

CHANGING PLACES: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF PLACE  
IN INVISIBLE THEATRE PERFORMANCE

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Under the Direction of PROFESSOR GEORGE CONTINI

This research focuses on the role of place in Invisible Theatre performances. Invisible Theatre is a subset of Theatre of the Oppressed developed by Augusto Boal in the early 1970s, while he was living in exile in Argentina. Wanting to continue political performances but living under a repressive regime, he and his companions began performing scenes in public places without anyone realizing that a performance was occurring. The scenes address pertinent social issues with the aim of creating dialogue. My research questions how the same Invisible Theatre performance changes when performed in different places. To begin this research I attended the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference, and reviewed a variety of texts, including *Theatre of the Oppressed*, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, and Boal's auto-biography *Hamlet and the Baker's Son*. I have continued my research by forming a troupe, who have spent the year developing and performing Invisible Theatre scenes. The culmination of the research is a scene addressing domestic violence. This is performed in a variety of places, such as a large corporate shopping center, a small, locally-owned store, and a college campus. Qualitative data are collected through troupe members' journals and recordings of the troupe's post-performance discussions, in which members are asked to address specific questions, such as, "How did you alter your performance to adapt to the environment? What types of technology were present? Did these hinder your attempts to involve audience members?" This research will contribute greatly as there is little research done on this fascinating topic.

INDEX WORDS: Invisible Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal, Place, Political Theatre, Non-traditional Performance Space, Street Theatre

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by

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

BACHELOR OF ARTS

in THEATRE

with HIGHEST HONORS

and CURO SCHOLAR DISTINCTION.

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PERFORMANCE

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## DEDICATION

To Nia and every UGA Invisible Theatre Troupe Director to come, please accept my humble offering of a thesis. May you respect the spirit in which this troupe was founded and honor the tenets of our form. Then go break every rule and *explore your art*.

And to Paul, who will forever be my one and only bug-a-boo.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

Theatre of the Oppressed is a set of theatre techniques developed by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal in the 1960s and 1970s (Cohen-Cruz, 121). The over-arching goal of Theatre of the Oppressed is to start dialogue concerning social issues and explore ways of effecting change. One major aspect of Theatre of the Oppressed is the concept of the “spect-actor.” Many of the workshops and performance styles of Theatre of the Oppressed require a high level of audience participation. Instead of solely being a “spectator,” witnesses to Theatre of the Oppressed performances frequently act in the performance alongside the formally named actors. As such, they are called “spect-actors.” For example in Forum Theatre, actors perform a short scene depicting an instance of oppression. After they have performed the scene in its entirety, audience members are invited to take the place of the oppressed character and demonstrate what a possible action would be in that situation. As Boal states in the introduction to *Theatre of the Oppressed*, “... the barrier between actors and spectators is destroyed: all must act, all must be protagonists in the necessary transformations of society.” While this is a common goal of all Theatre of the Oppressed, it is arguably most integral to Invisible Theatre.

Invisible Theatre developed in the early 1970s while Boal was in exile in Argentina, having been banished from Brazil for his highly political theatre. Even in Argentina, the government did not approve of the kind of theatre he did. One wrong step and he could be sent back to Brazil under much harsher conditions. As it became more and more dangerous for them to perform their theatre, one actor suggested that they perform the scene in a public place without

anyone knowing that a scene was going on. Boal and the actors planned and scripted the scene, knowing that it would change as they interacted with the people around them.

One of the most fascinating things about Invisible Theatre for Boal was the “interpenetration of fiction and reality” (Boal, *Hamlet and the Baker’s Son*, 304). Here, he expounds further: “Reality took on the characteristics of fiction, fiction appeared like reality. The professionals, having rehearsed; the spontaneous ‘performers’, improvising – all playing truth.” In this way, invisible theatre blurs nearly all the lines of what people typically think of when they think of theatre. Not having made a declaration of what is performance, fiction blends with reality, actor blends with spectator, and places of performances blend with our places of living.

I first encountered Theatre of the Oppressed, and more specifically Invisible Theatre, in the spring semester of 2008 when I was cast in a University of Georgia season production of *The Misadventures of Uncle McBuck*, a play by Augusto Boal. It was translated by Dr. Robert Moser from Portuguese to English and then adapted and directed by theatre professor George Contini with input from the cast and assistant director Amy Roeder, a performance M.F.A. student. This was a particularly notable production as it was the first time that an English language production of a Boal script was performed in the United States.

In preparation to do the play, we had a series of workshops where each day we learned about a different type of Theatre of the Oppressed, namely Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, and Invisible Theatre. While all of the theatre styles were fascinating, Invisible Theatre struck a chord with me. It was certainly unlike any type of theatre I had heard of before. I loved the idea of being a catalyst for dialogue, where previously there was none. The scene we attempted to do in a mall food court did not seem to go particularly well. Actors were reluctant to strike up

conversations with strangers. It also seemed to me that the layout of the food court was not conducive to our scene; people were spread out a great deal and content to stay focused on whatever might be happening at their own table. If we consider success to be an increase in dialogue and a sense that the performance area was altered in focus or utility for a period of time, then this did not seem to be the most successful Invisible Theatre performance.

My next experiences with Invisible Theatre occurred during workshops held during the run of *The Misadventures of Uncle McBuck*. The workshops were conducted by Augusto Boal's son and theatre practitioner, Julian Boal, and Doug Patterson, a theatre professor instrumental in starting and organizing the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed organization and conference. It was through this workshop that I was a part of what seemed to be a more successful scene. The concept was relatively straightforward. Two friends were getting coffee at a local coffee shop. One would turn from the counter and fall in pain, dropping his coffee. In talking with his friend we would find out that the man had kidney stones. His friend would want him to go to a hospital, but he would refuse, saying that he does not have health insurance and would not be able to afford it.

The scene began as planned. What followed was the start of a terrific dialogue. As people began talking about health care, some contributed advice about services available to those who don't have health insurance. Yet, there was an explosion of energy when one man said something to the effect of, "Well, at least it's better than socialized health care." It seemed as though everyone in the room began to lash out at him in rebuttal. If we had known more of the details of the debate, some of the other actors and I could have supported this man's position in order to perpetuate the discussion further. However, none of us felt informed enough to be able to do that convincingly or were quick enough to think about contributing to his side of the

argument. The main discussion died down relatively quickly, but splinter conversations seemed to continue for a while.

While this scene demonstrated to me the potential Invisible Theatre had as an artistic method for sparking dialogue, another scene we attempted seemed to go much more poorly. This scene focused on the issue of sexual harassment from professors to students. The major weakness for us in developing the scene was that we structured it as if we would be performing it as part of a realistic drama with a captive audience. The first half of it was dependent on a slow build of tension between a professor and student, until the professor exploded at her and left in a huff. We performed the scene at a restaurant that had a small indoor seating section and a larger outdoor section. While we had originally planned on doing the scene inside, it was too crowded so the action moved outside. The tables were spread far apart with most people seated in groups. Watching from a little way off, it seemed as though no one was paying any attention to the “teaching assistant” and “student’s” subtle power plays and character choices. When the person playing the teaching assistant burst off, all the customers looked around in bewilderment. One man clapped saying that it was clearly some theatre thing. I was never quite sure what made him think that, but I have always wondered. In this scene my role was to try to continue dialogue afterwards, which I found to be extremely difficult. I walked to a table to ask if they knew what had happened. When they didn’t, I explained what I had “overheard.” We talked for a minute or two, and it seemed apparent that this group of college-age women had things they could say about this issue. But no one seemed particularly moved to discuss it further, and I was unsure of how to elicit deeper discussion.

In comparing these two performances, I knew that structurally they were quite different. One used a specific moment to really begin the piece and start discussion, whereas the other

relied on a more traditional plot structure. But even beyond this difference, it seemed that in one scene the place aided the performance. The coffee shop was a mostly quiet confined space with many people working there alone. In contrast, the other scene seemed hindered by the setting. People were very focused on the group they were with and were very spread out from each other. While this wouldn't negate the possibility for effective Invisible Theatre, it did not seem particularly conducive to the performance. Contemplating these scenes ultimately led me to my research question, "How does the same invisible theatre scene change when performed in different places?"

Before delving into this question and the journey it led me on, it is essential to know what place exactly is and how it differs from space. Space is the "pure" mathematical arrangement of a given area, in essence, a blueprint of an area's layout. In contrast, place includes everything specific to a given area, including all of the associations or emotional responses a person has to that place. For example, imagine looking at a blueprint of all of the rooms in a dormitory, where all of the furniture is arranged the same way. The space, or mathematical arrangement, of each room would be exactly the same. However, the place includes everything unique about each room: the posters, the bedspreads, the books. Place also includes the associations that flood your mind when you walk into your room that let you know that this is your room and not your neighbor's.

In order to explore how the same invisible theatre scene changes when performed in different places, I produced and directed an invisible theatre troupe and collectively we developed scenes to perform in a variety of places. After each performance, troupe members wrote about their experience, and together we discussed what the performance was like.

Throughout the process we placed on emphasis on comparing and contrasting the various performances.

In writing this thesis I hope to convey the experience of our troupe and the scope of what we have undertaken in the past year. I have tried to include the challenges we faced along with our successes. Theatre, like most any art form, is highly subjective. I cannot quantify the experience we had. I can only record our journey and allow you to retrace our path.

## CHAPTER 2 FORMING THE TROUPE

In August 2008, I held a meeting to describe what Invisible Theatre is and what the troupe would be. I advertised using the drama listserv, Facebook, and flyers, which I posted in various buildings on campus. There were a large number of people, around 20, that came to the first meeting, much more than I expected. After talking it over with my mentor, it became clear that I would need to hold auditions. Until this point, I hadn't planned on holding auditions. I suppose I had assumed that relatively few people would be involved, so I would just be grateful for those who did express interest.

The auditions were really interesting. Because of the non-traditional nature of Invisible Theatre, it made sense for the audition style to also be a bit non-traditional. The major goals for me in the auditions were to assess people's ability for working in groups and whether or not they were able to integrate current events in theatrical performance. The first part of the audition was an activity I had done in my Acting Foundations class with Professor Contini. The concept is simple. The moderator brings in a large number of unusual, strange, and eccentric objects. Participants form groups and then pick up or are given objects and are supposed to make a game using all of those objects. The game must have rules, an objective, and must be "do-able." In essence, the game can't be so hard that it is impossible to win. When I participated in this activity in George's class, I had a lot of fun. We got to use familiar objects in strange ways and strange objects in even stranger ways. At the time, I didn't think all that much more about it. But when George suggested I use it for the Invisible Theatre auditions, he explained that the real magic of the activity is that the outsider is able to gain a great deal of insight into people's

personalities and how they work in groups. It becomes clear very quickly who gravitates towards leadership roles, who contributes ideas, who makes decisions, who is reluctant to get involved, etc. Since the participants are focused on another task, there is much less concern about the moderator, allowing them to relax and be themselves rather easily.

While approximately twenty people came to the initial meeting, eight came to the audition. Upon seeing how few people there were, my first thought was, “Oh, this audition will just be a formality then. Everyone will be in the troupe.” One group started working immediately. They all got going really quickly and were bouncing ideas off of each other and moving really fast. In the other group, it was drastically different. After a moment or two of looking at their assorted objects, one woman (let’s call her Ashley) began explaining her elaborate plan for this game. The other members were listening and asking questions about things that were confusing, but still relatively quiet. B.J. was late, but still wanted to audition. So, he joined this group, and Ashley went through her in-depth explanation of the game to catch him up. She then finished by saying something like, “But we don’t have to do that. You know, that’s just what I was thinking.” After a little bit, I remember Ashley holding up two bouncy balls and saying with utter solemnity, “What do these two balls represent?” Carley immediately replied, “Life and death.” And with that the group started developing a game together. While I remember little about the games they created, seeing how people worked with each other was extremely beneficial to the development of the Invisible Theatre Troupe.

For the second part of the audition, I had them do a bit of Newspaper Theatre, a theatre style also developed by Augusto Boal. The basic idea is that participants read a news article and then develop a performance inspired by it. The style can be as realistic or abstract as desired. The main goal in having them do this was to see how they handled discussion of issues and how



they incorporated these ideas and concepts into theatrical settings, ideally incorporating multiple perspectives into the performance.

After the audition, I was less sure about casting everyone in the troupe. While there were some people I knew I wanted in the troupe, I was less certain about others. One woman (we'll call her Rachel), I've worked with in classes before. While she has some strengths, she does have a difficult time working with others and communicating her ideas, both of which are vital to being in Invisible Theatre. I questioned what she might be able to bring to the troupe.

Ashley, who I discussed previously, was another person I was unsure about being a part of the troupe. She had left midway through the newspaper theatre activity. She had just gotten her tongue pierced, and it was hurting so she had left. I could empathize with this, but it did leave me a bit concerned about her level of commitment. On the one hand Ashley would bring a very unique perspective to the troupe. I have also worked with her in class and different settings, and she seems to see the world just a bit differently, which is one of the things I really like about her. On the other hand, judging from how she interacted with the group in the make-a-game activity, I was concerned that she might overwhelm group discussion, making it difficult to get input from everyone. I was really undecided about her until I remembered the audition info sheets, which I had not looked at yet. I had been thinking the purpose of these sheets was mainly to just get contact info and to get to know the auditionees better. Which they certainly did, but it also helped me make my decision on whether or not Ashley should be in the troupe. While most people had written one or two sentences for open-ended responses, nearly all of Ashley's were one-word answers. Though I had not directly addressed it in my mind, I realized one of the most important skills troupe members would need is the ability to write and describe in detail the performance experience. Perhaps Ashley would have been able to do this with a bit

more prompting, but the fact that her answers were so nonspecific and so brief led me to not cast her in the troupe.

The third person who I did not cast was Andrew (pseudonym). I would have loved to have him in the troupe. He is very kind and dedicated and would definitely have contributed positively. However, it simply came down to logistics. He was scheduled to work during one of our two weekly rehearsal times. Ultimately, I didn't feel like I would be able to include him, while still missing half of the rehearsals. He had mentioned on his audition sheet that he might be able to switch his shift with someone else. I explained that if he was able to do this, he would be a welcome troupe member, but if not, he would be unable to be in the troupe. I never heard back from him on this, so unfortunately he did not become part of the troupe.

Those selected to be in the UGA Invisible Theatre Troupe of 2008-2009 were Vicky Costilla, B.J. Lewis, Antonia (Nia) McCain, Carley Moore, and Tracey Rose. Vicky is a second-year, Latina woman. She brought tremendous energy and great enthusiasm to our work. I knew her through the theatre department, but had not yet had the opportunity to work with her formally until this time. B.J. is an African-American man who was starting his fourth year at the time of the auditions. His energy and sense of humor contributed greatly to the Invisible Theatre Troupe. Nia, a third-year black woman, brought a great deal to the Invisible Theatre Troupe. She had prior experience with Invisible Theatre as she had also been in the cast of *The Misadventures of Uncle McBuck*. She has a genuine passion for socially conscious theatre and this became more and more evident as we worked together over the course of the year. Carley is a white woman who was starting her second year. Her thoughtfulness and sensitivity added a strong dynamic to the work of the troupe. Tracey is a third-year, African-American woman. She brought a great deal of courage in making strong acting choices and displaying a willingness to

take risks. Something that quickly became evident as our troupe worked together is that each one of them possessed a tremendous sense of humor. While humor may not be the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of socially conscious theatre, it became an extremely important aspect of our troupe. When people are dealing with difficult issues, humor is essential to balance the weight of the work and allow for a forward progression. For this I am extremely grateful that each member of the troupe seemed to make me laugh every Tuesday and Thursday during rehearsals.

<b>UGA Invisible Theatre Troupe 2008-2009</b>						
Name	Gender	Race	Year	Role 1	Role 2	Role 3
Vicky C.	F	L	2 <sup>nd</sup>	schill	student	schill
B.J. L.	M	B	4 <sup>th</sup>	possible boyfriend	student	boyfriend
Nia M.	F	B	3 <sup>rd</sup>	girl who has dated B.J.	friend	Tracey's friend
Carley M.	F	W	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Nia's friend	student	girlfriend
Tracey R.	F	B	3 <sup>rd</sup>	schill	friend	intervener

### CHAPTER 3 PREPARING FOR THE SCENES

One of the things I really hoped to do with the troupe was to very solidly prepare them for doing Invisible Theatre. All of the experiences I had had doing Invisible Theatre had been rather spur of the moment. We had very little time to prepare. Typically we did a few Boalian warm-up games, talked about what Invisible Theatre is, and then were let loose to brainstorm topics and come up with scenes. This is fine for a workshop setting, but I was curious what might happen if a group was given an ample amount of time to get to know each other better, develop the skills necessary for performing Invisible Theatre, and then be allowed to explore a variety of ways that the scene may play out.

At first I really wasn't sure how I should go about planning our beginning rehearsals. I had been reading about different games and exercises in Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* and many sounded interesting and fun. Yet, I really wasn't sure how to decide which would be most beneficial for the group. My mentor guided me in this process by suggesting I should first think about what skills are necessary for doing Invisible Theatre. Then, choose activities that would help the troupe members cultivate those skills. This made planning infinitely simpler.

One of the most important skills when performing Invisible Theatre is a willingness to go outside of one's comfort zone. This is a vital skill in all forms of theatre, however, it's even more important in Invisible Theatre. In most traditional western theatre, there is a clear distinction between who is an actor and who is a spectator. However, this barrier between actor and spectator is gone in Invisible Theatre. The title of actor is not unabashedly announced to passersby. In Invisible Theatre, there is no curtain call that allows the actor to step completely

out of character, effectively saying, “Do not judge me for the things my character has done,” or “I am not my character.” Conversely, there are no spectators in Invisible Theatre. People in the vicinity of Invisible Theatre are fully capable of interacting with the actors and changing the entire course of the scene. It is for this reason that Boal coined the term “spect-actor,” as it much more accurately describes the role of those people.

One exercise I had the troupe do which I found particularly interesting is something I called, “Argue the Opposite.” While the concept is not entirely novel or original, I did formulate the idea for this exercise on my own. One of the most important skills necessary for Invisible Theatre is the ability to view an issue from multiple perspectives. For this exercise I asked each troupe member to think of something they feel very strongly about. They were then supposed to take turns standing on a “soapbox” ranting about whatever it is that they felt strongly about. I told them it could be anything and they certainly delivered. Vicky talked about religious intolerance, while Carley talked about the differences in how arts and sports are perceived or treated differently. Nia got particularly heated up on the subject of how black women are portrayed in movies and the media. In contrast, B.J. ranted about people who play with their chewing gum. And the one that probably took me off-guard the most, but was completely hysterical, was Tracey ranting about how much she hated Nicolas Cage as an actor. Apparently this was an argument she and her sister had had on several occasions because she had very specific points and reasoning to support her opinion.

I then asked them to now think of how someone who had the opposite opinion of might argue their side of the argument. Immediately there was a moment where everyone seemed a bit disappointed or reluctant. I said that they were also free to create the character of someone who might have this opinion. It was a bit difficult for Vicky to get a hold on how to approach this.

Instead of taking on a character, she talked in the abstract about how someone might do it. In retrospect, I think that her topic of religious intolerance is a little tricky for this activity.

Intolerant people don't typically label themselves as such. Instead, they tend to have extremely strident convictions that reduce their capacity to see ways of coexisting with those who disagree, which is essentially intolerance. Carley and Tracey had an easier time as they both emulated the person with whom they had had an argument on their topic. Nia and B.J. both seemed to take on the character of someone that embodied the thing they disliked, primarily using a large amount of physicality.

While I do think this exercise allowed the group to really work one of the most important skills for Invisible Theatre, I do think that there are some drawbacks to consider. One of the most difficult things with this exercise is being able to take on the character and opinions of something you absolutely disagree with and not satirize them. There is a tendency towards making the characters larger than life. I also had a sense that with many of the opposite versions people were able to maintain a sort of distance between what they said and what they personally believed using this satirization, with some even approaching mockery. With further exploration though, I think people would be better able to create more realistic renderings of characters opposite their personal opinions. I don't view this as an unsolvable problem, as in most acting classes I've been in, the general idea is that it's much easier to reign in something too big as opposed to making bigger something too small. One possible way of remedying this would be to tell participants that they will have to argue for and against an issue they feel strongly about, but the goal is for those watching to not be able to tell which is their true perspective.

The other concern that came up for me in retrospect regarding this exercise is that works on a system of binaries. You either love Nicolas Cage or hate him. Whereas in reality, many

people don't feel as strongly or their feelings are more mixed. For example, while I dislike Cage in nearly everything I've seen him in, I think he is fabulously hysterical in *Raising Arizona*. The exercise as it stands eliminates the possibility for exploring people with moderate or tertiary perspectives. If I do use this exercise in the future, I would like to incorporate a way of exploring multiple viewpoints. However, I do think that starting with extremes and then tempering them is a viable route for creative exploration.

## CHAPTER 4 COOKIES CAFÉ

As part of wanting to gradually increase the intensity of the scenes we were doing, the first scene focused on a topic that is relatively familiar with many college students. The basic issue we wanted to focus on is dating. One thing we discussed is that there seems to be a tendency in recent years for two heterosexual people who like each other to “hang out” as opposed to going on official dates. This can lead to confusion over how committed or uncommitted and how exclusive or open the two people are. One reason for choosing this scene is that it allows for clear opportunities for drama. It also deals with something that is very relatable; most people have had some experience with dating, and while they may not have experienced the miscommunication we’re addressing, the fact that they did not experience it is something they might discuss. It also allows the troupe to get experience with Invisible Theatre without trying to tackle an issue that has gotten copious amounts of media attention or that is extremely volatile or polarizing.

The basic plot of the scene is as follows:

- Nia and Carley enter a small café or coffee shop.
- Two other troupe members, Tracey and Vicky, are already in the space but do not initially interact with each other.
- Nia tells Carley about this guy she’s been hanging out with who she really likes. Though nothing is official, she’s crazy about him and can’t wait to see him again. (While it is relatively unlikely that anyone who might overhear this conversation would think twice



about it or pay close attention, it was important for the actors to establish the situation and circumstances for themselves.)

- B.J. and another woman, Kathryn, enter holding hands.
- Nia tells Carley that that's the guy she's been seeing and then tries to confront B.J. about what is going on.
- B.J. tries to calm Nia down and say they can talk about it later, but this makes Nia even more upset.
- Eventually B.J. leaves with the woman he entered with.
- Nia returns to her seat to try to talk about it with Carley.
- After overhearing their conversation, Tracey begins talking to them, saying that they probably weren't all that committed to each other, as it had only been a few weeks.
- After some time, Nia gets frustrated with Tracey and leaves with Carley.
- This leaves Tracey and Vicky to continue dialogue with spect-actors as long as seems appropriate.

As you may have noticed in reading the outline, the scene calls for one more person than is in the troupe. While it would have been possible to do this scene using the five members, I really didn't want to have only one person left to continue dialogue about the altercation between B.J. and Nia. This is the primary reason for deciding to include another individual for this scene. Kathryn volunteered to assist us. She had planned on auditioning for the troupe, but had forgotten on the day of the auditions. She was the assistant stage manager for *The Misadventures of Uncle McBuck*, so she was familiar with Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed. One important directorial choice for this scene was that I directed Kathryn to stay as

calm as possible while in character. If both women didn't know and were upset that B.J. was dating other people, there would be no contrast. People might be more inclined to dismiss it as B.J. being just another trashy guy, rather than seeing that some people are fine with dating openly.

I chose to do the performance at Cookies Café in downtown Athens for a variety of reasons. Firstly, from my own experiences, it seemed that small cafes and coffee shops lend themselves very nicely to doing Invisible Theatre performances. People are in a relatively small confined area, so it's a bit difficult to ignore excitements that come about. The layout was rather open; no booths or great divides in the space. And while it was a less important reason, it did help that a cookie there only costs fifty cents. This meant that troupe members had a convenient, inexpensive reason for going back up to the register, if they felt that would help them in continuing the scene.

To understand what the space of Cookies Café was like, please imagine walking through a door from a street corner into the corner of a long, rectangular room. To your left is the shorter wall, which is predominantly a window to the street outside. Next to the window are two small tables with two chairs apiece. To your right is the longer wall. Along this wall is a long bench with five or six small tables lined along the bench. With each table is a chair, facing the bench and the wall. As you walk to the far end of the room with the bench and its tables on your right, you will pass two tables, each with four chairs on your left. These tables are approximately in the center of the seating area. Also, on your left is a stairway that leads downwards to more seating. At the far end of the room are the display cases and cash register, where customers order. The display cases are arranged somewhat in an "L" shape, with the long side of the "L" parallel to the wall that the bench is also on; it is on your right. The short side of the "L" is

facing you, and parallel with the far wall of the room. The cash register is in the corner of the “L”. Still facing the far wall of the room, the door to the unisex bathroom is on your left.

The place of Cookies Café seemed very light and open. The walls were painted a very pale yellow. The wood of the furniture was darkly stained. The ceilings were high, which made sense, since the exterior of the building suggested that this was an older building that had been remodeled over the years. There was music playing, though it was easily forgotten. The place seemed cozy, while still keeping clean lines and refraining from kitsch.

While the performance of the scene was very similar to the rehearsals, there were some noticeable differences. The first major difference was that when Nia and Carley sat down, their orientation was different than I’d instructed. I had told Nia to sit facing the wall; this was to make it so that she didn’t see B.J. and Kathryn until after they had gotten their cookies and were on their way out. My intention with this had been to prolong the scene and possibly increase the tension some. However, in the actual performance Nia and Carley had forgotten about this and sat so that Nia was sitting next to the wall facing out. As a result Nia saw B.J. almost as soon as he walked in. She appropriately decided to go ahead and confront him while he and Kathryn were about to order their cookies. In doing so, B.J. was very honestly caught off-guard by Nia coming up to him. This also allowed for Kathryn to lock eyes with one of the women working there. Nia then pulled B.J. towards the center of the eating area to talk with him away from Kathryn. This was a very strong move by Nia as it resulted in spreading the action of the scene out more and using a great deal of the available space.

After this much of the action of the scene went as rehearsed. One of the most fascinating things about the scene, however, was the discussion after Nia and Carley left. Almost immediately after Nia and Carley left, a white mid-late 20s male entered, ordered his food, and

then sat at a table near Tracey. Tracey was trying to get conversation going with Vicky, then quickly turned and started talking to this man about it. After learning he hadn't seen the altercation, Tracey described the event to him and started talking to him about it. This man rather eagerly began discussing it with her. He said what Nia should have done instead and how she could have handled it better. He explained how people really just have to communicate. It seemed like the man could not say enough about this topic. In contrast, there was one woman sitting near the window, who was either texting or using a handheld electronic device nearly the entire time. She had been present for the whole scenario. However, when Tracey asked her what she thought, it seemed that the woman first tried to ignore Tracey. After Tracey asked again, she said that she hadn't seen anything, pretty effectively shutting out any further conversation. Later I could also overhear the one employee who had seen everything describe to the other what had happened. While they were too far away for me to hear exactly what they were saying, it seemed that the one who hadn't been present claimed that she would have definitely kicked them out of the restaurant; she would not have allowed that behavior on her watch.

Given my past experiences with Invisible Theatre, it seemed that getting any conversation after the primary catalyst of a scene would be a mark of success. However, what really made this conversation interesting is that even people who hadn't seen the action felt compelled to talk about it, often being more vocal about it. This brought up the idea that there is a sort of shadow after the performance. We are able to alter the space, not only while the performance is happening but afterwards as well.

In reviewing the troupe members' journals about this first scene, the word that stood out to me the most was "awkward." Most of them seemed to use the word at some point in their

journals, either in reference to how they perceived spect-actors feeling or to how they themselves felt. B.J. described the waitress as, “[She] looked terribly uncomfortable, so I said, ‘I’m really sorry.’ She replied, ‘Oh, it’s fine,’ very awkwardly.” Referring to herself, Carley wrote, “Felt awkward talking to Kathryn at the register without buying anything. So, I bought another cookie, which was also awkward because I did not go up there to buy a cookie.” Tracey even wrote that, “The seating situation was awkward,” when explaining one reason that it was difficult to engage a woman sitting by the window in conversation. Ultimately, it’s obvious that for Nia, awkwardness was extremely prominent in her mind. She begins her journal simply writing, “Awkward!!!” Then she follows that with “Scared to Death” in brackets, before going into her notes more fully. It seems simultaneously fascinating to me and entirely reasonable that this word would be used so consistently. The word is relatively nonspecific. It conveys a feeling of discomfort, but does not contain a whole lot of context to a reader. I do think it reflects the troupe’s coming to terms with the risks inherent in Invisible Theatre as a form. Most theatre has the potential for actors and audience members to feel “awkward.” The actor may be nervous about a scene or an audience member might feel uncomfortable with the subject matter presented. However, the awkwardness in traditional theatre is masked. Actors do not see the awkwardness of their audience (if present) because the lighting prevents it. The audience ideally does not see the awkwardness of an actor because the actor’s personal feelings should not interfere with the portrayal of the character. Yet, in Invisible Theatre, the line between actor and character is so fine that the awkwardness of one easily becomes the awkwardness of the other. Likewise, in Invisible Theatre, the lines between actor and spect-actor are so thin that each is confronted with the other in a very close, real sense. In this way, the “awkwardness” of Invisible Theatre can easily feel much greater when compared with traditional theatre styles.

The other thing that struck me in reviewing the journal entries was contrasts in how troupe members seemed to think the performance went. This was most apparent in contrasting the endings of Vicky and Tracey's journals. Vicky writes, "The girl in the window didn't say much when Tracey confronted her. \*sigh\*" In contrast, Tracey writes, "I think it worked and stemmed conversation! Hooray!" One could easily attribute this to Vicky and Tracey having a tendency towards optimism or pessimism, which may be part of this. However, I think part of this contrast is the result of how each of them was involved in the scene. Tracey really seemed to drive the conversation on dating forward, easily involving the one male spect-actor in a good bit of dialogue. Vicky was involved in the conversation, but not to the same extent. She seemed to refer back to the fact that she had been trying to study when all of this happened, which seemed to imply that she had more important things she should be doing. While it's difficult to know completely what contributed to Vicky and Tracey having such different perspectives on how the scene went, it does demonstrate how Invisible Theatre is a different experience for each person involved.

## CHAPTER 5 ESPRESSO ROYALE

For the next scene, one of my goals was to do something more directly political. While we had some ideas from brainstorming, I was still undecided on what our next scene should focus on. Then, after the election of Barack Obama, the opportunity presented itself on the ever-growing social networking site Facebook. Immediately after the election nearly everyone on Facebook had changed their status to voice their opinion or feelings about the election's outcome. Some who were unhappy with the result expressed their disappointment respectfully or called for unity across parties. However, some who disliked the results expressed this in rude and even explicitly racist ways. This came up in the Invisible Theatre Troupe rehearsal the day after the election. Carley had been so surprised by some of the statuses that she began compiling them in a word document. One was so blatantly racist that she de-friended the person on Facebook. All of us talked about the fact that we were shocked by how prolific these racist comments were and how freely these people seemed to express them.

While one of my goals with the troupe was to do scenes where they had plenty of time to rehearse and prepare, this was an issue that called for a scene immediately if we were to do it. This specific instance of racism was something that might only be in the forefront of people's minds for a limited time. So, the sooner we did the scene, the more likely it would be for it to raise significant discussion. As a result, we had much less time to plan this scene. We performed the Saturday after the election on Tuesday November 4, 2008. The idea of the scene was that three of the troupe members, Carley, Vicky, and B.J., would be three students who were meeting to discuss a class project where they were to discuss the recent Facebook statuses and

get other people's opinions on them. Tracey and Nia would overhear the conversation and enter at some point. After that all troupe members would try to include spect-actors. I decided that we would perform it in Espresso Royale. This is a coffee shop in downtown Athens. Again, since this was just the second scene we would perform, I wanted to choose a place that I thought might be more conducive to Invisible Theatre performance.

The space of Espresso Royale is very confined. Please imagine entering a door in the corner of a rectangular room. The door is on the left part of the short wall. Along the left and far wall of the room (as viewed from the door), are display cases and a counter for ordering. Most of the room is filled with small tables and chairs. Tables along the wall are rectangular, while tables scattered in the center are mostly circular (a few might also be rectangular). The wall that the door is in is largely a window facing the street outside. In the corner opposite from the door you have entered in is another door to a street.

The place of Espresso Royale was very cramped, artsy, clutter. Drinks and prices were listed on chalkboards. Magazines and newspapers were piled up on a low bookshelf near the entrance. The sounds of coffee grinders and blenders overwhelmed the area. People often moved the chairs and tables about how they needed in order to situate themselves. The long wall on the right was lined with outlets, each seeming to have a corresponding customer with laptop attached.

This performance turned out much more differently than I imagined. Firstly, the coffee shop was not all that ideal for Invisible Theatre. The coffee grinders were extremely loud. It was also clear that many everyone in the shop had come to do work of some kind. Many people had laptops and or were listening to mp3 players. For many people the purpose of coming to



Espresso Royale was to tune out from everything around them, rather antithetical to Invisible Theatre's goal of helping people tune in.

This was a near polar opposite from the first scene in Cookies Cafe. This scene took a very long time to get going. There was lots of talk and discussion within the group of actors, but very little action. I couldn't hear them very well because of the ambient sound, and it was difficult to determine what exactly was happening because they were all seated for the vast majority of the time. B.J. seemed to take on the role of devil's advocate, taking an opposing viewpoint on most everything for the sake of argument. This is what seemed to initially get Tracey and Nia involved in the other group's discussion in the first place. While one or two people might have been listening in on their conversation, the troupe seemed to miss some opportunities to pull them in to the discussion. For example, Tracey writes, "I could tell the man beside Nia and me was engaged from the beginning because I heard him chuckle at something I said right off the bat.... He and another woman laughed when Nia said the problem was not McCain , but Palin. The woman actually turned around and smiled to show she was reacting to what Nia had said." Those moments of humor seem perfect for drawing people into discussion in a non-threatening manner. It would have been interesting to see where the scene would have gone, if Tracey and Nia had capitalized on those moments more to incorporate spect-actors further. B.J. was the first one to leave. After that, the rest stayed and talked for a bit, until Nia and Tracey left. They suggested talking to people in the coffee shop to get more opinions before leaving. At that point Carley and Vicky walked up to other tables. They explained that they were doing this project for a class and wanted to get other people's opinions on it. This was an interesting approach, since it was extremely forward and matter of fact, possibly bordering very closely on being forced. Carley and Vicky did talk to one table for an extended amount of time,

where a male and female college student was seated. The man had a computer and at one point pulled up Facebook to show something to Carley and Vicky. While I couldn't hear their conversation, it appeared (and was later confirmed by Carley and Vicky) that they were all pretty much of the same mindset regarding the issue. In total, the entire scene took about 40-50 minutes.

Ultimately the question this scene left us with was, "Can an Invisible Theatre performance be subtle, yet still be effective?" This question became a large part of our discussion afterwards. Some troupe members thought that a scene could be effective without having a definitive action point or climax. I remember Nia talking about a performance that was done during the J. Boal and Patterson workshops. The scene consisted of a very heated discussion at the restaurant, The Varsity. Even without a direct event happening in the space, the actors took large risks in talking loudly and aggressively and spect-actors got more involved. However, her account of this scene did strike me as being substantially different from the quiet, polite conversations the troupe had during this performance. While it was important for the troupe to do this performance and explore a topic that speaks much more to the intellectual than emotional, I don't think the structure of it allowed for a high degree of effectiveness. Even if the scene does not have an event it springboards off of, even if the entire scene depends on theoretical discussion, the actors must not be afraid of drawing attention to themselves.

## CHAPTER 6 DEVELOPMENT OF SCENE FOR MULTIPLE PLACES

After performing two different Invisible Theatre scenes, I thought that the troupe was prepared to move on to the scene that would address my initial research question, “How does the same Invisible Theatre scene change when performed in different places?” In choosing a topic for this scene, we needed something that would be relevant over a long period of time, something that contained a sense of urgency, and that was not location-specific. After considering different options, I selected the issue of domestic abuse, which fit each of my criteria well.

I was aware that the relative emotional intensity and risk for this scene was much higher than our previous scenes. While Invisible Theatre does require a certain level risk, the safety of the troupe was always my first priority. As such, I decided early on that the scene would not include any explicit physical abuse. This might be implied from the characters’ actions and words, but the most explicit abuse in the scene would be verbal.

More time was spent on developing this scene than on the past two. I wanted the structure of the scene to be clear and for the troupe members to have had ample opportunities to explore the different things that might come up during the actual performance.

The basic outline is as follows:

- Tracey and Nia milling in the space as friends, while Vicky was in the space by herself.
- B.J. and Carley would enter, the tension evident from their body language and how they interacted with each other. Some time would pass as B.J. and Carley covered the space. They would be having a discussion where the stakes were high for Carley and B.J. was

opposing her. (We explored a couple ideas on what the argument should be about. The first was that Carley wanted to meet a friend she hadn't seen in a long time for coffee that evening; B.J. wanted her to stay home. The second was that she needed to buy an outfit for her first job interview the next day. She didn't have any professional clothes and needed something to wear in order to get this job.)

- At some point while they were circling the area, Carley was to be far enough away from B.J. in order for Vicky to come and quietly ask Carley if everything was okay. (For this scene, Vicky was to present a somewhat moderated approach to the situation. She thought something was wrong, but preferred to stay relatively quiet about what was happening.)
- B.J. would see Vicky talking with Carley and say something aggressive to Vicky, who would pretend like she didn't hear him and go on her way.
- After some more arguing from B.J. and Carley, B.J. would grab Carley's arm and lead them towards the exit.
- Tracey would see this and intervene verbally, saying something close to, "Excuse me, I don't think you should grab her like that."
- Tracey and B.J. begin to argue. Here Carley would be trying to persuade B.J. that they should leave, while Nia (as Tracey's friend) would be trying to calm Tracey down telling her that she needs to mind her own business.
- Eventually B.J. and Carley would exit, leaving Tracey, Nia, and Vicky to discuss and get dialogue going with spect-actors.

A couple of difficulties arose in the development of this scene. One was establishing what the relationship between Carley and B.J. was like. The first time we improvised with this scenario in rehearsal, B.J. and Carley entered holding hands, arguing but with a substantial degree of control and restraint. Over the course of a few rehearsals, they achieved the power dynamics and body language I was looking for. By the time we were ready for our first performance, B.J. entered the acting area a few steps ahead of Carley, perpetually texting on his phone so that he barely looked at Carley. His responses to her were abrupt, calloused, and definitive. Carley's physicality seemed to turn inward. Even though she was putting most of her attention on B.J., her body seemed to indicate a mouse coming to a chef, trying to stir up enough courage to ask for a bit of cheese.

The other difficult part of this scene was determining what Nia's argument was. Perhaps it was a bit naive of us, but we were all fairly certain that spect-actors would feel compelled to get involved. How could someone possibly ignore the blatant abuse of a fellow human being? In one of the rehearsals right before our first performance, I did realize that one way of arguing this side would be to say that intervening only makes the situation worse for the woman and that ultimately it's best not to get involved.

## CHAPTER 7 WAL-MART

The first place we performed the scene was at a Wal-Mart in Athens. The action took place mostly in the women's clothing area of the store and the dressing rooms. This was a very different setting from anything we had previously done. The space of the area was very large and designed for moving about, as opposed to a small cafe or coffee shop where people are typically seated for most of the time they are there. If you were to walk down this particular clothing aisle, you would be facing the dressing rooms. Directly in front of the dressing room table the aisle intersects with another aisle at a right angle. The aisles are indicated by being tile flooring, while the clothing shopping areas were carpeted. The men's clothing area is on your left, while the women's clothing area is on your right. Most of the racks were probably about four feet tall, so that it was easy to look over them. However there were some taller, larger racks that also seemed to serve as dividers within the shopping area. These made it so that sometimes the troupe could not always see each other during the performance. (As I observed I tried to keep Carley and B.J. in my line of vision at all times.)

The place of Wal-Mart was much different from the other places we had performed at. It had a much more corporate feel, not being very neighborly. The large warehouse type building design seemed extremely utilitarian and no-frills. It seemed to be trying to put on an air of business and order, yet the racks of mismatched clothes gave it the feeling of being tired and over-worked.

Upon first walking into Wal-Mart before the performance, my first thoughts were, "There is no way the actors will be able to fill this space." The store is expansive and even though I

knew we'd be focusing the action within one area, it seemed like the store would simply be too large with people too spread apart to be able to effectively have an impact on the spect-actors. However, my thoughts quickly changed when B.J. and Carley entered the area. Their body language was so strong, one could see exactly what their relationship was like without hearing anything they were saying. They also had this knack for inconspicuously getting near spect-actors, allowing them to overhear the situation. Tracey and Nia confirmed this later when they described speaking with one woman about the couple before the confrontation in the scene had even taken place. Nia wrote about this, "While walking we passed a woman who rolled her eyes at the couple and Tracey decided to ask her what was happening. The woman repeats back the complete story that the actors came up with and basically proved to us that she had been listening hard and did not approve."

One strength of performing this scene in this place was the dimensions of the relationship that came out from use of the dressing rooms. This provided opportunity for B.J. to verbally abuse Carley about her appearance well within earshot of employees and customers. B.J. wrote about this, "We then entered the dressing rooms where I yelled and rushed her from outside the door. Then when she came out of the dressing room I told her she looked like shit and to put on her fucking clothes. When she returned to the dressing room to change one of the clerks who had been covertly paying close attention remarked that, 'Today is one of those frustrating days!'" Several troupe members recalled this middle-aged, female employee's remark and reaction to B.J. and Carley.

The dressing rooms did provide some difficulty, however. Vicky had a hard time knowing when to come out of the changing room to interact with Tracey, Nia, or Carley. She pretty effectively managed to come out of the changing room exactly when no one else was out

of them. Vicky described her frustration in her journal: “I came out when nothing was going on and then I went back into the dressing rooms. I tried on some more stuff, but then I heard nothing was going and timed my exit the wrong way too.”

After some time at the dressing rooms, Carley and B.J. are a fair distance away while Tracey, Nia, and Vicky are near the dressing rooms (although Vicky is still inside). B.J. grabs Carley by the arm and starts to leave, when Tracey calls loudly across to him and crosses from the dressing rooms to where B.J. and Carley are. It is also about this time that a female employee at the dressing rooms calls for security and dials 911. One particularly fascinating moment of this performance occurred when the woman who Tracey and Nia had spoke with earlier was standing next to me as the altercation began. She almost immediately hung up her cell-phone and moved her cart towards B.J. and Tracey. At first I thought she was just passing through, as the action was taking place in an aisle. But once she got to where they were standing she put her cart in between them and stopped. She then immediately turned to Tracey, essentially talking her down from interfering. She explained that there was nothing they could do except pray for her (Carley). This was fascinating because it was exactly the position I had asked Nia to uphold and this woman stepped into it so easily, largely because she truly, fervently believed it. Nia described this part of the scene, as follows: “...as I reach Tracey the customer that we spoke to before beat me to her and thrust her cart between Tracey and B.J. and as I tell Tracey to walk away the customer turns abruptly and tells her to stay out and basically does better than I ever could have done with my part. She tells Tracey to pray for the girl and that she could have made it worse for Carley by intervening and could cause the girl to get beat in the car and even if we do something the girl will go back to him so pray for her.” The two middle-aged female employees who were working at the dressing rooms quickly joined Tracey and Nia. They



echoed the other woman's comments, saying that there really was nothing to be done until Carley did something herself to get out. Tracey described this part of the scene, "She was so concerned with my idealistic stance on the issue and told me that she 'didn't want me to get hurt,' so it was best that I didn't interfere. I employed a Wal-Mart employee for help in support of my stance on interfering and she agreed with the shopper, telling me that I may have made the situation worse." B.J. and Carley left pretty quickly after the confrontation. Quickly enough that security and the police did not come while we were present.

The biggest difference between the performance and rehearsal was the volume and intensity of the blow-up between Tracey and B.J. During rehearsal we had tried the altercation with several varying degrees of intensity and volume. In the last rehearsal we had before the performance, the intensity and volume were both extremely high, culminating in a few "f--you's" as B.J. left with Carley. Tracey described this striking difference vividly, "At the climax, where B.J. grabs Carley and I interfere, it was completely different than planned. B.J. and I did NOT come close to reaching the level that we had rehearsed...." What was fascinating about the performance is that the volume was much quieter than anything we had rehearsed. But since the intensity was still extremely high, the volume was much less necessary.

CHAPTER 8  
MLC JITTERY JOE'S

After the scene at Wal-mart, I wanted to focus the troupe's journals a bit more by asking more specific questions to guide them in their writing. These are as follows:

- 1) Did spect-actors alter the space in any way? Did they physically touch or move actors?
- 2) Did spect-actors move closer to or farther away from the main action of the scene? Did this influence your performance?
- 3) Describe the environment. Was it easy or difficult to move about? Was it confined? Open? How loud was the environment?
- 4) How did people seem to relate to each other before the main action of the scene? Did this seem to change throughout the course of the scene?
- 5) What types of communications technology (i.e. cell phones, blackberries, etc.) and/or media (i.e. TVs, mp3 players, radios, etc.) were in the environment? How did this impact the performance?
- 6) How would you rate the sociological structure of the environment on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the least structured, 10 being the most? Elaborate please.
- 7) Describe your role in the scene. Did you have to change your role from what was rehearsed during the performance? Why?
- 8) What were some specific things you said in the course of the performance?
- 9) What were things you heard others say, either to a member of the troupe or to another spect-actor?
- 10) Compare and contrast this scene with others we have performed.

11) Did you engage spect-actors in dialogue? Did spect-actors engage you in dialogue?

12) Did you hear others discussing the event or related issues without an actor being directly involved?

13) Any other thoughts, comments, reflections.

Another thing that happened after the third scene was that we experienced major time conflicts. Carley was stage-managing for a Rose of Athens Theatre production. She had told me about this conflict early on, and I thought that it would not be a significant problem. By this point, we had already developed the scene, so the Tuesday/Thursday rehearsals were less important for her to be at. All we would really need time for was a few hours for each performance we still needed to do. I assumed that they would likely have at least one of the weekend days off. However, it turned out that they rehearsed on both Saturday and Sunday with their day off on Monday, a day that I had prior commitments on. As a result, it became extremely difficult finding time to do performances. Ultimately we had to do the performances during our Tuesday/Thursday rehearsal time. The entire troupe was present for the performances, but a couple had to leave early without being able to participate in the discussion afterwards. Because people's time was limited, we needed to do the performances in places that were relatively close to campus. This was one factor in deciding to do the next scene at the Zell Miller Learning Center (MLC).

Beyond the logistical simplifications that doing the next performance at the MLC provided, it did provide an interesting space and place to work in. We focused our performance in the area near the Jittery Joe's in the MLC. The space of this area is interesting in its layout. If you were to stand with the Jittery Joe's on your left, you would be looking down a long indoor walkway. On your right would be about three large tables with 6-8 chairs apiece. Continue

walking on the walkway and the seating area for Jittery Joe's would be on your left. Spatially this is partially indicated by a wall division, maybe four feet tall. In the seating area are many tables of varying shapes and sizes and some booths. On your right, there are rows of overstuffed chairs for studying or sleeping, depending on the motivation and energy level of the student. Continue on the walkway and you will find the entrance to a classroom on your left. On the right would be two more large tables with 6-8 chairs each. Continue on the walkway far enough and you reach the exit to outside.

This place of this area is particularly interesting because it serves a few different functions for people. Some people go here to study individually or in groups. Others use it for campus group meetings. Some people use it primarily for getting their coffee or snacks. Many people pass through the area on their way to somewhere else. It is also worth noting that the aesthetic of the Jittery Joe's seating area was different from the rest. While the flooring elsewhere was carpeted, the Jittery Joe's seating area had wood (or wood-like) flooring. It also had snazzy blue track lighting augmenting the ever-present fluorescent lights. The pattern on the textiles of the furniture in this area was also different from the rest. The place has a feeling of urgency and momentum. Most people in the area are there for a specific purpose: to study, to get coffee, to rush to class, to sleep. The fact that many people walk through this area without stopping does contribute largely to the overall "feel" of the place.

Because there is a wide array of places to sit here, I directed the troupe to try to stay within the area that is more like a coffee shop. I hoped this would focus their efforts and allow them to interact with each other more easily. Yet, on the Tuesday afternoon we performed, the area was significantly more crowded than I had anticipated. It was very difficult to find seats anywhere, let alone specifically in the area I had indicated. As a result, a fair amount of time

was spent with the troupe orienting themselves so that they could do the performance and interact with each other. The relationship between Carley and B.J. was also much different from how they performed in Wal-Mart. B.J. was being much less dominant, and Carley felt compelled to heighten her stance in order to compensate for this. This made their conversation seem much more like a lovers' spat than an abusive relationship. At first I attributed the difference in their performance to the fact that it had been a very long time since we had been able to rehearse as a complete troupe. However, later Nia informed me that there was a large group of people B.J. knew or was acquainted with there at the scene. This led him to be much more cautious in the performance, changing the relationship, and making it seem really strange when Tracey intervened. This time it seemed as though Tracey was just a busybody interfering in other people's business, not a concerned citizen seeking to help her fellow woman. Tracey reflected on this in her journal: "My role in the scene is usually to be the heroine. I stand up to the abusive man, B.J., in order to champion Carley, the proverbial damsel in distress.... My role did change slightly in this performance. Instead of being seen overall as someone who is trying to be helpful, I think I was seen more as a trouble-maker... My 'valiance' probably seemed sporadic and uncalled for to everyone watching."

## CHAPTER 9 WUXTRY

The last place that we performed this scene was in a music store downtown called Wuxtry. It is a rather small shop, particularly with shelves of music dividing the space. Even with the shelves, I thought that with the small environment, it was very possible to get a strong discussion from the performance. What I hadn't anticipated was that they would have music playing, very loud music playing. As a result it was very difficult to hear what was happening between B.J. and Carley. While their body language was better at demonstrating their characters' relationship than it had been in the past scene, it was still nowhere near as strong as when they performed the first time at Wal-Mart.

One woman did seem to notice that something was wrong between B.J. and Carley. She was standing very close, trying to pass, when B.J. dropped his chap stick and made Carley pick it up for him. However, as soon as she was able to get by she returned to a man who appeared to be her boyfriend. She stayed near him for most of the remainder of the time they were in the store.

One highlight of the scene was Tracey's timing for intervening with B.J. and Carley. While the music was playing very loudly nearly the entire time, Tracey managed to get her, "Excuse me..." in right at a time that the music was changing from one song to the next. This was extremely effective in drawing everyone's attention to B.J., Carley, and Tracey. However, since few, if any, had really noticed a problem between Carley and B.J. before Tracey spoke up, most people seemed to just dismiss Tracey as being overly nosy. Or the situation as something they didn't want to get involved in.

Although I hadn't realized it until afterwards, the scene went much more quickly than the past two as well. There wasn't the same sense of build as there had been with the first one.

I spoke some with Nia about how the past two scenes hadn't been quite as successful as the first one. She thought that it was largely because the first scene in Wal-Mart had had a lot higher stakes with much more tension. We went into it being a bit naive, and as a result, took larger risks. She also thought that B.J. on some level was less willing to take risks since this scene painted him pretty explicitly as a "bad guy." Of all the characters in this scene, he seemed the most at risk for being viewed or treated negatively, if something were to go wrong.

## CHAPTER 10 CURO SYMPOSIUM

The last performance our troupe did was for the Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities Symposium. Originally I had planned on doing the same scene as we had done previously. However, Carley was on running crew for *Dangerous Liaisons* and wouldn't be able to perform. I thought it would be confusing to do the same scene with different casting as spectators might come away thinking that that was how it was in all the other scenes. For this reason, we developed a new scene to perform. Given the reactions from previous scenes, it seemed like people were interpreting the scene as one instance, not evidence of a larger social problem. This led me to want to try a scene that still had a pressing urgency for the moment, but also led more directly to the larger issue we were trying to tackle.

Because time was limited for our preparation, I decided to adapt a scenario that had been used in the workshop while Julian Boal and Doug Patterson had visited to see *The Misadventures of Uncle McBuck*. While I mentioned this scene earlier in the thesis, I'll review the set-up. A couple of graduate performance students had come up with a scene where one of them fell due to a sudden burst of pain from their kidney stones. The fall immediately gave the scene energy for spurning conversations and a sense of urgency. However, when he revealed that he didn't have health insurance and couldn't go to a doctor or hospital, it gave the scene its focus as to what the heart of the crisis was all about. The dialogue that resulted was really interesting. Some people started offering information on non-profits or options for those without health insurance. Somewhere in the conversation one man said in reply to something, "Well, at least it's better than universal health care." Immediately dialogue erupted; people who hadn't said anything



before began talking. Unfortunately nearly everyone in the room who spoke up disagreed with this man, and our group was not prepared to support him in his argument. So, the discussion ended relatively quickly since the one man did not feel he had any allies in the room. However, the scene did demonstrate that the opportunity for a rich dialogue was there, as long as the actors had a strong enough grasp and agile sense of the situation to be able to convincingly support several views on the topic.

In adapting this scene for our purposes, Tracey played the part of the person in pain, this time with a slightly non-specific pain in her side, as the kidney stones would be inappropriate. Vicky took on the role of being her friend, insisting that she go to a doctor and caring for her. Nia would play the part of someone who didn't know them, but was in favor of universal health care, while B.J. would take on the role of someone who was opposed to universal health care.

As soon as we began working on developing this scene, it became clear that none of us, myself included were especially informed about the intricacies of this debate. Being college students, if we had health insurance it was our parents' and we were listed as dependants. Most details of how it actually worked and what we may or may not be covered for we were unaware of. If we didn't have health insurance, there was a sort of sense that this was just the way things were. The way scheduling had worked, it had been difficult to focus on this scene because we were trying to find time to perform the previous scenes. Because of this, I sent the troupe links to a couple websites that outlined the basic arguments for and against universal health care. Knowing the ins and outs of the argument seemed less vital for Tracey and Vicky. They were reacting on a much more emotional, physical response to the situation. It was extremely important however for B.J. and Nia to know the approaches to this debate, as they would be the ones primarily in conflict and trying to recruit others to take up their side of the argument. Once

again it had worked out that B.J. was playing the most precarious role. While there are concerns for implementing universal health care and reasons to question it, it does seem a bit callous to try to defend this position when faced with a direct example of what that means to someone in pain without health care. For this reason, I directed B.J. to take a slightly quieter approach, in essence arguing that while universal health care is a nice thought, it's not a feasible or realistic goal, particularly during a recession. In contrast, Nia was to be more vocal and outraged at B.J.'s way of thinking. She was also supposed to be more inclined to involve other people.

I had planned for everyone to meet about an hour before we were performing to review the scene and maybe practice it a few times. B.J. was late, but when I called him he said he was on his way. Time passed and no B.J. After a while I decided we should run it a few times with me playing B.J.'s part to at least give the other members a chance to practice. I called B.J. again, and he was apologizing profusely. Apparently he had been napping when I first called and had fallen asleep afterwards. He was now on his way. It was at this time that I thought, "Well, if B.J. doesn't get here, I suppose I'll do his part." I went ahead and sent Tracey and Vicky in to listen to some of the art talks. It would look suspicious if we all entered at the same time. Nia and I waited until it was almost time for us to go in. I wanted us to be there about 15 minutes early, so we wouldn't be walking in just as it was time. I called B.J. again. He was at the Continuing Education Center, not the Classic Center. He said he'd try to be there as fast as he could, but at that point I was fairly certain that I'd be the one performing his part. I walked into the room, found a corner to set my things down at, and just as I crossed the room I heard Dr. Callahan say that that concluded the art talks, and as directed Tracey started to fall. Apparently the schedule was running much more quickly than we had planned. It was only after she began falling that he asked for questions, at which point I immediately felt guilty that the performance

had infringed on someone's discussion time. But Tracey had fallen and there was no going back now. The first part of the scene was mostly as we had rehearsed, asking people for help getting chairs and water. Some people asked where it hurt, and there was some debate over whether it might be her appendix or not, just as we had wondered while we were in rehearsal. Other people noticed what was going on, but wanted to get back to looking at the art. The major departure from what was planned was when Tracey insisted on trying to leave to go lay down, several people very strongly felt that she should stay put for the time being. Which is certainly not at all unreasonable, and I'm not sure why originally I had assumed that it would be simple for them to go on their way after that beginning action. Having them present for the majority of the debate though did provide an interesting new outlet for Nia's position. As she and I began debating some, she would sometimes stride over to Tracey and ask her a question, then march back to me with the interpretation that lent itself to her argument. Nia's 5'3" was quickly making my 5'9" feel smaller by the second. I tried to calmly and logically explain the side of the argument, but it seemed to get more and more difficult to continue arguing for something I personally did not believe. I found myself repeating the same slightly hollow statements over and over to present the opposing argument. It wasn't until midway through the scene that I realized I hadn't really noticed anything about anyone in particular the entire time during the scene. I had a general sense that people over here were backing away and the people there were listening. But I hadn't really looked at anyone except Nia this entire time. I remember at one point, a female student stepped into our conversation and said something to the effect of, "Now isn't really the time or place to discuss this." Nia immediately jumped back asking something like, "Well, when is the time?" After a couple quick exchanges, the student backed away to talk with a group of friends about what was happening.

One thing that became clear is that my idea of how I used the time and Dr. Kleiber's idea were a bit different. Nia and I had only really started getting into our debate before Dr. Kleiber tried to slip me the microphone. I told her not yet. The scene went on a bit longer and she handed it to me again. I had been planning on using the majority of the time to develop the scene. If Invisible Theatre is going well and getting discussion, then you really don't want to stop it, since that only happens sometimes. The longer scene would then be followed by a somewhat briefer reveal and discussion on what my research was. When Dr. Kleiber handed me the microphone the second time, she was more insistent that I needed to wrap things up. I had also felt that we had developed the scene enough that people would get a better sense of what Invisible Theatre is. In all honesty, I think whatever sparks the discussion or crux of the scene is frequently less important than the discussion afterwards. At this point I held the microphone and asked for everyone's attention as I explained that what had just happened was an Invisible Theatre performance, which was the topic of my research. It was hard to gauge people's reactions. Some sort of smiled. It did seem like everyone deeply exhaled. I gave about a minute and a half explanation of what Invisible Theatre is and my basic research question, after which I invited everyone to continue looking at the art. Dr. Kleiber sort of stopped me and started asking questions and inviting questions and discussion from others. It was really nice in this instance because it allowed most of the troupe members a chance to talk about their experience and what they've gained from being in the troupe. I enjoyed hearing each of them speak on Invisible Theatre and their relationship with it. It made me really proud of them; I realized how closely we had grown over the past school year.

## CHAPTER 11 CONCLUSION

My experience in producing and directing the Invisible Theatre Troupe is one that will stay with me for years to come. It has been extremely challenging, and in turn very rewarding. Although my future career path is not altogether certain, I do believe that I will likely be involved in directing socially conscious theatre groups or workshops at some point in my life. This work has helped me learn how theatre can be used in uncommon ways to strive for positive changes. And even more importantly, I've gained confidence in my own ability to explore all of theatre's possibilities. I feel empowered, just like you would hope anyone would after working with Theatre of the Oppressed.

Much of what I've learned is central to any project management. Scheduling is utterly crucial. Plan your use of time. And have plan B ready for when Robert gets sick. And have plan C ready for when Lucinda has to make up an exam. And have plan D ready for when you come down with the flu from having tried to do a thousand things at once. And when all of your plans have fallen through, take a deep breath, be flexible, and adapt.

The other major thing I learned regarding project management was to always, always back everything up. This was a lesson learnt the hard way. During the writing process I had been saving drafts on my laptop and e-mailing myself copies of my progress. I felt like I was doing well to make sure my safety net was in place should anything dire happened. Unfortunately something dire did happen. After my thesis defense I was editing my paper, incorporating my mentor and reader's notes. Nearly everything was finished. Just a little formatting work and conclusion-polishing, and my thesis would shine in all its completed glory.

That is, until, I lost my computer. In a bitter moment of absent-mindedness I was packing things into my vehicle and set my laptop on top of my car. Eight hours and seventy miles later, I realize that it never made it into the car. This was not a good day. I was able to recover a copy of my thesis via my e-mail account, but it had none of the changes I had made after my defense. I also discovered that while I had been relatively diligent about saving copies of the main thesis, I had not been so careful about backing up some of my supporting documents, for example, the troupe's journals or my works cited page. It is for this reason that the journals for scenes 4 and 5 are incomplete. Scenes 1 through 3 I had the original hard copies from, but for the later scenes I had the troupe type their responses, only a few of which I was able to recover. While this situation could have been much, much worse, it has definitely taught me the importance of backing up *everything* related to a project. And of course, also to never place anything of value on top of a vehicle, parked or otherwise.

In retrospect, there are some things I might have considered doing definitely. Originally I had entered into this project with the idea that it would be a highly collaborative experience and that all of our troupe's decisions would be reached together. However, early in the rehearsal process, it became evident that this was not as simple as might be thought. We would have brainstorming sessions and discuss lots of options very openly. But the direction to go in was not always clear from these discussions. As a result I began making decisions (i.e. what topic the scene would be on, where we would perform it, etc.) in a manner much more similar to a traditional theatre director. While I don't think this completely stifled the troupe and our experience, I would have liked to explore more ways to elicit the troupe's responses in a more Boalian manner. Ideally I hope this would have resulted in developing scenes that everyone was very clearly passionate about. The troupe may have held opinions on each of the issues we

explored, but I don't know that the topics were always ones they were really aching to discuss or bring to people's attention.

Another thing I realized in reviewing the journals was that there seemed to be a focus on making sure that the performances were realistic and believable. This is certainly an understandable concern and not at all unreasonable. However, I do wonder if maybe we had placed a bit too much focus on realism. While there are only a few accounts I found of different Invisible Theatre performances, there did seem to be a certain degree of audacity in many of the performances. A quality that made them not unrealistic, but certainly out of the norm that might prompt an "Are you serious?" type of reaction from a spect-actor. For example, one well-known scene involved an actor going into a fancy restaurant, ordering the most expensive steak, and then asking if he could pay for it by working it off. This then led to a discussion of the wages of the different employees and how minimal they were. This isn't implausible, but it is unexpected. This is something I would have liked to have explored further in our scenes.

I also might have started doing performances sooner. It would have been good to have done a few more in order to have more to compare and discuss. Originally I had been concerned about rushing into scenes and not having enough rehearsal time to explore the possible outcomes. However, I think more than working together to rehearse and brainstorm, it would have been helpful to have just done a large number of performances in order to give the actors more experience. While I think there are ways to rehearse and prepare for Invisible Theatre that are worth exploring, I have to wonder if the best way to learn is by simply doing lots of it.

From my own experiences, it seems that Invisible Theatre may have a bad reputation for some people. For example at the Theatre of the Oppressed conference, the only direct discussion of Invisible Theatre came from a workshop led by Augusto and Julian Boal, and then it was only

in passing as part of the larger “tree” of Theatre of the Oppressed. None of the presentations I attended mentioned Invisible Theatre explicitly. When it was mentioned, it seemed to have an aura of danger hovering with it. There was the sense that even if all the other types of Theatre of the Oppressed (Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Newspaper Theatre, Rainbow of Desire) were edgy, Invisible Theatre seemed the most edgy, perhaps even “too edgy.” And this perception is not completely unfounded, since Invisible Theatre does blur the lines safety and ethics.

Firstly, I do want to reiterate that safety of the troupe members and spect-actors has always been my top priority. I have constantly tried to be aware of the possible dangers or outcomes that might result from performances. In addition, I have tried to prepare the troupe in avoiding those dangers as much as possible.

That said, Invisible Theatre is a very risky art form. When reality and fiction blend, it becomes difficult to predict what will happen next. It is for this reason that some of our earliest exercises focused on sharpening the troupe’s awareness of their surroundings. This skill was extremely important in the scene in Wal-Mart. The troupe’s heightened awareness was demonstrated by the fact that most, if not all, of them knew exactly when the employee called for security. Knowing this, B.J. pulled his aggression way back from what we had rehearsed and he and Carley left relatively quickly.

Safety is a reasonable consideration when performing Invisible Theatre, but the risk of danger is not so great as to negate the potential value of performing it. As long as actors are mature, acutely attuned to their surroundings, and have explored a wide range of possible outcomes, I believe the benefits of Invisible Theatre outweigh the risks.

The question of ethics also arises frequently in discussion of Invisible Theatre, and it is one that I personally have contemplated repeatedly in the course of this research. Considering



how the style came about when faced with the force of an oppressive regime, Invisible Theatre seems highly ethical. Given that situation, Invisible Theatre is a vital avenue for creating dialogue where previously there was none. In a society where there are no designated places for discussion, those places must be created wherever possible.

However, it is important to consider where the urgency now is or isn't when Invisible Theatre is performed in a society that does not have a government overtly oppressing it. While U.S. citizens enjoy ample opportunities for expressing their free speech, our cities are not bubbling wonders of dialogue. There are problems in the world that are not being addressed and there are people looking away in apathy and ignorance. Instead of being oppressed by powerful regimes, it is more common that we oppress ourselves, cutting ourselves off from other people with our cell phones and ipods and a stream of headlines without faces attached. The question of ethics surrounding Invisible Theatre is a difficult one. But as with all things Theatre of the Oppressed, it deserves a healthy dialogue.

APPENDIX A  
COOKIES CAFÉ JOURNALS

B.J.

Kathryn and I started bonding a little before the scene began. We entered only focusing on each other and began to order. Before our order was complete Nia interrupted us and pulled me away. She then confronted me and no one really paid attention. Being that there was only two people watching at the time. After some loud talking and tussling between me and Nia and three women who entered there was now an audience. I re-approached the counter to order my cookies as Nia continued to tug on me. I snatched away and ordered and paid. The waitress looked terribly uncomfortable, so I said, “I’m really sorry.” She replied, “Oh, it’s fine,” very awkwardly. I then pulled Kathryn away and fled the scene. Fun stuff.

Kathryn

B.J. and I entered Cookie[s] Café holding hands. We were flirting with each other until we reached the counter. Before we could even order, Nia jumped in and displayed that there was a problem with seeing me and B.J. together. He introduced us and she was very rude to me. It was obvious that the woman trying to serve us was very uncomfortable. Nia snatched B.J. away, so she could talk to him privately. The cashier made a very confused facial expression to me and shrugged her shoulders. Carley approached me to find out who I was and to figure out the relationship between me and B.J. I told her that we had been dating for a couple of weeks and she shared with me that Nia and B.J. had been doing the same thing. B.J. came back to the counter and tried ordering the cookies again. Nia continued to pull on him and raise her voice. At this point, the cashier was avoiding eye contact and was trying to quickly serve us cookies. B.J. grabbed my hand, leaving his change with the cashier, and pulled me out the door. We had to walk around three women to get to the door, not to mention, push past Nia.

Carley

- Felt nervous about timing – if there wasn’t anyone in the shop. I kept wondering how to fill the space until someone came in and we could talk about B.J.
- Helped conversation by beginning to talk on the way
- Noticed women on bench laughing – not sure at what
- Talking to Kathryn – woman at the register seemed a little startled, and very engaged
- Volume was good
- Good build-up to main conversation. We didn’t talk about B.J. all the time, which felt natural
- People on the street paid attention to our conversation, too
- Felt awkward talking to Kathryn at the register without buying anything. So, I bought another cookie, which was also awkward because I did not go up there to buy a cookie

- Felt like it went by quickly
- Wanted everyone to be able to hear, but did not want to be too loud
- I could not see anyone's reaction because of my positioning
- Felt like the "tension" was good
- We had a good backstory, actually being in the café was only 50% of our conversation

Nia

Awkward!!!

(Scared to Death)

- First walked in before all schills came into room and had to find reason to leave and come back
- Me and Carley found helpful to start scene way before entering the location (improv and establishing relationship)
- Positioning is key. I was sitting in a position that made me start the scene early
- Not sure how loud we were or if anyone could hear
- Tried best not to turn it into a fight and keep on topic of dating
- Tried best to make sure not to cut off train of anti and pro dating conversation
- Found it important to find strong exits when it naturally felt like it was time to leave
- Found it important to have logical reason to stay and not leave after having confrontation with B.J.
- Also continued scene after leaving store
- Saw no one or could not pay attention to anything but those in the scene

Vicky

So... I saw that the only other customer that wasn't part of our experiment didn't want to become involved. She sat there trying to ignore the situation. She was on the phone for the most part of the experiment. After the scene had happened, she tried to eat her food, but it seemed as though she was confused. I observed that the waitress didn't want to ask Nia and her friend if the food plate was theirs probably because Nia was loud and hot and bothered. After the scene the guy that came in after didn't see what happened, obviously, and Tracey brought him in. The girl in the window didn't say much when Tracey confronted her.

\*sigh\*

Tracey

All-in-all, I think the scene went well. No one was paying any particular attention to Nia and Carley. As soon as Nia confronted B.J., however, the attention of the entire upstairs was focused on the scene. The relocation of B.J. and Nia (in order to have a more private conversation) was a good idea. The movement attracted attention. I talked to one man about what happened (he wasn't there originally) and he was very willing to discuss the issue and give his point of view on dating and the subtleties thereof! I tried to engage another girl in conversation, but a) the seating situation was awkward and b) she was very unwilling to get engaged. I heard the women that worked there discussing the situation, but I wasn't close enough to hear what they were actually

saying. I ran into two people I knew and decided to abort mission. I think it worked and stemmed conversation! Hooray!

APPENDIX B  
ESPRESSO ROYALE JOURNALS

Nia

- This scene was harder to establish and took a long time
- The shop was noisy and people were so focused on their own thing
- There were a lot more people in this shop and the space was small and intimate.
- Talking about the things we “overheard” with each other then starting a new discussion from our own experience helped to establish our genuine interest
- We managed to start a slight discussion or conflict with the other troupe members that caught the attention of a girl behind B.J. and the guy sitting beside me and Tracey
- The most helpful thing was tapping on Carley before she left and talking to her – it turned the conversation out of the little group and included the shop
- When I made my statement about Palin, a woman and young guy turned around and really got into laughing with us
- We left Carley with the idea to talk with people and hopefully gave them more to work with

B.J.

I went into the coffee shop and began reviewing for my project with Carley and Vicky. We discussed racial issues and political policies related to the recent elections. I noticed through out conversation that this one guy never left and he turned around once when I made a comment about Barack Obama. I also noticed that two women behind me would often become quiet when we said certain things. Me and Tracey (a shield) who was at another table began arguing. I told her that it might not be right of people to say offensive things but it is their right. After that we continued talking until I left because I found out that Carley was really a republican.

Tracey

I loved this scene because it was so heavily based on improvisation and, therefore, natural.

There was a guy who was behind Nia and I in line who kept suggesting which desserts we should get. We were really looking forward to engaging him in conversation, but he left after receiving his drink order.

It was a challenge to find a reason to talk to the “other/project group.” Because of the busy-body atmosphere, everyone was existing on their own place. It was harder to hear and to stay focused on other people.

I could tell the man beside Nia and me was engaged from the beginning, because I heard him chuckle at something I said right off the bat. And when I asked him where to put my dishes, he wasn’t surprised or anything. It was like he was listening the whole time. He and another

woman laughed when Nia said the problem was not McCain, but Palin. The woman actually turned around and smiled to show she was reacting to what Nia had said.

It was awkward interacting with Vicky and Carley... I mean, Annie, at first which I think was a good thing. I think it was believable and I was interested. It went a little long, but I blame the noisy atmosphere for that.

Also, B.J. genuinely made me upset when he said that I was only standing up for blacks because I was black. Really upsetting.

### Carley

- Felt natural to be more of an instigator – to ask questions instead of presenting my opinions only
- The old woman said that Obama was elected mostly by white people, so no one can say that it was only black people who put him in office
- I saw people looking straight at me from time to time
- The girl in the black hat said:
  - o Her parents thought Obama was really a terrorist
  - o She noticed many Facebook references to the effect of “Oh well, Obama will get shot anyway”
  - o We noted that many people may use the internet to say things they wouldn’t say in public
- We brought up the question of how the black/white conflict is seen by people who are neither black nor white
- The black hat girl also brought up the rejection of Amendment 8 – how the same night we took a huge step forward, we took a step back, too (is America still afraid of certain differences and not others?)

### Vicky

I felt like the people we talked to really knew their stuff. When we were talking to Tracey and Nia, this girl turns around for a second when she hears us talking of McCain, and how our fear of him being our next president was that he was too old that he might die in office, and then we’d have to deal with Palin, an inexperienced politician.

I think more people than we were aware of were paying attention because even though it was loud in there with all the blenders and everything, there were people looking at us when we made points. I think all the looking of people our way made more people look at us and take interest in us.

The old lady we talked to was just happy and didn’t really have much of an opinion, except “it was interesting.”

The college kids we talked to were very open to us.

APPENDIX C  
WAL-MART JOURNALS

Nia

I guess we are supposed to talk about our recent Friday performance. The performance was to happen at Walmart at 4:45 and we were suppose to address the issue of when a person would find it appropriate to intervene if they were faced with something they didn't agree with in a public space, like a boyfriend mentally abusing his girlfriend in a public space. The scene had me nervous from the beginning because there were a few local cops dealing with another disturbance outside of the Walmart and I knew we were dealing with a scene that would deal with confrontation and could possibly get heated. Me and Tracey proceeded in the store and went with our story that we were trying to get clothes for me to wear on Valentine's. While walking around we would witness B.J.'s abuse of Carley and notice customers who would also notice and glance over but would walk away. While walking we passed a woman who rolled her eyes at the couple and Tracey decided to ask her what was happening. The woman repeats back the complete story that the actors came up with and basically proved to us that she had been listening hard and did not approve. Also, the lady tells Tracey in a hushed voice that the "boyfriend" grabbed his girl's arm and kind of shakes her a head but makes no mention of having intervened or said anything to the couple. Me and Tracey walk to the dressing room and I pretend to change. Every time I came out to show her the clothing, I would witness B.J. talk badly to Carley and Tracey stare annoyed. The scene finally hits its climactic part when Tracey yells out and I run out of the room. As I pass some workers commit to watch that there will be a fight and as I reach Tracey the customer that we spoke to before beat me to her and thrust her cart between Tracey and B.J. and as I tell Tracey to walk away the customer turns abruptly and tells her to stay out and basically does better than I ever could have done with my part. She tells Tracey to pray for the girl and that she could have made it worse for Carley by intervening and could cause the girl to get beat in the car and even if we do something the girl will go back to him so pray for her. A Wal-Mart worker at some point came up on us and kept *[illegible]* the customer. We got into a little *[illegible]* conversation with other workers but we never got to get dialogue going about jumping in because we found that they called the cops. Looking back on the situation, me and Tracey found that the customer was more worried about Tracey's safety than the abused girl.

Vicky

Our entrance was pretty much like all the other scenes we've done. When I tried to establish a relationship with Tracey and Nia, it didn't quite work well because there was no one around to see our relationship be established, however I thought there was someone there. Then I found some pants my size and went to the dressing room to try them on. I thought after I went in and tried on a few pairs that everyone else would be ready for me to come out. So, I tried to time it right, but I didn't time it quite right. I came out when nothing was going on and then I went back

into the dressing rooms. I tried on some more stuff, but then I heard nothing was going and timed my exit the wrong way too. So, pretty much my part didn't exist, but there were other people that had gone into the scene. So, maybe they took care of what seemed to be my part – neutral to the argument, but not interfering.

Also, I saw the woman at the counter start to panic. She saw that Tracey was going to comfort B.J. and she called security because she thought a fight was going to break out. She called security on her walkie talkie and then she dialed 911 on the phone. That's when my adrenaline kicked in and I felt that our scene was working. I saw a crowd start to flock toward B.J. and Tracey. Then Carley and B.J. left. Tracey came back to the counter, and started talking to that lady at the desk. The lady told Tracey all she could do is pray and for her to leave it alone because it wasn't worth her getting hurt. As far as the interaction between Carley and B.J. goes, I didn't see anything, but I did hear them in the dressing room. I tried to come out on time to see what was happening and to try to get into the scene, but the lady sent B.J. away and told him to leave her alone in the dressing room as long as she needed to be in there. That lady was on it from the very beginning.

B.J.

The scene began for myself and Carley outside in the parking lot and I led and pushed her with hand securely on her lower back. I made her wait on me while I used the restroom. Then we proceeded to the women's section. I followed her rushing her deliberately yelling in her directions about her "not being able to have company tonight." She was soft-spoken and I was abrasive. We asked two store clerks for help and both offered their assistance but were sure to exclude themselves from our drama. Other customers were sure to do the same whenever we came in their directions. One woman obviously began listening but said nothing. We then entered the dressing rooms where I yelled and rushed her from outside the door. Then when she came out of the dressing room I told her she looked like shit and to put on her fucking clothes. When she returned to the dressing room to change one of the clerks who had been covertly paying close attention remarked that, "Today is one of those frustrating days!" At this point I notice more people paying attention to us. Once Carley came out of the dressing we attempt to head out but we are stopped by Tracey yelling at me. She is stopped by the woman that was listening intently earlier. The woman advises Tracey to stay out of it and me and Carley make our escape from the store.

Carley

This was by far the most engaging invisible show that we have done thus far. I believe this was because we did something related to action as opposed to just conversation. As soon as B.J. and I began talking. I could feel the eyes and easy paying attention to us even without looking at any of the people surrounding us. I never had to think about what to say next, because it all felt very organic. We did not have to be too loud or obnoxious because with this kind of scenario, people are already so concerned that they will be watching closely. I know from experience that moment when I wonder "is this really about to happen?" and you don't want whatever crazy thing is happening to happen because you don't know how to deal with it, but then when it starts happening you just kind of freeze. Until the lady jumped in front of Tracey and stopped her from interfering with me and B.J. I could feel the onlookers going "is this really going on?"



That is why it was such a surprise when the lady jumped in and derailed what was happening between Tracey and B.J. It is funny to think about because you must be brave and self-assured to jump in the middle of such a volatile conversation. This lady, however, was not jumping in to save me from B.J. but rather to keep Tracey from interfering. She was protecting Tracey. I guess she figured that B.J. was hurting me and could hurt Tracey too. But she could only “save” Tracey because I was “going home with B.J. no matter what” (her words to Tracey). It was a lose / lose more situation. The more I think about it, the more I see how it must be hard to break up a couple engaged in violence. When doing so, it is likely that the abuser will only become angry and defensive and continue to hurt their partner, but now whoever tried to save the abused may also be in danger. It is an extremely unfortunate situation, but the greatest evil is the abused person’s inability to see clearly. Until they want to leave, there is almost nothing that can be done. The woman knew she couldn’t help me, but perhaps helping Tracey from a confrontation was the best she knew how to do.

Tracey

This scene was particularly volatile. It escalated so quickly that everyone involved was surprised when it did finally come to a climax. This was the very first time I felt bad about being deceptive. I guess it was because the emotional impact we seemed to cause was substantial and possibly “long-term”, “long-term” meaning lasting longer than 10 or 20 minutes after we leave. It was also possibly detrimental (mentally, emotionally) to the audience involved. I can’t imagine how those people felt unsuccessfully attempting to rectify a huge societal issue... This might have also been where my guilt originated from. I think it kind of enforces learned helplessness rather than invoking change or unification against the problem.

Anyway... Nia and I walked in and milled around, pretending to buy clothes for her for Valentine’s Day. We spotted B.J. and Carley early on but they were only mildly awkward and unsettling. They tried to involve a woman but she quickly maneuvered away. That was interesting (she stayed just long enough to hear) and sad (her lack of involvement). Then Nia and I walk past a woman and she is clearly reacting to Carley and B.J. I said to her, “Did you hear that?” and a spew of information came out. She was possibly the most willing person to discuss the situation of any of our previous situations. The woman began talking about how Carley needed to get out of that situation in a very above-it-all way. Like that situation would / could never happen to her. Once again – interesting.

Finally, the scene moved to the Dressing Room. The woman working the Dressing Room snapped at B.J. for badmouthing Carley. When he moved away from the area, she began slamming boxes around in an annoyed fashion. She kept complaining about cops being outside, repeating that it was just, “one of those days.” The anger, I feel was stemming from B.J. and Carley’s interaction.

At the climax, where B.J. grabs Carley and I interfere, it was completely different than planned. B.J. and I did NOT come close to reaching the level that we had rehearsed and apparently the cops (911) and Wal-Mart security were called!!! Instead of Nia telling me to leave the situation alone, the woman I talked to earlier did. She was so concerned with my idealistic stance on the issue and told me that she “didn’t want me to get hurt,” so it was best that I didn’t interfere. I employed a Wal-Mart employee for help in support of my stance on interfering and she agreed with the shopper, telling me that I may have made the situation worse. B.J. and Carley left while the first woman was talking.

Afterwards, the lady working at the Dressing Room area suggested I go to the cops who were outside if I was truly concerned. I made excuses in the way of them being long gone. Everyone has an opinion on this topic and no one wanted to get involved – like it was a communicable disease.

APPENDIX D  
MLC JITTERY JOE'S JOURNAL

*(Due to the unforeseen loss of my laptop and my imperfect backing-up of documents, I do not have the complete set of data for the fourth and fifth scenes.)*

Tracey

1) Did spect-actors alter the space in any way? Did they physically touch or move actors?  
The spect-actors did alter the space they were in without even being knowledgeable that they were doing so. Several people who were friends with or affiliated with the invisitors tried to talk to them and engage in conversations. Their presence really altered the scene and lowered the intensity that it is usually capable of reaching.

2) Did spect-actors move closer to or farther away from the main action of the scene? Did this influence your performance?

The spect-actors did not respond to the scene physically at all. This could be because Carley and B.J. were speaking in hushed voices and they were not aware of what was transpiring between them. One girl that I talked to *was* aware of the scene, but didn't really think anything of it. She believed it was a matter for the couple to handle and that it was too complicated for her to really pass judgment on it. It was interesting and scary. No one was really concerned. She also explained that because it was in a public place, the girl could have stood up for herself because a "Southern gentleman" could easily handle the situation. She also said she believed that Carley had brought the situation upon herself.

3) Describe the environment. Was it easy or difficult to move about? Was it confined? Open? How loud was the environment?

The environment was the Jittery Joe's in the SLC. It was buzzing with the hushed conversations of everyone there, but loud because of the music and the whirring of the machines. Because of the café/study room feel of the area, it was very cramped. It was also very hard to find an area where everyone could be at least somewhat involved in the scene. At one point, I had to turn Vicky away from a seat in order to later confront B.J. One would think that would be perfect for the scene, but it was quite the contrary. It was hard to hear one another and to spark interest in the surrounding people. One group of people I tried to engage claimed to not even have heard the dispute until I confronted B.J. Awkward.

4) How did people seem to relate to each other before the main action of the scene? Did this seem to change throughout the course of the scene?

People remained generally in their own world before the scene. Everyone comes to this area of campus to be alone with a bunch of other people. They bring whatever material and usually study. I didn't get to see the relationships really change around me after the

main action of the scene, but Kelly did. The group who refused to engage in conversation with me, apparently addressed Kelly to tell her what had happened prior to my inquiry. It made me wonder why they would discuss the situation with Kelly and not with me. Perhaps it was the fact that I appeared to have instigated it.

- 5) What types of communications technology (i.e. cell phones, blackberries, etc.) and/or media (i.e. TVs, mp3 players, radios, etc.) were in the environment? How did this impact the performance?

There were many laptops and iPods in the environment. This allowed people to easily tune out the surrounding events or pretend that they did. There was a guy directly beside Nia listening to his iPod. I wanted to engage him, but he never looked up once.

- 6) How would you rate the sociological structure of the environment on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the least structured, 10 being the most? Elaborate please.

I would say the structure of this environment was about a 7. While everyone is free to do as they please in the area, there are still cardinal rules that must be followed. For example, it is taboo to talk to anyone except if you're asking if the seat close to them is or is not saved. It's also taboo to sit closely to people you don't know. The biggest rule of this area is probably not to talk to anyone who is reading, has a laptop, is on a cellphone or is listening to an iPod.

- 7) Describe your role in the scene. Did you have to change your role from what was rehearsed during the performance? Why?

My role in the scene is usually to be the heroine. I stand up to the abusive man, B.J., in order to champion Carley, the proverbial damsel in distress. I do this despite Carley's unwillingness to admit the situation is abusive even though it is apparent. I am also Nia's friend. She tries to discourage me from interfering. Sometimes I talk to Vicky... My role is also to engage outsiders in an attempt to rally them to my defense. My role did change slightly in this performance. Instead of being seen overall as someone who is trying to be helpful, I think I was seen more as a trouble-maker. The girl beside me told me "props" for standing up for Carley, but it seemed like she was just trying to be polite. My "valiance" probably seemed sporadic and uncalled for to everyone watching.

- 8) What were some specific things you said in the course of the performance?

I said to B.J., "What the hell are you doing?! You can't grab your, well, I guess it's your girlfriend like that!" To the girl I said, "I'm sorry, did you see that guy grab that girl?" The girl responded with the things I mentioned previously. And I said the same thing to the group. A girl in the group shook her head "no" before I even finished what I was saying. It was more of a denial to converse with her/them than an actual answer.

- 9) What were things you heard others say, either to a member of the troupe or to another spect-actor?

I didn't hear much outside of the people I spoke to. The hum of everything was so loud and distracting. It was hard to understand a lot of what was said between B.J. and Carley even though they were right beside us. I did hear someone address Nia to say hello. And there was also a guy who came up to Nia to tell her she did a great job in *Bernarda Alba*.

- 10) Compare and contrast this scene with others we have performed.

The scene is different from all others that we have performed. The first scene in Cookie Company was light-hearted. People were excited and mostly willing to talk about the awkward encounter between B.J. and Nia. It was less taboo to discuss, especially after the actors involved in the main action left. The second scene in Espresso Royale was also light-hearted. The jokes surrounding politics made everyone more relaxed. Some felt free to laugh even though we weren't actively engaging them. People were, once again, more willing to talk about the scene. This scene, originally performed in Wal-Mart, did spark conversation, but the mood was completely different. It was of regret, rather than interest. A woman was so concerned (about me, rather than Carley, ironically), she put her hand on shoulder and tried to comfort me. People were angered by this scene in Wal-Mart. A Wal-Mart employee yelled at B.J. to leave Carley alone while she was in the dressing room. After that encounter, the same woman began complaining that it was "just one of those days". This was the first time I ever felt any guilt while engaging in the scenes. I felt guilty because I knew that people would just text their friends about the situation for a cheap laugh. They were uncomfortable with the topic. Today, was a different story. People didn't really seem to care about the going-ons of Carley and B.J. They were immersed in their own thoughts and easily dismissed their tryst and justified themselves for doing so. I wonder if the average age of the people surrounding this scene may have produced such responses. The other time it was performed in Wal-Mart, the surrounding audience was mostly middle-aged and female. While they weren't excited to jump in, they did comment on what was going on.

- 11) Did you engage spect-actors in dialogue? Did spect-actors engage you in dialogue?  
I engaged one girl sitting beside me in dialogue. She was relatively comfortable to discuss the event, but she was dismissive of the entire situation. She almost seemed placating as she explained away the grab that she didn't see. As, I stated previously, the other group would *not* engage in conversation with me.
- 12) Did you hear others discussing the event or related issues without an actor being directly involved?  
No, I didn't hear anyone discussing the event with another actor. Kelly did say that she was engaged by the group though.
- 13) Any other thoughts, comments, reflections.  
I have some residual feelings from the scene. Instead of feeling guilty, like the first time we did this scene, I feel disappointed. I feel disappointed that no one thought it was right to say anything. I do realize that the scene was not at the same level of intensity and that may have effected such a response, but I'm still disappointed. I also feel like an irrational jerk. I feel like I was on a soap box for no legitimate cause.

## Carley

- 1) Did spect-actors alter the space in any way? Did they physically touch or move actors?  
The spect-actors did not move the actors in any way. The closest they got to the actors was simply sitting near them.
- 2) Did spect-actors move closer to or farther away from the main action of the scene? Did this influence your performance?

BJ and I sat close to the spect-actors on purpose, because it provided a physical link between us and the spectators. It influenced our performance because we knew that the spect-actors were attuned to us and we did not have to project or force our performance as much. When the spect-actors interacted with us, it felt like the scene was literally “spreading out”.

- 3) Describe the environment. Was it easy or difficult to move about? Was it confined? Open? How loud was the environment?

The environment was difficult to move about in and gain an audience. Everyone in that area of the SLC is in their own world, either talking to their friends or studying. Very few people are trying to study alone in quiet, because it is not a quiet area. Therefore, it was difficult to grab people’s attention away from what they were doing without being much louder than they were (which felt unnatural). The trick was to balance volume and realism.

- 4) How did people seem to relate to each other before the main action of the scene? Did this seem to change throughout the course of the scene?

I did not notice any changes in the way that people reacted with one another before and after the scene. Everyone kept their seat and no one drew closer to us. There was a sense of attention put on us; people glanced at us and you could tell that they were listening, but I was not able to hear any distinct conversation or notice any changes in mood.

- 5) What types of communications technology (i.e. cell phones, blackberries, etc.) and/or media (i.e. TVs, mp3 players, radios, etc.) were in the environment? How did this impact the performance?

There were many cell phones/blackberries and probably mp3 players (I did not see any but it is likely that they were there) and a great deal of laptops. These were just other obstacles in the way of getting attention on the main action. Not only were people talking to each other, but their laptops and music provided additional reasons to ignore their surroundings. This was very different from the experience in Wal-Mart, because it was mostly silent and people had nothing to do but simply walk around and look at the clothing and their surroundings. Not only did most people not continue to pay attention after they noticed us, but many never seemed to notice us at all.

- 6) How would you rate the sociological structure of the environment on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the least structured, 10 being the most? Elaborate please.

I would rate the structure as an 8, because everyone was distinctly grouped. The division included circles of friends, study groups, loners, and people working on causes together (as usual for this area of the SLC). Some groups were probably very close, some probably just met for a quick session of group work. However, there was a very distinct structure to how people associated with other people, and why.

- 7) Describe your role in the scene. Did you have to change your role from what was rehearsed during the performance? Why?

I was an actor in the scene, the victim of BJ’s bullying. I had to change my role in this performance because we were in such a large, loud space. I became louder and therefore more aggressive. I took initiative in starting discussions with BJ and did so with more

power because I wanted people to notice. In rehearsal, and even at Wal-Mart, I think I was a lot weaker. I did not have the luxury to explore that range in this space, however.

- 8) What were some specific things you said in the course of the performance?  
During the performance, I remember repeating the phrase “I don’t understand why you...” and continuing with a complaint about BJ. I also blatantly avoided physical contact and told him it was because I was upset with him. I remember telling him to “stop” a few times. I was constantly asking him questions about why he was upset with me.
- 9) What were things you heard others say, either to a member of the troupe or to another spect-actor?  
I did not hear anyone’s comments except for those of the spect-actors. I thought I saw a pair of friends looking at us and talking, but I could not hear correctly what they said.
- 10) Compare and contrast this scene with others we have performed.  
This scene is very much in the present, meaning it is not about storytelling or discussion, but about action. We do not try to actively engage people as actors (like Scene #2) nor do I believe that we necessarily have a climax in our story. It is essentially just two people fighting with each other. Because of the openness of the premise, this scene does not have to have a definitive beginning or end. This makes it easier to perform than the other scenes because it allows the actors to move around until an audience is found who will pay attention. With our first scene, if the audience missed the climax, then that was that.
- 11) Did you engage spect-actors in dialogue? Did spect-actors engage you in dialogue?  
We engaged spect-actors in dialogue after they began talking to us. I was simply trying to get BJ and Tracy from arguing, but we left shortly after the spect-actors began talking to us.
- 12) Did you hear others discussing the event or related issues without an actor being directly involved?  
No, I did not hear others discussing the event without an actor involved.
- 13) Any other thoughts, comments, reflections.  
This scene does much better in a place that is not filled with distractions, but it was interesting to have.

APPENDIX E  
WUXTRY JOURNALS

*(Due to the unforeseen loss of my laptop and my imperfect backing-up of documents, I do not have the complete set of data for the fourth and fifth scenes.)*

Nia

- 1) Did spect-actors alter the space in any way? Did they physically touch or move actors?  
Nope...the space altered the situation more than anything. It was so loud in there and we had to get closer together to ignite the scene and even then it was to quite to get the kind of impact that we had gotten in the walmart
- 2) Did spect-actors move closer to or farther away from the main action of the scene? Did this influence your performance?  
They moved away, we tried to talk with a young man and he seemed uncomfortable and wanted to drop the conversation then tried to leave very fast as if to make sure we wouldn't bug him again.
- 3) Describe the environment. Was it easy or difficult to move about? Was it confined? Open? How loud was the environment?  
It was very small and loud. We were so close together but the noise made it hard for anyone else to notice the issue. People that sis notice , like the store owner, observed but the situation never got bad enough for him to intervene or say anything.
- 4) How did people seem to relate to each other before the main action of the scene? Did this seem to change throughout the course of the scene?  
Everyone seemed to be in there own world for the most part. The music kind of created an environment that you had to lean into the person you were with and if you were by yourself then you were so focused on the objects to notice much around. By the end of the scene we had attracted some attention so that people were watching but we hadn't created enough of a stir to get people to say anything. One girl nudged her friend but stayed away from the issue and avoided it.
- 5) What types of communications technology (i.e. cellphones, blackberries, etc.) and/or media (i.e. TVs, mp3 players, radios, etc.) were in the environment? How did this impact the performance?  
Radio, place was loud and we should have been louder in order to compensate.
- 6) How would you rate the sociological structure of the environment on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the least structured, 10 being the most? Elaborate please.



10...there were few people in the store and the few were quietly amongst themselves and quietly scanned the stuff. It was a chill environment and everyone came in with the same chill vibe

- 7) Describe your role in the scene. Did you have to change your role from what was rehearsed during the performance? Why?

I was suppose to take on the stay out of it perspective but the nature of the scene changed in that too many people were not giving Tracie what she needed to work with and I wish I had changed to flip on her side and pull in more people into the conversation because we had know where to go with every one claming they didn't see the situation

- 8) What were some specific things you said in the course of the performance?

Not much, I tried to tell her I agreed but didn't see it enough to make judgment however by this time the steam was gone and there was nothing to do but leave

- 9) What were things you heard others say, either to a member of the troupe or to another spect-actor?

Another person ( the guy w/ the chick) told us they didn't see it but it's there business so we should stay out of it.

- 10) Compare and contrast this scene with others we have performed.

It was better than the SLC in that it had the potential to go somewhere but for whatever reason it just didn't. I think we were scared after the Walmart experience and no one wants to go there again.

- 11) Did you engage spect-actors in dialogue? Did spect-actors engage you in dialogue?

No, one guy talked to Tracie briefly but mainly wanted to be left alone

- 12) Did you hear others discussing the event or related issues without an actor being directly involved?

I didn't see it but Tracie mentioned that she saw a woman nudge a guy and tell him to look at what is happening but that was about it.

- 13) Any other thoughts, comments, reflections.

This scene was all about how much the actors were willing to commit and the actors were afraid to go to the place they needed to for this space

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**UGA Invisible Theatre Troupe 2008-2009**

Carley Moore, Kelly Nielsen, Antonia (Nia) McCain,  
Vicky Costilla, B.J. Lewis, and Tracey Rose



*cuckoo cuckoo*