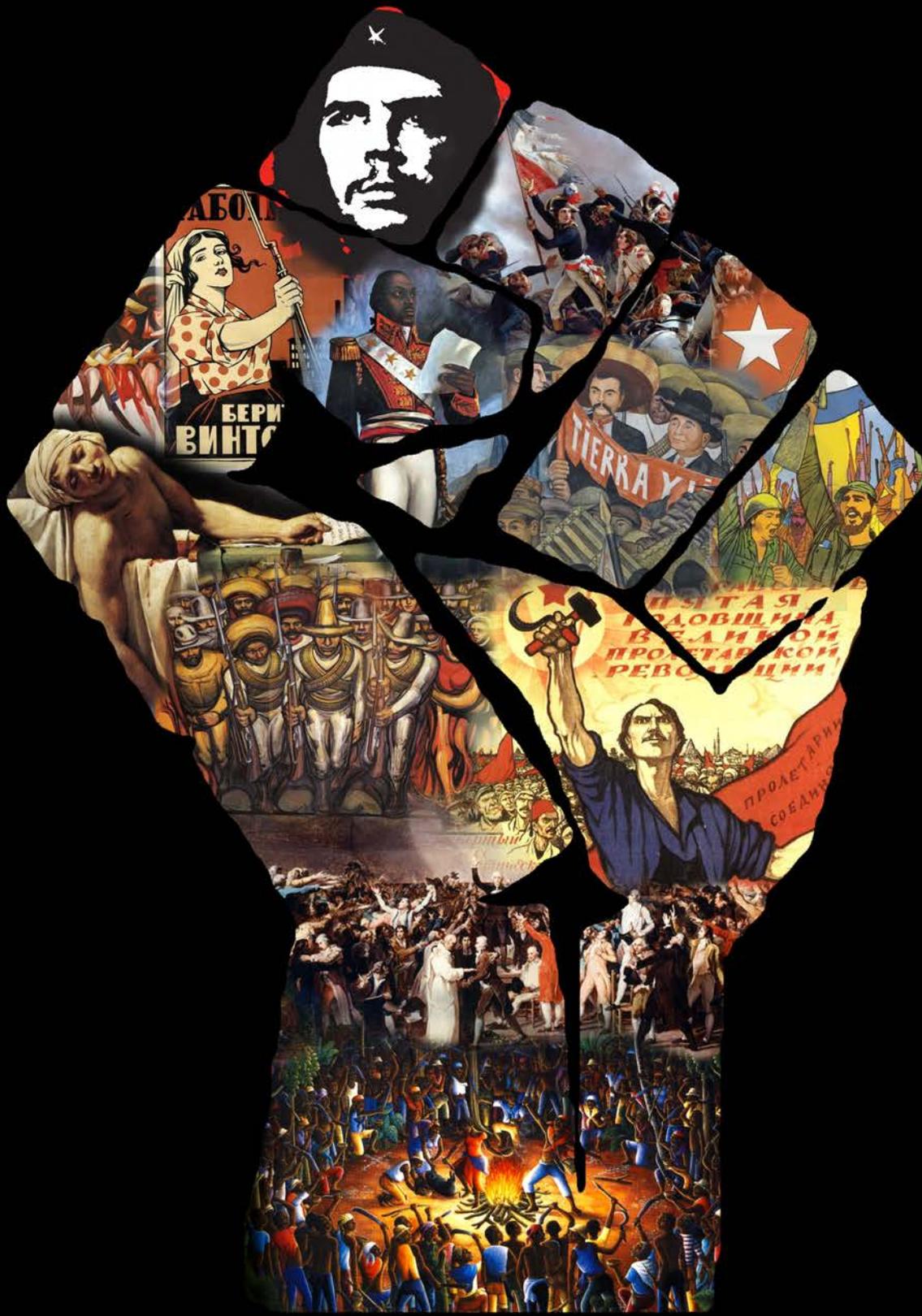


RevoluTionize

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Performance & History of World Revolutions
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Introduction

by Prof. Angela Marino

The day I sat down to write this introduction, Mario Woods was shot in cold blood by a firing squad of the SFPD. There was no trial. We all saw it on video, just like Rodney King, just like... and the names go on and on. In a post-Patriot Act moment, we are unsafe at a school, a social service center, at a health clinic, or a church, reminding us that terror has always been as much here at home as abroad. The crisis in Syria, displaced persons in a shredded system of statehood, climate change corporate hijackers; we are at war. It is in this context that we spent the semester examining the conditions of revolution and the performances that accompanied them in theaters, on the streets, as scripts and memorials of the past.

Starting with the French and the Haitian revolutions of the late 18th century and moving to the Russian, the Mexican and the Cuban Revolutions of the 20th century, we were concerned with what kinds of theater, dance and the arts were happening in relation to those pivotal moments of radical structural change. We also considered the social dramas of revolutionary movements and their constant and ongoing reproduction of history.

What we found when analyzing these various case points was that performance tapped into the central problems of revolutionary change: participation, representation, spirit, virtuosity, and a renewed set of ideals. The ability to speak and be heard was tantamount for the left, for the right, by the reds and the whites to reinforce and legitimate power. Where for Rousseau, the frivolity of the theater was anathema to popular reason, destined to be outside the revolution, the loas of Haitian dance referred to the very word for laws. Performance had its own laws, its own inside and outside of inclusion and its own inside and outside of revolution. For theatre historian, Susan Maslan, theater of the French Revolution generated "perhaps the most significant crucible for the formation and expression of public opinion" (2). Revolution is in

the dance; revolution also is the dance.

From the extremely stylized staged representations of the worker's machine-like preeminence (as in the work of Meyerhold in the Russian Revolution) to corridos, or ballads, of women soldiers of the Mexican Revolution, we saw symbols like the train, the beret, like the fist in the air move across mediums and across geographies with tremendous influence. Even in an age of the Hunger Games in which the Capitol sustains its opulence in a dazzling media simulation, we are not so far from the 18th century newspaper editorials and theatrical scripts that fabricated reality to make winners and losers, friends and foe. As Michel Rolph-Truillot argued, the hidden text of that which was erased from history was just as polemic and revealing as the triumphant and spectacular raising of the flag or the toppling of statues.

We came together in this class on the understanding that participation is a social practice that we could engage more fully in our class in order to further analyze our subject of performance and revolutions. We rehearsed on a daily basis what it means to work in a group, what it means to step up and step back, to make mistakes and build trust, and learn together. We were critical to uphold a singular ideal. While at the same time, we recognized the power of a call to unity. I refer to a "we" as the class, yet make no assumption that we all think alike, act alike or move with one gesture. For some, our present reality means gun control laws are the answer. For others it is education, consciousness building and reform. Many students recalled the teachings of the Black Panthers and the Third World Liberation Movement to defend one's community and build from the inside. Still others are trying to find a way to respond to a matrix of patterns and privilege that feed us and also bleed us in all kinds of ways.

"Create is this generation's password."

-José Martí

Each of us has a different perspective and together we make a more balanced and just world. In the end, students came up with a format of this zine to mirror the cyclical reproduction of revolution based on three phases: the power structure, story/narrative formation, and aesthetic reinforcement. In the following pages, you will find essays, collage, poetry, and images that depict the various mediums and messages that we explored in the classroom and the studio. We give a special thank you and acknowledgment to Colette Eloi and her company of El Wah Movement Theater and Michael Mansfield

of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies for leading outstanding workshops respectively in Haitian dance and Augusto Boal. Last, but not least, a special shout out goes to Lulu Matute who very expertly brought their work together into this design on web and in print. The zine is their way of sharing ideas that contributed to this class, and also to keep the conversation going, this time in words and images that you can hold or see on a screen, next time in the theater, or as performance on the streets. Along the way we hope to edge closer to what it means to do revolution better the next time.



Image by Street Art Encounter - South Bronx

“The ultimate mark of
power may be its
invisibility;
the ultimate challenge,
the exposition of its
roots.”

-Michel-Rolph Trouillot

Part I Power Structure



Power Structure Introduction

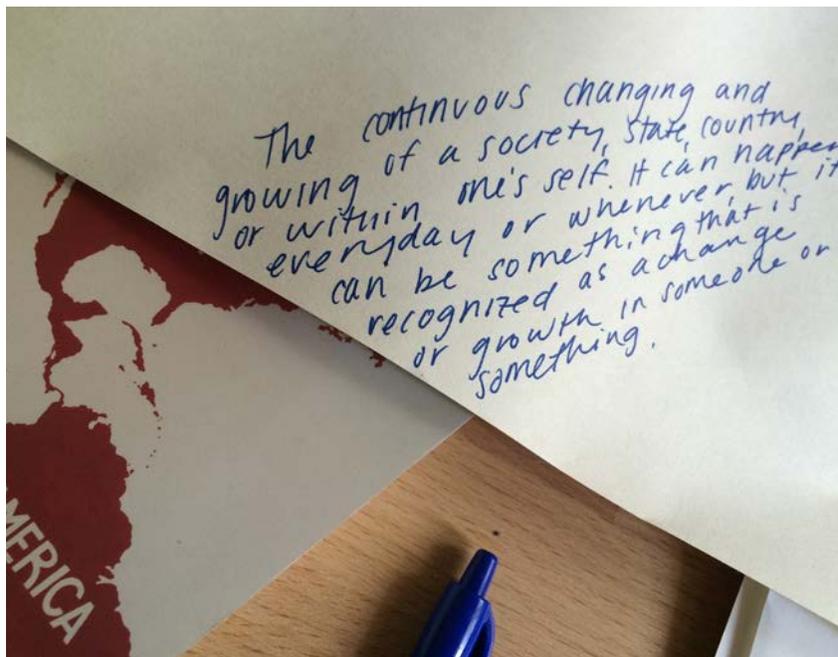
by Nathaniel Allen Ramil

On the very first day of class, Professor Marino passed out blank note cards and asked us to write down what we thought the definition of a revolution was. All the note cards were then spread out across the floor for the whole class to walk around and read them. We were almost all in agreement, believing that a revolution, in the most general sense, was a necessary fight for change against corruption and oppression. But one card was left blank, its owner afraid of being wrong, afraid of being punished with judgments, afraid of expressing his/her own mind. And the worst part, nobody ever knew. Who knows what kind of an impact that response could have had.

Growing up, we were taught “facts” from our parents, our teachers, our representative leaders, all those who are seen to be in higher power than ourselves. In this world brimming with unique and creative individuals, we were taught in such a simplified manner: right vs. wrong, good vs. bad, black vs. white. We began to view the world in dichotomies, separating us vs. them, and inferior vs. superior.

In creating clear distinctions and divisions between people, we also create power and leadership within these factions, giving a voice to our differences. With this power comes the abuse of it, as people attempt to achieve and maintain their power.

Throughout the semester we studied revolutions of different countries and focused on how people were both affected by and overcame existing power structures. Dictatorship, slavery, extreme social classism, gender norms, and corruption imposed by established systems had to be overcome. Despite being silenced under corruption, those seeking liberation found motivation and encouragement through their struggle. Theatre and art were used as means of gathering and expressing the corruption being faced, and through theatre and art, millions of people have been inspired to participate and empowered to fight for their freedom. What it came down to was realizing that the source of power lies within each and every individual, and as a collective unit that power can reach an extraordinary potential for change.



To Live...

by Nathaniel Allen Ramil

To live for your work is not living at all

Chained to ideals that are corrupted, not mine

Lose myself daily, afraid to stand tall

Becoming an object that's yours to define

You live by oppressing in hopes to succeed

Desire wealth, power, false golden tokens

You've taught me one thing, my mind now can see

Nothing is beautiful 'bout being broken.

To live for you work is not living at all

But some how I find myself answering your call



Image by Katherine Garcia

Violence Comes to Me

by Katherine Garcia

Peace and violence in fighting the power structure
Sometimes I lose the power to speak
My hands tremble my palms sweat I am speechless
My vocal cords stop working and I am left speechless
My television, computer and phone screen
As hate full words spill out of
The ignorance runs deep
Deep in the foundations of our institution that promotes its ties to social justice
but still keeps bones of natives locked away as artifacts.
Deep in the medias depiction of people of color as
violent radicals who spontaneously erupt into protest without just cause.
Continues to come to me, to my family, to my friends to our bodies
Peace will be used to be victorious and fight the oppressors that keep us silenced
If we use violent means we will lose is what I'm told
I did not bring violence, violence comes to me
So deep that the violence continues
But peace is the answer I'm told
Peace not violence
Violence will not work
Violence is not right
But wait lets put this on hold,
violence is tearing apart families
So don't tell me peace is the only way
That peace is the only way to true revolutionary change

Libations

by Liv Lara

I buried you yesterday.

With the hurt I've been holding

Libations

In the form of water

Because water moves into the container you put it in

Because you are water

Cleansing water

From the prison of old thoughts

Based on fear

Based on western thought

Based on documentation

Based on contradictions

that were left over...

Libations

Para los ancestros que no tienen nombre

Para os antepassados motivados pelo material

Para los perdidos, los de abajo y los de arriba

Para os antepassados que lutaram por seus direito de existir



Image by Lee Craker

We Carry Our Peoples Revolutionary Struggle in Our Blood

by Katherine Garcia

Historians have continually silenced the history of the Haitian revolution, as if it either didn't exist or was not a revolution at all. Prior to coming to Cal my knowledge of the Haitian revolution was zero. Like many of my classmates I always related Haiti to the natural disaster that occurred there. Our lack of knowledge about the Haitian revolution is not an accident. Much like the lack of my own history as a Mexican American in text book's is not an accident. The Haitian revolution is silenced because of how important it was. Professor Bayannah Bello stated in a interview that slave rebellions were occurring everywhere in Jamaica, Cuba, Brazil and the only difference was that Haiti succeeded in its revolution. Haiti was the first colony under French control to gain freedom and end slavery. That fact is essential in order to understand the reason why their history has been silenced. I will focus on how the performance of silencing history and discrediting it has affected people's view of the Haitian revolution today. I will begin by looking at how people found the revolution as something that was not possible. Furthermore, how performances are discredited and viewed as satanic. Finally, I will show how although some believe these performances are satanic, they live on and carry the legacy of resistance.

The Haitian revolution was considered impossible to many and it was often discredited as even taking place. This discrediting of the victory of the enslaved was on the basis that colonizers did not believe they had the ability or intelligence to organize. According to Trouillot, there are two similar themes that are reiterated through history when spoken about the Haitian revolution, "The first kind of tropes are formulas that tend to erase directly the fact of revolution"(96) and " The second kind tends to empty a number of singular events of their revolutionary content so that the entire string of facts, gnawed from all sides, becomes trivialized"(96).

As was spoken in class, some people thought that this revolution suddenly occurred and had no planning or pretense. As professor Bello stated, the revolution started since the people were being robbed from their homelands to be enslaved. This was not a simple and sudden uprising. The revolution took a lot of time and effort from many and yet this history is not seen in texts or taught in schools. This performance of silencing and discrediting the Haitian revolution by historians stemmed from a racist belief system and also fear that it would spread to other places where slavery was still in place.

Our lack of knowledge about the Haitian revolution is not an accident

A major part of the Haitian revolution was the performances that took place, such as the Vodun performance of Bois Caimen, yet much like the revolution as a whole it was discredited. According to Elizabeth Mcalister "... on 14 August 1791, several hundred slaves from different ethnic groups united under a leader named Boukman and vowed to fight the French who ruled the colony and used forced labor to fuel the sugar industry"(3). This gathering is very important because it was considered the inciting event prior to the revolution, which is believed to have occurred two weeks later (3). As Haitian dance instructor Collete Eloi said, people whom were enslaved often didn't speak the same language, but they knew the same dances and rituals and that was their way of communication. This performance was like a rehearsal for revolution. A popular Christian figure Pat Robertson stated on his show that the cause for the misfortunes occurring in Haiti was the pact that they made with the Devil in Bois Caimen. This view of the gathering that occurred that night is not uncommon.

It continues to disregard the injustice that was occurring to the enslaved people of Haiti and puts blame onto them. This powerful performance that took place and empowered the people to come together and get them “pumped for revolution” as Collete Eloi stated during our workshop, is viewed as something evil.

Although there is this discrediting of the performance of the Vodun performance at Bois Caimen, the legacy of its importance to the revolution of Haiti is still present today. I saw the importance of it first hand in the workshop we had as a class. As we all danced communally to the beat of the drums I began to feel power not only in my body but also spiritually. The songs sung were also ways of communicating stories and messages. The dance moves we were taught represented victory and stopping the oppressor. Although the people were robbed of their country, their families and home, they still had this performance that brought them together. 200 years later the performance carries on with people like Collete who continues the teachings. In the interview with Collete Eloi she talks about how she shows students the Haitian folkloric dance moves and it looks similar to their own contemporary dance techniques. Collete believes these are rituals that continue in their

blood even though generations have past. Although the people in power of textual knowledge have attempted to silence these histories, the performances that tell those stories through song and dance live on.

The silencing of the history of the Haitian revolution had a clear intent that was fueled by racism and the fear of losing power. Trouillot even states how, “the silence” is not only reproduced in the text books, but also in “popular writings that are the prime sources on global history for the literate masses in Europe, in the Americas, and large chunks of the third world” (Trouillot 98). This important revolution, which freed the slaves of Haiti is a forgotten and rejected truth. Many believed it was an inconceivable occurrence that could not possibly be true. They object to believe that “slaves” caused a revolution to take place. Instead of looking at these rituals as powerful tools to communicate and create community, some people considered them demonic practices. Even though there is so much silencing and discrediting of history, the legacy of resistance continues in the Haitian folkloric dance. Their legacy of performance and resistance continues to be taught and passed down to new generations.

“In studying our story, we capture a light from the past, which shines on the road to the future.”

-Prof. Bayyinah Bello

The Source of Power

by Marie Droual

"To make a spectator of the people, while making sure that the possibility of a spectator-actor reversibility remains carefully controlled, is to maintain an alienation that is the real form of power" (p 35).

For a long time, the vast majority of the French people were impoverished and struggled to live, while watching the wealthy aristocrats and royalty living unperturbed by the struggles of those beneath them. After some time of seeing this spectacle, the people of France could take it no more, leading to what we now refer to as the French Revolution. The government and the political institution that ruled pre-revolutionary France was performing a "spectacle" that the repressed and underrepresented had watched for many years. The citizens were eagerly awaiting their opportunity to transition from spectator to 'actor'. Turner describes a metaphor as, "at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown" (p 25). The French Revolution is an immensely complex part of not just revolutionary history, but of history overall. The natural desire for the spectator to become the actor can be used as a metaphor for understanding the French Revolution a piece of theater all on its own. The suppression of this transition is symbolic of the power that the monarchy held over the masses, keeping them as impoverished and powerless spectators of their grandeur and power. When the citizen came into power, they completed the transition, completing the cycle of performance.

Only through theater, the oppressed were allowed to speak

Theater allows those participating in the creation and production to express their opinions and ideas, and the French theater of the Revolution was no exception. The spectacle produced by the pre-revolutionary judicial system can be described as an "organization in which the activity of the actor (in the broadest sense) requires a spectator and excludes his participation" (Maslan, p. 69). Though the people are an obvious necessity to maintain

the structure of a government, the political power given to the masses was extremely out of proportion to the number of representatives in the National Assembly. Only through theater, the oppressed were allowed to speak. There were in fact many important leaders of the Revolution involved in the theaters. In her writings, Maslan describes that whether it be a puppet show or execution, spectators flock to these events for the purpose "of retelling, playing a role, assembling the neighbors and getting them to listen...in which the spectator ultimately finds his justification: to have become an actor" (Maslan, p. 33). The fluidity from spectator to performer is at the basis of everything from acting to retelling a story to a friend. Every action we do is in and of itself a performance, and all of these actions come from seeing someone else do them (Schechner). After having to watch the upper crust enjoy lavish lives while masses of people were suffering in pre-revolutionary France, the public was ready to complete the cycle of performance and take power by re-performing the 'spectacle' as the actors.

The lack of representation in the National Assembly is one example of how the majority of people in France were underrepresented and repressed. Symbolically, they weren't able to take their rightful role as actors retelling the spectacle that the monarchy of France was performing. "To appeal to an audience is to appeal to this possibility of a spectator-actor exchange, and an audience that does not achieve this exchange, this cycle, this transformation, is a mutilated audience – or, one might say, an alienated one" (Huet, p 34). Written word played a major role in the French Revolution as an outlet for the public to perform by voicing their own ideas and opinions. Written word is powerful, because it is something that is permanent (unlike the spoken word) and is able to be copied and distributed widely. Simply said, "paper is king" (Huet, p 6). With written word, important landmark events were immortalized, and were made available to many, so that even those who weren't able to be at the event can experience it through the notes of the scribes. The citizen's performances in theater gave

the public power. Many of the major revolutionary leaders had close ties to the theatre. One notable instance that demonstrates the power of written word is seen in the movie *Les Misérables*. At the beginning of the movie, when Jean Valjean is a prisoner, a single slip of paper with his probation written on it is holding him back, preventing him from being able to reintegrate into society. It is amazing when you think about the power that this small piece of paper had, shunning him as an

outcast. When he decides to change and rips the paper into shreds, he is symbolically tearing off the chains that the new "monarchy" of France has put on him and taking power over his own life. This moment is symbolic of the emergence of the revolution, as Valjean outwardly demonstrates his defiance of the established order. It was through the power of the citizen's own written words that they were able to get enough power to revolt, both in the movie and during the French Revolution.



Image by Ivette Martinez

Strength Through Community

by Nathaniel Allen Ramil

At the start of the unit, we were asked as a class to come up with anything we knew about Haiti. Although the French Revolution had become iconic in the perception of even American Independence and democracy, Haiti was unknown. The more we were challenged to think of other facts or news, the more we came to realize that there is a lack of knowledge of Haiti's past and present; but why was that? History is the production of colonial power and thus dictates what is presented and what is hidden. Those in power are able to create masks: one to cover up their blemishes while highlighting their successes full of misconceptions and false accusations for the inferior. In terms of Haiti, we see Haitians portrayed in the media as a threat with their Vodou practices that are perceived as dark and dangerous. In recent media, reporters have suggested that Haiti's "bad luck" with natural disasters and extreme poverty is due to its people's "pact with the devil that was made in order to liberate the country from French rule several years ago. What is presented to us as factual has been altered with and become popular belief. Even the Haitians cannot have their voices heard when speaking against the false information, speaking for themselves. Their voices are unheard, or more likely muted by the public, because historical accounts have depicted Haitians through a discriminating lens. Despite being silenced in the midst of racism and discrimination, many Haitians are able to maintain their sense of culture and community through the practice of Vodou. Their strong sense of unity and spirituality guided them to freedom from European colonialism, and in today's world, it may guide them to freedom from discrimination.

Vodou is a spiritual practice that emphasizes the development of the individual and his/her role in helping society advance. According to Professor Bayannah Bello, "our purpose on this earth is to build good character...so we can create a worthwhile society and have a life of victory." In doing so, there are seven principles, or Seven Loas, that must not only be understood, but

acted upon in order to achieve good character. The first social principle Professor Bello introduced was the principle of Legba, which stresses that we must place others before ourselves, and give them the opportunity to better themselves and save them when they've gone down a wrong path or things have gone awry. In the ceremony at Bois Caiman, Boukman was the man who acted upon the loa Legba. Boukman gathered slaves from all across the region to lead and perform a Vodou ceremony, one that Collette Eloi described as a liberating ceremony which allowed the Haitian slaves to take charge of themselves as humans after being oppressed and dehumanized by the French. The ceremony consisted of loud music, chanting, dancing, and calling on their god to give them the strength and courage to fight against the colonial powers. In this situation, building good character meant fighting against a corrupt higher power, fighting not only for themselves, but also for the people around them. Community was their strength, and ultimately, as Collette Eloi said, Haiti became the first country to win a revolution against the colonial powers. Why is it though, that despite such a great achievement, Haiti and Vodou is looked upon in such a negative way?

What is presented to us as factual has been altered with...

The process of creating history, creating what we think of as "knowledge of the past", is susceptible to straying away from the truth by misinterpretation and/or alteration by those with power. In his book, *Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot states that history is produced in four fundamental steps, each step susceptible to having certain aspects of the stories and events silenced or altered. These four steps are "the making of source", "making of archive", "making of narratives", and "making of history

in the final instance" (26). I think the most important step is the very first: making the sources in which facts are created and events are documented. The first written accounts of the ceremony at Bois Caiman were published by the French. The Frenchmen who documented the event may have indeed witnessed the ceremony, but as outsiders and, in a sense, foreigners to the culture, they are prone to misinterpret the event as savage, animalistic, and chaotic. Such an account could easily be distributed to other nations because France had the power, tools, and connections to do so. The trend of altering and silencing continues on as others who have read the documentation interpret an already misperceived event, thus straying away even more from the truth. As seen today, evangelicals claim Vodou as a demonic practice. From the numerous different interpretations of the event, the evangelicals interpret what they "know" as a "blood pact with Satan", one that the people of Haiti made in return for their freedom from the French.

Racism and discrimination also tie into how stories are altered and what is hidden or silenced. As Collette Eloi mentioned in her dance session, Haiti was the first nation to free itself from colonial rule. The unthinkable had been done. Rather than celebrating such an

achievement, stories were altered to shine a negative light on Haiti and its people in order to discourage other enslaved people from revolting, as well as to warn and advise other colonial powers to reinforce their control over the inferior.

What surprised me in this unit, and actually gave me a sense of hope, is that Vodou is still practiced despite what the world thinks. During the dance session, Collette Eloi stated that Vodou allows different people from different regions to practice Vodou, to dance, sing and chant. Through this, people of the culture understood exactly what region the other Haitians' ancestry is from. They are able to gain a sense of understanding of where the other Haitians came from, what they've dealt with in the past, and ultimately what they are dealing with today with the discrimination and false accusations of their culture. The Haiti people are their strongest as a community. United, the Haiti people won a revolution against a powerful colonial nation, and as they reconnect and gather with those of the same or similar ancestry through the spiritual practice of Vodou, they will be able to overcome this dominating negative perception of Haiti.

“It is not only our understanding
of revolution but our conception of
freedom”

-Hannah Arendt

History, Herstory, but Not the Media's Story

by Karina Rodegeb

These days society as a whole, especially our age group being the Millennial generation, learns most of what they know about the world from social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. and obviously from the news, word of mouth, and what not. But what this creates is a funnel of information that can be controlled, manipulated, warped, produced, and manufactured to suit those in power. Much like the case for the Haitian Revolution, this creates a whole faction of marginalized people whose voices are not heard, stories are not told, and existence is for the most part, unknown—unknown, of course, until it is recognized by the media. However, as I said earlier, we are only exposed to a tiny part of these stories by the media, and this is the case in historical documentation as well. How do we know what is true or what is manipulated? In our initial discussion of Haiti in class, knowledge was extremely limited; most facts known about Haiti surrounded the limitedly covered 2010 earthquake. And that's not truly the fault of any of us because Haiti's story is predominantly unheard by the world. In Michel Rolph Trouillot's book, *Silencing the Past*, he discusses how those in power (e.g. the media) are those who produce our understanding of history and this certainly applies to the people in Haiti and the Haitian Revolution—they are the people whose voices are unheard, and the performance of the Haitian Revolution has left us with a very specific lens to view it through.

Personally, the Haitian dance lessons we were taught by Colette Eloi were the most beneficial and resonated the most with me when discussing performance and its power in communication. While I am not Haitian, I was able to connect to the energy and the movement that we did. Colette would tell us the meaning of each move in connection to the Haitian people and especially the revolution. I could feel the power in each move and

was able to connect to its meaning from my toes to my head, which just furthers the importance and influence performance has on communication and revolution. One thing that really struck me was when Ms. Eloi encouraged us to use our pelvic area as a place of importance and power, and to not think of it as a sexualized object, which is what it has become in Western culture. This is yet another instance in which media has funneled our views through a hegemonic agenda. I also surprisingly became pretty emotional during some of the moves; I am Chamorro and my people are from Guam, a U.S. territory that has lost its culture and history through hundreds of years of imperialism and conquer.

there is already a dominant story that is constructed and told...

For instance, much of the original Chamorro language has been completely decimated and mainly only the elders know the language and at this point many of them are passing away which creates urgency for preserving what is still known. Similarly, Trouillot's states that "because these observers did not find grammar books or dictionaries among the so-called savages, because they could not understand or apply the grammatical rules that governed these languages, they promptly concluded that such rules did not exist" (pg. 7). Now, the Chamorro language is basically a mix between Tagalog (Filipino) and Castilian Spanish and some few original Chamorro words. Therefore, like the Haitians, there is a loss of history and an oppression that still does not afford the Chamorro people liberties that mainland Americans have. I can connect with idea of those in power silencing those who are not, as Guam is probably another place that not people probably cannot name too many facts about.

During the Haitian Revolution, the events that took place at Bois Caiman are probably of the biggest “legacies” still known today. It was here that Vodun priest, Dutty Boukman, led a religious ceremony. It has since been cited by Christian influencers as a ritual in making a “pact with the devil” (McAllister) tainting the true purpose and meaning of the ceremony. This is just one of many examples demonstrating that “the very mechanisms that make any historical recording possible also ensure that historical facts are not created equal. They reflect differential control of the means of historical production...that transforms an event into a fact” (pg. 49). Furthermore, Vodun practices have been practically demonized, misconstrued, and exaggerated in Western culture mostly to perpetuate these longstanding fallacies from the construction of “history” and for entertainment values. Vodun is today, more commonly associated with zombies, voodoo dolls, black magic. This demonstrates the

many ways to distort narratives which can come through in games, songs, TV shows, movies, etc. Hollywood has turned Vodun practices into a caricature to add dramatic “flair” and create a subconscious instillation of fear in the spectator.

The biggest problem with the “legacy” of the Haitian Revolution is that there is already a dominant story that is constructed and told by those who have control over historical narrative, and Trouillot claims, “As sources fill the historical landscape with their facts, they reduce the room available to other facts. Even if we imagine the landscape to be forever expandable, the rule of interdependence implies that new facts cannot emerge in a vacuum. They will have to gain their right to existence in light of the field constituted by previously created facts” (pg. 49).



Women Warriors in Disguise

by Amanda Te

In such a patriarchal world, women have lived under centuries and centuries of suppression. They have been left out of history, silenced, and “domesticated” in roles that society deems they are appropriate for. The Mexican Revolution, which is also known as the Mexican Civil War, is viewed as a civil war for women. Not only did women assist in the revolt against Díaz, but they created their own revolt against stereotypical women’s roles, as well.

They described women who died during childbirth as soldiers on a battlefield

María Herrera-Sobek’s *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis* presents the idea that women soldiers, and their power, have been in existence throughout history, despite the popular belief. The title of her work in itself presents such an empowering message, as it translates to “The Mexican Narrative Song.” She basically states that this is what Mexico’s history is truly built off. Sobek analyzes the path women had to discover to build their succession. In doing so, they were capable of so much more than men or even they expected themselves to be. From fighting alongside men, to taking a majority of positions, to their mental strength during the war women proved themselves to be of importance to the revolution when the Spaniards were in constant battle with the Native Americans. As men fell alongside their ego women support became a necessity. This was recognized by Alonzo de Ercilla y Zuñiga in his literary epic, *La Araucana*, which described that when all was lost, Doña Mencía, persisted in encouraging men to continue battling and picked up weapons herself to fight along with them. He shows that, while men began to give up, Mencía only grew a stronger mentality and even offered herself as a sacrifice in order to gain efforts in the war, proving

that women can be stronger than the average man. The fact that he wrote about a woman also contributes to the strong influence women must have had in the revolution, as most men held society’s beliefs. Another woman who proved a great influence was Doña Josefa Ortiz. She was an inspirational independence leader who helped lead the country to its independence and was honored, not only in poetry but on Mexico’s currency, as well. María Manuela Molina raised an army of men who fought and won seven battles, dubbing her “La Capitana.” What is even more impressive is the fact that she only died after numerous fatal wounds. Her stubbornness to stand for her justice and only die after truly being terminated shows the vigor of absolute femininity. These women uncovered their own way to proving their impact on the world.

Kentner claimed that the reason for lack of women inclusion in history is due to the fact that there were simply too many who played active roles to name. In addition, amongst these many women, there were several positions they held, such as tending to the wounded, donating to the cause, sacrificing themselves, cooking, and even seducing. In fact, María Bernarda Espinosa was known as a “seductress.” This talent, which is most often seen as prostitution and taboo, can actually be categorized alongside the many advantages women have over men. Seduction doesn’t compare to the amount of cruelty they practiced. Pepita Neri, dubbed “La Coronela,” and Jovita Valdovinos, “The Generala,” are often described as playing “men-like” roles, such as “dressing and acting like men.” Valdovinos later reveals to the President that she, having been so cruel to her victims and a woman, had served him. This brings to question, again, the expectations of a woman and what defines their roles in society. If she was capable of succeeding in such a task, why is it still labeled as something men do, rather than simply being a noble accomplishment? Finally, the most impactful force that these women had over men was

the fact that they either expressed their beliefs of the revolution through some art form, such as writings or paintings, or men documented or praised their activities by writing or painting them themselves. This is the greatest power of them all because it is an influence that lingers and is remembered for years to come. Their fight and struggle lives on through these pieces of performance, just as the strength behind the symbolism of the image of a woman in military uniform. This is their form of voicing their immortal opposition to tyranny, and even more impressive is their courage to do so voluntarily despite the risk of their life by involving themselves in the danger of politics.

Most interestingly, Mesoamerica produced the concept of a woman warrior, which was later inherited by Mexico. They described women who died during childbirth as soldiers on a battlefield. In this sense, women fought in “war” more often than men did, and more likely than not, succeeded. In addition, the ideology of a woman warrior is extremely relatable to me, personally. In a previous English class, I read the novel *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* by Maxine Hong Kingston, which discusses the view that women who are suppressed, in different ways, fight their own type of battle and become their own type of warrior. Although Mexican and Asian culture is very different, I find myself relating myself to both, especially

after growing up in a dominantly hispanic area but raised in an Asian household. I came to realize that as the daughter of a low- income, underprivileged, refugee family, I was expected to succeed in nothing more than maybe graduating high school. Much of administration believed our students had little potential, and, regardless of the fact that my parents encouraged me to pursue a higher education, many of my traditional family member commented on my possible career paths as being “a man’s job.” This novel made me realize that I am a woman warrior fighting a battle against my family’s and society’s expectations and views of my abilities. This is exactly what the women of Mexico did during the revolution, just in a different context.

Women were depicted as fragile and incapable of surviving without the assistance of men. Because of this and the fact that men dominated everyday society, women were notably left unrecorded in history, despite some important roles they proved to play. Sobek provides readers many influential women leaders and the active positions they held in the war efforts. In addition, she shows how, although men exercised control over everything, down to the news and the arts, women still have some appearance in it if one reads close enough. Thus, these times war, yet giving them little credit for their immense aid.

“Constructivism has forced the artist to become both artist and engineer”

-Edward Braun

Representation & Revolution

by Nathaniel Allen Ramil

One of the main roles that representation has in regards to social movements such as revolutions is that it unifies a group of people under one common perspective. Though not every single individual of the particular group is being heard through their own voice, the general concepts of their corrupt society and their beliefs/hopes of a better society are being brought to the forefront. Many of a group's representatives are outspoken and take on leadership roles, becoming icons and symbols of strength and hope.

Putting so much faith into these representatives, though, can also be a downfall. With so much power and responsibility, the people depend on the representatives, and when things begin to go awry and the worst comes, the leading representatives are the ones to blame. It can also go in another direction in which the representative becomes more power-driven, more controlling, more like another corrupt leader. In either case, the people that are being represented lose a sense of self-entitlement and self-control. Indeed, having a leader to represent the group is key to moving forward, but the people need to also understand that they are just as powerful and can make just as much of an impact as these representatives in being active participants and representing themselves. That way, they aren't only relying on their representatives and putting all their eggs in one basket, but rather they, too, also have control over themselves and the ideals that they are fighting for.



The Voice

by Cuahuactemoc Salinas

“That’s the history of the world. His story is told, hers isn’t.”

This simple but yet eloquent quote by Dolores Huerta describes how the Mexican Revolution history continues to be seen and told. In the reading, “Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis,” by Maria Herrera Sobek attempts to not only define corrido itself but incorporate the construction of the Mexican Revolution through womxn narrative, roles and participation. By incorporating and developing this construction the womxn voice becomes their story and possession.

Popular images of women during the Mexican Revolution (1911-1920) often depict them as sexual beings, but with “masculine” traits wearing a bandolier and guns. As expressed in the reading, womxn roles became minimal and as a result they were labeled “seductresses.” “One of the greatest evils which we have had from the beginning of this war...are the women who, on account of their sex, have been the instrument of seducing all classes of persons...(361)” They played integral roles; however, like some of their voices, their bodies were silenced. Over the course of the Mexican Revolution, we are brainwashed to see the female soldier as submissive, but now we see them as a promiscuous fighter (Si se puede). Objectivity has damaged our minds in terms of how we see womxn, although they were brave and strong soldiers, many men continue to see them as objects. With this image instilled in our minds, womxn were trying to make their image more vivid and their involvement to the revolution became an essential part of making their image more visible, however their lives were still in danger, “these women demonstrated their pluck and mettle in entering the political fray, which entailed extreme danger to their own lives and

to the safety of their loved ones” (362). When gender roles are being challenged, our history and men have the tendency to set and define womxn roles.

There are three types of soldaderas that are represented in the corrido. “These types vividly demonstrate the historical process in the fashioning of an archetypal image. Some corrido depict the soldadera in her true historical dimension. Some romanticize the soldadera and transform her into a love object. In others the soldadera is transformed into a mythic archetypal figure.” Their female beings and bodies in corrido tradition have silenced some womxn and, as a result, many female roles are seen as insignificant for both the revolution and corridista. “As we have seen, the historical record confirms the involvement of Mexican women during the periods of armed conflict. The heroic corrido corroborates the participation of Mexicanas on the battlefields. For the most part, however, the women appear as anonymous entities, at times denominated solely by their first names, at other times as “Juanas” or “galletas” (“cookies”), the names usually given to soldaderas. Some are simply labeled “mujeres” (363). The historical struggle appears to come from womxn being a part of the already established, patriarchal society that our history has constructed. This of course, can be said about how corrido tradition has been established as well.

Maya Angelou once said, “the sadness of the women's movement is that they don't allow the necessity of love. See, I don't personally trust any revolution where love is not allowed.” The reading implies, “Many women, of course, joined the struggle simply because their husbands, fathers, brothers, or lovers were deeply committed to the ideals of the revolutionary movement. Still others were drawn to the battleground by a combination of motives...She, no doubt. Exemplifies many soldaderas who were drawn into combat for love and ideals” (367).

Part II

Story Formation



“It was easier to glorify the soldadera and to mythify her than to grant her the vote.”

-María Herrera-Sobek

Story Formation Introduction

by James Lewis

It's one of the first things we all learn when we start studying books as children: "introduction, rising, action, climax, falling action, and resolution." As we grow older and come into contact with different forms, more complicated concepts and bigger words start to make their way into the mix: denouement, apotheosis, monomyth . . . Our view of stories, however, whether fictional or real—or at least as real as any story can be—is continually shaped by that early image of the inverted checkmark, slashing its way across the whiteboard and off into the untold future of the story, remaining, as it were, as straight and stable as its denouement. This picture of how narrative works can be difficult to shake, even as we come to realize that many narratives—whether fictional or historical—are far more complicated than this, but become ensnared by the media, by dominant discourses, and by our own inherent biases and prejudices. What is complicated and complete becomes simplified, or buried completely.

In this class, we took a long look at Michel Rolph-Truillot's book, *Silencing the Past*, which addresses the many problems and questions surrounding historical narrative formation. The book, which uses the oft-untold story of the Haitian Revolution as its primary example, became a cornerstone of our discussions about narratology and how history is not just written *post facto* by the victors, but by the victors who remain in power. Professor Marino introduced our work with a reference to *The*

Hunger Games, and it is perhaps a fitting metaphor here as well. The narrative of the "Victors" is used to define and control the oppressed, and all those who suffer from violence are used to prop up and reify those narratives.

Augusto Boal once said: "We are all actors: being a citizen is not living in a society, it is changing it." Boal believed in a democracy in which everyone could speak, and over the course of this class we have discovered new ways of speaking and creating narratives that do not seek to become the dominating discourse. Dance, song, and performance have opened doors to simultaneous individual expression and collective fiat—whether in a blockbuster like *Les Miserable*, or in our own workshop space. With Boal in mind and thinking of ourselves as spect-actors, our own performances reminded us of how those climactic dramas could be an institutional device designed to keep the catharsis contained to the theatre, dominating our will to act on the outside.

Ultimately our discussions of narrative formation did not end with our study of any singular revolution. As we read and watched and wrote about the stories of various historical revolutions and looked for something deeper than what Rodolfo Usigli's Miguel might call "truth," we have discovered truth—without quotation marks—in finding our voices and telling our own stories.

The Unsung Heroes of the Mexican Revolution

by Yoonji Jang

Along with studying various revolutions in class, I've recently started some research of my own on the American Revolution by listening to Lin-Manuel Miranda's new show *Hamilton: The Musical* on repeat. The musical focuses on the life of founding father and America's first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton as well as the people in his life during the time of the American Revolution. Aside from the brilliant music and lyrics, one thing Miranda succeeded in was bringing up the idea of "who tells your story"? The characters that really stood out for me in the show were the women. The Schyuler Sisters: Angelica, Eliza and Peggy discuss their "legacy" and how they will go down in history throughout the entire show. Angelica, the eldest sister, states that her role in life is to marry rich and climb the social ladder. However, she desires to make her mark through politics and is eager to talk to Thomas Jefferson to compel him to "include women in the sequel". Eliza, who marries Alexander Hamilton, struggles to find her story inside her husband's narrative and asks Hamilton to let her be a "part of the narrative, in the story that they will write someday". Peggy, the youngest sister is often in the background and forgotten. The portrayal of women in Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical perfectly mirrors the Mexican Revolution. While the men were in the spotlight fighting for new government, land reform and class equality, the women working behind the scenes or aside the men to help with the war efforts were either forgotten, deliberately cut or portrayed incorrectly throughout history.

Soldaderas, an archetype of the "Woman Warrior" inherited from the ancient Greeks, were female soldiers during the Mexican Revolution. They engaged in various substantial roles from "soldiers actually engaged in battle... spies and couriers, "seductresses"... wives, sweethearts, and daughters... cooks, nurses, fund raisers... and camp followers" (87). As the current state of society affected their wellbeing, the women actively

participated in the revolution. It's amazing that certain women were in charge of battalions, putting themselves into dangerous situations and their lives on the line. Rather than focusing on the woman as an individual who acted out of her own accord, women are always linked with men and characterized as docile beings that follow their man out of love and devotion. Their role is always beneath or for the man. Although many did join "the struggle simply because their husbands, fathers, brothers, or lovers were deeply committed to the ideals of the revolutionary movement", that wasn't their sole cause (367). Regardless of the reasons why these women joined the cause, they all go down in history on the sidelines, as supporting the man or being the vice of man.

Soldaderas are romanticized and hyper sexualized

Herrera-Sobek in *The Soldier Archetype* discusses the three types of Soldaderas introduced through corridos, songs and stories. The first is the true historical depictions of these women. In class, we engaged in an exercise where we researched Soldaderas and created dialogue for them to put their voice back into the narrative. Working with Katherine on the Castillo Sisters, I was exposed to the harsh realities of their legacy. We were not able to find much information about the sisters and most of the class had the same issue. If we were lucky, we found a paragraph on who these women were and their impact on the Mexican Revolution. A whole life (in our case, four lives) reduced to one paragraph from the perspective of men. Many of the women's roles during the revolution were not documented. Where did their stories go? Is this how they wanted to go down in history? What is the truth? The sisters, Carmen, Toña, Concha and Lola had the task of being suppliers for the revolution and bringing ammunition, clean clothes and

“candies” for the soldiers. They are praised and labeled for their hard work and bravery, which become their legacy. It is interesting and frustrating to see them praised for their domestic role as “caretakers” who bring candy and earn the compliments and approval of men rather than their heroic deeds. They still remained voiceless and opinion less. Katherine and I created dialogue for the sisters where they could take charge and be a fighting part of the revolution. In our story, the Castillo sisters inspired by the ideals of the revolution and wanting to do more, charge into the room at the end of *The Imposter* and rally Julia into joining the revolution. Julia leaves with the sisters in order to leave the patriarchal grasp of her father and brother.

Soldaderas are romanticized and hyper sexualized. When you search Soldaderas on Google, one of the first image that pops up is an overly sexualized image of the warrior. You see a curvy woman, sticking her chest out in a low cut top as her hair blows in the wind. The author states “to neutralize the woman, by making her a love object and thus presenting her in a less threatening manner” (104). This instills the idea that a woman with thought and drive is dangerous and to minimize her power, men put her into a submissive and romanticized position. In *The Imposter*, Julia shows society’s fascination and obsession with appearances and standards of beauty. When Julia’s mother, Elena tells her

that “physical beauty is not the only thing that attracts men to us”, she responds by saying “no... but it’s the one thing that keeps them from leaving us” (17). Julia is desperate for the approval of men, even if it’s from her own father. Women are always seeking men’s approval who at the same time create unrealistic standards and depictions of women. Women are shaped and molded to fit a man’s world.

Soldaderas are seen as the mythic archetypal figure (93). From real stories, Soldaderas are crafted into sexual objects and romantic fantasies and the final step is to immortalize this image. In corridos such as “Juana Gallo”, she is given superhuman powers and becomes the representation of every Soldaderas. The portrayal of women during the Mexican Revolution influences the view of female soldiers today. The media continues to put female heroines into skimpy clothing or have them fall in love, which distracts them from their ultimate mission. Women make up half of the world’s population and are responsible for great events throughout history, yet only a small percentage is dedicated to them. As the next generation of storytellers and practitioners of the theater, we need to discover and tell these stories. Only by creating new works of art and telling new narratives, will we be able to change the perceived idea and make headway for women.

“Morals are not corrected; they are depicted, and an ugly face does not appear ugly to him who wears it”

-Jean-Jaques Rousseau

Representation & Revolution

by Khaled Bekhit

Representational politics are at the heart of every revolutionary struggle. From the Haitian Revolution to the Arab Spring to the Black Lives Matter movement, revolutionary struggles cannot be separated from representation; this is especially true in today's increasingly technological age where images and ideas can be disseminated, mobilized, and politicized. As a queer person of color, I understand the importance of representation in shaping revolutionary struggle. However, I also understand that representation is a tool; it can be deployed for the purpose of the revolution just as easily as it can be used as a tool of repression.

The iconic image of Ché Guevara was instrumental in mobilizing Cubans against the US-backed General Batista. The icon Ché became associated with the revolutionary struggle against imperialism especially after he was assassinated by the CIA. Soon thereafter, however, the capitalist propaganda machine began its work; Che's face was on all types of products and the symbolism around his image changed. This is not to say that Ché is no longer a symbol of revolution. Rather, it is to say that the hyper representation of Ché in a capitalist context made him so far removed from his struggle for socialism, economic equality, and against imperialism. Ché was transformed into a symbol and just that. Thus, it is not mere representation that we need to mobilize but representation that has the power to dismantle hegemonic structures, that is what must be at the crux of our revolutions.

"...it is not mere representation that we need to mobilize but representation that has the power to dismantle hegemonic structures, that is what must be at the crux of our revolutions."

-Khaled Bekhit



The Haitian Revolution: Consciousness Challenging Narrative Hegemony

by Chrissy Curl

Truthfully, I can't say that I was delighted when Professor Marino announced we would be learning Haitian dance. Firstly, dance in my personal, American experience is generally either for artists who are elevated by their technical virtuosity or just for fun and social bonding at parties. Secondly, I don't consider myself a spiritual person so I found the concept of the loa interesting but not at all convincing. My expectations for the dance class were that it would be intriguing from an academic standpoint, but not moving on a personal level. I am very happy to say that I was completely and utterly wrong.

The spark for the Haitian Revolution came not from the written word, but from a performance

Like many others in our class, I was deeply moved and inspired by my brief encounter with Haitian dance and the knowledge of Colette Eloi. The power, the freedom, and the joy in the movement took me to some higher space, elevated beyond the everyday. The experience of dancing with the class also brought me that feeling of an idealized singularity that transcends individual relationships and individual moments— I felt a connection to my fellow humans that was core, visceral. After the class I kept thinking about it, wondering why it felt so different, and I realized that for me dance was a new kind of consciousness— a new way of knowing. This experience really crystallized my understanding of the deep rift between Haitians and Westerners in the remembering and recording of the Haitian Revolution. Epitomized by the reactions to the pivotal Bois Caïman ceremony, the conflict over the production of Haiti's history arises because the Haitian Revolution shattered Westerners' fundamental way of knowing.

The birth of the Haitian Revolution was quite different than, for example, the French Revolution. While the French Revolution included popular movements, much of its momentum was fueled by the discourse and writings of the Enlightenment thinkers. Intellectuals like Rousseau worshiped the written word and its ability to both inspire and moralize. The rallying cry for "liberté, égalité, fraternité" was the distillation of vast amounts of philosophical text. Conversely, as Trouillot points out in *Silencing the Past*, the Haitian Revolution "was not preceded or even accompanied by an explicit intellectual discourse" in part because of the illiteracy of most slaves and because the idea of the revolution was so radical it could only be established in discourse after it had happened (88). The spark for the Haitian Revolution came not from the written word, but from a performance. As described by McAlister, the ceremony at Bois Caïman was a foundational moment in Haitian history. Hundreds of slaves assembled and united in a vow to fight the French colonists, symbolized by an animal sacrifice led by Boukman where each person participated by touching the blood and raising his hands up (3). In this kind of performance, the boundary between actor and spectator is broken. Spectators become actors, and in so doing become empowered to create the next performance. Two weeks later, the slaves rebelled— by burning the sugar plantations (McAlister 3). The symbolic potency of this gesture in addition to its practical effect cannot go unnoticed. Though I can't assume the intended impact of this action, I think the burning can be thought about, to use Schechner's idea, "as" performance— a continuation of the ritual at Bois Caïman. Thus the first moments of the revolution sprang from an ideological source extremely decentralized in Western thought, rather than from the revered written word that was considered the backbone of Enlightened rationality.

In addition to the initial spark of the revolution, its very existence was also incomprehensible to contemporary

Westerners. Though the French championed their Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the idea of an inherent hierarchy of men based on race went essentially unquestioned. The colonists' understanding of the natural way of the world justified their capital gains from slavery on the plantations, so philosophy and economy reinforced one another. So ingrained was their perception of the world and belief in the status quo that, during the revolution and even afterwards, the French outside Haiti did not even believe that the reports were true. The practical obstacles slaves had to face to overpower the French were massive and surely a contributing factor to the initial disbelief. Yet Trouillot argues that the revolution both in its time and the centuries after was "unthinkable" because "the very deeds of the revolution were incompatible with major tenets of dominant Western ideologies" (95).

Fast forward to 2015, and it appears the Haitian revolution remains incompatible with Western thought. Trouillot demonstrates that history is a production molded by those in power at the creation of sources, the compiling of archives, the construction of narratives, and the making of history (26). The significance of events in their own time does not necessarily correlate with the significance of events in the historical narrative, as there are many points throughout the production where stories and voices can be silenced—Haiti is the perfect

example of this. Slavery has played an enormous role in the development of the Americas as well as in our historical narrative, and the first successful slave revolution leading to the first black republic is an immense moment in history. Yet the Haitian Revolution is absent in our textbooks and our popular knowledge, replaced with images of disasters and destitution. The ceremony at Bois Caïman—legendary to the Haitian people—is distorted through a Christian lens and recast by Evangelicals as a pact with the devil that has left Haiti cursed, and must be righted by reclaiming the land for Jesus (McAlister 3). The Haitian spiritual practice of vodun has been bastardized by Hollywood, bringing the misconception of "voodoo dolls" into popular mythology and portraying the spiritual rituals as some form of dark, mysterious magic.

Though many Americans in 2015 are worlds away from the contemporary beliefs of French colonists who understood slavery as the natural order of the world, we are clearly still failing to recognize the complexity and importance of the Haitian Revolution. My experience with Haitian dance made me realize how easy it is to silence, unintentionally as well as purposely, things that we do not understand—particularly when new truths challenge our most fundamental ways of encountering the world.

“We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society.”

-Angela Davis

Feminist Façades in the Mexican Corrido

by Khaled Bekhit

As I read through Maria Herrera-Sobek's feminist analysis of corridos in revolutionary Mexico, I was struck by the similar roles that both corridos and the story of Bois Caiman played in the imaginaries of the respective audiences that consumed them. Both related integral parts of national identity to audiences and both were co-opted to serve non-egalitarian purposes. In the case of Haiti, the story of Bois Caiman was recast by religious fundamentalists in the West, (namely in the United States), in order to serve a colonial agenda. Similarly, corridos, a stylistically poetic method of storytelling, were being redesignated as patriarchal tools of domination. By historicizing and mythologizing the part that women played in the Mexican Revolution, these corridos, which appear to be feminist in nature, actually serve patriarchal powers in that they maintain the narrative that feminist power is an unattainable historical myth as opposed to an aspect of a lived reality.

the conceptualization of what soldadera was, did not manifest itself through combat rather it hinged on the very essence of womanhood

Herrera-Sobek explains how corridos historicize the soldadera's role in the revolution, "transform her into a love object," or transform her "into a mythic archetypal figure" (Herrera-Sobek 93). Presenting women as such, serves the patriarchal agenda and strips women of their agency. Let us examine the historicization of the soldadera first. Presenting the soldadera as a historical phenomena, places her in the past -it traps her in a reality that she cannot escape from because of the temporal barrier that exists between her and the contemporary women who wish to emulate her strength. Thus, the

soldadera is completely erased from the present not so that contemporary women can forge their own paths, but rather to present the soldadera as a purely historical figure who appeared during Mexico's revolutionary epoch and promptly disappeared when the revolution was over. Such a notion is a radical departure from any kind of reality, especially when considering how versatile the original conceptualization of the soldadera was: "the Azteca-Mexica considered women who perished while giving birth to a child to be honorable soldiers" (Herrera-Sobek 85). Thus, the conceptualization of what soldadera was, did not manifest itself through (just) combat, rather it hinged on the very essence of womanhood. So, by defining such a universal concept, in such narrow terms, the patriarchy is able to convince contemporary women that brave soldaderas are a thing of the past even though all women have the capacity, the potential, and the ability to emulate the soldadera

Mythologizing the soldadera similarly distorts her relevance. Juana Gallo is the name typically assigned to the mythologized soldadera and this name exposes our problematic. Gallo, translates to "cock," though it is often used as "a metaphor for 'fighter,' someone who is brave and aggressive in the face of danger" (Herrera-Sobek 111). By associating such characteristics with masculinity, the name "Juana Gallo" essentializes gender, reducing it to a group of characteristics that are "inherently" masculine (and therefore male) even when applied to non-men. Thus, the term does not provide a conceptual framework whereby femininity, (and therefore women) can be understood as strong, powerful, and/or aggressive without being (hyper) masculinized. As a result, Juana Gallo becomes unnatural and unwomanly; she must cast away her femininity and her womanhood in order to become a soldadera and so, in this sense, she is not truly a woman, rather she is the myth of a (masculine) woman who is endowed with "the superhuman qualities of the male" (Herrera-Sobek) and exists only in popular mythologies or in this case certain corridos.

The third type of corrido that Herrera-Sobek analyzes is that which romanticizes the soldadera, presenting her as an object of male affection, in order to “neutralize the woman by making her a love object and thus presenting her in a less threatening manner” (Herrera-Sobek 104). Unlike the other songs, these corridos “gloss over the guerilleras’ actual involvement in the war and focus on the male soldiers’ romantic liaisons with them” (Herrera-Sobek 109). The soldadera is not taken seriously as a soldier. Instead, she is objectified and offered up to the male gaze; she does not participate directly in the war, rather, she faithfully awaits the return of her (male) lover. Thus, her role is limited to her capacity as the woman behind the Man and so, this type of soldadera cannot be conceived of independently of her (male) lover.

The process of historical production exacerbates the erasure of women from the annals of the Mexican Revolution. Even though there was a consistent and established “tradition of the valiant fighting women” playing major roles in “Latin American revolutionary upheavals” (Herrera-Sobek 86) not much of that was documented, as a result of the relegation of women

working within the context of a patriarchal society. During the Mexican Revolution, men’s feats were transcribed along with their full names. On the other hand, women’s feats are often difficult to document “owing to the omission of their full names from the annals of war and historical archives” (Herrera-Sobek 87). Trouillot’s ideas with regards to the process through which history is produced, might help us understand why this occurs. The most important thing to keep in mind is that history is never neutral -its production is influenced by different power relations. Thus, in the case of women in the Mexican revolution, the work that they do is deemed less important because they are women in a patriarchal society and so that work is not well-documented. It may seem as though women had no part to play in the Mexican Revolution as a result of their assumedly fragile femininity when in fact it is precisely because they are women that patriarchy drives us to these conclusions. The soldadera’s that were “praised” in the corridos, sometimes ended up “living in old age and forgotten” (Herrera-Sobek), underlining the subversive nature of an art form that reinscribes the patriarchal context that it occurs in.

"Individuals start to see themselves reflected in their work and to understand their full stature as human beings through the object created, through the work accomplished."

-Ché Guevara

The Russian Revolution: A Theatre of Estrangement

by Mimi Gilles

In the years 1905 to 1917, Russia was shaken by war and bloodshed. The idea for revolutionary social change was at the forefront of the Russian psyche. One way this manifested itself was through the power of theatre. Politically engaged theatre of the Russian revolution presents a spatial and temporal paradox as practitioners in the late 19th and 20th centuries sought to overturn theatre practices that no longer seemed appropriate for the modern world. In a complicated theatrical and historical landscape, I would argue that an explicit act of political propaganda, such as *The Storming of the Winter Palace* (November 7th, 1920) is a very appropriate subject – the space of history turning into a performance of history.

This mass spectacle was staged to promote and enhance awareness of the revolutionary masses: including ballet dancers, circus performers and witnessed by an audience of around 100,000 people. Directed by Nikolai Evreinov, a Russian director and dramatist, it promotes an aesthetic to merge theatre and everyday life, through rediscovering the theatre through play. Moreover, and like his contemporary Meyerhold, the aesthetics of Russian Symbolism ring clear; according to Anatoly Lunacharsky, who was People's Commissar for Enlightenment: "In order to acquire a sense of self the masses must outwardly manifest themselves, and this is possible only when they become a spectacle themselves." [1] It united workers, soldiers, students and artists and presented an interesting parallel of acting and 'reality', as many had been actual participants of the event in 1917. This aestheticisation, in which the people play themselves, demonstrates theatre's possibility of establishing a new human relation. It is not a seamless translation of life into art, nor an aestheticisation of politics, yet it attempts to bridge the gap between the past and the future – the future that was not available then could be available now, at least as an idea, if only in the theatre.

The event's intimate engagement with history then,

could be seen as an exercise in theatrical estrangement. For Evreinov, theatricality is inherent in humans as is the will to play and his vision of theatre is full of sensuous artifice – puppet like gestures, sharp angles, distance, light. An emphasis is placed on visuals to submerge text in favour of external forces. The external reality of the theatre space, that the actor is required to engage with is also required of the spectator, thus, caught up in an act of witnessing and estrangement; theatrical moments highlight an awareness of the past. Evreinov's use of 'real' people encompasses the passion of the Russian Revolution, to expose those who are against collectivisation and "shake up old patterns of production" [2]. What is at stake for both politics and theatre are the very activities of showing and saying through which some are made visible who would otherwise have no political agency being seen, and others get to speak who would not in 'normal' circumstances count as speaking beings.

**The art ... that
emerged from the
Russian Revolution
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tial like never before.**

The *Storming of The Winter Palace* was depicted too in popular culture, in Sergei Eisenstein's 'October.' Aesthetic qualities that are not dissimilar to Evreinov and Meyerhold are translated onto the screen, full of radical jump cuts and visual metaphor – the spatial and temporal paradox is presented in the image of the falling statue of the Czar – historical transformation all at once becomes a ruin and construction site of the tenure between past and future. Whether explicitly theatrical or not, these depictions provide a context for a certain kind of estrangement - human beings are fated to encounter the strangeness of the human condition. The Russian Revolution highlights the many possibilities of political

theatre: its urgency to give hearing to voices of dissent was also manifested in Agit-Prop brigades. With a focus on dialogue to inspire action rather than visual, their work is in direct contrast to the aesthetics of practitioners like Everinov and Meyerhold - described as aggressive and violent, they would publicly shame those in opposition to the revolution. An air of theatricality however, is still present in Agit-Prop. It has the same immediacy and potential to make the familiar strange as theatrical illusion was broken down. Theatres conventions and processes became its own topic - the use of local material and adaptability of space as troupes travelled the countryside to unite the collective, contributing to the determination of a common goal. Theatre allows us to appreciate and address concepts of freedom, politics and justice differently because the issues come in many forms.

This leads to another possibility of political theatre – the opportunity to extend the range of popular culture. Returning to discuss the role of the actor/spectator as a witness, the 1981 film 'Reds' produced by Paramount pictures demonstrates how varied versions of Russian

history co-exist and clash. Focusing on the participation of John Reed in the Revolution of 1917, the film also includes footage where 32 people bare testimony to the film's text. It complicates the relationship between art and history without attempting to define it perhaps ultimately, because a Hollywood love-story, but more than this, it elevates the status of the 'documentary' and at the same time the strangeness of the human condition as a deeper identity of those playing themselves, performing their own actual engagement in history.

In conclusion, the theme of the masses entering history and history entering the masses was manifest in theatrical works during the revolution and afterwards, as shown in 'The Storming of The Winter Palace' and 'Reds'. This demonstrates theatre's untimeliness whilst at the same time being a factor in estrangement and distancing of attachment. The art and theatre that emerged from the Russian Revolution realised political potential like never before. Theatrical work during time of revolution leads us to question the nature of our engagement with theatre's more untimely and uncomfortable appearances.

"When dictatorship is a fact, revolution becomes a right."

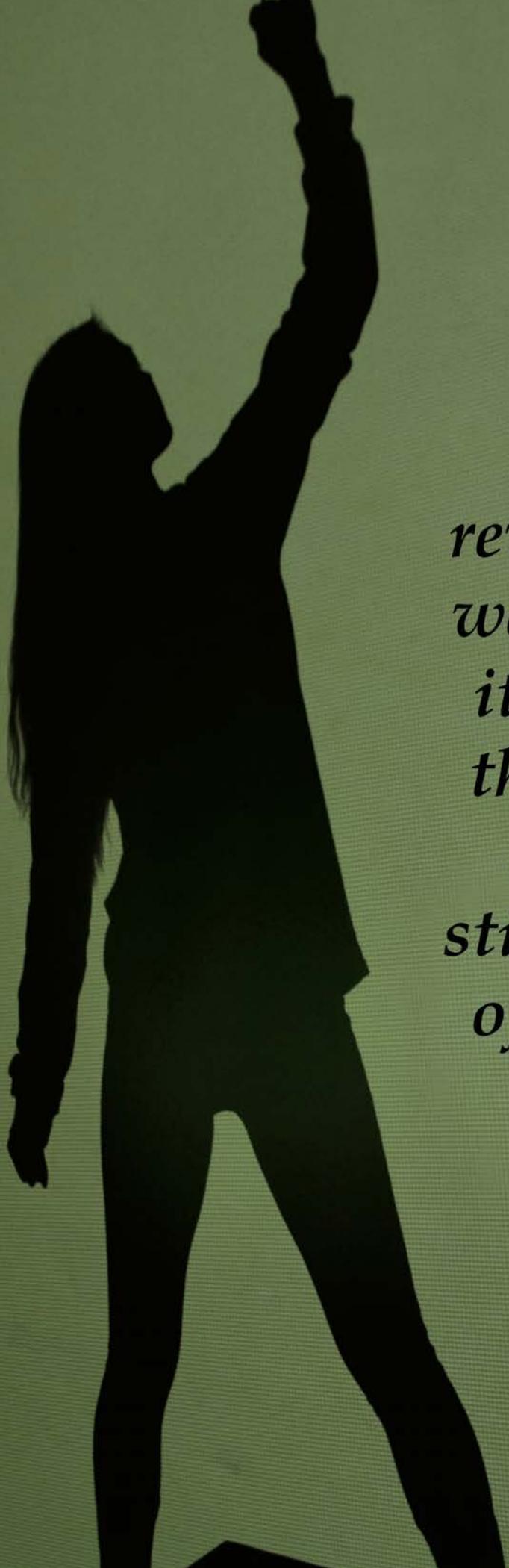
-Victor Hugo

Monaco Narrative--Revised

by James Lewis

11:48:48 AM Adam Mike /unintelligible uncertainty broken
to address physical: resident address okay?
balcony outside collapsed—decided laboratory uncomfortable
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prisons advise non-resistance; popular anti-inflammatory Naproxen
overpowered the riot—th- perturbed priori
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Black/Blue Monte Carlo,

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St. Anthony cleared omfg! Purportedly charges seen
so alright Fermi, embellish initial re-autopsy
uh shoot hurry . . . result 100% accuracy
contort stuff truly? circle firearm holes
gangway assumptions nice—simulate th- morphed
consistent incisions red, detained personality affects
clipping slider chamber: boom ss- solved
Monte Carlo potentials slant; exiting louder duck
a random drawing, approximate sss- car
children, 40, piggyback, tussling, primary gray
brown Yours truly-

A black silhouette of a person standing on a small platform, with their right arm raised high towards the top of the frame. The background is a light, textured green.

*“Why make a
revolution in reality if
we have already made
it in the theater? But
that does not happen
here: the rehearsal
stimulates the practice
of the act in reality.”*

—Augusto Boal

Haitian Revolution: Moving History

by Ivette Martinez

If it had not been for the performance that the Haitians and other communities did in Bois Caiman, I don't think there would have been a revolution. Since the whites had stripped the slaves of their souls; their physical and emotional freedoms were restricted, and without these, which make you human, it would be hard to revolt and stand up against anything and anyone.

Our class had a guest instructor come to our class and enlighten us about few of many Haitian rituals; the Vodun, and Haitian dances. The professor Collette Eloi, from Laney College began the class by introducing us to the Bois Caiman story, she also taught us how to release the tension we had in our hip areas more specifically in our pelvis area. She also told us to loosen up our minds; to be one with nature and our bodies. As she was explaining how we, as society have sexualized the female body, even moving a certain way may cause people to think negatively about dance in general. The images we extract from the media that are now embedded in our minds, have attached a label in the female body that pertains to the sexualization of these images. I cannot imagine how it would have felt to have had my history enslaved and silenced to the whites, but while being a part of the Haitian dance workshop, I felt a different kind of enslavement; I realized how I was a slave to the media and a slave of my own body; I was not able to release myself from it until I closed my eyes and opened my mind and soul and released my body to move and sway to the beating of the drum.

This same feeling aroused many feelings within me; first, I started wondering how people had been slaves and wanted to be set free, where they had been constricted from their loved ones, and where their identity was no longer their own, not only would you not have the right to your own history, body and religion, but your name was not yours to keep either, because the slave owners would most likely change anything and everything that made you human. By silencing their spirits they

silenced their power and the creation of their history. When I was performing this Haitian dance ritual, I too, detached myself from my American name and gave in to mother earth who was connected to me through the soles of my feet, and although I didn't feel her directly under my feet, I felt her through my womb, and felt alive. Like a woman that had been inside me, full of life, whose greatest privilege was to someday give life. That alone was empowering to me.

On August 14, 1949, they united their voices and energy

I envisioned the enslaved Haitians performing these rituals and dances with all of their being, and pulling energy through their ancestors and from the ground. The dances and rituals that were being taught, was a way to gain their spirit back, and with it came great power--the sort of power that frightened whites because they knew that once the "slaves" had access to their inner spirit, and had self knowledge, there would be no stopping them from revolting. In Michel-Rolph Trouillot's words in "Silencing the Past: Power and the production of History," Trouillot talks about how "history is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent... the ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots." What this quote is communicating to me, is that no power is too much to succeed, nor is it invisible, and the exposing of one's roots is the power and the strength required to move forward and succeed. The enslaved Haitians gathered to perform their spiritual dance with the rest of their brothers and sisters that were from around the villages that were also slaves to the whites, and were ready to fight for their freedom. On August 14, 1949, they united their voices and energy. Boukman led the people in Bois Caiman, they performed their dances and rituals that

were sacred to them, which helped them gather the strength they needed for their revolution.

The Haitian ritual dances, throughout the years have shifted tremendously, and they have done so because people outside of this tradition that are not open minded, might see this traditional dance, through another lense, and claim that the Haitians won the revolution because of the pact the people made with the devil in order to be set free. For some, this might sound silly to the ear, or in fact, might be hard to comprehend even, but for others that are fanatics of religion, that do not see how this sort of idea has affected the people of Haiti because it demonizes their culture and religion to the last bit of their existence.

If we see the Haitian dance rituals in a different context, perhaps in a more theatrical performative context, that could possibly be utilized in a performance on a stage, in a play or in a dance piece, all spaces where the dance would be performed will essentially create

a different feel to the performance. The theatre space would most likely have dialogue and could possibly give a little bit of history to the audience members, which could be very educational to those who are not familiar with the history. On the other hand, if it were performed in a dance piece, the audience might feel connected with the music and the feel of the beating of the drums through the ritual pieces, in some ways that would be like reviving history through music, but perhaps would be taken as just any dance piece. With that being said, we can see that performance can definitely shape what we know of the Haitian Revolution. In all the performance whether on stage or in the woods in private with fewer people; the audience members as individuals can take with them a little bit of the past that has been silenced and repressed through history and at the same time stored in the movements of the ritual and dance, and every time the drum beats a little bit of history is being released.

“If you’re not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.”

—Malcolm X

The Soldadera Image

by Nils Skudra

In the Mexican Revolution, thousands of women participated in the guerilla forces of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa as frontline soldiers, with many earning notable reputations as field commanders. These “soldaderas” have been commemorated in Mexican popular culture (especially in corridos – folk ballads on the Revolution) for the roles that they played, but the form which this commemoration has taken includes many deviations from historical fact. While a number of corridos elaborate on the leadership roles of soldadera heroines, other corridos convey images of the soldadera as a romanticized or mythic figure. What does this portrayal illustrate about the historical production of gender roles in the Mexican Revolution? It illustrates how this historical production was influenced by gender biases and the consolidation of power by male leaders, essentially formulating a narrative which legitimized male leadership of Mexico and the return of women to traditional roles in the post-revolutionary period.

In her book *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis*, María Herrera-Sobek explores the portrayal of the soldadera in the corridos and the ways in which they articulate gendered constructions. She points out that these representations, in conjunction with historical scholarship on the Mexican Revolution, have been characterized by three categories: the depiction of the soldadera “in her true historical dimension” as a significant soldier or leader, the romanticized soldadera, and the “mythic archetypal figure.”[1] While the first category commemorates the historical roles that soldaderas played in the Revolution, Herrera-Sobek points out that it is nonetheless characterized by gender constructions. For example, while male figures in the corridos are typically referred to by both names, the soldaderas are featured primarily as anonymous entities, referred to either by their first names or as “Juanas,” “galletas,” or “mujeres.”[2] Although some corridos refer to soldadera leaders by both names, this discrepancy is illustrative of women’s reduction to secondary roles in the Revolution since it

places them in a background category while placing male leaders at the forefront, conveying an impression that soldadera leaders were a notable exception rather than a rule.

a representation that nonetheless served to reinforce the legitimacy of patriarchal dominance in Mexico...

Another significant aspect of the historical category of corridos is that while some celebrate the heroic feats of specific soldadera leaders, these corridos have a tendency to articulate traditional perceptions of gender roles in terms of the soldaderas’ behavior and their identities. This is reflected in the ballad “De Agripina” which commemorates the actions of Doña Agripina, a soldadera who led an Agrarista army to victory during the Cristero Rebellion. The lyrics initially laud the courageous leadership of Doña Agripina and how a golden-winged dove helped to provide weapons for her forces during the battle, a juxtaposition which, the author notes, parallels the patriarchal conception of women’s involvement in war.[3] However, the corrido’s transition to portraying Doña Agripina as a “damsel in distress” (through her expression of fear and doubt regarding the arrival of reinforcements) marks a poignant contrast between the portrayals of soldaderas and male heroes: courage and agency are esteemed characteristics which are lauded in both categories, but the display of fear is not normally allowed in lyrics about male leaders since it is considered taboo.[4] Assigning this trait to female protagonists or referring to them as wives of male revolutionaries (reflected in “La Toma de Papantla”) therefore contributes to the reduction of soldaderas while strengthening the image of male revolutionary leaders as heroic figures.

The second category of soldadera corridos, which

emphasizes the role of the soldadera as a romanticized figure, had its roots in the patriarchal attitudes of Mexican society which “could not readily accept the fighting woman as reality was presenting her.”[5] However, since corrido songwriters could not ignore the historical reality of soldaderas, they were faced with the alternatives of romanticizing or mythologizing the soldadera. In opting to cast women soldiers as romanticized love objects, the corridistas essentially served the purpose of neutralizing soldaderas “and thus presenting [them] in a less threatening manner.”[6] This romanticized image is exemplified by the corrido “La Adelita” which proclaims a male soldier’s love for his sweetheart and implores her not to forget him as the soldier marches off to the battlefield.[7] This corrido illustrates the neutralization of soldaderas since it emphasizes the man’s role as a soldier and the woman’s role as his lover who remains behind to wait for him.[8] In a broader context, the romanticization of the soldadera fits into the connection between historical truth-making and political legitimacy since it served the interest of strengthening the position of male leaders, but it also served this purpose by conceding to the people’s imagination of the female protagonist as a soldadera without directly indicating that identity, thus denying her “the proper honor and respect she deserves.”[9]

The final category of soldadera corridos emphasized the soldadera’s identity as a mythic archetypal icon. In her elaboration on the formulation of this image, Herrera-Sobek notes that the mythic soldadera corrido based its narrative “on the deification and glorification of the soldadera as legend” rather than actual historic events in which soldaderas had participated.[10] Citing the corrido “Juana Gallo,” she points out that the protagonist’s name had its origin in association with the male soldier, with the implication that she joined the Revolution out of love for her male companion rather than commitment to the Revolution’s ideals.[11] Although the mythic genre provides the soldadera with a sense of empowerment through its attribution of superhuman

qualities and leadership roles, this category of corridos nonetheless plays a role in diminishing the historic agency of soldaderas since it assigns the role of lover or daughter (in the case of the corrido “La Chamuscada”) to the female protagonist whose motivation for fighting is attributed to love for her mate or father instead of ideological commitment. Through this technique, the mythic genre also contributes to reinforcing the legitimacy of Mexico’s male leadership while appealing to audiences’ imagination of the soldadera.

In summation, the construction of the soldadera image in Mexican scholarship and popular culture profoundly demonstrates the role that gendered constructions played in crafting the historical narrative of the Mexican Revolution. The various portrayals of the soldadera as a historical participant, a romanticized object and a mythologized figure reflected the gender biases of the songwriters who wished to present the soldadera in a way that appealed to audiences’ comfort level and imagination. Consequently, while these corridos projected the image of a heroic and empowered woman, it was a representation that nonetheless served to reinforce the legitimacy of patriarchal dominance in Mexico during the post-revolutionary period. Indeed, this could be said to coincide with the purpose of legitimizing the power of Mexican elites as the heads of government. Since Mexico’s government during the postwar years closely resembled a Porfiriato dictatorship in which corruption flourished, invoking images of heroic male revolutionaries while casting soldaderas in a significant but secondary role would have suited the elite’s purposes of maintaining power while claiming to represent the Revolution.[12] While Mexican government continued to be exercised in the hands of male leaders during the 1930s, the reforms passed by Lazaro Cardenas would have been seen as truly honoring the Mexican Revolution’s legacy and the goals of social change which the soldaderas fought to achieve.[13]

Revolutionary Russia: Power in Participation

by Ariana Shakibnia

Russian workers were exasperated from the continuous oppression under the rule of the Czar. For decades, exploitation was the reality of many people's lives, and hopes for a better future were rarely shared. However, as what happens at the start of most revolutions, the actions of a few inspired many to break the bonds of apathy and demand change. The Bolshevik Revolution served as a stage for Russians to express their dissatisfaction with their ruler, and to transition to the new ways of the world, culturally and industrially. As evidenced through Meyerhold's biomechanical performance and the production of the movie *Reds*, Russian society underwent immense political, social, and cultural changes from the aristocratic rule of the Czar to the supposedly equitable organizational system in the Soviet Union.

every person who joined
the revolution was another
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amassing flames of this
fierce movement

As news of the impending revolution spread, members of the Russian working class began rallying together, meeting in larger and larger spaces for assemblies and forums. These meetings intended to provide a space for the sharing of ideas, ways in which to move the revolution forward, and to promote a shared identity for these working class Russians, the Bolsheviks. Having been at the bottom tier of Russia's very strict class system for so long, these workers were ready for change, they were ready to have their wants and needs represented on a large scale. Every meeting, every speech, every person who joined the revolution was another spark igniting the amassing flames of this fierce movement driven almost exclusively by working class folks.

Similarly to the French and Haitian revolutions, modes of performance played fundamental roles in

creating a thriving political crusade to overthrow the Czar and instate leaders with the common people's needs as their number one priority. Each rally that was held included theatrical aspects, be it during emphatic call and response speeches or through the artwork advertising the rallies or the revolution's initiatives. With the heart of the revolution beating ceaselessly with the growing masses of Bolsheviks in favor of equal representation, it made sense that the theatre of the time reflected this transition from individual benefits to group benefits.

Vsevolod Meyerhold pioneered a system of acting, a new art form called "biomechanics," which connected machine and man, thereby combining work and politics and the individual. With the falling of the Czar came a new era of industrialization. Russia was finally catching up with other nations and growing as a hub for industry, which subsequently required an increase in workers. This biomechanical approach to theatre favored simple set design and staging in order to draw the focus to the extremely sharp, technical movements made by the actors. Biomechanics sought to transcend the psychological aspect of theatre and instead encourage physiological movement to convey thoughts and emotion. Meyerhold's creation of "a skilled worker in action," enabled the working class to see themselves on stage, and create narratives for themselves and for the revolution (Meyerhold). These performances exposed people to this new type of common language he aimed to create, a language understood by common people. This theatre was revolutionary in itself, as it conflicted with most of the previous conceptions of theatrical arts, but it also served as a mechanism for revolutionary actions outside the theatre.

Looking specifically at the aesthetics of this biomechanical style of performing, we can see how Meyerhold aimed to emulate industry work. In the short film we watched in class, Charlie Chaplin is stationed at one part of a conveyor belt and quickly becomes overwhelmed

by the speed of the machine; soon he is unable to complete his tasks quickly enough and the conveyor belt must stop ("Factory Work"). This scene is one example of what industrialization could do to society, as it illustrates man becoming overtaken by the machine. Contrastingly, Meyerhold's biomechanics essentially make man and the machine one entity, encouraging attention to detail and sharp movements. Beyond the individual actor's role in performing this biomechanical story, Meyerhold sought to emulate factory life / industrial aesthetics via other theatrical features as well. Often, Meyerhold's performances had dramatic lighting and set pieces arranged so as to cast dark shadows across the stage. Additionally, intense music was played so as to create "organized chaos" – something commonplace in factories (Meyerhold). These additions to the theatrical experiences promoted the new aesthetic in Russia during the revolution and continuing post revolution – an aesthetic aiming to appeal to the working class and to deviate from the tiered, hierarchical system previously plaguing Russian society.

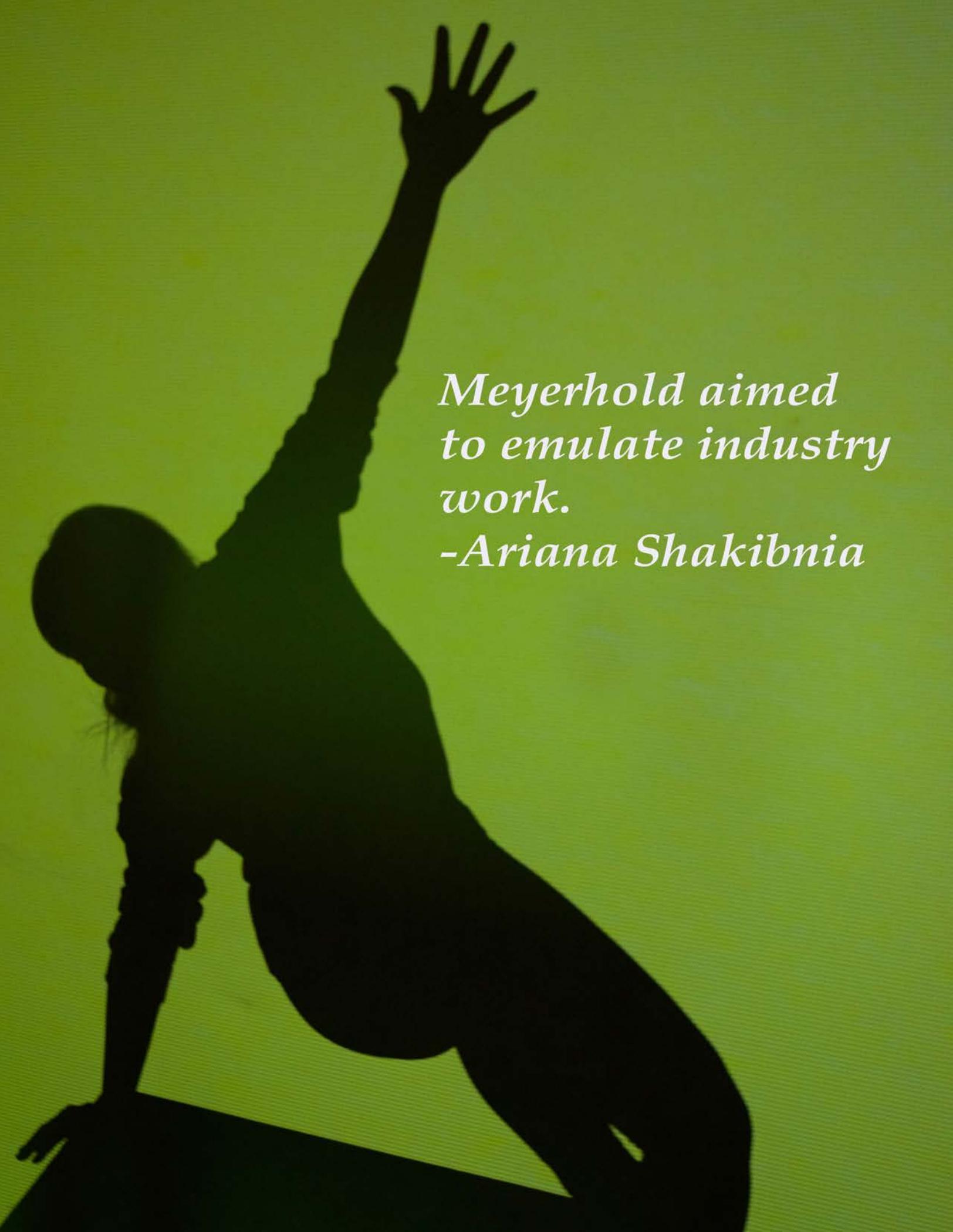
The directors of the movie *Reds* similarly portrayed people involved in the Russian revolution as working class folks desiring a government accurately representing them. In the film, when the American John Reed visited Moscow and attended a revolutionary forum, he was encouraged to stand up in front of the massive crowd

and make a speech. He was hesitant, and stated that he had no credentials and thus should not be allowed to be heard. A Russian replied stating, "you do not need credentials, everyone may speak" (Reds). This was a particularly moving scene, as earlier in the movie Reed had been denied permission to speak at a meeting of the American Socialist Party as he was told he had no adequate credentials. Depicting the contrast between forums illustrated the new Russian revolutionary ideals, that everyone should have a seat at the table. The American Socialist Party's denying Reed permission to speak indicated a hierarchy remaining despite that being somewhat against their own ideals. Here, Russia's new aesthetic is clear – speak with a common language, the language of revolution; appeal to the senses of the common man so as to ensure everyone has equal access to information and decision-making.

Although we see how the events in the Soviet Union transpired, this revolution remains integral to studying the affects industrialization had on theatre and politics in Russia, as well as its role in the subsequent World Wars. Theatre and performance can serve as incredible vehicles for change, inspiring individuals to stand up and join the revolutionary crowds. Each participant becomes a cog in the revolutionary machine, playing a part in inciting change.

"The young always inherit the
revolution "

-Huey P. Newton

A black silhouette of a person in a dynamic, athletic pose, possibly a dancer or gymnast, set against a solid green background. The person is leaning forward with one arm extended upwards and the other resting on a surface below. The lighting creates a strong contrast between the dark silhouette and the bright green background.

*Meyerhold aimed
to emulate industry
work.*

-Ariana Shakibnia

The Importance of the Spoken and Written Word Through Theater in Revolution

by Andrea Meagher

To start a revolution, organization and passion must be present. In other words, there must be a method to the madness that is revolution. There needs to be a fire going in the hearts of the people, and a means of fueling that fire. In the Russian Revolution, the fire in the red hearts of the industrial workers came from the corrupt social class system and the fuel for the fire came from the theater. Theater, both written and performed, demonstrated to the Russian public the overwhelming need for an end to classism. The "Red" Bolsheviks used propaganda posters, articles, speeches, and agitprop theater to gain a following in the revolution against the "Whites" who remained loyal to the Czar and the old hierarchical system.

Trotsky's Communist Policy Towards Art describes how art cannot be controlled by one party...

The working class was too busy being overworked by the Whites to have time to create art or theater for the revolution. Instead, revolutionary leaders, people ranked above the working class but who saw the corruption within the hierarchal system and sided with the lower class, were the artists. They created propaganda posters that often idolized a single person with their hand raised up showing a leader for everyone to get behind. Sometimes this leader was a worker, sometimes it was Lenin, serving as a martyr to the revolution, or sometimes an unknown character. The purpose was to have the image of someone who they were supporting. The color red was very prominent in these posters, symbolizing the bloodshed of the working class as they fight for freedom and an end to classism. The aesthetics were also very geometric and sometimes industrial. As seen in Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, examples of

paintings, posters, even costume design and sets. The bright reds and sharp lines were a new form of Russian art that developed largely because of Meyerhold and his new form of theater called biomechanics. The theater was discreetly political yet humorous. The costumes looked "nothing so much as convict's uniforms." And the sets were composed of "an assortment of white-painted acting instruments . . . each one conceal[ing] a trap" (186). The actors were acting as workers who were imprisoned and controlled by the white people -- a direct analogy to the white instruments of trickery. This demoralized the workers and made them into a spectacle for the world to see, emphasizing the strict classism in place. This geometric interpretation of theater was carried into the art and propaganda posters as a means of reminding the workers of their virtual imprisonment under the Whites and prompting them to fight for their liberty and equality. Trotsky's Communist Policy Towards Art describes how art cannot be controlled by one party, but rather is a collection of all views of the time. Foreign artists outside of the revolution contributed greatly to this new style of art and often agreed with more left-sided Marxist views. The Reds produced more art in the form of propaganda because they had to encourage the workers to get involved, whereas the rich bourgeois inherited a following because they wanted to keep their high profits from underpaid and overworked minority workers, and they did not fear the repercussions of fighting since they had the Old Regime governors on their side.

Another innovative forum for theater to be reflected was in public speeches and agitprop theater. Amateurs spoke their opinions with young energetic voices, getting the audience involved in the denunciation of authorities, rallying for the cause. Sometimes these speakers became leaders like Goldman and Trotsky. This form of theater was called agitprop, and was a stark contrast to the pre-revolutionary TRAM staged theater which did not enable them to promote current issues.

Although Lenin was not as animated as Goldman and Trotsky, his speeches and leadership were vital to the revolution. Lenin delivered a speech in Moscow on November 3rd 1920 explaining how “the transition from bourgeois society to the policy of the proletariat is a very difficult one, all the more so for the bourgeoisie incessantly slandering [Russia] through its entire apparatus of propaganda and agitation” (352). These types of speeches even inspired some writers like Jack Reed to become revolutionary speakers. It is important to note that any magazines and newspapers were censored by the Whites and a large portion of the population was illiterate, so speaking through agitprop theater was a much more effective way to spread revolutionary ideas. Furthermore, newspapers were read aloud to the community in a theatrical manner to convey information such as legal and judicial decisions to the public. A sign that helped many of the Russians recognize the true corruption of the Czar was the Sacco and Vanzetti trial. This case demonstrated the injustice in the court system, proving the national issues with security and individual freedoms. These kind of irrational cases showed how much the people of the IWW were risking by revolting against the government, further emphasizing the need for propaganda and theatrical methods to get more people to join together in the union. It is amazing how dedicated the Reds were to their cause. As demonstrated in the Film *Reds*, Jack Reed chose to “lead the Revolutionary train” and risk his relationship with his wife at home and his own safety. It was the theater, speeches, writings, and propaganda that held the revolution together and encouraged the people to keep fighting for a fair chance at success.

The revolution in Russia promoted other countries, particularly its allies like America, to pick up on the trends. The Russian Czar was chosen for the people, but Americans were able to vote on their president, and they were still forced unwillingly to go to war. Emma Goldman emphasized this antithesis in her *Speech Against Conscription and War* on June 14, 1917 declaring, “one

of [President Wilson’s] political advertisements bill posters [was] posted all over the city with the picture of a working woman and her children saying, “He has kept us out of war.”(2). These catchphrases were mocking the governmental system in America, specifically Wilson’s betrayal to his word. These types of posters were adopted by the American workers who saw the progression of the Russian Revolution and started using similar propaganda tactics to gain power in their own country to promote the anti-war viewpoint. The Russians revolted strongly against the Czar and the social system whereas the Americans revolted, but did not need to overthrow the government because they already had more power in the system. Even today, locally in Berkeley, we can see this demonstrated as students show greater resentment towards the appointed regents of the university than towards the elected Governor Brown. Songs were also adopted from America to spread revolutionary thought. For example *Yankee Doodle* was first created in America in the 1700s, but was sung in Russia during the revolution (as seen in *Reds*), showing America’s influence on the Russian Revolution.

A common misconception is that all the Russians fighting against the Czar were the Reds. In actuality, the left side ranged from extremists to the middle-grounded, more of a pink range. The communists, anarchists, and socialists were all radicals and considered Reds because they were representing the lower working-class. The pink ideals promote a society with a central government that is not repressive, allows freedom without classism or segregation, and has people in power whom reflect the desires of the people. America was on its way to this pink society and Russia wanted to follow, but many people adopted Marxist ideals, which were too red to be possible in society because of the natural human desire for power and wealth. The impact theater has on history by initiating revolutions is not well recognized in modern society, but it is hugely expansive and integral in achieving a successful revolution.

*Who lives, who dies...
who tells
your story?*



a quote from Hamilton: The Musical

Letter To The Author

by Danielle Fellguth

Dear Susan Maslan:

I am writing to inform you that I just read an article written by Marie Huet that seems to disagree with your point that, during the French Revolution, “revolutionary theater and revolutionary politics did not transform themselves into one another” (Maslan, 1). The discrepancy between your and Huet’s argument leads us to an important discovery: if one is going to state that theater is a vehicle for freedom and open communication—as you and Huet both seem to do in different ways—one also needs to be aware of what is influencing that freedom and communication. That influence is ultimately going to define the type of freedom achieved.. Is that freedom fueled by a desire to be heard and express opinions? Is it a literal overturning of an oppressive structure? Is it a combination of both?

Specifically, Huet bluntly disagrees with your point that “revolutionary politics [cannot] be read as a theatrical text or performance” (Huet, 1). I understand your argument that revolutionary theater and politics need to be separate because having theatricality involved in politics encourages politicians to lie to and manipulate their constituents (4). This deception, as you argue, would indeed be counterproductive to the goal of transparency and open communication that revolutionaries fought for (7). I can also see why you state that combining revolutionary theater and politics takes away a distinct theatrical space that revolutionaries and the public use to define, discuss, and express their political ideas in a manner that may not have been acceptable in the political sphere. In other words, taking away that space undermines the idea that the public engaging with the theater helps create the “reflexive, reciprocal process” that defines a new culture being formed (2). Huet disagrees with both of these points. She begins her article by describing how the trial and condemnation of Louis XVI was, in itself, “a theatrical manifestation” (15). Another one of the ideas that Huet situates is the

idea that being an actor and a spectator at a trial such as this is essentially the same—meaning that roles are fluid—which allows anyone to have a voice (34). Huet fuses both of these ideas by stating that the trial and its outcome create a theatrical text, in which multiple voices are present and heard, that eventually gets turned into a law (7). By taking part in Louis XVI’s trial, participants are not only communicating, but also gaining a freedom because they are defining their society through law.

democracy, in turn, helps citizens become revolutionaries...

While you state that blurring the line between revolutionary theater and politics decreases transparency in the political system (Maslan, 2), Huet argues that making them one of the same actually encourages transparency because having actors and spectators present “protects the accused” from enduring unfair proceedings (Huet, 7). Ultimately, Huet values the idea of freedom through communication; however, unlike you, she believes that that freedom is manifested through the existence of and participation in politics. I am not sure if you are familiar with it, but she has even created the term “network of communication” to describe the ways in which “the social nature of the theater” and its text—especially when combined with major societal influences such as theater—can have an end result larger than solely communication within the theater (22). What fuels one’s desire for freedom and defines what freedom is, speaks exactly to how society should be structured. You believe that people should be involved in politics in a very reactionary way. Your belief leads me to believe that a citizen’s unmediated reactions to political culture and events help shape a democratic culture that is truly in the name of the people. Additionally, in order to play a significant role in politics, citizens need something to react to, whether that be the degree to which representation

is needed, a piece of political theater, or the National Assembly. This structures society in such a way that people can manipulate society through their communication and participation in a system in which political events, though influenced by opinions, are separate from the public. Huet thinks that, instead of reacting to politics in order to mold and influence society, citizens create their society through their own active communication and participation in a theater piece that creates a political event. This forms a society in which the political culture and structure do not necessarily already exist but is created by the people. Looking at the intersection of revolutionary theater and politics through a lens of your arguments versus Huet's then determines what type of freedom one enjoys. With your viewpoint, it is the freedom to express one's opinions and have these opinions be regarded as influential. However, in Huet's view the freedom that is enjoyed is the freedom to not only influence law but to create it.

Your and Huet's opinions differ greatly in some respects, but I would like to point you to a statement that Hannah Arendt makes. She believes that a productive and content society can only be created if the people actively work to generate an air of freedom that

inspires people to participate in politics and, in turn, the revolution. The end result of this is that people can live in a society that they approve of (Arendt, 43). It can be argued that whether one believes that revolutionary politics and theater are integrated or separate, both beliefs ultimately encourage political participation. Because citizens have the freedom and opportunity to participate in politics, they are indeed generating an air of freedom that inspires more political participation. Therefore, they are creating a society that they are content with and can be productive in. I urge you not to take too much issue with Marie Huet's arguments because, while theater may play a varying role in each of your arguments, her points, as well as yours, frame theater as a vehicle for communication which leads to political participation and democracy. That democracy, in turn, helps citizens become revolutionaries that fight for a society they can believe in. It is notable that you both recognize the cultural impact that theater does have on society and politics and neither of you agree with the idea that the theater inherently influences the status quo. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Danielle Fellguth

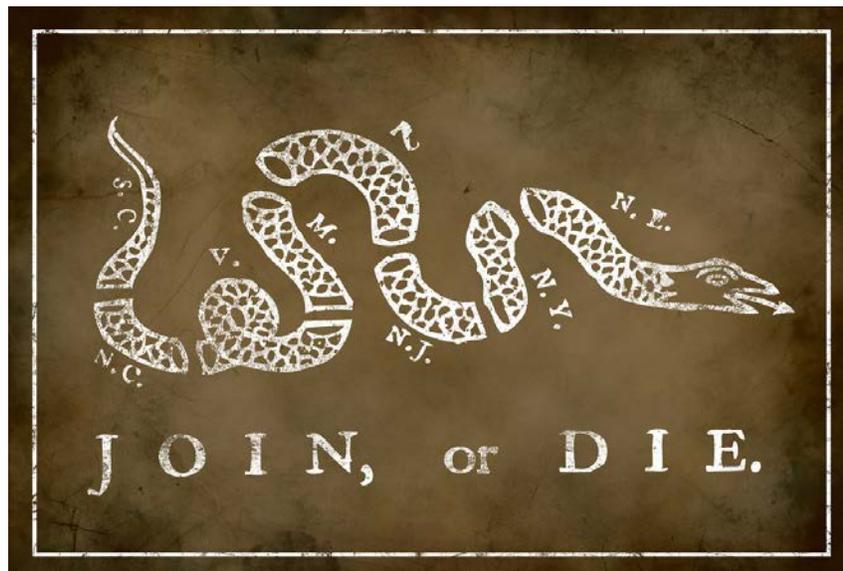


Image by LibertyManiacs



Part III Aesthetic

“For us, it was
not always clear
where life
ended

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved dress with a lace-up bodice, stands with her right arm extended to the left, holding the hand of another person whose hand is visible on the far left edge of the frame. The background is split vertically: the left side is a light green color, and the right side is a vibrant red color. The woman is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking slightly to the left.

Reinforcement

and the
performances
began.”

-Mikhail Sokolovskii

Aesthetic Reinforcement Introduction

by Anika J Kenion

In the last section we focused on ways that historical narratives are created to effect change. We also looked at how narratives can obscure some stories while they highlight others. It is this double work of the story that makes it crucial to pull back the layers of what makes a story to examine a process of consolidation and reinforcement. We noticed how these stories are preserved and often times altered over generations.

The answer lies in the production and reproduction of these stories. As stated by Michel-Rolph Trouillot in his book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, history is a performance of power and a reinforcement of those who have the means to control it. This concept is spread across all of history: revolutions, wars, explorations, accounts of daily life. Regarding revolutions, this idea of stories being silenced and controlled by those in power is prevalent in each of the cases this class studied this semester. Haiti, France, Russia, Mexico, and Cuba. Each movement and revolution well illustrates the tremendous effects of aesthetics on firstly, the creation of the narrative, but even more so, on the reproduction and passing on of the narrative. The French revolution has been diluted into musicals of “empty chairs” that portray only tiny glimpses of the story. The Bois Caiman dance ceremony

of the Haitian revolution --an event that inspired courage and communal uprising against the dehumanizing forces of slavery—has yet to be fully recognized as a liberating act since popular media and pentacostalism continue to discredit the practice of vodun (see McAlister 2012). The soldaderas of the Mexican revolution have been shrined in paintings and corridos into mystical goddesses of the war somewhere between the virgin and the vamp.

Ché Guevara in many ways remains a man of resilience and sharp militancy, willing to shed blood, yet drifts into beatnik tourism as his image sells on wallets and t-shirts. The examples are endless, and the untold stories are innumerable. Art, music, shows, stories all have crucial roles in revolution to create history, but more importantly, to reproduce the history for the coming generations. It is therefore absolutely essential to address the importance of aesthetic reinforcement in order for us, as the next generation, to ensure voices aren't silenced and the retelling and reproduction of history is not forever in the hands of those simply with the power and resources to buy their way to posterity. Without art, revolution and the retelling of history is just simply not possible.

“The Revolution introduced me to art, and in turn, art introduced me to the revolution!”

—Albert Einstein

October's Revolutionary Stage

by Sam Peurach

Who has the power to change society? Whose ideas are valued? Who in society are given more importance than others? Each of these questions was aggressively put to the test in the fall of 1917. Almost 100 years ago in October of 1917, the Bolsheviks and the people that didn't matter in the eyes of society, got organized and fought for their new place, in a new society. The fall of 1917 was a harsh bitter chill of reality for the upper wealthy class of Russia. The society of pre-revolutionary Russia had certain credentials of the old society and new "amateurs" were being put to the test of governing the new country.

Simultaneously, the theatre of the new society was changing and experimenting in new forms, mirroring the change in ideas and values. Through the use of new aesthetics, theatre groups like the TRAM theatre clubs and later, shock workers were able to use the values of the Socialist movement to explore new heights in artist representation, aimed at educating the masses to be on the side of the new state. It was the artistic and political ideas of the amateurs, students and un-credentialed that brought about the most change in Revolutionary Russia.

Prior to the Russian Revolution, the ideas of a changing society were being explored. As seen in the *Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov in 1904, times were changing and a new dawn was on the horizon. The shift in society of the educated students, like the character Pyotr Sergeevich, were increasingly unsettled with the way society was being handled. He embodies the values of an early Bolshevik and young revolutionary in his denouncements of institutions that are keeping people back from freedom and even the institution of love.

He also mentions how the Intelligentsia was not capable of change and weren't doing anything but trying to find ways to escape. With the First World War in full swing and the rise of the technology industry, the gap between the classes was increasing. The lines in society started to be seen clearer on who or what was the cause

of the inequality happening in Russia.

Capitalism became the enemy that the Revolution was fighting against. An economic institution that through the writings of Karl Marx in *Das Kapital* and other sociologists at the time of the mid 19th century, was the back-bone of support and the fuel that oiled the Revolutionary machine.

The film *Reds* (1983) is a great view into the spirit of the age. The film does a great job of representing the work of the leaders of certain parts of the revolution. Ultimately, the film is a love story between Jake Reed and Louise Bryant, and the film does a great job in romanticizing the revolution. In the frame of the revolution the structure of the film and story are counter to the aesthetics of the time because it is several decades removed and done from an American point of view. The ideas of of the revolution were captured in the speeches given in the union organization meetings of the working class. These ideas were juxtaposed with the hindsight and comparison of the American society and Russian Society at the time.

Whose lives matter and whose lives are being used for those who matter?

The ideas of credentials are raised in the film as to who has the right to speak up in the political arenas. In America, Jack Reed is unable to engage in the political process during the meetings of his own political party because he does not have the credentials to speak. As said in the film, "This floor is reserved to delegates!" Compared with political meetings of the same political party in Russia. These Russian meetings are similar to the French Political Theaters where the audience was able to participate. The meeting in this case was attended by the people in the trenches of the revolution; the workers. When he goes up on stage he is accompanied by a

translator and after his inspiring translated speech the audience cheers and sing. This open floor, or stage policy gave Jack the ability as an American in Russia to speak freely to those who needed to hear a revolutionary speech. This shows that even though he is an American and has the right of freedom of speech in his own country, it isn't until he is in Russia that he truly feels free.

"The ground has been cleared and on the ground the younger communist generation must build a communist society." [Lenin 10/2/1920] The stage has been cleared, the props have been struck and now it is time to build a new set for the newest production on the world's stage. But like theater, the new society needs dedicated individuals to work together to create and put into motion their creation. These individuals needed to devote their life to the cause. In order to get these messages across to the uneducated masses, to care for the greater collective instead of the individual, the new government supported Agit-prop groups to spread the ideas of Communism. In a speech delivered by Lenin on November 3rd 1920 he states, "We must re-educate the masses; they can be re-educated only by agitation and propaganda." This type of re-education was being done on different platforms, but the most influential and innovating forms were live performances. Like our group project in class to recreate a type of Agit-prop performance, the audience has an opportunity to get involved unlike other art forms. The importance of these theater performances was directly influential to the other forms of propaganda.

Leon Trotsky was very critical of theater he believed that it was doing no good to restage old plays that had similar themes to what was going on in his current world. He believed that, "In general the place of art is in the rear of the historic advance." [Trotsky Revolutionary and Socialist Art] What he was describing is that art, in the understanding of the old society, cannot keep up with the changing ideas of the present. As history is happening in the years after the revolution, the theater and the structure of theater doesn't help the revolution. The times called for new forms to reflect new ideas.

Though Trotsky wasn't the biggest fan of the theatre

but he saw the usefulness of its platform and easy is was for the audience to get the messages. In a description he gives in chapter eight of his book *Revolutionary and Socialist Art*, he describes how he doesn't go to the theater that often but when he does he was, "Impressed with the fact of eagerly the audience caught every hint at present-day life..." He desperately thought that there needed to be new forms to keep up with current issues. He explains,

"A new class, a new life, new vices and new stupidity, demand that they shall be released from silence, and when this will happen we will have a new dramatic art, for it is impossible to reproduce the new stupidity without new methods."

These new methods and forms are seen in the young working-class putting on performances in the small clubs. The TRAM Theater was a new type of theater created by Working-Class Youth and was "bridge between amateur and professional theaters..." (pg125 TRAM: the Vanguard of Amateur Art) The group truly was a Vanguard in every sense of the word.

"TRAM was one of the few theaters in the Soviet Union that was not suffering a crisis of repertoire because it made its own," (pg 138) The success in the lower clubs brought them much success in the new society. They made the shift from the Amateur to the professional but with the rise in success, they left themselves open to ridicule. In this demanding climate of change once they became "professional" the groups were not able to operate the same because of frictions among the factions. The politics on what was right started to break down the group.

"...RAPP(Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) charged that the TRAM movement, inspired by the Leningard organization, was based on faulty and harmful principles." (140) Instead of the theatre able to function how it was in its amateur status, it had to focus on fighting against other groups trying to occupy the same

space. This led to the end of the TRAM theatres in Russia, but the artistic influence was adapted into other forms like film and the live newspapers.

The credentials given to those in the old society were useless to be apart of the development of a new society, but the credentials of the new society started to form quickly after, silencing the collective. The new society was more than just a paradigm shift, but a practical change in the distribution of goods and value of wealth. This was only capable by getting full involvement by the peasants and proletariats.

Who had the credentials? And who doesn't? Whose points are valid and whose aren't? Whose lives matter and whose lives are being used for those who matter? With the power shifted by the masses and the ideas of who is going to be in charge became more of an issue than Communism. It became about whose ideas were better for making society an equal playing stage and not about the stage itself. The ideas on who was capable,

able and most of all qualified to bring change was being contested. What if the women of the revolution were the ones in charge? As seen in the film *Reds* both Emma Goldman and Louise Bryant played vital roles in the revolution but who remembered from those days? Emma Goldman called Patriotism "A Menace to Liberty". Emma Goldman had this to say about Patriotism;

"Indeed, conceit, arrogance, and egotism are the essentials of Patriotism. Let me illustrate. Patriotism assumes that our globe is divided into little specks, each one surrounded by an iron gate."

Like patriotism, the revolution became divided and neither side was willing to listen to one another. The pride and power of control was deeply seeded in the lack of co-optation. Out of curiosity, and ideas for the future revolutions to come, what would the revolution have been like if the paradigms had been changed, to allow women more power in the revolution? Maybe the new revolution will.

"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love."

-Ché Guevara

Feminism Versus Femininity

by Chelsea Hinkson

Protect the women and children! Save the women and children! The women, grouped with the children because women are just as helpless and fragile as children, get on the lifeboats first, while the men stay on the sinking ship and fight for their survival. When it comes to revolutionary battle, it's the same as the sinking ship. But when the women take up arms and do participate in the battle, give them credit where credit is due, but not too much credit! Not enough credit to where there might actually be equality amongst the men and women! Instead, "neutralize the woman by making her a love object and thus presenting her in a less threatening manner or to transform the soldadera into a mythic figure," as Herrera-Sobek so appropriately states (104). Women are depicted with extreme variations of stereotypical "femininity," making them of lesser value and importance than men. Sexism is reinforced in the making of the history of the Mexican Revolution through the corridos of the time and Usigli's *The Impostor*.

"Physical beauty is not the only thing that attracts men to us, Julia." Elena says this to Julia in response to Julia's previous comment that nobody loves her because she isn't pretty. This small exchange happens within the first two pages of the play, the beginning, where the characters are all first established. Usigli does not wait until further into the play to introduce Julia's internal struggle to perhaps suggest she is more complex than mere vanity. Instead, he throws it right out at the beginning, making that the first impression of Julia. She continues to berate her father for being a failure and it isn't until Cesar compliments her body in a most uncharacteristically non-paternal manner that Julia shows any appreciation for Cesar. Julia is only able to show respect to her father after he compliments her physical appearance, displaying not only Julia's vanity, but her need to establish her self-worth from an outside source, most particularly, men. The appreciation turns into affection when Julia discovers, or thinks she discovers, that her father is Cesar Rubio, the famous revolutionary. The

stage directions explicitly direct Julia to run and throw her arms around her father, again displaying her as superficial and frivolously two-dimensional.

In the heteronormative society, loving a woman is often portrayed as a fatal flaw in men.

Elena, the only other female character in the play, is also shown with a similar two-dimensionality as Julia. After Bolton has been convinced that Cesar Rubio is the Cesar Rubio, Elena gently steps in and privately questions Cesar and his motives. Cesar doesn't even respond and instead exits the room, and Elena goes on to follow in Cesar's lie. Cesar doesn't have to say a word to convince Elena to go along with his lie! Elena decides to play along with Cesar's lie, convinced by him simply exiting the stage. The portrayal of the voiceless, opinionless woman is not a new concept and clearly not limited to contemporary American society, as this play was written in 1938 by a Mexican male playwright. Throughout the scene where Guzman and his four companions try to convince Cesar to run in the election, Elena expresses her disagreement and wish that Cesar not participate in several different lines; her opinions go completely unnoticed. In one line, she even threatens to leave Cesar, and this too, goes unnoticed and unacknowledged.

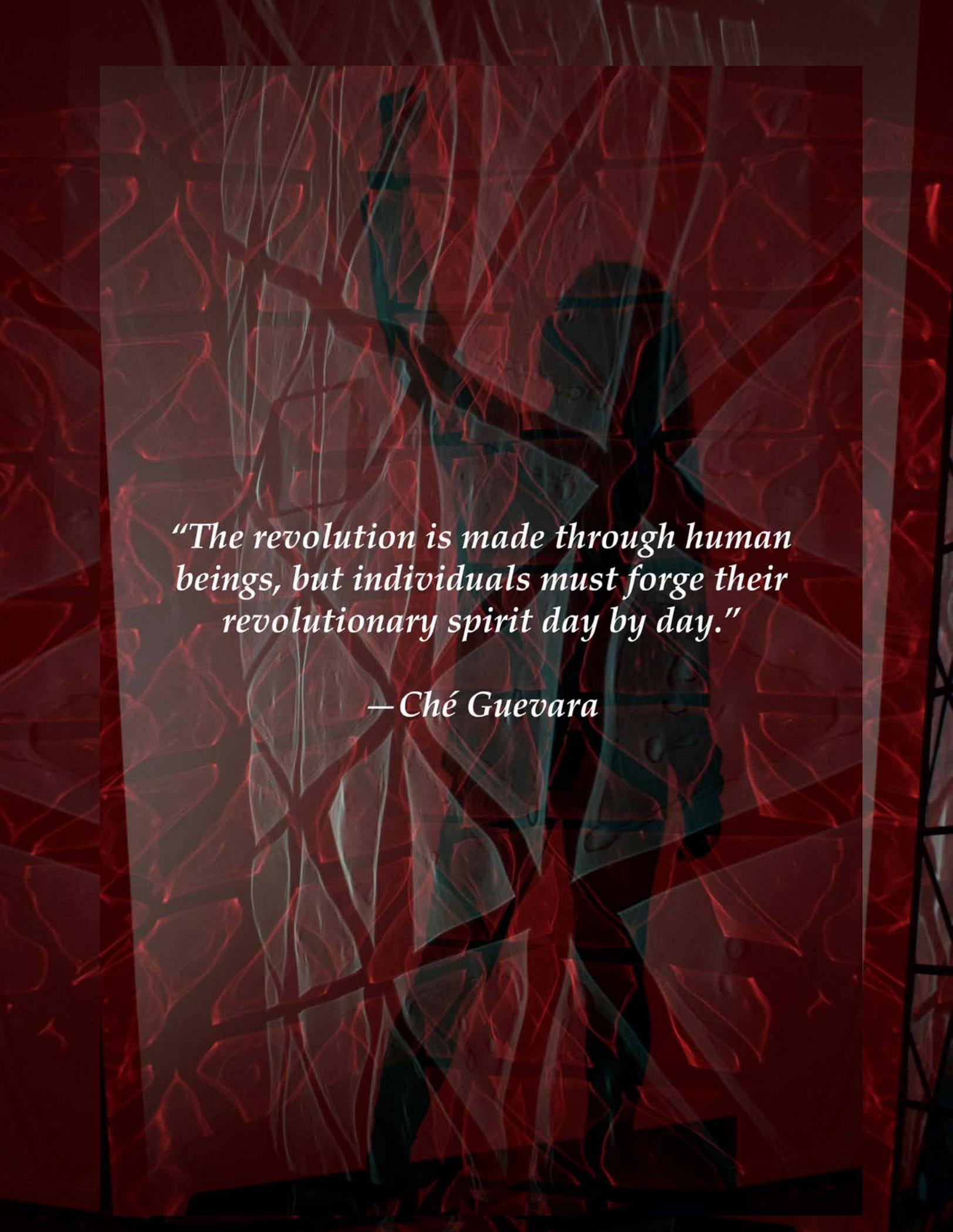
In the heteronormative society, loving a woman is often portrayed as a fatal flaw in men. The love for a woman is a vice, something to be wary of as it makes men weak (and heaven forbid the ever-so-masculine male becomes weak), making them susceptible to many other vices. Beware! To love a woman is to die a slow and painful death! Most likely, not. Demeaning and diminishing, this villainous take on the love for a woman strips away a piece of her humanity, making her less

than human, less than a man. In the corrido, "La Valentina" is said to have been based off a "real-life guerrillera," although you'd never know it from the lyrics. "A passion dominates me." To dominate is to demand control, to have unyielding power. There is a negative connotation under the word "dominate," as there is a non-consensual implication. There is a big difference in saying "dominate" as opposed to, for example, a passion "moves" me, or a passion "touches" me. "They say because of your love, a bad turn will be done to me." The lyrics then go on to talk about alcohol and death. Alcohol is considered a vice and death, well death is the end-all. To group her love in with alcohol and death, again, attaches a negative connotation to her. "I surrender at your feet." Surrender happens in battle. "Let them kill me now." Your love is so devastatingly painful that my only option is to give up and die.

Lack of physical beauty, obsession with physical beauty, voiceless, opinion-less, villainous, and love that leads to fatality are a few of the characteristics attached to the women in *The Impostor* and the corrido "La Valentina"; both of those narratives being influenced by the Mexican Revolution. "I can bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and never, never, never let you forget you're a man." Part of the lyrics to an Enjoli perfume commercial from the 1980's. What it says is that a woman can go to work, just like the man, but mustn't take any credit for it and must instead be gentle with the male ego because she wouldn't want to "emasculate" him in any way, much like the historicizing of the Mexican Revolution. Women did indeed participate and play key roles in the revolution but when it came time to produce that narrative and document it, instead of receiving equality, the women were "neutralized;" they were erased or even demonized.

"I think what motivates people is not great hate, but great love for other people."

—Huey Newton



“The revolution is made through human beings, but individuals must forge their revolutionary spirit day by day.”

— Ché Guevara

Representation & Revolution

by Amanda Te

A revolution could not stand or even exist without the participation of all. I think of it as a system: those “rebelling” participate by joining together and creating a force, those against the rebels participate by opposing the new ideals and creating conflict, and those whom are neutral participate by being the observers of history. Whether we choose to “pick a side” or not we already do in a sense by this process of participation. One can compare my idea with one of the activities from the Boal workshop to gain a better understanding.

At one point of the class, a single person had control of two people, who then had control of two more people, and so on, so that one single person had control of everyone. Any small movement was responded by movements of the line of people; something as harmless as a flick of a finger was paralleled by a head-jerk of the people behind it. This just shows the true power of participation in any activity, and the effect of our actions to cause a ripple effect, one of benefit or also harm. A revolution is made up of and consists of these forms of participation through the inspiration of representation.



The French Revolution on Stage

by Kai Xi (Kasey) Cheng

Theatre in itself is a form of entertainment for the general public. It's a reflection of social ideals and at the same time an important platform for self-expression. Throughout the history of democracy, theatre acts like a vacuum that questions traditional beliefs and fosters revolutionary ideas in order to promote greater degrees of political freedom. Understanding the role of theatre under a social setting from a specific period of time in history requires different levels of interpretation and analysis. The role of theatre during the French Revolution demonstrates the progressive functions of entertainment, social influence, and forces of revolution.

theatre acts like a vacuum that questions traditional beliefs and fosters revolutionary ideas

On the first level of interpretation, theatre by seeking to amuse the audience serves the primary purpose of entertainment. People not only have the desire for external pleasures, but also possess an innate need to seek a kind of self-indulgence and release that a theatre performance can provide. Rousseau argued that, "The stage is, in general, a painting of the human passions...But if the Painter neglected to flatter these passions, the Spectators would soon be repelled...Hence the Author in this respect, only follows public sentiment." (Rousseau, 263) Rousseau expresses the idea that theatre aims to perpetuate human passions and private emotions in order to connect with its audience. Interestingly, almost the same argument is made by Susan Maslan in her book *Revolutionary Acts*. She states, "Dramatic effects, on the contrary, served to move and to touch spectators, and in doing so, to make them into sensitive appreciators of art, to bring them into the work of art, to make them moral beings, and to encourage them to enter into a true community with each other." (Maslan, 4) Fulfilling human desires for entertainment is the most rudimentary level of definition for theatre

performances. Nevertheless, theatre taps into the underlying human emotions, which builds up the sentiments for a revolution, such as the French Revolution. People's desire for emotional discharge and self-liberation from social constraints in daily life causes them to be attracted to the theatre, where they receive reinforcements that normalizes their concerns, fears, beliefs, and happiness in life. Gradually, theatre became a public arena where opinions toward the content of the performance can be openly expressed; hence, slowly shaping the discourse on political democracy. Despite their similarity, Rousseau and Maslan hold very antithetical attitudes towards the role of theatre in society. While Rousseau holds a more pessimistic and critical view on theatre's function in society, Maslan takes on a more positive attitude and approach toward analyzing the role of theatre throughout history.

The second level of interpretation examines social influences between theatre and the people. As a social institution, theatre not only benefits the general public with entertainment, but also takes a role to shape social sentiments of the people. Even though Rousseau makes a strong argument that theatre merely perpetrates the already established social norms, the relationship between theatre and its audience is a reciprocal one of mutual influence. According to Rousseau, "theater purges the passions that one does not have and foment those that one does." (Rousseau, 266) He claims that theatre pacifies the people by feeding them what they prefer to see, hence gradually loses the power to change public opinion. On the other hand, Maslan believes that French Revolution theatre, as a massive social institution during the French Revolution, promoted the development of modern democracy by acting as a platform for common voices to be heard. In one paragraph she states, "for the people in the audience decided what would be performed and what would not; to be successful, representation in the theater required the audience members' explicit, active assent." (Maslan, 24) This description of French theatre during the Revolution very much resembles the formal

definition of a political democracy.

Finally, the third level of interpretation takes it a step further and examines the relationship between theatre performances and political manifestations. vDuring the French Revolution, theatre, as a prominent and popular public institution, inevitably held intricate relations with the politics of the time. Rousseau continues to denounce the role of theatre by giving examples of theatre's negative social impacts. He argues that theatre, while consuming a large amount of governmental budget, remains a predominantly aristocratic activity that excludes the poor population who are also paying taxes to support theatres. Ultimately, this is not only unfair to the poor but also increases social inequality. Taking on the advocate' position, Maslan argues that many politicians were active in the theatre sector not only by being part of the audience, but also in contributing to literary works thereby indirectly influencing the political discourse of the public. Therefore, theatre was not simply a piece to the aristocratic regime, but in reality, an important source where political information is disseminated throughout the public and returned back on stage for the politicians to view as constructive criticism. Another author Marie-Hélène Huet drew an interesting comparison between the political arena and theatrical performance. She claimed that political practices during the Revolution often mirrored projections in theatre. At the same time,

theatre productions are also very much dependent on the political power play at the time. Huet's claim once again brings the intricate and reciprocal relationship between theatre and politics into the spotlight.

Theatre, like many other forms of aesthetic expression, not only constructs the social and political struggles of the time but also memorializes critical moments in history through the different lenses and perspectives. A good example is the film *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, which critically memorializes the French Revolution, from 1815 to the June Rebellion in Paris, through a unique narrative lens following the life story of an ex convict named Jean Valjean. A performance produced at the time of the French Revolution will differ from those later reproductions of the performance in narration and critique. As Rousseau proposes in his Letter to d'Alembert, "the same object offered to the same people at different times taught men at first to despise their own lives and, later, to make sport of the lives of others." (Rousseau, 263) Despite Rousseau's negative tone of speech, he is alluding to the idea of retrospection and how theatre also demonstrates retrospective expression in its unique ways. Therefore, democracy and revolutions will have a different interpretation and additional layers of meanings for people of different times and social contexts.

**“In its organization, the theatre
embodies a revolution.”**

-Marie-Hélène Huet

Representation & Revolution

by Shawna Madrone Jeavons-Leler

Representation is a necessary part of revolution. Representation, be it comic strips, visual art or other, serves to reinforce the values of whomever is presenting them. The role of representation is one of explanation. Revolutionary ideals such as freedom need images and feeling attached to them in order to be understood. The visual poster art of the Russian Revolution strongly reinforced the revolutionary values through image and colour representation. Reinforcement can also be done through writing, however aesthetics can sometimes appeal more to our senses making ideas come across more as an experience to be had, as something you can see and feel and taste. Representation through photography such as used by the literacy students of ALFIN, mentioned in the Poetics of the Oppressed article about Boal's work, served a language to the literacy students when they were unable to express their ideas and feelings using the limitations of the Spanish language, so they turned to the image based language of photography which was able to better serve their needs and portray their concepts and ideas. Artistic representations serve to give the ideas or concepts shape and form so that they may be better understood.

The media assumes that representation corresponds with consumer demands for that media. That is why we are in trouble now because now we have a millionaire presidential candidate who is denying climate change. He is successfully able to represent himself and his view because he has money. Our media and representations can quite often be bought. It is possible to have access to resources and influence to represent yourself without money, but it is rare. Most often money is power and money is our voice.



Reflecting: Aesthetics of the Russian Revolution

by Willie Porter

In Anton Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, the young revolutionary tutor, Petya Trofimov, adequately sums up the longstanding conflict around class politics at the heart of the Russian revolution: "To *own* living souls — that has changed all of you, your whole family. Your mother, you, your uncle don't even notice that you are living on the credit of all those centuries of people." Since beginning to work on this production in September, this has been the quote that has consistently struck me as poignantly speaking to the heart of the revolutionary conflict felt throughout Russia's turbulent class struggle in the early 1900's. This same sentiment of class conflict, and the industrialization that followed, is seen throughout the theater of this time, most notably the performance of agitprop brigades and Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanics.

While many performances came out of, and have been made about, this revolutionary period, the form that most deeply reflected the heart and intent of the revolution was the aesthetic and practice of agitprop amateur groups. These agitprop brigades were revolutionary in their own right; they denounced traditional theatrical training and structure, instead insisting on a more personal and "in your face" type of aesthetic (Mally 146). The goal was beyond entertaining--instead the agitprop groups aimed to "change their viewers' actions" (Mally 147).

the agitprop brigades became the symbolic language and voice of the new government

This facet of their work mirrors what the Russian Revolution was constantly aiming to do. The goal was to create radical change in the lives of the former serfs and switch the culture to a communist and utilitarian society, and that active change in behavior is mirrored

in the aims of agitprop theater. Contrary to much of the amateur and intervention performance of today such as rallies and protests that fight against the status quo, agitprop brigades were actively promoting the ideals of the new state, calling out and denouncing those who still stood in opposition to the revolution. While both still support a kind of revolution, agitprop had state support while modern intervention performance fights against the government. Using their performances as a way to incite change through drawing on local experiences and material, agitprop theatre used the support from the state to not only help spread their message, but to actually incite real change (Mally 154). This aesthetic and aim so closely mirrored the goals of the Russian revolution that the agitprop brigades became the symbolic language and voice of the new government, which recognized the power of the people in this major cultural shift.

Meyerhold approached the changing dynamics of the Russian revolution with a somewhat different emphasis, focusing on the industrial aspect of the class struggle. By focusing on the intersection of industrialization and classism, Meyerhold brought the factory dynamics into the theater. He recognized how much it would change the world outside the factory; "In future the actor must go even further in relating his technique to the industrial situation. For he will be working in a society where labour is no longer regarded as a curse, but as a joyful, vital necessity" (Braun 197). The most distinctive contribution Meyerhold made during this time period was the notion of biomechanics. Biomechanics is the concept of the actor most efficiency using their body and energy, and realizing that each action has three phases: intention, realization, and reaction (Braun 201). These three phases in Meyerhold's challenge to the old aesthetic of performance also very closely mirror the process of revolution. The intention to change took many attempts and negotiations to actually happen, as seen through the various attempts at revolution in 1905 and the multiple phases in 1917. However, the realization of the

revolution created multiple reactions throughout law, structure, culture, and the aesthetics of theatre and art. This illustrates that life, as well as work, has the potential to border on art, as Meyerhold so clearly aimed to achieve in his revolutionary aesthetic.

There is much to learn from the Russian Revolution and its effects on the theater of its time. From challenging the body to take on the utility and efficiency of industrialization, to the intervention performance of agitprop

brigades that aimed to use theater as a way to inform, interrogate, and change action, the art movement that came out of the Russian Revolution was clearly affected by the political and economic struggles that were at the heart of the revolution's cry. This movement was centered around economic equality and the overthrow of the serf labor structure, and these two challenges to the old aesthetic's status quo demonstrate a change in art from being for the benefit of the cultural elite, to being for, and about, the people.

Pass The Parcel

by Mimi Gilles

Lets play pass the parcel

But time is the ache

Pass it on

In absence there is presence

Pass it on

Connect

Take it, feel it

Waiting for unmediated truth

Not for me or you,

Not for ourselves,

But for someone

Somewhere

One day

Pass it on

Because there is no better way

Silence, Vodou and Power

by Anika Kenion

“What do you know about Haiti?”

“Hm, well... I know there was an earthquake there.”

Just the other day after class, I asked one of my apartment mates this question and that was her reply. Not surprising to me, she knew nothing of Haiti besides the huge earthquake that hit in 2009. Why does the average American know little to nothing about Haiti? Before this section, I had no idea that there was even a revolution that occurred in Haiti; and I'm sure I wasn't the only one. How is it that such a deep, rich event crucial to the status of that island managed to escape from textbooks and so from the average person's radar of knowledge? The answer to this skewed and incomplete history lies embedded in the performances and portrayals of the Haitian revolution and the island of Haiti itself by others and Haitians themselves. The history of the Haitian revolution is continuously taken over by the production of those in “higher power,” and the performances created as a result reinforce that production.

The Haitian revolution's birthplace is found in performance. The Bois Caïman ceremony is a vodou ritual that encompassed animal sacrifices and vodou deities, as well as the slaves' final preparations for the revolution. What began as a representation of the starting point of a new era of post-colonialism and freedom and equality given to all, has evolved as a result of incomplete historical narratives to appear as a highly exaggerated demonic ritual where a pact with satan was created. If we were discussing the Boston tea party, most people don't recall that event as an economic waste or an inconsiderate action disrespecting the British; most people would applaud the American revolutionists' actions. In his novel, *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot comments on the idea that this heavily misguided narrative is “due to the uneven power in the production of sources, archives and narratives” (27). During French occupation of Haiti, vodou was forbidden and the colonists looked at vodou as primitive and strange; so naturally their later

recollection of this ceremony would be skewed, as one can see in accounts of vodou and artist depictions of the ceremony in paintings (which is a performance of a performance in of itself). Trouillot explains that one stage in the production of history is the making of sources. Most slaves couldn't read or write and had no access to any arena allowing them to record their accounts; and so, we are left with sources, like artist depictions and colonist statements, that are far removed and from the hands of the powerful. The production of just this one ceremony by “higher powers”, in this instance the colonists, has set the trajectory of how the Haitian revolution would be perceived and has continued to be seen in the minds of many- erroneously with it's biggest legacy as a deal made with the devil. The performance of vodou has continued to reinforce that history perpetuated by those with more power in their production. Through the creation of several movies and television shows, Hollywood performances of vodou has capitalized on the Haitian colonists' idea of vodou- that which includes devil worship, possession, dolls, zombies, etc. They are in effect documenting Haitian history and culture for the Haitians simply because they have a larger soapbox to stand on, and greater resources to enable their voice to be heard. The ability of those with more power to completely take over the representation and emergence of a culture to the world is one that has been exercised largely over Haitian vodou practice.

The Haitian revolution's birthplace is found in performance

The revolution itself as a performance to the colonial world demonstrates the hijacking of Haitian history by the powerful. Trouillot writes that “not only was the revolution unthinkable and, therefore unannounced in the West, it was also- to a large extent- - unspoken among the slaves themselves” (89). The Haitian ex-slaves'

“performances” about the revolution served not to lift up the revolution, but rather to put it down. If the slaves weren’t speaking of the revolution they had just fought, who but the powerful would swoop into the historical void the Haitian people left?

The Haitian revolution has continued to be swept under the rug from this continuation of silence, so when higher powers produce the narrative, they condemn the revolution, calling it a revolt and a rebellion. Furthermore, as Haiti was one of the first colonies that broke free from their motherland, it can be considered the “first free black republic”. The production of history, and specifically the history of the Haitian revolution is “systematically recast by many participants and observers to fit a world of possibilities” (95, *Trouillot Silencing the Past*). As a result, one can argue that as a country, Haiti performs to represent the first black republic and many argue that they have continued to falter tremendously. Many reporters and scholars highlight modern day Haiti as characteristic of poverty, helplessness, turmoil and poor infrastructure. Unfortunately for many colonists, and surely even some people today, the idea of a fully functioning and well maintained society full of blacks was and is outside the scope of their beliefs. It seems as though the vast majority of the world have accepted

that blacks, not only in Haiti but around the world, have and always will struggle to meet the invisible bar of success and independence as defined by the world. The performance of Haiti as a country today reinforces the world’s production that portrays Haiti as a country that will continue to fail. After a long history of expected performance at low standards, it is even possible that Haitians have come to accept this production as well, and so the positively reinforced misguided production by higher powers persists.

The performance of Haitian history and the revolution continues to reinforce the ability of those in power to inaccurately produce it. It’s interesting as the Haitians fought so hard to have their voices heard, but even in the act of this desire to be heard, they have been silenced; that in their freedom from colonialism, they have become so dependent on others; in their freedom to practice their own culture and religion, they are constantly harassed by the stigmas placed on them. It is very true, the Haitians won the revolution; but if their revolution is considered a rebellion (if considered at all), their freedom of self-government entails occupation by others and their freedom of culture condemned by the world, then what have they won?

“... perhaps the theater is not revolutionary in itself, but it is surely a rehearsal for the revolution. The liberated spectator, as a whole person, launches into action. No matter that the action is fictional; what matters is that it is action!”

-Augusto Boal



Theater: The Truth Comes Out

by Delaney Lemaster-Dwyer

Revolutions constitute change in perspective and attitude amongst the people, towards the dominant and traditional institutional order (Yoder, p. 441, 1926). They promote the participation of the people by suggesting the idea of freedom from the injustice that the institutional order subjects its people to (Arendt, p. 19, 1963). Over time, the perspectives of social justice shift, as the understanding of the rights of humans becomes more prevalent and concentrated in society. This shift in perspective has proven to lead to revolutions of the masses, as was the case in the French Revolution in 1789-1799, because the people desired a change in the institutional order; the people wanted to be heard, respected, and cared for— they wanted power. The people's desire for power and their voices to be heard, is reflected in the performances found throughout the French Revolution, both in the theater and outside of it. The theater and the performance of the French Revolution played a large part in determining the outcome of who holds the power in society. Different ideas of democracy have been portrayed by the theater during the revolution and the performance of the French Revolution-- both have allowed the people to have a voice, question and change who holds the power in society, and promote the written word. I am going to use Marie H. Huet's writing, *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat's Death*, and Victor Hugo's film *Les Misérables*, to show how these ideas of democracy were portrayed by the theater and the performance of the French Revolution.

the people no longer appropriated the power of approval to the king

Many of the events of the French Revolution can be examined as a performance (Schechner, p. 23). According to Huet, the real performance and display of democracy during the French Revolution was not seen in the theaters,

but rather in the events that took place in society itself, like that of the trial of King Louis XVI (p. 1). On page 12 in Huet's writing, Huet notes the six main events, or the network of communication, of the French Revolution from a theatrical standpoint. It begins with the trial of Louis XVI, and ends with the theatrical representation of Marat's death. The theatricality displayed in the trial is remarkable. It is regarded as a spectacle in which the people participated in. Their blatant disregard for the authority of the king is shown by how they regard the trial as something of a spectacle in which they bring snacks and voice their opinions; this demonstrates their desire for a change in power. The people want to be in charge, rather than have the king continue his reign.

Although Huet argues that the real performance was outside of the theater, the theater did play a large part in the road to democracy, as mentioned by Maslan in her work, *Revolutionary Acts*. The theater allowed the people to start voicing their opinions about the governing institutions and social injustice. From the power felt through the theatrical performances, the people started to take power into their own hands, shifting who their actions are "in the name of" (Huet, p. 104); the people no longer appropriated the power of approval to the king. For example, Charlotte Corday played out a dramatic and symbolic act that added to the theatricality of the French Revolution, as she assassinated Jean-Paul Marat, vulnerable in his bathtub. This act of defiance and demand for social reform was justified by Corday herself; the political act was "in the name of" Corday.

During the French Revolution, there was a desire for a shift in power from the king to the people, which was seen in the film *Les Misérables*. The movie demonstrates the ideas of who and how people should participate in the revolution by both its songs and its performance venues. The beginning of the song, "Do You Hear the People Sing?", is sung by one person, but amounts to the entirety of the people singing the song together.

This shows how the power in numbers influenced people to speak up and voice their opinions and desires for change. The venue of the barricade, which was a symbolic act of defiance and revolution in the movie, was a small barricade in the middle of town, symbolizing that the desire for change rested on the streets with the people. The movie mobilizes sentiment in the United States by sharing its symbolism and intensity of the fight for human rights and democracy in the French Revolution. The red flag seen throughout the movie with the revolutionists, shows the importance of freedom from the oppression. So many people were willing to lose their lives for the possibility of freedom. This fact presses sentiment into the American people because we have democracy, freedom, and human rights, which were so heavily sought for in the French Revolution. This desire for democracy, as portrayed in the theatrical display of the movie, stresses to the American people the importance of our freedom

and the luck that we all have because we have achieved this level of democracy.

A significant aspect of democracy, as noted by Huet, is the written word and the acknowledgement of its power. During the shift in power in the revolution, the people discovered that there is power in knowing the whole truth. Everything said and unsaid in the trial of King Louis XVI was written down and made accessible to the people; the written word grants power to the people because they have access to information and they can document injustice.

The concept of freedom of the people and change in social structure, has led to many revolutions, like that of the French Revolution. I feel as though the desire for democracy, and the different ideas of democracy, such as the idea that power should rest with the people, have been portrayed through the theater and the performances of the French Revolution.

"If I can't dance, I don't want to be part
of your revolution."

-Emma Goldman

Revolution is as Revolution Does

by Annie Fei

The Russian Revolution is nothing like what I thought it would be. To me, the Soviet Union used to be synonymous with The People's Republic of China—at least in terms of propaganda, oppression, and the high death toll of counter-revolutionaries. Here is what I thought I knew: propaganda was government-issued and only had an effect on the people because by that point, they were all brainwashed aliens, there is no sense of freedom within revolutions, meaning, all motives were centralized and only the big picture of revolution mattered, and finally, everyone who doesn't like the revolution dies. Yes, that last one is a bit dramatic, but based on all the anti-Communist films I've seen, that really seems to be the case. What I've learned from our Russian Revolution unit is that there is individuality in revolution, even though the assembly of masses is crucial to a revolution's success. I saw propaganda as more than just rigid Chinese faces plastered on every surface of every city. Although, I stand by the idea that brainwashing has much to do with the success of propaganda, though I now notice the performativity.

The movie *Reds* was a long one--riddled with useless scenes showcasing a relationship that is obviously doomed from the very beginning. Yet, through the director's lens, I saw a different side to the Red Scare. The opposing side, will you. The rise of Agitprop theater after the success of political propaganda after the Russian Revolution is an interesting study for political theater in the 20th century. It's ironic, in contrast to the stark "good" and "evil" figures within Agitprop, I realized that societal conditions within a revolution are rarely black or white. In fact, the act of revolution falls into a grey-zone: there isn't simply pure good or evil and the United States is not right about everything.

Jack Reed. What an interesting specimen. Once I got past all of Louise's fussiness and all of Warren Beatty's "look at me, I'm a charming lead actor-man", I realized that I was watching a protagonist that does

not hate communism. I really like following rules. So, when I was taught in middle school that communism was bad, I decided to think communism was bad too. In high school, when we studied the Russian Revolution and when we mainly focused on the Red Scare, I decided that revolution must be pretty bad--unless it was happening in the United States, because let's face it, it was impossible for us to be wrong about anything. Then, along comes *Reds*, a movie about a radical man who fights for workers' rights and seems to be a feminist of his time, who voluntarily and continuously enters revolutionary Russia and even starts his own Communist party in the United States. The conditions in Russia are portrayed in a way I wouldn't expect--at least, in the first half of the film. When Jack participates in a peaceful assembly in the United States, he's beaten by police who break up the meeting. Yet, in Russia, even though Jack has "no credentials" at a revolutionary assembly, he is welcomed onto the stage and revered for his passion. And here I was, thinking that the United States was the best playground for free speech.

the act of revolution falls
into a grey-zone: there
isn't simply pure good
or evil

I'm not saying that the Russian Revolution was perfect, or that it was without purposeful performance. Agitprop took full advantage of the political stage. The "oral-agitation networks" were great examples of using performance as an instrument to convince peasants of Bolshevik ideology. Soldiers were distributed to different parts of the country dressed in their pristine uniforms, armed with expert knowledge of Bolshevik ideology. I imagine they marched in perfect unison as well. These are the images that play in my head when I think about Communist China. Revolutionaries also realized that if

they were going to amass peasants for their cause, they had to increase literacy amongst the public. Lenin then created the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment to take down illiteracy and bring about more followers for his regime.

The United States is/was so afraid of revolution. Take the Sacco and Vanzetti case for example: two innocent people were executed because they had the audacity to believe in a different ideology and the United States was afraid keeping them around meant a heightened possibility of increased anarchy on our soil. It's obvious in Reds how much tension rose as the revolution picked up speed. Jack first came and went as he pleased, and as the revolution continued, he was no longer allowed to leave for the sake of the revolution, and was even imprisoned. The Russian Revolution started out as a wonderful, idealistic cause. Take down the Tsar, improve the lives of the working (or indentured) class, and give Russia back to its people. The continuing struggles

between the Bolsheviks, Whites, and the socialists in my opinion, resulted in a waste of resources and lives. In any revolution, the original intentions can become muddled as more agendas come into play.

Performance can be seen throughout the Russian Revolution. While Agitprop is the most obvious example, any assembly or meeting of "comrades" must have qualities of a performance. The main goal of these performances and the revolution is to incite more people to join the cause. Jack Reed started out as a radical journalist, interested primarily in the labor union crusades within the United States. However, as time passed and world conditions changed, so did his ideology. Performance has a great role in this transition. The Red Scare is hardly the most important takeaway from the Russian Revolution. I'm grateful to have seen the other side of revolution and the individual motives that drive it.

"Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and indivisible."

-Ché Guevara



Image by Yoonji Jang

"If there's one thing I can't stand, it's injustice!" -Anton Chekhov, *The Proposal*

by James Lewis

I have spent the past two months learning by heart the words of a Russian Revolutionary. I have talked about “higher truth,” and I have harangued the upper class for their apathy. I have railed against the ineffective “intelligentsia,” and I have witnessed firsthand the depth of the chasm between wealth and poverty in pre-Soviet Russia. I have even participated in a magic trick within the greater illusion that has made all of this possible: the theatre. There’s something palpable and inevitable happening behind the slow-moving train of Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*. It is the puffing and chugging of the agitprop train just starting to pull out of the station, steam billowing and pistons still visible in their slow push and pull, chug and un-chug; the slumbering giant whose half-wakened throes are just as unstoppable as her battle charge. That’s what the theater has the potential to be, and it’s what the agitprop group literally embodied: a snowballing roll towards something waiting at the bottom—not the top, but the bottom—of a long and obstructed hill, be it truth, justice, equality, or freedom. Where the agitprop performances, our own in-class performances, and *The Cherry Orchard* past and present meet and intersect is in the depiction of injustice. It sounds like a simple concept, and each type of performance makes its own sorts of waves, but the key, it seems, is in this depiction of injustice from which all other choices derive.

Take, for instance, the relatively neutral way in which *The Cherry Orchard* depicts injustice. While my character, Petya, talks a lot about the injustices of the world, the play itself doesn’t depict him actually doing anything. I’ve taken to throwing in small moments in which he tries to do the right thing, only a little too late, and indeed he is often called out for ‘not doing anything’ and for being too old to still be a student. On top of all that, I am really the only one to talk about these injustices. The script reveals inequalities by depicting the extreme poverty of the freed serfs—but this is only in a single

moment; the rest is silence. Our production highlights this moment, but we have also found it very easy to cast the play’s sympathies on the upper class. The pendulum swings and the rich are given their just reward for their frivolity: foreclosure—and yet, we can’t help but feel *sorry* for them as well. It’s a funny story and it’s also a sad story. You could argue that its melancholy arises from its unequivocally sad ending, or from the fact that the lower classes don’t rise up to take the property and it instead only changes hands to a different kind of upper class. And yet the sympathy for Lyubov and Gayev losing their childhood home feels like something that would only disappear after being rooted out: either by a truly vindictive audience, or by pushing the script into melodramatic farce. I think it is *The Cherry Orchard*’s nature as a “traditional” play (i.e. one that uses a script) that allows for its neutrality—it only takes on what we might think of as a “revolutionary” bent when the practitioners of the theater bring in the element of interpretation.

**...the slumbering giant
whose half-wakened
throes are just as unstop-
pable as her battle charge.**

Our own in-class agitprop performances, however, all depicted injustices, and yet they also took very active roles in denouncing those injustices. The tenants’ rights group did this through narrative and hyperbole: by depicting the injustice in a larger-than-life way, in all of its dramatic nastiness, from the perspective of the victim. (It’s important to note here *The Cherry Orchard* script’s virtual erasure of victims).

My own group, focusing on UC contracted workers’ rights, chose a call to action as the means that followed from our depiction of the unfair wages and conditions to which contracted workers are subjected. Again, we

can compare to *The Cherry Orchard*—specifically, our production’s use of anterooms that were intended to be Brechtian viewing areas, in which the actors watched their own play and commented on it. The result, however, has been more of an amelioration of the erasure of the serfs as people in the play, than a true location for any kind of commentary, call to action, or breaking of the 4th wall to interact with the audience such as in our workers’ rights performance.

The group performance on the Marcy and Coward debates also depicted injustice, but did so comparatively: they chose to compare two different injustices to show how the system was built to perpetuate cycles of injustice. They also used satire by extrapolating the secret conversations of those in power and opening them up to public ridicule. These techniques seem more in line with the agitprop tactics.

Lynn Mally discusses how the agitprop aesthetics functioned upon the “unspoken assumption that censure was a more effective means of motivation than praise” (Mally 161). Mally assigns a kind of good/evil valence to the conflict by describing the two factions as heroes and villains: “These little villains with their bad deeds were the stock and trade of agitprop productions” (Mally 161). When compared to *The Cherry Orchard*, the contrast is significant, as it would again take some serious artisanal or audience-induced interpretation to craft any of the characters as evil (except perhaps Yasha—but he is by no means the antagonist, and his evil acts seem to rarely jump

across the trenches of class.) Our in-class performances, however, all took a similar approach, each with their own villains: the landlord, the Math and Astronomy department heads, Janet Napolitano. While our performances used this agitprop tactic, I think it’s important to note that they did not fall into a binary paradigm of good and evil. They portrayed the injustice as it was, sometimes dramatically and even hyperbolically, but they did not descend into the maniacal melodrama at which Mally seems to hint. I think this comes back to the question of depicting injustice as the key to problem-solving theater. It has to be clear what the injustice is, why it is unjust, and who is the perpetrator, but at the same time it cannot descend into the ridiculous or else it risks its legitimacy—there is a ration of respectability politics there that remains, a certain dignity of the attack that demands to be taken seriously.

While the agitprop brigades demonized and “isolated” their opponents, such as “kulaks, better-off peasants who were blocking collectivization,” (Mally 158) *The Cherry Orchard* walks along the other side of the balance between offense and neutrality in the depiction of injustice. Indeed in the play kulak is used as an insult by the aristocracy. It seems there was little room for any sort of middle ground at the time: theater was either aggressively egalitarian, or neutrally interpretable—just as the social structure that demanded the elimination of the higher class would necessarily demand the exclusion of any ‘kulak’ middle class that rose to take its place.

"A revolution is a struggle to the death
between the future and the past."
—Fidel Castro

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