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A Brazilian, a Politician, and a Jew walk into a Gay Bar:

How the Satirical 'Fake News' of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* Adapted Augusto Boal's Joker System for its Coverage of LGBTQ Rights

Steven V. Trothen, Jr.

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Abstract

This thesis examines modern interpretations of Augusto Boal's politically engaging and transformative theatrical theory, the Joker System and its derivatives. The concentration of the research uses Boal's system as the lens for which to examine how televised satire, specifically *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, utilized this historically linked theory of public engagement with politics, policy, and government through theatrical interpretation of modern journalism in both video and print. The arts have, historically, interpreted and commented on contemporary cultural and current events, most ardently at the beginning of the modern era at the turn of the twentieth century. Traditionally, this entailed creating satirical performance art by which performers interpret and perform narrative that is both informative and engaging for an audience that is more proletariat than bourgeoisie. Most art is created for specific audiences and this thesis emphasizes that the 24-hour televised news is both journalism and theatrical narrative. However, my argument takes exception that the target audience of the 24-hour news has been directed towards a demographic that is homogenous, when the information reported on has broad effects on a much larger demographic than it is intended to serve. Boal's Joker System is the reinterpretive tool utilized by The *Daily Show*, and similar programs, to disseminate information to the underserved demographics often overlooked by cable news. His tools share a tradition with the modern theatre of the twentieth century, and Modernism in general, that focuses on elevating and educating the meager masses in an effort to combat their exploitation and disenfranchisement.

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Preface

By the end of the twentieth century, the age of Modernism had set in. It was a period consumed with purging the antiquated bureaucracies, laws, and ideas regarding class, gender, race, and sexuality. It was a period where Western culture advanced technologies, reflected on the human condition, and, to that end, spread those new values via both rapid communication and transit. Modernism is the age in which we live now. To understand *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* you must begin to peel away the layers of the program to reveal the complexity of its organization. From there one can identify the causality of those individual components.

Theatre, in its twentieth century iteration, is a departure from the over the top, often extravagant acting style and writing, which was its hallmark prior to the twentieth. Like the politics and anti-discrimination movements that are characteristic of the modern era, modern theatre through satire represents discontent for the powerful and present human condition and it portrays those feelings more realistically and accurately than ever before. This acting style, developed by Konstantine Stanislavski who devised it during the Bolshevik Revolutions, spurred on writers to tackle recognizable and present topics for audiences who openly portrayed scenarios of war, racism, and bigotry, to name a few. Audiences were satiated by entertainment and the representation of their world, as well as an internalized desire to respond to the conflicts presented on stage. Playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht examined the effects of the Third Reich through his plays and departed from the Aristotelian model of catharsis through his use of *Verfremdungseffekt*, translated as the "alienation effect," which had the goal of reimagining theatre towards an activist purpose rather than just an entertaining one. His expectation was that his audience would

fulfill the lack of catharsis through a change in their behavior and a compulsion to act against injustice. This is a pedagogical technique for the masses in reaction to authoritarian rule.

This idea was further revised by another theorist, Augusto Boal, who reimagined Brecht's use of *Verfremdungseffekt* in his native Brazil, which was experiencing a *coup d'état* that would end democracy in 1964. Like the censorship in Nazi Germany, Boal's response was to refine theatre that would counteract the misinformation and illogical arguments perpetuated by his government. His technique was called the Joker System and its aim was to present information through a system of theatrical mechanics that would serve and compel the public to action. This is also a pedagogical technique for the masses in reaction to authoritarian rule.

As Figure 1 shows, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* is a multi-layered program that uses satire, the "alienation effect," and the Joker System. Most discourse and study of the program concentrate exclusively on the satirical layer because it is the most obvious. However, The Daily Show (*TDS*) uses other techniques in addition to satire that are thoroughly modern and identifiable. It is clear that Stewart and the cast are having a laugh at the most powerful people in American society — politicians. Each segment or episode concludes with *Verfremdungseffekt,* an anti-catharsis, developed by Brecht, i.e.

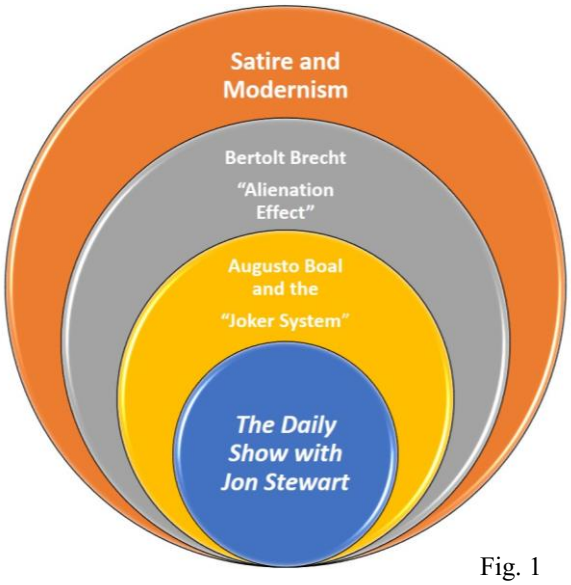


Fig. 1

the “alienation effect.” This tactic compels the audience to reflect inwardly and personally to the conflict with the hopes that that reflection results in a change of mind and behavior. The next layer, also using Brecht’s “alienation effect,” is Boal’s Joker System that aims to reinterpret the narrative of current events. This tactic consumes the information presented by government agencies and mainstream media and distills that information to a form that is understandable for the common man.

The Daily Show was also a reaction to authoritarian tendencies brought about by the neo-conservatism of the George W. Bush administration. The Bush administration was not comparable to Nazi Germany, nor was it to a Brazilian coup, but the mainstream media and public were complicit in the illegal wars, government surveillance, and discrimination that were a result of the administration’s actions. Furthermore, neo-conservatism targeted the LGBTQ community and was fervent opponent to marriage equality. *TDS* was a counterculture form of activist theatre that argued against the actions of an authoritarian-like party and government. The program was able to argue effectively because the artistic tools that it utilized were developed by practitioners who reacted presently to the authoritarians in their own country and time. For these reasons, *TDS* uses effective pedagogical techniques originating from activist theatre against authoritarian rule.

Chapter I

Introduction

Augusto Boal was born March 16, 1931 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil when it was a functioning democracy. In a 1974 interview with Charles B. Driskell at the University of California, Los Angeles, Boal says his interest in theatre began in 1950 when he, "…became concerned about things that were happening to the Brazilian people" and "…began to write plays about a place [he]...was living in Rio de Janeiro, a workers' district" (71). By 1953, he was living in New York City studying drama under playwriting professor and critic, John Gassner, at Columbia University, a former teacher of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams (Hays 5, 21). In 1956, at age 25, Boal returned to his native Brazil to work with the Arena Theatre as its artistic director, eventually developing and specializing in a form of activist theatre that he called Theatre of the Oppressed, a theory that came to fruition following the end of Brazilian democracy (Driskell 72).

By 1964, a brutal authoritarian government ruled by military junta had replaced democracy. This authoritarian government existed from 1964-1985 and permeated every aspect of Brazilian life. Their tactics included mass censorship, detention, and rampant executions and disappearances of those who undermined the government. Martha K. Huggins articulates the nature of Brazilian oppression in her article, "Legacies of Authoritarianism: Brazilian Torturers' and Murderers' Reformulation of Memory. She writes,

> While the Brazilian military's "dirty war" against "subversive" did not torture and kill proportionately as many people as in the military-

> dominated countries of the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay) or Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras), Brazil's national security state (1964-1985) carried out widespread repression that included brutality, torture, murder, and "disappearances." Just "between 1969 and 1974 ... institutional violence [was so much a] ... part of everyday life [in Brazil that] it was difficult to meet a Brazilian who had not come into direct or indirect contact with a torture victim or been a search-and-arrest operation target" (Alves, 1985: 125; see also Archdiocese, 1986; Huggins, 1998b). (59)

Boal was no exception to the brutality suffered at the hands of the military. Following the "Arena performance of Brecht's The *Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* [that] Boal directed in 1971, [he] ...was kidnapped off the street, arrested, tortured, and eventually exiled to Argentina, then self-exiled to Europe" (Paterson).

This cause and effect relationship of activist theatre to authoritarianism has been a persistent form of protest for actors and playwrights for the last century. Boal used forms of activist theatre with the Arena as a pedagogical tool to combat the authoritarian rule of the Brazilian government by endeavoring to inform those oppressed peoples in his country. His brand of theatre was used in part to circumvent the censors of the government.

In response to the military dictatorship, Boal created his theatrical system to reinterpret the information supplied by state controlled media. This reinterpreted narrative provided information in theatrical form so that citizens could have a greater understanding and, thereby, a measure of control. Part of the Theatre of the Oppressed system includes its predecessor, also from Boal, the Joker System, a rough guide to the process of using actors with versatile roles in order to reinterpret information provided by traditional media by transforming news stories into theatrical narrative.

By understanding the mechanics of Boal's theories, which have root in other activist-type theories in the modern theatre of the twentieth century, we will see how they

appear, now, in televised satire of more recent memory in the early twenty-first century. *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (*TDS*) was a long-running and prolific television satire that examined all manner of government and public corruption in a humorous and highly analytical fashion. It is also an amazing enactment of Augusto Boal's Joker System.

Boal explained the circumstances in Brazil that gave rise to the Joker System theory in "The Joker System: An Experiment by the Arena Theatre of São Paulo." published in the 1970 issue of *The Drama Review.*[1] In the essay, he points to a growing economy initiated by American businesses after World War II in São Paulo, which lead to it "being the largest industrial city in South America," and as a result was the inciting incident for his new theatrical system (91). This "boom" created divergent classes in Brazil; one was a new upper class, who "...invited important theatre companies and artists to perform in São Paulo." Boal notes that the introduction of European theater culture to Brazil had immediate and lasting, effects: "Brazilian artists began to imitate them and imported directors, mainly from Italy, to build and train theatre in São Paulo. Actors began to resemble Italian actors and playwrights European playwrights" (91). Brazilian performance culture, Boal laments, was trading its cultural identity for a European one that, in his mind, did not properly represent the diversity of the Brazilian people.

This influence consisted of foreign investors who, in Boal's analysis, created two classes of people in Brazil: the rich industrialists and the working class. Theatre dominantly created at this time, according to him, sought only to serve upper-class audiences. From the 1950's to the early 1970's Boal worked with the Arena Theatre and confronted this artistic and class imbalance by aiming the Arena Theatre's demographic towards the working and middle classes of Brazil. In response to these European plays

[1] Vol. 14, No. 2

and playwrights, the Arena, "began producing plays" for the middle and lower classes, who "had not been to Europe and did not respond to Italo-Brazilian [*sic*] shows" (91). His target audience — the working-class — had no context for what the other theatres were producing nor the means for which to participate. The material was foreign to them and did not address their circumstances or culture.

The Arena theatre, however, "produced plays by new Brazilian writers" and its performance style was "heavily influenced by Stanislavski, by the work of the Actors Studio, and by the books of Clurman, Strasberg, [and] Lewis" because "only crude realism[2] was helpful" (91). By using a realistic acting style paired with Brazilian actors and playwrights, the Arena Theatre addressed the issues of working-class Brazilians in a fashion that was relatable. This tactic offered a nuanced lens of the common man's life. Important to understand are the social conditions that necessitated the development of the Joker System. Boal's article illuminates the divergent environment of economic prosperity for his country and the creation of different classes of people, where one sort of theatre is entertaining the ruling class, while the working class (middle and lower) is left without. This absence of relatable theatre for the working class of Brazil, for Boal, created a void of relevant theatre, which needed to be filled. This divergence among classes is arguably similar to the audiences who are addressed by American mainstream media and those who were addressed by Stewart on *The Daily Show.*

The Joker System is most accurately described as a system of reinterpretation originally used to transcribe the theatrical narratives of European playwrights for a Brazilian audience. In his *Drama Review* article, Boal states that the coup d'état in 1964,

[2] "Realism" as Boal is using it refers to the theatrical realism made popular by Stanislavski who promoted the performance philosophy that actors should act truthfully under the circumstances, i.e. the way in which a person would normally respond to a given situation.

"ended democracy in Brazil" and "censors prevented the use of a realistic acting style" (91). Not to be undone, Boal ironically turned to classical European plays to perform, but with a reinterpretive slant. In his book, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, Boal makes reference to the surreptitious nature of art during times of authoritarian rule, citing Sartre's *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*)[3] and Picasso's *Le Désir attrapé par la queue* (*Desire Caught by the Tail*),[4] both of which were written at a time during the German occupation of Paris in World War II. The Arena Theatre during this time period took its cue from works like these by producing a type of "... theatre whose meaning was disguised but perceptible to the audience it was aimed at" (222).

Boal explains in his 1979 book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, that the purpose of reinterpreting these texts was to make classical European plays relatable, understandable, and palatable for an audience that was neither European nor affluent (167). Spanish classics such as "Lope de Vega's *El major alcalde, el rey* (*The King, the Greatest Mayor*) were performed for the "…poorest Northern provinces of Brazil, playing in the streets, in front of churches, on trucks, anywhere, for a peasant and worker audience." However, there was an important element that concluded each show that was different from those affluent theatres and audiences — discussion. Boal says, "After each performance we discussed the play with the audience" (The Joker System 91). The act of discussion is a lynchpin to both the Joker System and, later, Theatre of the Oppressed. In its elemental form, discussion is also present in *The Daily Show* because it concludes each episode with a guest interview in which the joker — Stewart — questions, disagrees, and lampoons in order to arrive at a significant piece of truth for himself and the audience.

[3] Sartre's *Les Mouches* reimagines the Electra myth. It was written in 1943 and performed in Nazi-occupied Paris.
[4] *Desire Caught by the Tail* is Pablo Picasso's surrealist play written in 1941 in Nazi-occupied Paris.

This question and answer session is an essential pedagogical tool for both Boal and Stewart in service to their audience.

The current and previous format of *The Daily Show* consists of three distinct parts not dissimilar from televised news: headlines, interest story, and interview. *The Daily Show* runs 30 minutes with commercials. The host presents himself as any news anchor, dressed in a suit and tie, and is seated at a desk with televised display over his right shoulder and chyron[5] at the bottom of the screen. At a glance to any first-time viewer, this appears to be a typical news broadcast. At the start of the show in the A-block,[6] the host, like any anchor of any news program, runs down the main stories that are either new or recurring, often utilizing clips and sound bites from major news networks, i.e. CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC, to present a picture of the current events for that day. After eight to ten minutes, the b-block begins, and the anchor either passes the focus or shares the platform with another journalist/co-anchor who also engages the audience in another news piece or op-ed assembled by that co-anchor. The basic structure is arranged as in any news program on CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC. At the conclusion of the b-block, the anchor welcomes a guest who is interviewed on the topics discussed (or in lighter-hearted episodes, to shamelessly plug a movie or similar).

However, *TDS* is not entirely a news program, which informs, and is not entirely parody, which entertains and mocks. Its purpose is to inform like the news, parody like a comedy, and teach like it is theatre. At the center of its structure is the anchor, Jon Stewart, who presents the news to the audience, engages with the co-anchors, and

[5] Chyron: A display of graphics and information typically found on a new program located underneath the anchor.
[6] A "block" refers to segments in a news broadcast. The first story presented in a broadcast is often called the "A-block," the second is the "B-block," etc.

interviews the guests. His influence and inquiry is represented in each piece of the program. He is whatever the program needs him to be in order to engage the audience in a brand of activist theatre that uses real stories presented by actors playing anchors.

Jon Stewart is the stage name of Jonathan Stuart Leibowitz, a Jew born in New York and raised in New Jersey. He hosted Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* for 17 years from 1999 until 2015 when he passed the 'anchor's chair' off to stand-up comedian, Trevor Noah. *The Daily Show*, in its current iteration, would not have existed without Stewart's reinterpretation of the original format from previous host, Craig Kilborn (1996-1998). At its inception, in the mid-nineties, the program was substantially different with Kilborn, who focused primarily on pop culture rather than politics; his topics were arguably of little value and mostly unmemorable (because there was nothing worth remembering). Under Stewart's direction, the show transitioned from 'bubble gum' entertainment to something integral to American political conversation. It did this by engaging outside the typical music and entertainment spheres of its previous host. The subject matter under Stewart had a strong political slant and focused on current events and politics and it made Stewart, the intellectual humorist on Comedy Central, a force to be reckoned with. Whereas Kilborn would interview mostly actors and musicians, Stewart's guests included authors, politicians, scientists, heads of state, and journalists. He and the cast, along with some sharp writing, dripped with wit, charm, and purposeful mockery, all of which made the show a hallmark of a generation by engaging in a form of political theatre.

Like Boal, Stewart reinterpreted the national narrative Americans received from their television news organizations. In Boal's 1974 interview, Driskell asks him about his

plans for the future. Boal responds about being interested in writing plays about "mass media" by "...giving them a progressive content, not creating anything new, but using what already exists." Like Boal mentions, *TDS* does not create the narrative of the news. For *The Daily Show*, the source text for reinterpretation is the 24-hour news cycle that is best represented through these cable news networks: Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC. The target audience[7] for *TDS* were younger Generation X'ers[8] and the up and coming Millennials,[9] whose youth, naiveté, and modest economic means, among others, is a basis for their foreignness as it related to the political and cultural power dynamic reported by those cable news networks.

To understand the analytical methods of Boal's Joker System it is useful to interpret the joker's role on stage as metaphorical to the joker in a deck of cards and the versatility both share in their respective arenas. This concept is explained well in Ebru Gökdağ's[10] essay, "Augusto Boal's The Joker System" which appeared in *Idil Journal of Art and Language*. In it, she articulates the significance and meaning of the Joker:

> The word "Joker" had, in Boal's mind, the same significance as the "Joker" playing card, a card which has more mobility than any of the other cards in the deck. Like the cards, in his technique, the joker plays different roles within varying contexts and combinations, including director, referee, and workshop leader. The system also facilitates the creation of a character, which can play various roles: actor, character, chorus, and protagonist, all in the same performance (27).

[7] Demographics; According to the Pew Research Center in 2012, 39% of viewers of *The Daily Show* were 18-29 years of age, i.e. Millennials and Generation X, by comparison to 19% of the same for Fox, 16% for MSNBC, and 21% for CNN.
[8] According to the Pew Research Center, Generation X are identified as those Americans born between 1965 and 1980.
[9] According to the Pew Research Center, Millennials are identified as those Americans born after 1980.
[10] According to Anadolu University's website in Turkey, Dr. Ebru Gökdağ is a professor of theatre at Anadolu University. She holds a Ph.D. and Master's in Theatre from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and another Master's in Theater from Texas A&M University.

Consider that there are 52 cards in a deck. Each card belongs to one of four suits and each of those cards belongs to one of 13 ranks, with the exception of the joker. The joker is an outlier, and his absence of conformity to the rest of the cards means he can adapt to a range of games being played. This adaptability is what Boal had in mind in developing the Joker System for theatre — an actor whose purpose in the production is to be mobile and flexible within the show. By not conforming to one particular role, the joker is able to serve the audience's needs to foster greater understanding for the material being played in front of them.

The modern day Boal-joker is Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show*. *The Daily Show* can best be understood by identifying those practices that are borrowed from the Joker System and because of that, *TDS* shares a history with other forms of activist theatre that use current events as its base. Boal's article, "The Joker System: An Experiment by the Arena Theatre of Sao Paulo" details the origins and articulates the particulars of his Joker System (92):

1. to "create a system...enabling...the use of every style, genre, technique, or process" (92);
2. the joker who is able to act as "master of ceremonies, lecturer, judge, raisonneur, stagehand, he can interrupt the action, repeat certain actions in order to demonstrate them better, use slides, films, diagrams, statistics" (93);
3. "Explanations. Breaks in the dramatic continuity of the show, given by the joker as, lectures, articulating the point of view of those presenting the play... The Joker is a man of our own time and does to the universe of the play..."(93); and
4. Interviews. There are many devices which show the audience the true mind of the character; for instance, the soliloquy, the aside, etc.... In our system, whenever it is necessary to show the audience the inside story of the character, the Joker asks him those questions the audience wants answered. During the interviews, the Joker addresses the character, not the actor." (94)

While not each aspect of Boal's theory aligns perfectly with *The Daily Show*, there are some tactics, enumerated here, that pronounce themselves. The techniques and format of Stewart's *Daily Show* can be identified in the format to reveal Boal's established theatrical theory — the Joker System and its overarching theory and book of the same name, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Prior writing about the program do not evaluate, or even consider, the claims this thesis is making. *The Daily Show's* techniques reveal a pedagogical style aimed at the combat of discrimination and the expansion of civil liberties through methods of reinterpretation of dominant news narrative presented from the major networks. News networks have immense power and influence over the information that is brought to the American public because of their commanding market share of information. While their services are arguably valuable to maintain an informed public, *TDS* provided a counter narrative to current events by examining the world through an every-man lens. This particular lens looks at events not dryly or detached, but with empathy for those involved.

Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, discusses the development of the *Teatro de Arena*, (Arena Theatre) of São Paulo under his artistic direction as a reaction to the, then dominate, *Teatro Brasileiro de Comedia* (Brazilian Theatre of Comedy, i.e. TBC) which he writes "…was made by those who have money, to be seen also by those who have it" (136). Theatres such as the TBC, he argues, segregated its audience by the 'haves' and 'have-nots.' In contrast, Boal believed the Arena theatre's "…first stage… [was] to satisfy the middle class," an obvious contrast to the elite (TBC) which catered to the upper classes of Brazilian society (137). By comparison to the TBC, the Arena Theatre was created to be "Close...to its public" (136). The *Daily Show* mimicked this closeness

by satirizing those dominant and affluent American news networks, e.g. CNN, Fox, and MSNBC, which created an alternate narrative of political and culture interpretation for the middle and lower classes of the United States in a similar fashion as Boal's Arena Theatre.

In the '74 UCLA interview, Driskell asked Boal what sorts of plays were produced at the Arena Theatre and what his contribution was. Boal discussed the three phases that the Arena underwent during his artistic direction. Each of these phases was designed to address the political turmoil and authoritarianism of Brazil's *Ditadura Militar*.[11] The first phase described is one where the theatre "did [its]...best to produce only the first plays written by new Brazilian authors." From that point, the second plays of those playwrights were then passed off to other theatre companies, he says, so that the Arena would continue to produce *only* new work (72).

In the second phase, Boal departed from exclusively producing new work and began to reimagine classical plays through the lens of the chaotic political and cultural climate of Brazil. He acknowledged a "reversal of the process" in relation to the first phase. He said of this junction,

> If during the first phase we tried to produce plays concerned with Brazilian reality and to make the public acquire a general understanding of its problems, to universalize the situation, in this second phase we took universal plays and attempted to incorporate them. (72)[12]

This phase identifies how Boal was taking universally familiar plays and reinterpreting them with situations directly recognizable to an audience. By this point, a theme is developing which is that which seeks to educate audiences about the current political

[11] Portuguese: translation, military dictatorship
[12] Examples provided by Boal include, "*Tartuffe* by Moliere, *The Best Judge the King* by Lope de Vega, *The Inspector General* by Gogol, and also Brazilian plays, such as *Um Aviso* by Martins Pena" (72).

circumstances of authoritarianism. This pedagogical tactic was intended as a means of subversion towards the authoritarian government — a crime that led to his imprisonment, torture, and exile. It is this process of adjusting tactics that lead to the third phase of the Arena's protest of the military junta.

Boal's self-critique identified that the "The third stage was concerned with combining both the first stage, which [he says] was too objective (almost Naturalistic), and the second one, which was too abstract" (72). *Zumbi*, which will be discussed in greater detail later, was a "phase... in which both principles were fused: the extreme objectivity of Naturalism, and the abstraction, subjectivity or universality of the classical plays" (72). The analysis of Boal's three-part process in arriving at the Joker System and the later development of the Theatre of the Oppressed brings closer the underlying philosophies at play in both the Arena and *The Daily Show*, which is that subversive, activist theatre is an effective pedagogical tool against authoritarianism.

TDS's naturalism stems from the act of presenting a true newscast, a model of informational television that is both recognizable and fresh because of its respectively consistent format and the perpetual narrative that it draws from. It has an objective purpose of providing factual information to its audience and the abstraction presents itself in the mechanics in which it does so, which are sketches, bits, and graphics, to name a few.

After Boal's third phase, he says that the Arena went on to perform "Newspaper Theatre," a type of theatre that combines theatre with current events. It is easy to see how such a combination could lead to satire, such as the kind produced by *TDS*. Boal's objective by doing so, according to Gerard Borland in his article "Newspaper Theatre:

Applying Performance Based Learning to Journalism Education,"[13] is to demystify the media, and educate people to question the notion of objectivity." Since professional media carries the weight of authenticity because it appears in print or via the air, cable, or Internet, audiences can be swayed to accept information without scrutinizing the objectivity of the content. What Boal and Stewart both do through their respective processes is examine 'legitimate' media through a theatrical lens, which by its very nature is internally critical of the motivations of the messenger. For *TDS*, it is the theatrical lens and not the satirical one that requires additional study on the historical nature of the *how* and *why* Boal's tactics were used, and continue to persist in other forms of satirical newscast.

By viewing Stewart's work outside the realm of satire, the ridicule of the powerful, we can begin to understand its primary goals. Humorous satire is merely the hook — the entertainment factor used to hold the audience's attention. The goal is not to lambast the latest stupidity or buffoonery (although they do this well) done by a politician or corporation. The greater goal, however, is to create satire that informs and engages the general public in the discussion about injustices that are consequential to their lives and the people around them. "Public," in the American context, includes those without economic or political power, minorities of every persuasion — people of color, immigrants, the LGBTQ community — and, in general, all those whose government and businesses might not act on their best interest or embrace the American ambition that is inclusivity.

[13] This paper was presented to the Journalism Education Association Conference, Griffith University, 29 November – 2 December 2005, by Gerard Borland, Ph.D. of Charles Sturt University and David Cameron of Newcastle University, respectively located in Australia and the UK.

This argument does not make the claim that satire has the ability to influence the audience's opinion of politics and culture. Instead, it is that satire *done well* has pedagogical qualities that identify flaws in government, national leadership, and corporations. It highlights the absurdity of those arguments and beliefs used to discriminate and disenfranchise minority groups. My thesis argues *how* a televised comedy uses the theatrical tools of satire to transform the ways in which audiences engage with divisive cultural and legal issues like the rights of the LGBTQ community. By using a theatrical rather than political or literary lens, greater insight can be gained by this prolific and transformative program: *The Daily Show*.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, I believe, unknowingly practices a format similar to August Boal's Joker System as a method for reinterpreting the 24-hour news narrative. *TDS's* method was to consume the news cycle and reinterpret the narrative for the rank and file of the American public, the everyman, which is more diverse than is typically portrayed by the media. The cast and crew reinterpreted the narrative of current events and used plainspoken humorous language and characterization to communicate a point of view that often disagreed with the response of politicians and government. This process resembles what Boal did with both European and Brazilian plays by blending the recognizable narratives of each with the culture of living under military dictatorship in his native Brazil.

By reporting on current events through a condensed, interactive, and editorialized half-hour teleplay of the news, *TDS* involved *all* citizens in the national dialogue. Perhaps *TDS*'s universal appeal countered the underrepresentation of youth, race, gender, and sexual orientation, or combination thereof, from policy and newsmakers. Regardless of

the metrics of representation in mass media, the cast acted as *de facto* representation for the American counterculture who did not fit the prototype of the white, male, Christian, middle to upper class tax payer. Through the use of Boal's methods, *TDS* became a trusted voice of journalism for the progressive, young American. It did this by adopting a Boal-style lens focused on a diverse citizenry who did not fit the prototype of the conservative, boomer viewer. *The Daily Show's* topics engaged with all those who empathized with friends, family, and colleagues who might be brown, female, non-Christian, gay, trans, poor, or immigrant, among many other qualities that are used to discriminate.

Although *TDS* focused on a plethora of subjects regarding discrimination, the historical bookending of early debates and the SCOTUS decision on *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same sex marriage in the United States, allows us to see the entirety of the debate and the coverage can be examined from an arguable start to finish. We can analyze the evolved argument, the sway of public opinion from minority support to majority support, and then the codification of those cultural values into federal law. What was once considered a fringe value becomes a lynchpin to our greater constitutional belief in equality.

In order to fully understand the attitude of opposition towards the hegemonic political structure shared between Boal and Stewart, it is important to discuss Boal's initial use of newspaper theatre. [14] In a 2002 interview with Augusto Boal, reporter Ray Brown of *The Guardian* wrote the following:

> When a US-backed coup turned Brazil into a military dictatorship in 1964, Boal introduced 'Newspaper Theatre' [as a function of the Arena Theatre].

[14] Newspaper Theatre: "A system of techniques devised to give the audience a way to transform daily news articles or any non-dramatic pieces to theatrical scene." (*New Media Reader*, Wardrip-Fruin, 346)

> He set up groups to read the dailies and create a new play each night. [Boal says that] "We had dozens of groups. This helped people to understand the news. The military did not like that, that is why they sent me to prison.

Note the open hostility of the Brazilian government during Boal's use of Newspaper Theatre, or anything produced by the Arena at that time, and compare that with the American democracy in which Stewart operated. Both performers took issue with their respective government and the perceived violation of freedoms like speech and transparency with the public. For Boal, this loss was catastrophic because democracy had failed and the military, not the people, controlled the government. For Stewart, his feeling of oppression stemmed from the Bush years, the pursuant Global War on Terrorism, the Patriot Act, the Great Recession, and an overall brand of conservative politics that sought to enrich the wealthiest of Americans and viewed minorities as an affront to the American identity. Both men responded in a fashion that consumed 'slanted' and weak news and then would craft a performance and dialogue from it. The difference between the two is that Boal's democracy was already a complete failure, whereas Stewart's performance was an effort to highlight failures of transparency from the American government and the disenfranchisement of the people.

In an interview on April 29, 2015 with Pulitzer Prize-winner Judith Miller, an American journalist, Stewart accused her of purposefully "help[ing] the [Bush] administration take us [the United States] to the most devastating mistake in foreign policy in 100 years," speaking of the invasion in Iraq in 2003, and added "but you seem lovely." During the interview, Stewart pressed Miller that her reporting was instrumental in drumming up support for the Iraq War because of a failure of the press to hold government accountable. Stewart asks of Miller that "The information," that being that

Iraq had weapons of mass destructions, "came from the Bush administration. Yes?" Miller responds that "broadly speaking, yes" it did. She attempts to counter that she was maintaining her standards as a journalist. Stewart rebuts this stance that Miller failed to keep her reporting in context because the "administration was very clearly pushing a narrative" and that Miller failed to report that. The interview concludes that:

> We're never going to see eye to eye on it... [because] these discussions always make me incredibly sad because I feel like they point to institutional failures at the highest levels and no one will take responsibility for it and they pass the buck to every individual other than themselves. It's sad.

One of his more lengthy and substantive interviews, lasting 22 minutes, his transition as joker from the actor/journalist, provides the opportunity to act as himself, a concerned citizen, rather than a newsman. In such moments, he is Boal's everyman. Stewart learns, performs, and teaches for his audience, the American people. The interview is an important part of the Joker System and of activist theatre as a whole because it speaks to the incredible responsibility of the press to hold government accountable.

In 1965, after Boal's incorporation of Newspaper Theatre into the Arena's repertoire, he created the Joker System (Gökdağ 27). Although he performed the news on stage and Stewart on camera in front of a live audience, Stewart and the cast and crew of *TDS* had similar goals as Boal. Broadcast and media news is a messy business; it is perpetual, confusing, and tangled—difficult for anyone to fully grasp and follow the narrative if you do not watch daily. Stewart took that saturated 24-hour narrative of news coverage from multiple network sources and, in a way, created his own form of Newspaper Theatre that blended journalism with theater and used tactics explicated by the Joker System.

The importance of my research reinvigorates Boal's theories that, while theatre practitioners are more commonly aware, are largely absent from the analysis of political theorists and academics. *The Stewart/Colbert Effect: Essays on the Real Impact of Fake News*, edited by Amarnath Amarasingam in 2011, provides, as the title suggests, a collection of essays where an assortment of 18 academics muse over the effects of Stewart and Colbert on the American psyche and its relationship to the American media and power structure. What is lacking from the analyses is the theatre of it all. These essays critique specific subjects of the show, the nature and role of comedy in politics, and the attraction of young adults to the genre. A basic understanding of dramatic structure and characterization, however, indicates that there is a philosophy at play in *TDS* that is glossed over.

The closest to a discussion of theatre in *The Stewart/Colbert Effect* is Julie R. Fox's essay, "Wise Fools: Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert as Modern Day Jesters in the American Court" in which she asserts that:

> Fools have appeared in a variety of media over the years including the fool literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Shakespearean dramas, circus and vaudeville skits, slapstick films, paintings, cartoons, and playing cards (Willeford 1969)... all draw our attention to the folly of a situation, whether it is a scene in a play or film, a skit in circus or vaudeville act, or the real-world drama that unfolds daily on the political stage (137).

While the closeness of 'fools' to power is interesting, the comparison here is disingenuous because Fox only hints at the theatricality behind *TDS*, but never fully explores the connection of *how* the "attention to the folly" is constructed. Performers such as Stewart or Colbert are described as fools, or anchors, or satirists, but Fox does not identify them as actors or artists. This omission of the accurate moniker 'actor' for Stewart and Colbert demonstrates an unawareness of the theatrical mechanization and

history that make *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* such compelling and entertaining mediums for social justice. It would be like comparing an automobile to a covered wagon as modes of transportation without ever discussing the development of the internal combustion engine: both have wheels, but the true splendor of the automobile is the intricacy, genius, and creativity that is found in the engineering, not the wheel.

American historian Thomas Underwood [15] remarked during a lecture that "One traditional way that conservatives and liberals have been contrasted is in their attitude toward the relationship between stateways and folkways. Conservatives, it has been held, do not believe stateways can change folkways while liberals believe the opposite." In other words, the collective mind of a populace can transform in one of two ways: 1. Change the laws and eventually the culture will follow, or 2. Change the culture and eventually the laws will follow. The theories developed by Boal seek to address the second. This thesis parses out the cultural shifts that both mirrored and affected national policy on the legal rights of the LGBTQ community. The oversight of theatre when examining satire, such as *The Daily Show*, renews the purpose for studying Boal's theories, while also reconciling them as a forgotten, but effective 'underdog,' because his methods have had profound consequences on the cultural attitudes of citizens to their government and the legal challenges that stem from it.

Stewart reimagined *The Daily Show* when he replaced Craig Kilborn. After Stewart left *TDS*, MSNBC produced *Jon Stewart has Left the Building*, a documentary about his influence on American politics and his vision at *TDS*, which featured interviews from former staff, as well as prominent figures in journalism and politics who were

[15] Dr. Thomas Underwood is a writing professor at the college at Harvard University and a former professor of mine.

impacted by the show. Addressing Stewart's influence on the program, former Field Producer, Evan Cutler (1998-2002) who was present during the Kilborn-Stewart transition said that,

> What Jon did was instill this idea that everything had to have a point of view. You couldn't just do a story for the sake of 'Oh, this is funny.' It had to have a point of view and he really wanted to go after the high targets, the people who were up on a pedestal and needed to be taken down. (*Jon Stewart has Left the Building*)

His techniques were both unique and a throwback to Boal because they engaged audiences with the interplay of news and government. The critical writings on Boal and *The Daily Show* do not address how Stewart's success might be recreated in future iterations of televised satire, although evidence suggests that it already has been. Stewart, whether aware or not, was performing an already established tradition of Boal's theories on activist theatre and political engagement within the field. By articulating these theories and examining Stewart's work through Boal's lens, it means that the practice can be repeated and refined as an effective tool for cultural and legal progressivism. It is an invaluable tool that gives a voice to the voiceless.

Chapter II

From Aristotle to Brecht to Boal to Stewart:

A Brief History of Political Theater and Anti-Catharsis as a Motivator

After scrutinizing all aspects of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, it becomes clear that viewing it through the lens of theater studies is useful and accurate. It is then that we identify the components within it that bear relation to the theories developed by Brazilian theatre practitioner and social activist, Augusto Boal. Audiences tend to view stage performances and televised ones as related, but often think of the former as (more) legitimate theatre — those sorts of mediums where the audience sits behind an imaginary fourth wall to watch actors perform on stage, invisible voyeurs to the characters' interactions and conflict. To complicate the comparison, *TDS* is filmed in front of a live audience just as a stage performance occurs in real-time also in front of a live audience.

Televised satires, such as *TDS*, might be fully understood as conceptually traditional theatre, the basic arrangement that most audiences are familiar with, but unable to name, should be reviewed: Aristotelian Dramatic Structure. The basic Aristotelian Dramatic structure, often taught in a high school English or drama class, consists of five distinct narrative parts: 1. Exposition, 2. Rising Action, 3. Climax, 4. Falling Action, and 5. Dénouement. All these parts work together in sequence to form a story arc for most plays, sitcoms, tragedies, or movies. Through the identification of these components in theatrical narrative, we can more fully understand the relationships and differences between the dramatic structures of the classical and the modern.

In the classical Aristotelian Dramatic Structure, the first component is *exposition*, where the audience is introduced to the characters, setting, and time of the play. Viewers understand who the characters are, where the play is taking place, and the time at which the action is occurring, e.g. the season, time of day, and/or period in history. Here the audience is exposed to the basic elements of the narrative and, hence, bring their own experiences and perceptions to the early events of the story.

Following the exposition, the audience is confronted with the second part of the play, the *rising action*, in which the characters in the story are confronted with the conflict to be overcome. Once the characters are met with this problem, they must engage with it; they are changed by it. Their response is part of the rising action, which leads to the *climax* of the narrative, the third part of the structure.

At the climax, the narrative tension is typically the most exciting part of the play. The audience both anticipates and relates to the characters as they work to overcome their problems and issues. After the climax, the characters move into the *falling action* in which the narrative begins to conclude itself and any remaining loose ends are tied up. The audience learns the fate of those involved and we, the audience, can breathe a sigh of relief over what we have just seen. This feeling of relief is called *catharsis* and signals to the audience the conclusion of conflict.[16]

The last part of the arc is the *dénouement*. In this remaining stage of the structure, the author or playwright, through his characters, may offer a final lesson to the audience. The dénouement is an important pedagogical device used to teach the audience a lesson or to offer a warning or word of caution. This neatly tied-up conclusion provides

[16] Later, I will discuss the meaning of the absence of catharsis, in addition to alternate forms of catharsis, in the modern theatre and its relevant meaning as it relates to forms of activist theatre.

additional catharsis, in the classical sense, or emotional release for any remaining tension felt by the audience. The audience has invested their time in the characters, the issues, and the trials.

Within this dramatic structure, Aristotle further articulates in Chapter 6 of *The Poetics* six components that can be found within a piece of theatre:

> There are six parts consequently of every tragedy, as a whole, that is, of such or such quality, viz. a Fable or Plot [17], Characters, [18] Diction [19], Thought, [20] Spectacle[21] and Melody[22]...and there is nothing else besides these six.

These components, within the dramatic structure, produce what the public accepts as theatre (in the traditional sense) and what we are accustomed to in most televised and film mediums, in addition to their theatrical elders. Aristotle articulates the schematic for theatre that audiences are already familiar with, even if they cannot readily name the components of that architecture. This structure remains the dominant form of theatre used today in film, television, and the stage. Experimentation with and divergence from this classical standard emerges early in the twentieth century because of advances in science, psychology, and populist movements that address civil rights and suffrage in Western culture. These advancements have a unifying theme of inclusion that influenced all forms of art. Audiences begin to see that spirit of inclusion in the twentieth century with the

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[17] Fable (or Plot) are "the end and purpose of the tragedy." This is the point or reason for what the story is about.
[18] Aristotle says, "Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions." For him, "Character" refers to the qualities imbued by those personalities within the play.
[19] Diction: According to Aristotle, diction is the "the expression of their [the characters'] thoughts in words. It is the thoughts performed in prose and expressed by the characters of the play.
[20] "Thought" refers to the motivation of the characters, the why and reasoning for the actions they take.
[21] Spectacle: "Stage appearance of the actor;" this refers to the aesthetic or 'look' of the play, i.e. sets, costumes, effects, etc.
[22] Melody can literally refer to the music or songs of the play. In ancient Greece, music would be assigned to the chorus of a play. Today the selections would be scant of any stage or screen performance that did not include at least some music.

disintegration of the fourth wall separating stage characters from audience members. The removal of the fourth wall by some playwrights was a highly purposeful device meant to include audiences in the conflict on stage. In doing so, playwrights often withheld catharsis from their audience so that endings could be resolved by the actions of the audience once they left the theatre. The abstention of catharsis signaled the transition of the audiences' assumed role as a passive observer to an active one.

Experimentation with the classical structure during early years of Modernism was augmented when actors began to perform realistically, not exaggerated, and writers concentrated on the problems of the everyman man, not the aristocrat. The scope of the theatre's function and mission began to extend beyond entertainment value into avenues that addressed broader thematic concepts of injustice and discrimination; again, its purpose was to *personally* and *emotionally* involve the audience in the conflict on stage to a specific end. With realistic performances, actors began to internalize their motivation first as a psychological response to stimuli. In contrast with the 'old style,' the actor's performance was a psychological one that demonstrated an internal conflict for human behavior. This marriage of content to technique moved audiences from a passive to an active role in classical theatre. For early twentieth century audiences who expected Aristotelian structure, i.e. introduction of (unrealistic) characters, their problems, and — this part is key — the neat resolution of those problems, these experimentations and concepts signaled a departure, or at least an alteration, from the traditional theatre.

In the classical structure, the terminal resolution of the conflict provides catharsis[23] for an audience and signals an end to his involvement in the narrative. The

[23] Catharsis, in the theatrical sense of the word, is the emotional release the audience feels following the resolution of a narrative, i.e. the release of tension to the conflict of the story.

release of narrative tension is uniquely important in the Aristotelian tradition. How does the function of the theatre change when that release is withheld from an audience? Its absence — in the Aristotelian sense of the word — in some modern theatre forms, some of which include Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal, signal the theorists' desire to motivate and influence the audience towards a specific goal of resolution that previously would have been provided by the narrative. Similarly, *TDS*, as a form of theatre, withholds classical catharsis from its live audience: no episode ever ends with a 'happily ever after.' Without the emotional release of classical catharsis, *TDS* demonstrates a tool derived from the patronage of modernist theatre and a crucial concept in this analysis.

In "Which Catharsis Do They Mean? Aristotle, Moreno, Boal and Organization Theatre,"[24] Stefan Meisiek [25] analyzes and defines the forms of catharsis as it refers to the classical Aristotelian Dramatic Structure and its transformation and meaning during Modernism. "Organization theatre," he says, "does not only include plays with passive audiences rather, the trend is toward greater involvement" (805). His essay first attempts to define the use of catharsis explained by Aristotle, who wrote plays for passive audiences, and then compares the use of modern catharsis for theatre written intently for active audiences — audiences who have a personal involvement or stake in the outcome of the narrative. Meisiek asserts, "Aristotle adopted the notion of catharsis and introduced it into classical theatre theory" because the "…tragic drama elicit[ed] the emotions of pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*) in the audience, thus also releasing them from the effects" (800). Meisiek is quick to note that Aristotle "contradicts Plato, who saw in theatre

[24] Organization Studies, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, CA & New Delhi
[25] Stefan Meisiek is the Director of Educational Innovation in Business in Sydney Australia, formerly an associate Professor at the Copenhagen Business School. He holds a Ph.D. in Organizational Studies from Stockholm School of Economics. "His research interests include organization theatre and social sharing of emotion in organizations." (816)

nothing more than entertainment and the imitation of reality" (800). Ancient Greek civilization debated if theatre's function was persistent on whether it was meant to teach or entertain. Conversely, the withholding of that emotional release signifies Brecht and Boal's use of catharsis for the purposes that the audience's response to the narrative should be a proactive one not reliant on the playwright's 'neat' conclusion to the present conflict. Time has proven that consistent evolvement of the art form demonstrated that Plato's attitudes on the subject of its function were shortsighted — Aristotle for the win.

By summarizing the work of philologist Jacob Bernays who "reconstructed the lost part of Aristotle's *Poetics*," he was able to define the Greek philosopher's use of "catharsis as the treatment of uneasiness, and that it aims not at suppressing or changing the source of uneasiness, but at arousing and uncovering it in order to release the subject from it" (801). According to Meisiek, Bernays establishes a classical definition, at least according to Aristotle's *Poetics*, of what catharsis means for an audience. Contextually, a viewer may experience a theater or film narrative and, even if they have not personally experienced these actions or emotions, their empathy may be momentarily aroused. Both viewer and character experience the conflict, but their feelings and involvement in the production are not the same. The viewer's feelings are short lived since his involvement is passive in relation to the action on stage or screen. The conclusion of the classical narrative brings with it the conclusion of the viewer's catharsis because he has been released from whatever inner turmoil was experienced during the performance; it is no longer a part of him. What Brecht, Boal, and Stewart do is to personalize the conflict they show to their respective audiences.

Movement from the viewer's passive role to an active one is a hallmark of Modernism and modernist theatre. This active role of the audience is present in the works and theories of Brecht and Boal, and by extension *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* because all three of these practitioners do not provide "neat" conclusions to their staged conflicts. According to them, the audience can be entertained, invested, and empathetic to the action on stage, but the play's end should not signal an end to the audience's investment in the thematic conflict. For these three, their works are thoroughly grounded in real, ever-present conflict that is easily recognizable and personable for an audience. Unlike Aristotelian catharsis, the works of Brecht, Boal, and Stewart lack a satisfying catharsis.

Modernism is the term used to identify that period at the turn of the twentieth century when western civilization made monumental strides in human rights, science, technology, art, music, writing, and culture; theatre was also a part of that transition. It evolved, mimicked, and opined the modern culture in which it was conceived. It is important to understand that this period in human history — Modernism — should be viewed as open ended, progressive, a rejection of the class system, and far from conclusive. Some modernist[26] theatre, unlike Aristotelian theatre, lacks catharsis and because it lacks catharsis, exists thus far in perpetuity. Writers, directors, designers, and

[26] What is the difference between modern, Modernism, and modernity? *Modern* is the general term used to reflect on the condition of an idea or thing that is current to the period in which it is conceived. However, *Modernism* makes direct reference to the period when Western culture in the late nineteenth and twentieth century was advanced by egalitarian notions of suffrage, civil rights, freedom, and rational thought over previous traditional norms of political involvement, gender, and race, etc. The age of Modernism is the current period of history in which we now live. When we use the term "Modernist," we refer to the content and context of the arts that represent the current period and ideals expressed at the turn of the twentieth century.

actors[27] created modernist incarnations of theatre as a response to the new human condition, a condition that was no longer satisfied with clearly defined classes and strict standards of conduct for wholly diverse populations of race, gender, creed, sexuality, and gender identity, etc. Early twentieth century Modernism welcomed a new spirit of unity, and signaled an end to a culture of isolation. As a result, the content of art mirrored the societal shift towards inclusiveness.

Theatre prior to the twentieth century preoccupied itself with the plights of the nobility and rarely if at all touched on the problems and discourse of the common man. The common man appears in those plays, sometimes acting as speakers of the truth, but the play's central focus preoccupies itself with the problems of the upper class. For example, in Molière's 1664 *Tartuffe*, Dorine, the family's housemaid, is instrumental in exposing Tartuffe's plot to steal the family's fortune. Moreover, an agent of the king, an emissary of the state, acting as a *deus ex machina* device, saves the day at the last minute to protect the family fortune from Tartuffe. Although the nobility are the butt of the joke for Molière's play, the characters with insight are of a lower social and economic class, but they are not their equals and are not the focus of the play.

Plays, light and fanciful, comedic and tragic, were rarely an expose or indictment of society's ills. This was not deeply personal material for the masses — entertaining, yes, but not relevant to their circumstances. What would be the use in examining the common man, if he lacked agency over such troubles? But Modernism, in the avenue of human rights, was not concerned with the *haves*, but rather the *have-nots*. The *have-nots*

[27] "Actors" in this context should be interpreted as the accepted moniker for both male, female, and non-binary theatrical performers and not a term that is gendered. "Actress" is a term that is, in most theatrical circles, considered antiquated.

had vastly different problems than the upper echelons of society. The subject of focus in theatre shifted from the powerful to the powerless.

A prime example of this shift is Arthur Miller's 1949 play, *Death of a Salesman*, whose narrative embodies the psychological motivations and backstory of its central character, Willy Loman, as he recalls his life in a series of flashbacks from childhood, his experiences in World War II, marriage, and the growth of his family. His conflicts are feverishly existential because they are given rich context through Miller's portrayal of the failed expectations of the American dream. Modernism brought a new age of reason, education, and enlightenment. It was (and is still) a period of self-reflection, empowerment, and improvement.

The reasons for this new age in Europe and the United States are many, and include compulsorily education that lead to high rates of literacy,[28] advanced printing technology that provided easy and cheap access to printed materials and news, and the success of the women's suffrage movements that lead to a drastic increase in the electorate.[29] A fully engaged population that could read with access to materials to read began to think more about their place in society, they began to have ideas, and they began to put those ideas into political action. The theatre in this new modern world reflected the new condition and importance of the whole of society rather than just the powerful. Modernism, Naturalism, Realism, and Expressionism were all forms of theatre to come of this new age.

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[28] The National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the US Department of Education provides reliable statistics on the rates of literacy in the US since 1870. It states, "in 1870, 20 percent of the entire adult population was illiterate, and 80 percent of the black population was illiterate." By 1930, only 4.3% of the total US population was illiterate, and 16.4% of the black population.

[29] In 1916, approximately 18.5 million American cast votes in the presidential election. After the passage of the 19th amendment in 1920, approximately 26.7 million votes were cast in the 1920 presidential election.

Theatre is transformative and the practice, like all art, responds to the environment in which it is developed. This thesis uncovers common traits among Jon Stewart, Augusto Boal, and Bertolt Brecht in order to identify the external, large-scale national conflicts to which these men responded. In reaction to those national conflicts — conflicts that impacted the quality of life for its citizenry — these men reacted artistically, pedagogically, and forcefully against discrimination and disenfranchisement. Each man actively contributes to the Modernist theatre and, thereby, the modern theatre is a product of the people's dissent and revolution.

From 1898 to 1917, the political and cultural revolution of Russia escalated, marked by exponential strikes and the rise of the Bolsheviks, a term meaning "one of the majority." In order to have the tools to portray the dissatisfaction and disenfranchisement of citizens realistically, performance theory evolved to be more honest and realistic, which signaled the departure of the *la pièce bien faite*, the well-made-play, as a realistic representation of life. This particular period of Russian culture, and Western culture in general, chronologically coincides with the Modernist era, thus we should commonly think of the early twentieth century as a time of revolution, pubic disobedience, and expansion of the rights of workers and suffrage. In Russia, growing public dissent towards the aristocracy eventually lead to the Bolshevik *coup d'état* known as the Russian Revolution of 1917. This successful revolution lead to the toppling of the ruling Czarist autocracy, which was replaced by the proletariat-centric Soviet Union just half a decade later.

After the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, the young country was eager to develop a national identity and one of its methods was through theatre. Founded in

1898, the Moscow Art Theatre reflected the defunct U.S.S.R.'s desire to address real conflicts with realistic performances; it represented an honest presentation of life. After the Russian Revolution, the Moscow Art Theatre rose to greater prominence. Konstantine Stanislavski was most associated with the theatre, and credited with the development of "method acting," a performance theory predicated upon the philosophy of actors responding truthfully to given situations. Stylistically, method acting signaled a departure from the wildly over-emotive acting often associated with theatre prior to the rise of Modernism. This style — *method* — of acting paired remarkably well with the new dramatic literature being written at the time, much of which had strong opinions on the status quo of governments, laws, and culture. The Soviet theatre reflected the country's radical political strategy that attempted to make all labor equal, including playwrights and practitioners, which suggests that politics and aesthetics potentially emerge from the same creative impulses.

As people all across Western culture began to respond externally to their circumstances, they were also reflecting internally, psychologically to these struggles. Wilhelm Wundt is credited as being the father of modern psychology for his creation of the Institute for Experimental Psychology at the University of Leipzig in 1879. Although psychology as a scientific practice emerged in the late nineteenth century, it was popularized and made mainstream in the twentieth century with the works of Sigmund Freud. Freud published his seminal text on the matter in 1917, *A General Introduction on Psychoanalysis* in which he said of the process that,

> The patient talks, tells of his past experiences and present impressions, complains, confesses his wishes and emotions…With words one man can make another blessed, or drive him to despair; by words the teacher transfers his knowledge to the pupil; by words the speaker sweeps his

> audience with him and determines its judgments and decisions. Words call forth effects and are the universal means of influencing human beings, (22-23).

Through this discussion between therapist and patient, the underlying cause of compulsion and neuroses, Freud thought, could be discovered and remedied. Although this sort of analysis is commonplace today, Freud's most popular text signaled a paradigm shift on how people explore their desires and faults and arrive at reasons for human action, successes, and failures. It reflects the philosophy of the era that language and personal narrative are driving forces for the influence of people and, by extension, this sort of thinking permeated the culture and the arts. Just as Stanislavski's Method Acting taught actors to ask "what if," Freud's theories taught patients to ask "why." Stewart's philosophy on *TDS* posited the same sort of questions to his audiences and all three men innervated their audiences with complex questions, with even more complex answers. This is what an effective teacher does. The pupil does not reflect only on his given circumstances but seeks a remedy to them.

Brecht posed questions in the narrative of his plays with the motive that his audience might be able to respond to them. "Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."[30] This quotation provides a mission statement for the sort of transformative modern theatre produced by Brecht, Boal, and eventually Stewart. The modern theatre envisioned was a tool to elevate the common man from his powerless social position — a tool to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The opinion expressed by Brecht contrasts starkly with Shakespeare's own ideas on the

[30] Although this quote has been attributed to Bertolt Brecht, it is likely a derivative of Leon Trotsky's: "Art, it is said, is not a mirror, but a hammer: it does not reflect, it shapes." Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (1924); Ch. 4: Futurism, p. 120.

purpose of art as expressed in *Hamlet*, published in 1603, in which he says of acting and theatre that one should,

> Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion
> be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the
> word to the action; with this special observance o'erstep not
> the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is
> from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the
> first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the
> mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature,
> scorn her own image, and the very age and body of
> the time his form and pressure.

Comparing these two seminal quotes of historically distant playwrights allows us to understand the malleability of theatre to suit the time in which it is written. For Shakespeare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[31] the masses had not the tools with which to shape their own destiny. However, for Brecht in the twentieth century, those tools manifest themselves in several forms; the masses armed themselves with education and legal rights, which gave them a higher purpose than that of living day to day for shelter and food, which were more readily available because of the industrial revolution. Thus, the theatre began to address the lives of the many, not the few, and the text reflected the perpetual development of the non-aristocratic and mercantile classes. Since that development exists in perpetuity, the use of anti-catharsis reflects the dissatisfaction with disenfranchisement, prejudice, and authoritarianism and acknowledges that the combat of those ills relies on the unification and, most importantly, action of the many. Playwrights such as Brecht abdicated — even refused — their Aristotelian responsibility of catharsis, instead shifting the burden to their audiences.

[31] There is some discrepancy as to when Hamlet was written, but it is generally accepted as 1599-1603 with the quarto edition.

For example, Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* uses catharsis in a fashion that is meant to compel the audience to action. Within the text of the play, Brecht consistently breaks the fourth wall when characters address the audience directly by commenting on the soldiers occupying the humble town of Halle. Published in 1939, with a first performance in 1941 in Zurich, Brecht was responding to the fascism and Nazism of World War II that had overtaken Europe. Kate Baker of *The Daily Beast* provides analysis of the play in her 2014 article, "Brecht's Mercenary Mother Courage Turns 75," to the occasion, reception, and purpose of the original text. She writes that Brecht fled Germany "…after being labeled 'degenerate' by the Nazi regime. [During that time] Brecht had been busy in exile, penning impassioned screeds against the Führer's war machine and warning of German dreams of empire." Brecht's anti-fascist play offers a stark lesson to its audiences who offer passive acceptance to regimes that infringe upon the modern morality code of egalitarianism.

Baker is keen to note the ambiguity in the intent of Brecht's *Mother Courage* and the perception of the audience. Citing Brecht, she says that,

> Later, Brecht complained, 'The [East Berliner][32] audiences of 1949 and the ensuing years did not see Mother Courage's crimes, her participation, her desire to share in the profits of the war business; they saw only her failure, her sufferings.' They were missing the point of his *Verfremdungseffekt*, that breaking of the fourth wall [,] which was supposed to make the masses think, not feel, in order to nudge them in a revolutionary direction.

Verfremdungseffekt, or the "distancing effect," is a cornerstone to activist theatre. Because of the ambiguity of Mother Courage, we the audience are not sure what exactly to feel about her. While her circumstances being caught up in the war between the

[32] It is important to draw make known the context of East Berliners circumstances as they were living under Soviet control by 1949. By 1961, the construction of the Berlin Wall would go up, effectively cutting them off from the rest of Germany.

Catholics and Protestants and the loss of her children is sympathetic, we envision our own reactions to the given circumstance. Do we profit from death and war as Mother Courage did or do we revolt, as was Brecht's intent? Baker ponders that choice from Brecht because he "…placed his merchant-mother in a dark universe of impossible choices. Is it worse to let your family starve or profit off the carnage?"

The "distancing effect" is Brecht's own brand of anti-catharsis. Brecht and Boal, both use anti-catharsis with great political purpose. It is a signal to the audience meant to 'pass the torch' along, as if to say, "Here is the issue. Here is the problem. You the audience now have a *responsibility* to provide your own dénouement, your own catharsis." The choices are written to be complex because the answer is equally so. *Mother Courage and Her Children* ends with the title character singing over the body of her dead daughter and then continuing to pull her cart. Where is the lesson and where is the relief? The war continues, the deaths are permanent, and Mother Courage goes on with her war profiteering. In the end, there is nothing left to do but question our choices of either tacit acceptance or revolutionary action.

The playwright's intent on thought over feeling is a narrow line and neither, one should assume, can be divorced from the other. I, the playwright, want you to think of the consequences rationally, to be engrossed in your own analyses. If East Berliners were unable, or unwilling, to grasp the intent of Brecht, perhaps that demonstrates a failing of the medium of the fictionalized, allegorical narrative of the play structure to convey such intent. Feasibly, for this reason the evolvement of the technique — *Verfremdungseffekt* — is best suited for the mediums developed by Boal and Stewart by relying more on non-fictional, current events to motivate thought and action.

On a side, but important, note for his efforts and writings, Bertolt Brecht was called to testify before the House of Un-American activities. During the Red Scare and the age of McCarthyism in America, congress began in 1947 to question artists in an effort to root out communists in the United States. During the hearing, Brecht was questioned about his plays and poems. When asked if he was a member of the communist party, Brecht responded that,

> Mr. Chairman, I have heard my colleagues say they consider this question as not as proper. But I am [a] guest in this country. I do not want to enter into any legal arguments. So I will answer your question fully as well [as] I can. I was and am not a member of any communist party. (*Open Culture*)

It is ironic that despite being a dissenter of fascism and the Nazi party in his native Germany, for which he was exiled, the US congress saw fit to summon Brecht before congress and question him for threat assessment based on his writings.

Readers and audiences much consider the presentation of current events as a serialized and perpetual narrative that is like a play, but firmly rooted in reality. The news is a script and the performance and meaning of it relies on the stylistic interpretation from the narrators. If the narrator is a journalist, the audience's response to it will be entirely different than if actors present that same script.

All episodes of *The Daily Show* end similarly. During the show, the audience learns of the characters and problems being covered and the actions in play. Its presentation in shimmering high-definition makes it all the more compelling story telling and elicits an automatic and empathetic response. Unlike classical theatre and its respective use of catharsis the emotional release is not the same for the audience; the play is continued the next day, and the next, serialized with reoccurring conflicts and characters. Resolution and catharsis can only be achieved through the public's

involvement and actions. If an episode discusses a law or government policy that could be interpreted as untenable vis-à-vis discrimination, Stewart and the cast examine it and provide the audience with the characters and the events leading up to the problem.

In a field piece from *TDS* entitled, "Last Gay Standing," which aired October 29, 2013, prior to the Supreme Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision in 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage, Al Madrigal, a correspondent/actor traveled to Mississippi and Alabama to examine the tolerance of gay relationships among citizens of those states. The purpose of the piece was to examine our perception of American Southerners as culturally intolerant. Mississippi and Alabama are Deep South states whose history has shown to be some of the most intolerant of progressive values. The segment aims to address the continued (and well-earned) stereotype to anecdotally determine if the culture and statistics regarding LGBTQ rights in these two states really is that intolerant.

Jon Stewart introducing the segment: "So listen to this. Gay marriage is legal now in New York, Massachusetts, California, you know, the gay states. But how long until the rest of the nation sees the light." The setup from Stewart introduces the problem of intolerance towards gay marriage by highlighting the national, divisive attitudes as one defined by culture and geography.

Before *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the legal fight was being won in the court systems of each individual state. Madrigal says, "State after state is racing to legalize gay marriage. But the question isn't who will be next, but who will be last?" Madrigal begins with addressing the conflict by the numbers with statistician, Nate Silver of *FiveThirtyEight.com*, who says that the last states to legalize gay marriage will be Alabama and Mississippi. Madrigal responds to Silver's assertion by asking, "Now when

you went to Mississippi what did you find?" Silver says he did not go. Madrigal then asks, "Now what about Alabama, you went to Alabama?" Silver again says he did not go, but continues by saying that "I think anecdotal evidence is more interesting and adds more color to a story, but…" At this point Madrigal cuts him off and rises from his seat to exit from the camera's view. The timing of his exit is humorous, and provides, theatrically, a way to switch scenes and to divide the nuanced conflict between statistics and stereotypes. As with 'stateways and folkways,' the argument may not be as simple as saying that the statistics suggest that Deep South states are intolerant because of the polling and the laws, neither of which may be an accurate representation of the culture; instead, as *TDS* suggests, the issue is more complex than that.

As the scene and segment advance, Madrigal is seen in discussion with two legal experts from each state: Alabama Civil Rights Attorney, Doug Jones[33] and Mississippi columnist of *The Dispatch*, Timothy "Slim" Smith. Both residents, who are progressives, insist that their state will be the last to accept gay marriage, if ever. The ensuing segment bounces between the two men expressing examples of how intolerant their states are. Smith says, "Mississippi was the last to ratify the 13th amendment, which allowed slavery." Jones says, "The Alabama constitution mandates separate schools for white and colored students, it still does."[34] The next question asked by Madrigal is, "Where does Alabama [and Mississippi] stand on sodomy? Jones says that sodomy is a Class III misdemeanor and Smith 'one-ups' him by saying that it is a felony in Mississippi and

[33] At the time of completion of this thesis, Doug Jones, a Democrat, had defeated controversial GOP Senate Candidate, Judge Roy Moore. Moore's defeat highlights again that seemingly intolerant states of the US, such as Alabama, can be demonstrably progressive.

[34] Although unenforceable, Alabama still maintain in its constitution the following language in Section 256: "Duty of legislature to establish and maintain public school system; apportionment of public school fund; separate schools for white and colored children.
… Separate schools shall be provided for white and colored children, and no child of either race shall be permitted to attend a school of the other race."

adds, “I’m surprised a gay couple can get a fishing license, let alone a marriage license.” Both parts of the segment show the connection between the statistics with Silver, and the laws, which are expressed by Jones and Smith; neither man discusses the residents or culture.

The final part of the five-minute segment involves Madrigal when he hires two stunt performers, dressed in stereotypical costumes of the southern ‘redneck,’ i.e. fatigues, cut-off shorts and t-shirts, trucker hats, unshaven and unkempt, to play “real-life gays.” “Round 1: The Gay PDA Test,” is a performance where both men are sent out on a busy commercial street in both Alabama and Mississippi while holding hands to gauge the reaction of onlookers to hidden cameras. One reaction they receive is from a young passerby in Alabama who proclaims, “Y’all are the most punk-rock gay couple I’ve seen in my life, dude.” Then a passerby gives both a fist-bump in solidarity. In Round 2, they are sent to a state-carnival photo booth in Mississippi where their picture is taken while sharing a kiss. The photographer is an elderly white man, who — perhaps because this is a commercial venture — exhibits acceptance of the staged romance, telling them “That’ll look awfully nice hanging up on your wall.” The last round is a staged engagement at a Waffle House in both states where each engagement is greeted by the applause of staff and patrons.

The intent of the segment is to teach viewers about the complexities and disconnection of culture from the law in seemingly intolerant regions of the country. Although certainly states such as Alabama and Mississippi have pockets (maybe large ones) of intolerance, so does every state. The point, however, is to show that progressive

morals can be alive and well, even if the laws of the region are not representative of their respective culture.

To demonstrate the *distancing effect*, or *anti-catharsis*, Madrigal shows that none of the characters have changed because of the conflict. The segment ends with the lesson of this sort of disconnection and the question, "what to do about it?" There is no successful conclusion: Alabama and Mississippi still have these arcane and discriminatory laws. Rather there is a call to action, whether that is on marriage equality, voting rights, or the act of protest, etc. Each episode concludes with the audience leaving the show themselves changed, rather than the characters, and slightly more knowledgeable and motivated on the issues. Madrigal signs off the segment with "I guess for all of our attempts to stereotype Southerners for stereotyping gay people, they showed they won't be put into a box, unless that's what they're into." Each segment represents its own narrative. The audience's empathetic response towards these stories and characters is part and parcel to their ability to identify one's self or those close to them within the exposition of the story.

You might say that satire is as American as baseball and apple pie and Mark Twain.[35] Mark Twain, one of America's most noted satirist, allegedly said, "If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're misinformed." Whether uttered by Twain or not, the concept has a Twain-like tone and relevance to the larger argument that news can be useful to the citizen body and terribly misinforming at the same time. The gray area between both is where truth and satire reside and can often be seen manifest in the arts of the day. Satire is the use of humor, irony, ridicule, or

[35] Although baseball was invented in America, Apple Pie is actually German. Ironically, German Chocolate cake was invented in America.

anything else that we Americans can think of to poke fun, lambast, or expose the powerful, the rich, the merchant, the culture, and the politician.

Take, for example, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a scathing satire of racial relations in the American south during the days of slavery. Published in 1884, Twain, by way of first-person narrative of the title character, critiques the Southern culture shaped by the practice of slavery. The adventures of Huck, a boy of about 13 and Jim, a runaway slave, demonstrate the inequities of one racial group to another as they interact with a variety of characters throughout their story. The story is written for the audience of children. Twain writes in a note at the beginning of the book that,

> My book is for boys and girls, but I hope that men and women also will read it. I hope that it will help them to remember pleasantly the days when they were boys and girls, and how they felt and thought and talked, what they believed, and what strange things they sometimes did.

Twain's book is certainly controversial, but effective satire has that effect. Twain's note signifies his intent was to teach young readers bout racial equality, while also hoping adult readers might be able to learn the same.

In the final chapter, Huck has a heated debate with the character Aunt Sally over the fate of Jim. Huck says, "You have no right to keep him [Jim] a prisoner. Let him go free immediately. He's no slave; he's as free as any man who walks on this earth" (291). This expresses the point of view of the author and the overall intention of the book, which is that through meaningful relationships we may better understand our equality to one another. Twain's book is written after the end of slavery, but during the rise of Jim Crow in the south. It is a reminder of our moral failings when it comes to falling back on old ways even after progressive strides that were hard won through blood and toil.

Global Insights on Theatre Censorship chronicles and analyzes various regimes from across the world that subjected its citizen-artists to strict scrutiny of the work they could produce and perform. It argues that theatre's potentially subversive nature "has always been subject to a wide range of social, political, moral and doctrinal controls, with authorities and social groups imposing constraints on scripts, venues, staging, acting and reception" (Preface). During Boal's time in Brazil, as one might see in other authoritarian governments, theatre that expresses a contrary point of view to the government is a threat to the survival of that regime.

Within the larger text is Gomes and Casadei's study entitled "An Overview of Theatre Censorship in Brazil (1925-1970)," an essay that provides a history of the censorship Brazil experienced. Most relevant to Boal's situation is the political censorship, which its authors conclude was "the prohibition of expressions that might imply criticism of the government, of the nation or its international relations" (164). Since Boal utilized current events as direct inspiration for the works produced by the Arena, he was subject to the state censorship expressed by the military, and the violation thereof is likely what led to his exile.

Whereas metaphor and allegory might allude to problems and figures within the government — Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* for example — satire, in particular, is directly critical of ruling factions, because it often directly names those figures and policies it is critical of. Gomes and Casadei write that Brazil already had a history of satire stemming from the 1920's that was critical of "a government dominated by coffee oligarchs and senior army officers" and infractions were regularly "retaliated with prison sentences" (165).

Boal's political environment was a tumultuous one. In August 1961, President Janio Quadros resigned his post, setting off a domino effect in Brazil resulting in the end of Brazil's constitutional democracy and the installment of an authoritarian government by military fiat. Addressing his new controlled life outside of a democracy and the need for a joker, Boal writes in *Theatre of the Oppressed* that, "The proposal of a new system does not arise out of a vacuum. It always appears in answer to aesthetic and social stimuli and needs" (150). A few years after the *coup d'état* in 1968, Gomes and Casadei explain that,

> ...the Conselho Superior de Censura (National Censorship Council) was created under federal auspices, and in December the regime issued the notorious Institutional Act Number 5… [which] reinforced censorship of the press, mass media and the arts, [and] suspended habeas corpus… (*Global Insights on Theatre Censorship* 167-168).

Just as Brecht created theatre in response to the political turmoil and transformation of his native Germany and Europe, for which he was deemed a degenerate, Augusto Boal also faced similar political recourse in his native Brazil. Activist theatre does not function for its own sake, but historically it is a response to the environment that it inhabits.

In contrast to past performance theories extolled by the virtues of realism and *Verfremdungseffekt* — for example Stanislavski and the Bolshevik Revolution, Brecht and the Third Reich — Boal's reaction to the *coup d'état* was a theatre philosophy called the Joker System. The system is tied closely to Brecht for sure, and Boal admits as much, but it is also tied to another form called Newspaper Theatre.

The idea that one would use real life to imitate art is as old as it is cliché. However, if an artist chooses to dramatize the current events of the day, then the artist offers an altogether different medium that is more accessible, retainable, and commensurate to action than conventional print. Some people do not like to read and they

may get more out of watching. In "The Concept of Sociodrama: A New Approach to the Problem of Inter-Cultural Relations" psychologist and founder of psychodrama, J.L. Moreno, makes the claim that he began the living newspaper movement in the early 1920's in Viennese Stegreiftheatre, calling it "a synthesis between the newspaper and the drama" (440). Moreno's article, published in 1943, articulates the aim of the dramatic technique:

> …in a living newspaper, the event had to be dramatized in accord with the cultural characteristics of the locality. The roles and the setting had to be portrayed, in order to have meaning, in the gestures, movements and interaction forms characteristic for that particular cultural setting. (441)

The techniques of Boal, and Stewart later on, are closely tied to the cultural nuances of their respective audiences, just as the purpose of Moreno's 'newspaper theatre.'

As Moreno elaborates, this tactic for conveying the news is effective for pedagogical purposes because the audience is culturally connected to the action. Brecht's 'distancing effect' may be quite effective for thought provocation with the hope of eliciting audience response, but his fictionalized, far flung narrative in space and time may be too foreign for the audience — at least that was the response from Brecht of East Berliners who seemed to miss the point of *Mother Courage*. Newspaper theatre brings the narrative back to the space and time currently occupied by the audience. Its closeness serves as a motivator to act upon the conflict presented in the narrative.

Boal aligns his Joker System to Moreno's Newspaper Theatre in *Theatre of the Oppressed* in which he states,

> …each moment of the play was interpreted 'presently' and 'conflictually', even though the 'montage' of the performance might not allow one to forget the presence of the story's group-narrator; some actors remained in the time and place of the spectators, while others travelled to other places and times. The result of this was a kind of 'patchwork quilt' formed of small fragments of many plays, documents, and songs.

> Examples of separation are innumerable. Let us remember…the whole 'Living Newspaper' movement in the American theatre. (146-147)

Boal's 'patchwork quilt' takes the best part of Brecht, which is the 'distancing effect' and combines it with Newspaper Theatre in a refined product that results in cultural closeness, pedagogical intrigue, and motivation. The refinement is the Joker System and it provides the versatility necessary for Boal's objective to educate audiences while also attempting to circumvent government censorship. However, arriving at this system, even with the influence of Brecht and Newspaper Theatre, is a circuitous process.

Boal's 'joker' is unbound to the convention of a single interpretation as in previous modes of activist theatre. He is a departure from the "The convention [which] is a created habit: it is neither good nor bad in itself." These were suitable techniques employed by theatre companies around the world, including his Arena Theatre that "...from 1956 to 1960, made ready use of realism, of its conventions, techniques, and procedures" (145). At the time, Brazil was still a constitutional democracy and thus the conventional techniques Boal and his company were using were suitable to the social and political climate at that time. The "conventional" techniques, he describes,

> ...answered the social and theatrical need of showing Brazilian life on stage, especially in its outward appearance. We were more interested in showing real things (borrowing terms from Brecht) than in revealing how things really are...we were ready to utilise [*sic*] the tools of any other style, as long as they met the aesthetic and social needs of our organisation [*sic*] as an activist theatre, that is, a theatre that attempts to influence reality and not merely reflect it, even if correctly. (145).

Conventional democratic problems, Boal argued, required conventional representation. However, following the political and cultural transition taking place in Brazil because of the *coup d'état*, Boal reasoned that the conventional tools of theatre — think Aristotelian Structure and Stanislavski's realism — would no longer be suitable for

an unconventional country. The Arena Theatre was able to maintain its commitment as an "activist theatre," because he reasoned that the current,

> Reality was...in transition; stylistic tools, on the other hand, are perfect and finished. We want[ed] to examine a reality in the process of modification, and we only had available for our use styles that were unmodifiable or unmodified. These structures clamoured [*sic*] for their own destruction, in order that, in theatre, the process could be captured. And we wanted to capture it almost daily – newspaper theatre (145)

Boal argues that theatre should present a narrative relevant to the culture it represents or, in this case, what it hopes to change, as well as the importance of the tools at its disposal: both will contribute to its politically motivated content. To that end, "The 'Joker' system was not a capricious creation; it was determined by the present-day characteristics of our society and, more specifically, of our Brazilian public. Its objectives are of an aesthetic and economic nature" (151). Boal's response is not entirely unique whereby the narrative and the actors are to be closely tied to the audience's own circumstances and feelings. That is to say that subjects of both content and audience perception should bear a close relationship to one another if the former is to be effective at enacting change in the latter.

Chapter III

Translating Boal to Television: *TDS* Covers LGBTQ Rights

By the summer of 2015, after 16 years as host, Jon Stewart left *The Daily Show*. In 2017, after the stunning election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States, Stewart appeared as a guest of his friend and former cast mate on *TDS*, Stephen Colbert, host of the long-running *Late Show* on CBS. During the interview, Colbert asks, "Do you miss doing a show like this," referring to the satire created by *TDS*. Stewart responded this way:

> There are nights where I find myself, sort of impotently, shouting into the abyss, which if you think about it, wasn't that different from what I did on a nightly basis.
> ...
> I miss the process. The process of making the show somehow became entwined with my process of making sense of things that I didn't understand and the two sort of merged at some level. So I miss that.[36]

The "process," as Stewart calls it, is the crux of the argument of this thesis. In response to growing resentment against the British, Thomas Paine wrote in *Common Sense,* "I do not choose to be a common man." In this segment, Stewart found himself in a very American tradition—disheartened by elected leadership. How does the common man, someone like Stewart, an observer to the world's problems and its politics, understand and involve himself in decisions in which he feels unheard and unaccounted? How does he make the world make sense? The format, mechanics, character development, and minutiae of creating nightly satire combined with that desire to make sense of the world — helping others understand the world around them — was Brecht and Boal's vision and mission for the modern theatre, as they saw it. The form's purpose

[36] *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, CBS, May 9, 2017

— its new mission — was to shock the audience out of their complacency for their circumstances, to involve them, and to call them to action to correct the sins and errors of their government and the world at large. It is a lofty idea and purpose, for sure, but arguably a noble pursuit. Stewart's understanding is the same from Boal and Brecht — that change comes from the unification of many.

Tied in with the "noble pursuit" of activist theatre by Boal's Joker System and Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, i.e. anti-catharsis,[37] by both, is its comingling with the modern interpretation of televised satire. Academics and journalists readily identify *TDS* as satire and its categorization is generally accepted. As mentioned in the preface, satire is an important, but superficial (not deep) layer; others remain, which should be studied. There are, as this thesis identifies, other elements within the *TDS* format that make it an effective pedagogical tool, i.e. *Verfremdungseffekt*, anti-catharsis, and its use of satire. To review: *Verfremdungseffekt*, or the 'alienation effect,' provides the audience with the ability to not be emotionally driven, but intellectually driven. Anti-catharsis means that the audience is not provided with a resolute ending and thus the complexity of character and conflict is left in a proverbial limbo. Using these theatrical tactics, *TDS* presents and reinterprets the news in a satirical genre.

Satire originated in Greek theater and writing, but it is important to place within context how satire is used in a televised format. In *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the*

[37] I use 'anti-catharsis' to refer to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. I wish to expand upon the terminology so that I am clear as to its meaning. *Verfremdungseffekt* goes by several names, 'distancing effect,' 'alienation effect,' as well as the terms just mentioned. To understand its meaning, I ask that you think about the trope of the 'anti-hero,' a character who takes the place of the hero without her virtues. *Verfremdungseffekt* is similar that it takes the place of catharsis in a narrative, different from the catharsis in Aristotelian Dramatic Structure, without its virtues of relief, but still serving a function and placeholder of the original. That precise function is to inspire thought (not feeling) and action from the narrative to the audience.

Post-Network Era, Jones, Gray, and Thompson define satire as it appears in televised format. They write that,

> Satire's calling card is the ability to produce social scorn or damning indictments through playful means and, in the process, transform the aggressive act of ridicule into the more socially acceptable act of rendering something ridiculous. Play typically makes the attack humorous in turn enlisting the audience in a social rebuke through communal laughter. (12–13)[38]

What is key in this analysis is that the effect produced during satire is the social community developed during the act. Community is vital since societal and government error impact large segments of the population as evident from the Third Reich and the Brazilian Coup. Satire is a method of unification for its collective viewership.

The audience for *TDS* is presented with a narrative that is factual, current, and relevant to their lives. The introduction and review of such information requires the audience to access prior knowledge in order to understand the narrative *TDS* presents. From the beginning of the program, the audience is intellectually engaged with the material and consciously aware of the stakes, e.g. the Global War on Terrorism, racial and LGBTQ equality, climate change, and so forth. In contrast to typical theatrical narrative, *TDS* has a reasonable expectation its audience is aware of some of the major players and conflicts in government and the world at large. *TDS* comments on real-life figures and major players through parody and ridicule. Its format is clearly satire and its expectation of action for its audience also signifies anti-catharsis and the reasonable expectation to respond via action, e.g. protest, voting, canvassing, or active tolerance and acceptance.

[38] Also cited in Ethan Thompson's "I Am Not Down with That": King of the Hill and Sitcom Satire" from *Journal of Film and Video*, Volume 61, Number 2, Summer 2009, pp. 38-51

There are clear connections between the theatre performed on *TDS* and that of Boal and Brecht's work. Stewart became renowned for what he was able to accomplish on *TDS*, but he was not the first to enact it on television. As early as the 1960s, there were other attempts at televised satire whereby the news was reinterpreted and dramatized. While *TDS* was not completely original, it was, arguably, the most successful by comparison to shows such as *That was the Week that Was* (BBC, 1962-1963, NBC, 1964-1965) and *This Hour has Seven Days* (CBC, 1964-1966), both of which only ran for a couple seasons each. *TDS* enjoyed larger audiences and has been running in its current form since 1999.

That was the Week that Was was a televised satire program originally aired on the United Kingdom's BBC in 1962 and, upon its cancellation in 1963, was picked up the following year in 1964 by NBC for an American audience. In both the UK and the US's political culture of the 60's , *That was the Week that Was* provided a response to the public's animosity towards government.

In the UK, just as in the US, the 60's represented a surge in the counterculture movement that was marked with the rise of civil rights, feminism, and rejection of establishment politics. Kimberley Watson of the website *Historic UK* writes, "By the 1960s, the first teenage generation free from conscription emerged in Britain. Young people were finally given a voice and freedom to do what they wanted." Unlike their parents who had "spent their youth fighting for their lives in the Second World War" boomers from both the UK and America found other injustices to fight. For the British it was dealing with the class system of yesteryear, and the remaking of its national identity following World War II, which lead to the demise of the British Empire. For the United

States, it was specifically the Civil Rights and Feminists movements, fear over nuclear proliferation exasperated by the Cold War, and the establishment of the United States over the United Kingdom as the world's dominant superpower.

That was the Week that Was (*TW3*) debuted in the US in 1964. In *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, David Marc calls *TW3,*

> ...the first no-doubt-about-it political satire show on U.S. prime-time network television, offering a 'news-of-the-week-in-comic-review' format for its entire half hour each week, more than a dozen years before Saturday Night Life's 'Weekend Update' segment hit the air...

and a full 25 years before Stewart sat in the anchor chair at *TDS*. "Sketches," he says, "included…United Nations paratroopers sent to rescue civil rights activists in Mississippi…the pope, nuclear weapons, and suburbia…" (xii). Based on the examples provided by Marc and the current events of 1964, we can surmise the cultural hotbed that was America at that time. America in 1964 was the period of the Freedom Summer, the movement that sought to register black voters in deep southern states, nuclear proliferation between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., rock and roll dominance, and the suburban boom. These were the events of the changing face of America and *TW3* reinterpreted and analyzed these events through comic satire.

If the 1950s in America was considered a peaceful time for the white middle class, the 1960s were a time of legal and cultural repositioning of American values. "The State of Satire, the Satire of State," an essay in *Satire TV* by Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey Jones, and Ethan Thompson, also provide analysis on *TW3* and its importance for covering often ignored topics by the network news. They claim that while "[*TW3*] became a national sensation in the U.K., it struggled in the American context...because of the reluctance of…network brass to ruffle the feathers of advertisers and the politically powerful" (21).

This reluctance from network executives was a form of self-censorship in order to protect profits and political alliances, both of which satirists see as antagonists towards government criticism.

Baring exception to actual televised news programming, Gray, and his coauthors comment that "television content in the 1960's was notorious for ignoring the massive social conflicts and changes taking place" (21). This omission of original content to speak to current culture emphasizes the need for satirical programming to exist as a counter narrative. Because *TW3* was based on actual events, but examined through the lens of satire, viewers received news of the day that was accessible to all demographics, much in the same way *TDS* does. Despite its short tenure and failure, it remains an example of the history of satirical news and provides a foundation for *The Daily Show* and the others that have come hence.

Subsequent programs that came to fruition in the 1960's speak to the tension of the decade. The acting style of Stanislavski, Brecht's plays and the creation of *Verfremdungseffekt*, Boal's Joker System and Theatre of the Oppressed all came to fruition from national tension and rejection of the status quo, when the cultural values of the everyman were not represented by governments. After *TW3* was cancelled in 1964, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) tried its hand at the format that same year in a program entitled *This Hour has Seven Days*; it was cancelled in 1966 after two seasons. Other programs such as *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show* and the song and comedy duo, *The Smothers Brothers*, rose to notoriety and recognition in the 1960's. Programs such as these used critical satire about the culture of the baby boomers, the global and political unease of Americans during the Cold War and the proxy war in

Vietnam, and the role of government in the citizenry. Satire throughout modern history has found a way to educate through entertaining formats to express public opinion and to offer an opinion by leading the discussion. It was nearly a century of modern satire and theatre that offered its shoulders for programs such as *The Daily Show* to stand on.

Satire, like all good theatre, embodies a harmonic relationship between narrative and actor. *The Daily Show* utilized actors as its correspondents to report the news, while using its host, Stewart — also an actor — as the anchor and lynchpin to the program. Stewart's versatility allowed him to take on many different roles in response to those characters/correspondents around him. His character versatility is most appropriately compared to Augusto Boal's Joker System, the predecessor to the more refined Theatre of the Oppressed. The Joker System takes its name from the joker found in a deck of cards and is not bound by the conventional rules of theatrical narrative. Mobility and representation of this key actor, Boal suggests, is the most important part of his system.

Boal takes this concept of versatility a step further and elaborates its meaning in his book *Legislative Theatre* in relation to the aesthetic used on stage: "joker scenography." This concept "allow[s] the audience to see and not merely look" (76). Boal argues that the representation of something real, but not real, draws the focus of the audience, encourages contemplation of the object, or, as I use it here, contemplation of the actor. "Things which are as they are [,] are not seen," which means that Stewart and the other actors on *TDS* act as journalists, provide actual news as journalists, but the audience knows that they *are not* journalists. Because of this "joker scenography," the audience cannot help but to contemplate the performance and information, which leads to active engagement of the conflict. If the audience is actively engaged in the conflict,

rather than passively, as found in Aristotelian dramatic structure, then meaningful change can be developed in the realm of society and government.

Class distinction — the rich and the poor — the powerful and the powerless[39]— and how satirical theater, under the guise of journalism, engages the average person with the political process is a major theme of this thesis. The political intent and rhetoric of *The Daily Show* suggests a deep kinship with Boal's systems of practices for reinterpretation. This connection indicates that the cast and crew of *The Daily Show* are more than actors or fools, poking fun at the day's stories. The analysis and critique resides in the absurdity of the presentation. The commitment of both writers and actors to engage with the news narrative transcends their role as spectators. The combination of spectator and actor breathes new life to Boal's coined term 'spect-actor.' Boal expresses the responsibility of this type of role in his text, *Theatre of the Oppressed:*

> I want him to occupy his own Space [*sic*] and offer solutions. By taking possession of the stage, the Spect-Actor is consciously performing a responsible act. The stage is a representation of the reality, a fiction. But the Spect-Actor is not fictional (xxi).

The cast of *The Daily Show* performs the duality of Boal's system by being spect-actors to the news and *at the same time*, through their performance, engages with that news in character and as themselves. Through this performance, the product is entertaining, but more important, educational for an audience. Stewart and the cast do not simply disseminate the news, nor do they mock it for humor's sake, but purposefully and analytically perform it. The stage may be "fictional," as Boal alludes, but the performers,

[39] In order to complicate these distinctions between theorists a bit more, I should perhaps explicate the types of classes each theorist struggled with. For Stanislavski, the distinctions were made between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. For Brecht, the classes were mostly religious between Jew and non-Jew. And for Boal, the class distinction pits the working class against the oligarchs and the military. In America, particularly, the animosity between class systems have been marked by the growing wealth disparity and exasperated by the cultural angst between liberals and conservatives, although the latter is typically supported by the ultra-wealthy.

i.e. the Spect-Actors, are not. They represent their show's audience, whose lives are affected by the very real events presented, and thusly offer very real solutions to their ills, which, in the Brechtian sense, are to be fulfilled by the audience.

An audience watching *The Daily Show*, becomes acutely aware that the cast, playing both themselves and journalists, functions as a cohesive ensemble to present the news in such a manner that each one is aware of the overall narrative at play. Audiences knowing the 'journalist' on stage is playing a character do not doubt the personal belief of the views expressed. Boal first tested his Joker System with a play called *Arena tells about Zumbí,* written by himself and Gianfrancesco Guamieri in 1965.[40] *Arena tells about Zumbí* is about the historical figure, "Zumbi, [a] chief of an armed uprising of a group of slaves to gain their liberty, who are paralleled with modern guerillas" (Gassner 77). Its original goal, Boal writes in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, was the "...the destruction of all the theatrical conventions that had become obstacles to aesthetic development of the theatre" (143). Boal described the play as having a "newspaper-like nature of the text, [that] it required connotations that were familiar to the audience (144).

Zumbi was Boal's first experiment with the Joker System. In "The Joker System: An Experiment by the Arena Theatre of São Paulo" he writes that,

> During the rehearsals of *Zumbi* we began work on our "Joker System," in which all the actors play all the characters, so that we eliminate the actor's mediation in the presentation of character to the spectator; in which all styles are permitted, within an overall "tribunal" style; in which the actors collectively create the masks of the characters (that is, their social motivation takes physical form); and finally, in which each scene of daily life is shown as a "ritual"-that is, a predetermined structure of actions and reactions. (92)

[40] *The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama*, John Gassner, Edward Quinn, p. 77

In *Theatre of the Oppressed,* Boal explains that "In *Zumbí* each actor was forced to interpret the totality of the play and not merely one of the participants in the conflicts portrayed" (147). This technique is a departure from the inwardly focused and psychoanalytic technique still prevalent of Stanislavski's method acting.[41] In *TDS* the actors are concentrated on the daily narrative in an ensemble effort rather than a personal one, each building on the story, not their characters; this is an important distinction. Since the audience is focused on the 'news' contained, each actor functions as a narrator, i.e. a journalist, just as Boal did in *Zumbi*. To this point, he writes:

> By obliging all the actors to interpret all the characters, the second technical objective of this first experiment was achieved. All the actors were grouped into a single category of narrators; the spectacle ceased to be realised [*sic*] from the point of view of each character and came to be narrated by a team...We were thus able to reach a level of 'collective' interpretation. (147)

The third technique used to create chaos is embodied in Boal's theory of approaching current events through a theatrical lens and functions as a method of public pedagogy.

The Daily Show and, by extension, *The Colbert Report* have engendered productive discussions within academia and has generated books, essays, articles, and classes taught on the subject. Most research seems dominantly focused on literary satire as the comparison for Stewart and Colbert and leaves out the importance of performance

[41] In 1923, the Moscow Art Theatre toured the United States. It was after this tour that the introduction of Stanislavski's style of acting was introduced in the US. Andreas Manolikakis, Chair of the Actors Studio MFA Program at Pace University, New York City, and a Board Member of the Actors Studio writes, "The roots of the Actors Studio go back to the Group Theatre (1931-1941) whose work was inspired by the discoveries of the great Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski and his best student Eugene Vakhtangov as revealed in the legendary productions that the Moscow Art Theatre toured in America in 1923…Stanislavski's dedication to his book My Life in Art (1924) reads: " I dedicate this book in gratitude to hospitable America as a token and a remembrance from the Moscow Art Theatre which she took so kindly to her heart."…When the Moscow Art Theatre ended the American tour, several members of the theatre stayed behind and trained artists, including Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, Stella Adler, who would go on to form the Group Theatre along with other artists such as Elia Kazan, Sanford Meisner and Robert Lewis. These artists studied, explored, developed and improved the work of the Russian masters with extraordinary results that were unique in the history of the American theatre and a new kind of acting was born."

theory as possibly the more appropriate lens to study their political criticism from standpoints of democracy, literature, or humor. Given the characterizations, scripts, and actors it would seem theatre would be an obvious angle, but the current amount of research with a theatrical lens is scant.

One scholar who made the connection is Professor of Comparative Literature and International Affairs at Penn State University, Sophia McClennen. McClennen interviewed Stephen Colbert[42] about his performance process on *The Colbert Report.* In the interview, she explores the pedagogy and effectiveness of such acts on affecting the public discourse. In one question, she makes the connection between the goal of satirists to both entertain and teach. She asks of Colbert,

> One of your major points that interested me concerned [your] ability to combine education and amusement. ...one person they've [political artists] always used as a touchstone is the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, who believed in "interrupting the spectacle" and also making spectators aware of the difference between the role and the actor playing it... I wonder if you've thought about Brecht and how that type of theater might have influenced [you], especially as [you] trained as a 'serious' actor.

Colbert's response was an obvious 'ah-ha moment,' for him, perhaps not realizing the connection he had with someone such as Bertolt Brecht. He responded in the following:

> ... now you are making me wish I had thought of that link earlier. You are absolutely spot on, I think. Most actors trained today would have been exposed to Brecht so there is little question that during [my] years at Northwestern [I] would have been taught Brecht's ideas about ways to use performance to shock the public out of complacency.

Colbert's reference to "shock[ing] the public out of complacency" directly refers to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, i.e. the 'alienation' or 'distance effect' or as I have called it 'anti-catharsis.' Its unique purpose is that the audience is aware that they are watching a

[42] Interview with Sophia A. McClennen author of "Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy."

play and because of this awareness, they can fully engage with the subject matter, just like the audiences of *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show*. This exchange between McClennen and Colbert is vital to helping us understand Stewart and Colbert's unawareness and apparent linkage between their work and Boal's Joker System and Theatre of the Oppressed, along with its relationship with Brecht's philosophy for theatre. In Boal's text, Theatre *of the Oppressed*, entire chapters and sections are dedicated to Brecht, which makes Boal's inspiration all that more apparent. Boal continues Brecht's tradition of *Verfremdungseffekt*, which,

> …means to watch from a distance, without involving oneself, as one who observes, thinks and draws his own conclusions…The actor is no longer hidden behind the Mask; he emerges and reveals himself beside it, openly contradicts it, and enters into conflict with it (xix).

A casual viewing of either program underscores the glaring conflicts combatted by the actors in performing and interpreting the news. The presenters openly mock and become frustrated with the stories they share, doing so sometimes in character and others as themselves. Stewart and Colbert, through their reinterpretation, bring both themselves and their characters to the news by engaging openly with the subject matter. Academics are missing or not in tune with the explorations of these mechanics and tactics. The mechanics and tactics are what Boal develops for would-be theatre tacticians who have a desire to use this form of theatrical art to combat tyranny, public buffoonery, and disenfranchisement. Academics who study Brecht or Boal are missing the connection between their subjects and Stewart and Colbert; more importantly, they are not seeing what their respective programs seem to signify.

McClennen's arguments on the ultimate goal of pedagogy through satire are a guide to how such tactics might be developed in a purposed classroom that teaches how

to replicate the process. Ruth Bowman's "'Joking' with the Classics: Using Boal's Joker System in the Performance Classroom,"[43] serves as a case study for teaching the *Joker System*, and provides an example of how she taught it in her own drama class. What separates the Joker System from Theatre of the Oppressed, Bowman states, is that "…the Joker System is a separate class of techniques, with different aims and aesthetics from Boal's more recent TO work" (1). Try to think of the Joker System as a set of tactics that eventually develop into the Theatre of the Oppressed — a close relative to the Joker System and Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*.

Bowman argues that, the Joker System was used to "rewrite and stage [existing scripts] in a manner that would be more meaningful, relevant, and entertaining" (1). With the purpose of reinterpretation in mind, the popular denouncing of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, among others, as 'fake news' is really a misnomer; satire, which may be more accurate, is also too broad a term. The news stories on either program are not factually untrue; the cast is not poking fun for fun's sake. Their interpretation is a reinterpretation of the narrative that is perpetuated by the powerful and the legitimate television networks that report them — it is merely *one* version of the story with a specific audience in mind. For Stewart, the news exists, its script already written. His job as the joker, however, is to take that script, that narrative — the one ignored and overlooked by the general public — and reinterpret those current events in a remarkably similar fashion as Bowman suggests.

The prevailing interpretation by the academics already mentioned is that news programs with a heavy slant towards comedy are satirical because it lampoons the powerful. What this academic critique misses is the theatrical function and motivation

[43] *Theatre Topics Journal* , Volume 7, Number 2, September 1997

that the actors/correspondents serve in relation to delivering news. Those actors, chiefly the anchors, wear numerous hats in a well-crafted and modernist effort to reinterpret the journalistic narrative so that real-world narrative is both palatable and understandable to a general audience — specifically younger and economically dependent citizens (either on the state or relatives). Their practice for doing so is hinged, as I have suggested, even unknowingly, in the four sets of basic techniques Bowman lays out in her case study. Those techniques she says are:

> (1) an "alienated" acting style, designed to "reduce" dramatic characters to a relatively simple "social mask" and to distance the actors from characters; (2) continuous role reversal or switching, such that characters are played by several actors, and actors play several characters; (3) stylistic and genre eclecticism from scene to scene (or even within a single scene), with little or no regard for a unified production style or tone; (4) the use of music as an independent "discourse" to complement, supplement, subvert, or contradict the meanings expressed in the text and performance (1-2)

Programs such as *TDS* are a specific form of satire; their biting theatricality plays heavily into their success as a source for daily news and entertainment, both of which make for an excellent pedagogical tool, as the Joker System is intended. In a 2012 interview with *Meet the Press*, David Gregory interviewed Stephen Colbert; one of his questions inquired about what did not work with government, and what was absurd about it. In comparing his personal process and Jon Stewart's, Colbert said "Jon does what's called pure deconstruction, where he picks apart what's happened in the day's news and lays it out to you like a cadaver. But I falsely reconstruct the news."

Jeffrey Jones' *Entertaining Politics: Satiric Television and Political Engagement* is an in depth look at how programs such as Stewart's engage audiences who are often overlooked by mainstream, legitimate media. In it he "…argue[s] that even though *The*

Daily Show is a fake news show, its faux journalistic style allows the show's writers and host to question, dispel, and critique...[and opens] up deeper truths than those offered by the 'objective' reporting of mainstream journalism " (168). Jones says the style is false, an allusion to performance, but not the news the performers provide. His thesis rightly grapples with the importance on style to delivery, but more importantly using that style or tactic to get after the truth of the narrative.

Will Rogers, the American humorist of the 1930's and 1940's famously remarked, "Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke." *The Daily Show* articulates its interpretive stance through a three-act format: 1. The headlines performed by the anchor, i.e. the joker, 2. A main story developed by supporting actors/reporters, and 3. The guest interview. The lynchpin of these segments is Jon Stewart, our joker.

In the first act, Stewart examines the 24-hour news narrative, using mostly clips of the three big networks: CNN, MSNBC, and Fox. By *playing* the role of anchor, Stewart analyzes the authenticity of the story from the point of view of an 'everyman' — poking holes in the logic and consistency of the journalists through mocking insight. This 'everyman' style, lacking the pomp and circumstance of a legitimate anchor is what contributes to the greater understanding of the performer's intentions to his audience. It is a quality lauded by Boal in *Theatre of the Oppressed,* when he paraphrased Brecht: "the popular artist must abandon the downtown stages and go to the neighbourhoods, [*sic*] because only there will he find people who are truly interested in changing society" (86). *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central, at 30 minutes a day (with commercial breaks), is

comparable to the local neighborhood, when associated with the 24-hour news network, which is the downtown.

Following the first segment, Stewart is joined by a member of the cast, with absurd titles that 'throw shade' to their legitimate mainstay counterparts, such as 'Senior Black Correspondent,' 'Senior Beyoncé Correspondent,' or 'Senior Jewish Correspondent,' and so on and so forth, each more satiric than the last, but each being a character with a point of view within the narrative. This segment is either a dialogue between Stewart and the designated correspondent, or a field piece in which that correspondent provides authentic interviews with key players to the story. The stories revolve around the hypocrisy and irrationality of leaders in government and industry.

In the final segment, Stewart interviews guests such as authors, politicians, and journalists. His style is inquisitive, thoughtful, funny, occasionally contemptuous, but always respectful. As described by Boal, in "The Joker System: An Experiment by the Arena Theatre of Sao Paulo," the interview is an important function of the Joker System. Boal extolls the importance of this tactic:

> …there are many devices which show the audience the true mind of the character...In our system, whenever it is necessary to show the audience the inside story of the character, the Joker asks him those questions the audience wants answered. During the interviews, the Joker addresses the character, not the actor. (94).

Vitally, when Stewart does interview a guest, that person should be interpreted as a character in the current event narrative. In this way, we can see how the process comports to the larger Joker System.

Given the breadth of material covered by *The Daily Show* under Stewart's 17-year run, it is necessary, and more effective for argument's sake, to narrow the focus to a single topic with broad implications. A concise topic will prominently reveal Boal's

Joker System and thereby its usefulness and dynamic range as a tool for robust satire and journalism. A comparative analysis of Augusto Boal's Joker System (and, by extension, Theatre of the Oppressed) with Jon Stewart's artistic direction of *The Daily Show* allows us to fully understand and appreciate the importance of theatrical interpretation on current events and its effect on cultural and legal progressivism. Progressivism[44] is a common link between Boal and Brecht, because each desired, as Stewart and Colbert, to shock their audience out of complacency for the purposes of improving the 'system.' Paraphrasing Brecht in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal states, "...a theatrical work cannot end in repose, in equilibrium. It must, on the contrary, show the ways in which society loses its equilibrium, which way society is moving, and how to hasten the transition" (86). To a first time viewer *The Daily Show's* progressive leanings would be readily apparent and it follows that Boal's theory would be an appropriate tool for moving an unjust society to an egalitarian one. *TDS* was an ideal vehicle for its audience because stylistically and narratively, "Each public demands plays that assume its vision of the world" (151). In other words, plays should reflect the current circumstances of the common man. The vision Stewart performs, thematically, argues that American policy does not represent the American majority.

Even before Donald Trump coopted the phrase as an attack against journalism that he disagreed with, despite the rigorous standards and practices of legitimate journalists, Stewart's brand of satire was known as 'fake news.' Ironically, what was originally dubbed 'fake news' became a trusted news source for a generation of progressive Americans. In a 2004 interview on the now cancelled debate show, *Crossfire*,

[44] "Progressivism" in this context should be understood as the belief that society has the means to achieve through legal, scientific, cultural, and economic means a society that is egalitarian, just, and balanced to all citizens.

on CNN, host Paul Begala introduced Stewart as "the most trusted man in fake news." Through analysis, interviews and the use of the Joker System, Stewart became a trusted voice for the counterculture — the demographic often without economic or political power that struggles with the cultural norm and is usually marked by youth as a metric. As a voice for that counterculture, he, along with the cast and crew, became champions of the rights of the LGBTQ community, and many other progressive causes. Such rights were advanced, in part, through a thoughtful and poignant reinterpretation of mainstream news coverage that gradually accustomed a public to the idea of same-sex couples marrying, assuaged fears, and contributed overall to the broad cultural acceptance of LGBTQ rights, which ultimately lead to the eventual legalization of marriage equality in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* SCOTUS decision.

A 2001 pew research poll cited that "Americans opposed same-sex marriage by a 57% to 35% margin." On June 26, 2015 in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court of the United States decided *Obergefell v. Hodges* and ruled that gay marriage bans were unconstitutional (Mitchell). By the time that decision was reached fifteen years later, the opposition to the question had flipped from 35% to 55% now in favor.

Comedy Central provides a searchable archive of clips from the past 20 years of TDS, replete with subject identification tags that provide a chronology of the national argument over rights of the LGBTQ community, marriage equality, transgender bathroom usage, etc. From Stewart's tenure as host from 1999 to his departure in 2015, a query for the word 'gay' produces 84 segments, 36 of which focus on 'gay marriage,' 28 for 'lesbian,' 22 for 'queer,' and 36 for trans. Using this database, one can follow the

dialogue over a decade and select clips that speak to this specific issue. It also demonstrates TDS's commitment to the equal rights of the LGBTQ community.

The phrase "homosexual agenda" or "gay agenda" originated from culturally conservative Christian evangelicals that marked the rise of the 'moral majority.' It was used to shame members of the LGBTQ community by framing their movement for equal rights with their heterosexual counterparts as one that threatened America's moral integrity and Christian culture. Consider, for example, the "Save Our Children" movement in 1977 launched by Anita Bryant, a self-described born-again Christian, as a response to the Miami-Dade County ordinance that prohibited the discrimination of housing based on sexual orientation. Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen of *The Advocate* looks back on this conservative movement by Bryant on the anniversary after the fact in his article, "How LGBT Rights Have Fared 40 Years After Anita Bryant." He writes that "Bryant launched the hateful 'Save Our Children' campaign, spreading lies about gay people and utilizing her platform to perpetuate the shameful myth that gay people were 'trying to recruit our children into homosexuality.'" Initially Bryant's movement was successful "with 70 percent of voters supporting repeal" of the Miami-Dade County ordinance. Bryant's "Save Our Children" highlights how the right perpetuated lies and stereotypes in order to enshrine religious dogma into secular law.

This fear from conservative factions regarding ulterior motives was persistent not only from evangelicals but was vocalized within the branches of the federal government and used as a dog whistle to evangelicals. Markos Moulitsas of *The Guardian* wrote of the 2004 US elections in his article "Kissing the Tarantula," that republicans used homosexuality as a 'carrot' to lure conservatives to the polls and that the "demonisation

[*sic*] of gays is paramount in their efforts to woo evangelical and bigoted voters." By framing the gay rights debate as one that was opposed to hetero-normative Christian values, Republicans could continue to hold and strengthen their power in elected offices. Moulitsas cites, then newly elected, Representative Tom Coburn of Oklahoma who said that,

> ...the 'gay agenda' is a more pressing danger than terrorists flying planes into buildings and killing allied troops in Iraq. 'The gay community has infiltrated the very centres [*sic*] of power in every area across this country, and they wield extreme power... That agenda is the greatest threat to our freedom that we face today...Why do you think we see the rationalisation *[sic]* for abortion and multiple sexual partners? That's a gay agenda.'

In conjunction with the culture wars and security of America framed by Rep. Coburn, legal battles were also being fought (and won) in state and federals court systems for the rights of the LGBTQ community despite disagreement from ideologically conservative judges. For example, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558, this Supreme Court case overturned existing sodomy laws in all states by a majority vote of 6-3 in favor. Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in his dissent that,

> Today's opinion is the product of a Court, which is the product of a law-profession culture, that has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda, by which I mean the agenda promoted by some homosexual activists directed at eliminating the moral opprobrium that has traditionally attached to homosexual conduct.

The legal challenges to discrimination by LGBTQ groups, and other minority groups of the past and present, has typically exceeded the pace of legal acceptance. The acceptance of the LGBTQ community in American culture is part and parcel to the performance of 'fake news' by Stewart. Stewart addresses, in context, the legal and cultural battles of the issue by combining the informative nature of the news through

satire of governmental officials and cleric with the assistance of the theatrical components created by the Joker System.

In a recurrent segment called "Gaywatch," which first appeared in season eight of *TDS* on August 6, 2003, Stewart and the cast satirized evangelicals and politicians on this issue. At the introduction of the segment, Stewart, a heterosexual Jew, opens with the line, "We at *The Daily Show* have long been known for our aggressive homosexual agenda." The audience laughs. What is poignant about this line is its lampooning and reclaiming of the derisive phrase and reframes the so-called gay agenda as one that is concerned with legal and cultural equality and not with the disintegration of American values, but rather the strengthening of our constitutional belief in equality.

In the opening moments of the segment, Stewart, clad in a neutral dark suit is the joker, but performing as the news anchor. For the first few minutes of the five-minute segment, he conducts himself in character as an anchor of a news broadcast. The story concerned the ordination of the first openly gay bishop of the Episcopalian Church, Gene Robinson. Because most American Protestant and Catholic Churches condemn homosexuality as a sin, the acceptance of an openly gay Bishop, a prominent position of leadership in Church hierarchy, would cause quite a rift across denominations and its parishioners. Doing so conflates the beliefs of hard righters that one could both be gay and close to God.

In Stewart's analysis, Robinson's appointment was "a progressive move that threatens to create a schism in the Anglican community around the world." His delivery is clear, dry, and charming — what one might expect from a seasoned news anchor. His delivery is part of the necessary mechanics articulated by Boal in the Joker System,

where he says that the performers should use "every style, genre, technique, or process" in order to be effective (92). For the first segment, the A block, Stewart is the anchor, presenting the subject of the play. He happens to also be using the day's narrative as the subject matter, which he sprinkles in with breaks in character and continuity as he "articulat[es] the point of view of those presenting the play" (93). Stewart does this through a variety of techniques in the A block, but mostly through clips sourced from 'legitimate' news outlets combined with in-house graphics. These technological and visual add-ons to the story fulfill the second item on Boal's list for using the Joker System and that is that the actor can "can interrupt the action, [and] repeat certain actions in order to demonstrate them better, [as well as] use slides, films, diagrams, [and] statistics" (93).

For the story on gay clergy, Stewart introduces two approaches, saying that the first from Rev. Gene Robinson was "disturbingly Christian," a phrase which contrasts Christ's universally accepted and loving nature with the tone of rejection from the church's cleric and parishioners. Robinson, who addresses those who disagreed with his appointment, says, "This is the only thing that makes this not a completely joyous day for me, the fact of my consent going through causing pain and difficulty for a good number of people." At this point Stewart interrupts the clip of Robinson to interject a joke, saying, "But not as nearly as much pain as the leather whips and nipple clamps I plan to install in the churches." And then finishing in an impression, Stewart shouts, "I'm gay I tell you! Gay!," capping it off with an evil and robust cartoonish laugh. What Stewart does here is turn the "gay agenda" on its head through a parodic impression. For Robinson becoming a clergyman, it is not to indoctrinate others into the homosexual

lifestyle by means of negative stereotypes that all gay men indulge in bondage, but rather, in Robinson's case, to pursue a relationship with God and duty to his parishioners.

The second side is the point of view from a Convention Delegate who says his, "opposition is based on Holy Scripture...and in all cases scripture disaffirms homosexuality." Stewart, playing the joker, and as himself, articulates a counter opinion on equality and pushes back against the delegate's literal translations of the bible, saying that "Scripture also says a 'woman is turned to salt.'"[45]

To further imbue that *The Daily Show* is both news and dramatic narrative, other characters must exist within the play outside of the joker. After the A block in the same episode, Stewart transitions to another segment called "Gaysplosion," which seeks to understand the wave of cultural and legal acceptance of homosexuals in American society. Stewarts turns to fellow cast mate, Stephen Colbert, whom he calls *The Daily Show's* "Human-Sexuality Correspondent." Colbert is performing his characterization of a clueless conservative, a character that eventually earned a companion series to *TDS*, *The Colbert Report*. Stewart, in true Joker fashion, switches from his role as Stewart the anchor to Stewart the interviewer, a character who is less anchor-like and more inquisitive as himself.

Stewart asks of Colbert,

> It seems like you can't turn on TV today without hearing about gay marriage or this gay bishop, the success of gay themed TV programming. Why suddenly all this media focus on sexuality and what people do behind closed doors?"

This question is asked innocently and seeks to address the collective concerns and curiosity from the audience. It is a blatant, but effective, pedagogical tool that Stewart

[45] Genesis 19:26, "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." New International Version

uses and pairs well with the show's own liberal slant juxtaposed with Colbert's character as a conservative stereotype. Colbert's response is that it's, "Simple Jon. There's been a 'gaysplosion.'" Colbert continues in character:

> An explosion of gayness. Out of nowhere, suddenly gay people are everywhere, doing everything, with everyone. Remember the Latin music explosion? It's just like that, but with sodomy. Gay is the new straight. And the anus is the new 'in-orifice.' I don't know who these gay people are or where they came from, but where have they been hiding? They are terrific.

If one were to take this monologue out of context, it might seem homophobic, but the exchange is a sketch, in the form of an interview written to demonstrate a wave of cultural acceptance that had not existed before. If there are two sides to the argument, and bear in mind that *TDS*'s target audience are people under the age of 35, Stewart represents the liberals, those arguably more aware of a segment of the population that has been ostracized in the past and Colbert is your stereotypical conservative family member or neighbor. Because Colbert says that he has "been swept up in this craze," he is providing tacit acceptance to the LGBTQ rights movement.

The mock interview continues with Stewart trying to convince Colbert that gay people "didn't just show up... [and that] throughout history there have always been gay people." Colbert responds with a smile and shrug, "Well, I didn't see them, Jon." It earns a laugh from the audience, but at a second glance, the statement highlights the self-concealment exercised by the LGBTQ community. Stewart attempts to assure Colbert that "there are no more gay people now than there were a year ago" and that media attention on the subject does not mean that homosexuality is new. Stewarts asks if this "media frenzy will signal a sea change on the way we feel about homosexuality?" Colbert's responds, "The coasts may be electric with the gayness, but once it gets out into

the ether, once there are gay kids in Iowa, that's when you know it's [the craze] over." This particular line is telling and embodies the overarching theme of the skit that open homosexuality is accepted in highly diverse population centers on the coasts, but in rural America it is something that is still not acceptable.

The repartee of the exchange is Boal-esque in its pedagogical nature, but the anti-catharsis provided by the conclusion is Brechtian. It may seem that within the echo chamber of the viewer's environment that homosexuality is broadly accepted, even in 2003 when the episode aired. However, here Colbert simply reminds the audience that in many parts of America, homosexuality is still something viewed as perverse and wrong and that the goal is to end the 'craze' and have it be an identity that is broadly accepted, especially in remote parts of the country like Iowa. Gay marriage would not be ruled constitutional until 12 years later in 2015.

Another segment on *TDS*, which aired June 29, 2015 titled "Fifty Shades of Gay," was a response piece to *Obergefell v. Hodges* that presented the unsurprising, oppositional response by the Republican Party. One pundit (not named), who appeared on Fox News mentioned the opposing argument of many conservatives that gay marriage would lead to polygamy, an argument often ridiculed for its absurdity, and inaccuracy, from members on the left. At the clip's end, Jon Stewart responds, exhaustively, to the pundit, "Because people aren't born polygamists." Stewart then transitions, as the Joker, from his anchor/actor role by adopting a born-polygamist character, lamenting over his 'coming out' story. With a deepened, serious voice and slumped posture and expression, Stewarts lampoons the 'polygamy argument' in character: "You know, I even knew when I was five, I was different. While the other boys played with trucks and army men, I was

figuring out bed sharing schedules with multiple wives." The comparison Stewart alludes to is ridiculous and he knows it. By playing this argument out in a theatrical environment he asks the question that if people were born polygamists, just as people are born gay, how might the inner monologue of a polygamist be similar (or ridiculous) to someone discussing their own homosexuality? It is the comparison of the LGBTQ community with would-be polygamists that shines a bright light on the falsehood of the right's tired and illogical argument that gay marriage ultimately leads to polygamy.

Satire makes fun of the powerful. But if you combine satire with the Joker System and instead treat the points of view expressed by the powerful as legitimate points of view by playing them out in a theatrical scenario, whether that be a bit or a sketch, the opposing argument loses power and is weakened. Stewart is not poking fun to garner ratings; he pokes fun to teach his audience why the discriminatory arguments of the powerful are ridiculous and without justifiable merit, despite the influence they receive through amplification and the credibility the legitimate news can sometimes lend them.

By considering *The Daily Show* as more than just satire, but rather as enacting Boal's goal of reinterpreting "legitimate" news narrative, we can better understand its political ramifications and transformative tendencies, in addition to how it was successful in making audiences scrutinize the subjects of 'legitimate' news media. Through a thorough study of how Stewart and the cast source and present their material using the Joker System, then the complexity of public discourse on news and media for satirical news might be fully understood.

By my own admission, I am an ardent liberal. For most wedge issues such as abortion, gun ownership, separation of church and state, and marriage equality, you could

say that I am respectively in the camp of a right to choose, universal background checks, yes, and yes. However, I was raised in southern Virginia, a red state until recently, by staunchly Republican parents, and I attended my Lutheran church every Sunday morning and youth group at the Methodist church on Wednesdays. By any standard of stereotype, I should lean Republican or conservative, but I do not. During my formative years, my parents did not have a lot of formal education, although they both had their high school diploma and some form of technical training. My mother would later go back to college in her early 30's to earn her nursing degree. Despite these stereotypes that one could attribute to conservatism, my parents eagerly emphasized formal education and sternly expected high marks in school. This was okay because I, for the most part, always enjoyed school and going to class. And after all, Mom and Dad did know best (read with sincerity).[46]

Extremists exist on both the left and right, and both are ruled by their emotions, not their logic. I did not arrive at my own political ideology through environmental and social inundation because I did not know any liberals or Democrats — both were often considered a 'dirty' word. I formed my liberal leanings from a desire to make sense of my country and its laws through logical argument that was free from emotion or religion, neither of which I saw as useful in any debate.

TDS has an unabashed liberal slant and it does not hide it. Boal's Joker System is about making an argument and engaging an audience in topical debates by framing the argument within a theatrical framework to make the narrative both palatable and memorable. During that process, Stewart and the cast do not look backwards for answers, but forward, hence the progressive stance. *TDS* is excellent at bringing in both sides of an

[46] I am also happy to report that they both now consider themselves Southern liberals.

argument and weighing the merit of each. Most people would not be able to tell you the case that decided that the Supreme Court of the United States had final say over the constitutionality of all laws in the US — its *Marbury v. Madison* by the way — but they do grasp the significance of a case going to the highest court. They know the case affects the whole of the country.

In a seven-minute segment from April 30, 2015 called the "Rights Court," Stewart reviews the oral arguments by both sides of the gay marriage debate. In what typically would be dry legal jargon, Stewart invigorates the narrative with a variety of graphics, impressions, and historical precedent to inform the audience, while also taking a position. As the segment opens, Stewarts says, "You have done yourself a service by turning into tonight's program. It is off the fleek!" It may seem like a slight forgettable joke, but it speaks to the unarticulated goal of *TDS*. Undoubtedly, those involved with the writing and producing aspects of the program believe their show provides a service; all the evidence suggests that it does.

The story, Stewart continues, is about the oral arguments in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. At the time the SCOTUS decision legalizing gay marriage was something forthcoming that many Americans were following, if even in passing. The legal arguments however can be considered somewhat of a dry exercise that even the most 'nerdy' of us might not find interesting since no video recording is permitted in the Supreme Court.

Over Stewart's right shoulder a video appears with a voice over and lip flap, i.e. a voiceover overlapping muted video, dictating the questions that the Supreme Court will answer on the case: 1. Can states refuse to issue marriage licenses to same sex couples?, and 2. Can states decline to recognize same-sex marriages that were legally granted

somewhere else? In simple terms, Stewart provides the stakes of the conflict in the narrative. Theatrically, we would classify this portion of the segment as the 'exposition;' we know who the characters are and we understand the conflict. The setup is pedagogical in nature.

A few moments later Stewart says, after showing demonstrators from both camps of the argument, "…[that] it wouldn't be up to those outside the court." Then a video with lip flap rolls again, saying, "This will in all likelihood come down to Kennedy," the swing vote of the Supreme Court. Stewart responds, "Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy!," *ala Brady Bunch* style. "The only justice anyone ever cares about is Kennedy. He's the 'Marcia' to the Supreme Court's eight 'Jans'" The audience laughs. Stewart's delivery is winey just like middle-child Jan from *The Brady Bunch* and the audience gets the reference. In context, however, before even Stewart goes on, it teaches the audience that for the eight other justices we can predict how they will vote based on their judicial philosophy. With the exception of Justice Kennedy, since the attention of the media seems to be on him, we can surmise that his vote is a swing, and thus unpredictable. In less than a minute, Stewart's reporting as an anchor shows the stakes at play for supporters and protesters on both sides of the argument and, through parody as an actor, informs the audience that the decision is not a democratic one for the people; it rests on the nine-member Supreme Court, namely Kennedy, who is likely to swing the decision in one way or the other. The switch between reporter and actor is a function of the joker.

Stewart continues, expanding on the segment, saying that, "But Tuesday's session was mainly a forum reserved for gay marriage opponents to air their best and final arguments which we look at in tonight's segment, *You Got Nothin*." The following part of

the segment outlines the debates from the transcript in the courtroom from the gay marriage objectors with what Stewart calls a "…good, old classic slippery slope." From here, Stewart brings up a copy of the transcript from the court, quoting Justice Samuel Alito questioning supporting counsel on April 28: Suppose we rule in your favor in this case and then after that, a group consisting of two men and two women apply for a marriage license. Would there be any ground for denying them a marriage license?" The video cuts back to Stewart,

> Why should gay people have to account for anyone who is ever going to get married after they get the right to marry? When women fought for suffrage, no one was like (doing a winey impression), 'What if one day a dog wants to vote? How about that ladies? Because the next thing you know, the state of our union is… [Stewart makes the sound of a dog whine]

A graphic of a dog in a suit addressing congress as president appears and the Speaker of the House over the dog's shoulder is a cat. The scenario is ridiculous; its absurdity is the point. It would be unfair to make the equivalent that because one group petitions the court for something, it will lead to something additional and out of the ordinary like polygamy. Just as women sought parity with their male counterparts in voting rights, so to do homosexual couples seek parity with their heterosexual counterparts. Polygamy is not parity.

The next voice Stewart considers for his audience is from Chief Justice John Roberts:

> If you prevail here, there will be no more debate. I mean, closing the debate can close minds, and it will have consequences on how this new institution is accepted. People feel very differently about something if they have a chance to vote on it than if it's imposed on them by the courts.

The frame cuts to Stewart. He responds to the argument by Chief Justice Roberts that the people prefer to vote directly. Stewart's response is that,

> Sure, no. That makes sense. If you *don't* impose gay marriage, folks like this [a graphic of a man holding a sign, 'God Hates Fags,' a head nod to the signs made recognizable by the hateful Westboro Baptist Church] will be more open-minded...to evolving their position. [The graphic on the sign changes to 'Fags are Okay']. Yeah, there you go. See.

Instantly the audience takes in the absurdity of the argument and begins, if they have not before, to understand why each state's court was ruling in favor of gay marriage.

The segment continues for another three minutes like that. Stewart brings up an opposing member of the Supreme Court, along with opposing counsel. Stewart addresses Robert's explicit dictionary definitions of marriage between a man and a wife and that the side for support is seeking to change the definition. Stewart's retort is that the definition of marriage has always been changing, referencing that "Before the last century marriage wasn't one man and one woman, it was one man and his new piece of vagina property." This is a crude turn, but the point is made that the institution itself was crude as women had legally less rights than a man and were often looked upon as chattel to their husband. Stewart is right as he points out the faulty reason used by the opponents and illustrates the better argument that given the facts, there is no logical argument to why gay marriage should not be a legal practice.

The final argument Stewart makes highlights the biological question posed by opponents that marriage is about procreation. Justice Elena Kagan poses this scenario:

> Suppose there's a state that is very procreation-centered view of marriage of the kind that you're talking about…So when people come in and ask for a marriage license, they just ask a simple question: 'Do you want children?' And if the answer is 'no,' the state says 'no marriage license for you.' Would that be constitutional?

The obvious answer is that it *would not* be constitutional. As a response Stewart calls Kagan "…very rabinnical." Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the most senior member of the court, age 82 at the time, posed a similar scenario if a 70-year-old couple petitioned for a

marriage license. You can hear laughter erupt in the courtroom. Even within the court, it becomes painstakingly clear that the purpose of marriage is not for procreation.

This segment is particularly informative as it is about the legal debate and the characters involved. As the joker, Stewart uses a variety of methods in the segment to illuminate his audience of the query put before the Supreme Court. We see the use of sampled video from news outlets, graphics (the head of Jan Brady superimposed on the heads of the SCOTUS justices, with the single head of Marcia Brady superimposed over Justice Kennedy), more graphics used for the chyron, and parody as a device to convey the importance of swing votes and the counterarguments to the broadly supported favor of the American public towards gay marriage. Dramatically presented, Stewart addresses each point of contention with clear and concise analysis and offers historical and legal rebuttal to each. The segment ends with no final judgment and thus this presents a very Brechtian style ending, i.e. anti-catharsis, for the narrative. It is a piece of theatre with no ending, but rather a lesson to compel the audience towards the action of adjusting their way of thinking if they have reservations on the legalization of gay marriage.

Neither Jon Stewart and, by extension, Augusto Boal are responsible for the legalization of same-sex marriage; that was the work of countless, mostly LGBTQ, individuals and decades of work. In examining the methodology of *The Daily Show*, its theatrical mechanics, and its role in persuading audiences towards a belief of inclusion is what makes the endeavor transformative. Are there more legal and cultural indiscretions in the realm of civil liberties that could be helped along by educating a reluctant and, in some cases, naïve electorate through reinterpretive or legislative theater? A gross study of the mechanics of Boal and Stewart, i.e. the Joker System, and their modern use of anti-

catharsis, would allow us to understand more intimately how cultural shifts take place and what role theatre can play in those shifts. If we consider *The Daily Show* as more than satire, more than news, and more than comedy, and instead viewed it as a work of theatre with a purposeful and consistent goal of reinterpreting 'legitimate' news narrative, then we have a more complete and nuanced understanding of its motives and successes.

Chapter IV

The Future of the Spect-Actor in American and International Televised Satire

Vox is an online media company launched in 2014 by Ezra Klein (aged 33), Melissa Bell, and Matthew Yglesias (aged 36) (*Vox*). What distinguishes it from traditional print media is the presentation of its reports. Vox publishes to its website and through an assortment of social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. They cover a variety of subjects — government, popular culture, and world news — just as any journalistic entity does. Vox also transcribes its stories into video essays in which the reporter contributes his or her own voice to their work. That video is then interlaced with other videos and graphics relevant to the topic. These four to six minute shorts are 'slick' and, for us visual learners, provide a new way to receive and consume news. Vox is not solely an online publication, nor are they a television network. They are young, hip, and progressive — what you might expect of journalism in this new age of real-time information and global connectedness in the twenty-first century.

This thesis's engagement with televised satire is an attempt to understand how a 30-minute satire, incongruously, on Comedy Central became an activist form of theatre, informed public opinion, and, also, how it might be recreated in other endeavors. Vox is an example of a media company that has taken note of the theatrical satire being produced on late night television in the age of Trump, which, no matter your political leanings, is quite different (and more chaotic and unpredictable) than any American leader since.

On April 3, 2017, just months after Donald Trump's inauguration, Vox published a video on YouTube called "Comedians have Figured Out the Trick to Covering Trump," a video which looked at how purveyors of satirical news are covering the Trump phenomena. Carlos Maza, presenter and co-author of the piece, argues, "Late night comedians have become rock stars in the Trump era...but if you look past the jokes and sight gags, these comedians are doing a really good job of covering Trump." By contrast to their network counterparts — the mainstream media—satire is engaging with the political narrative differently. This is a cornerstone of the Joker System and Boal's theories: gathering the prevailing narrative and transcribing it in a way that is more broadly accessible to the public, while also compelling them to respond. In doing so, you engage in a form of pedagogy that is otherwise lost, in this case, from traditional journalism.

While Maza's language is sometimes inaccurate — his choice of "comedian," rather than the more accurate "satirist" or "actor" — his analysis is salient. When dealing with a 'Donald Trump,' someone with arguable authoritarian tendencies, traditional news has difficulty articulating the rhetoric. Maza cites John Oliver, Samantha Bee, and Stephen Colbert, among others, all of whom have some training in theatre,[47] who have cut their proverbial, satirical teeth on *The Daily Show with Jon* Stewart, and all, he says, "play a big part in how we [the general public] talk about politics." His reason, Maza continues, is "because political satire has something TV news lacks: a really low tolerance for bullshit." He is right, though; these actors are effective in translating the news in a way that provides the public access to a crucial, albeit humorous, understanding

[47] Samantha Bee studied at the George Brown Theatre School. John Oliver was a member and vice president of the Cambridge Footlights, a theatrical club at Cambridge University. Stephen Colbert studied theatre at Northwestern University.

of the state of the world and our own government. Oliver, Bee, and Colbert's satire bears a striking similarity to their former roles on *TDS* and for that reason, the process honed on *TDS* makes itself known in current mediums that extol the virtues of the Spect-Actor, and thus the traditions of Brecht, Boal, and Stewart.

Stephen Colbert spent a good portion of his early years as an unknown actor before catching his break on *The Daily Show*. It was here that his eponymous recurring character began to articulate a point of view through the lens of a conservative caricature. His character was deeply narcissistic, hyper-nationalistic, and disconnected from factual reality. For a political party in which many believe global warming is a hoax perpetuated by the Chinese, supply-side economics is an effective way of bolstering the middle class, and there is no legal precedent of separation of church and state, Colbert's character does not stray far from the reality of the GOP.

Colbert became a household name when he received his own spinoff from *TDS* titled *The Colbert Report* (*TCR*). His interpretation of the 'fake news' genre was similar to *TDS* in that its host, Stephen Colbert, would present the news in a theatrical fashion, consistently in character interjecting his owns thoughts and opinions of the day through embodiment of the neoconservative movement. However, Colbert did depart from the *TDS* format, and Stewart's use of the Joker System format, because his show did not include other cast members. The character's narcissism would not allow for that. What it did include were interviews that Colbert conducted in character.

In a 2012 episode with *Meet the Press*, David Gregory interviewed both Colbert the actor and Colbert the character. During the interview, Colbert admitted that he "model[ed] conservative punditry" as part of the rhetoric of the character. When giving

guests of *TCR* a rundown of the format before they were interviewed by the character he let them know Colbert the character was "…an idiot. He's willfully ignorant of what you know and what you care about. Please honestly disabuse me of my ignorance and we'll have a great time." This statement speaks to the point of the interview on *TCR* and that is that the interview with the character is designed to do — educate the audience.

Colbert's "willfully ignorant" character poses the questions to guests from a pseudo-audience perspective, in a manner that tackles the issues from an emotional, less-logically driven point of view. The guest becomes a part of this theatrical exercise of rebutting the ignorance. This tactic highlights the closeness of character and actor by bringing them closer to one another, but not divorcing their point of views, as designed by Boal. Colbert understands that the purpose of Colbert-the-caricature-conservative is to get at the logical and rational matter of whatever subject is up for discussion. His goal is to dispel, through his characterization, of which the actor is hyperaware, the narrative of false information that is often floated around the GOP and conservative circles.

Gregory references a class, "The Colbert Report: America Satire" taught by Michael Rodriguez at Boston University in 2011, that notes on its syllabus that, "Colbert satirically exposes hypocrisy with surgical precision, inviting us to think more deeply about serious issues and to improve our sociopolitical conditions." The improvement is the goal of satire as Boal and Brecht saw it. It is not enough to make fun of the people in power, but rather to elevate and educate ourselves in the manner in which our leaders and policies deceive us.

Gregory continues that Colbert is a "…performer, but you also do make a point." This is the very nature of satire, of which Colbert admits that, "All satire makes a point.

Satire is parody with a point." The exchange reveals a couple of things. The first is that Gregory acknowledges that Colbert is a performer, i.e. an actor. The second, that "satire is parody with a point," is not the whole truth when describing the product on *TCR*. Colbert's process is fervently rooted in the aspects of theatre and this is what seems lost in the interview about the show.

Where Colbert differs from Stewart is his willingness to interject the show, and his character, into the process of government in order to highlight loopholes in public policy. Whereas the spirit of the law may, by decree, create a reasonable expectation for accountability, the particular language creates incongruities that are detrimental to government and the public. The best example of this interjection by performance is when Colbert (the character) created his own Super PAC.[48]

On March 30, 2011, an episode of *TCR* examined the subject and debate around Super PACs. Colbert was instructed on the procedure and then completed the creation of his own Super PAC. Campaign financing law is not a 'sexy' topic for a late night satire, but its implications have wide reaching consequences for all Americans. Colbert's segment was an educational one for himself and the audience. The interview highlighted the absurdity of the current laws and how campaign finance by the ultra wealthy of this country was directing the lives of average Americans. In short, the segment showed its audience who really was in control of their government.

[48] Super PAC: a super political action committee, not beholden to campaign fundraising law because they are supposedly not influenced or directed by the candidate themselves. Super PACs have been a source of public debate because the loose laws surrounding their governance. The creation and loose oversight of them have permitted political organizations to fund campaigns with nearly unlimited resources, which in turn has drastically changed the way we have funded campaigns in the United States and thus shifted the power to the super wealthy.

The segment starts with the introduction of Trevor Potter, former chairman of the Federal Election Commission, defining for Colbert how a PAC is created and then how a Super PAC is created and the difference between the two. Potter explains that anybody can create a PAC. At this point Colbert brings out the form to generate his own PAC and Potter walks through for Colbert what his PAC can do, such as advertising, use of personal jets, funds for rallies (the options are really limitless). Potter emphasizes that it has to be done independently of the candidate's consent. He then explains there are rules that you have to follow, but adds that no one has ever gone to jail for breaking the laws regarding PACs.

In a continuation of the story, on an episode that aired January 12, 2012, Colbert takes a look at the 2012 candidates' own Super PACs, which as the law expressed by Potter in the earlier episode is to have no coordination with the candidate. Colbert does a rundown with then GOP candidates Newt Gingrich and Mitt Romney, the latter saying "Super PACs have to be entirely separate from a campaign and a candidate. I'm not allowed to communicate with a Super PAC in any way shape or form." Colbert continues in character:

> Romney is not communicating with the Super PAC in any way shape or form. It is the exact same relationship he has with voters. Instead Super PACs are often run by people close to the candidate. The pro-Romney Super PAC, 'Restore Our Future,' was founded by Romney's lawyer. 'Wining our Future,' the Newt Gingrich Super PAC, is run by a former Newt staffer. And the Rick Perry Super Pac, 'Make Us Great Again' was started by Mike Toomey, who was Perry's chief of staff and co-owns an island with Dave Carney, Perry's chief strategist. But just because you spend time on an island with someone does not mean you coordinate with them. After all, Gilligan never even learned the professor's name.

This segment clearly explains that although Super PACs are expressly forbidden from coordinating with the candidate, it is blatant that the Super PACs' founders have personal

relationships with candidates. The revelation may be news to the viewing audience, and by providing the narrative and the process of establishing Super PACs, the audience better understands how politicians circumvent laws for personal gain and power.

Colbert then welcomes Trevor Potter to participate in a sketch that demonstrates how politicians exploit the process. Potter explains that Colbert cannot keep his Super PAC *and run* for president at the same time because that would be illegal, but that he could transfer the Super PAC to someone he was not coordinating with. At this point Colbert is joined by Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show* to transfer the power of his Super PAC *vis-a-vis* sketch and legal documentation. Colbert asks of Stewart, "Are you here to offer to take over Colbert Super PAC?" Stewart says he is "honored," but then asks, playing along, "Can we do this? Because you and I are also business partners? We're opening up that bagel shop." The bagel shop is a gag as it is used to highlight the next point that Colbert asks of Potter, "Trevor, is being business partners okay?" Potter answers that "Being business partners does not count as coordination, legally," so therefore it is okay for Stewart to take over the Super PAC. Colbert says with a smile and a laugh, "Great!" with such disbelief that the transfer of a Super PAC is so passive and unaccountable — it is ridiculous. Stewart can hardly contain his laughter.

The sketch continues with them debating over the 'complex' paper work, although it only requires a one-page document. After a flurry of quick signatures, Stewart and Colbert join hands for dramatic effect. Potter joins in on the fun, declaring "Colbert Super PAC transfer activate!" as a green, cartoonish electric shock wave reverberates from Colbert to Stewart. With a cry of victory, they both let go when the shock wave reaches Stewart. The scene is melodramatic, absurd, ridiculous, and *all* perfectly legal.

Another actor from *The Daily Show* who earned success with the format of satirical news popularized by *TDS* is John Oliver. Oliver performed on *TDS* as one of its anchors and writers from 2007-2013. When Oliver left *TDS,* he found a home performing a similar format on HBO's *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (*LWT*) (2015-present). Unlike Stewart and Colbert, Oliver does not, as a regular practice, conduct interviews on the program. His program is a take on the format with perhaps more similarity to Stewart than Colbert, as far as delivery and aesthetic. Oliver presents the news using a variety of sourced clips from mainstream media, sketches, and well-placed characterizations to interject opinion on the narrative and topic.

The best example to demonstrate Oliver's involvement of his program with government was his coverage of the Net Neutrality debate that has garnered so much press coverage since its airing on June 1, 2014. The concept of net neutrality is the belief that Internet Service Providers (ISPs,) e.g. Verizon, Comcast, or Cox Cable, should treat all Internet traffic equally. The most popular metaphor to explain the importance of the concept is this: Imagine you are driving on the road. Net neutrality says that everyone is permitted to go at the same speed, whether you are in a little Honda Civic, a MAC Truck, or a Ford Mustang. The road, regardless of who built it, permits all users the same access. Imagine that the rules change, i.e. net neutrality rules are stripped away. Now, for a price, a 'fast lane' and a 'slow lane' are created. Drivers who want to use the fast lane pay more and those who cannot, use the slow lane, or perhaps are banned from the road altogether.

This popular metaphor explains that the dissolution of net neutrality means that costs for certain websites and services that use the internet may never have a chance to compete with larger companies; the absence of which, threatens the free market, and

arguably even more pervasive is the restriction on the flow of information by corporations. Under Obama, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruled on February 26, 2015 that net neutrality be governed under Title II the Communications Act of 1934 and Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 because ISPs would be considered part a telecommunications service.[49]

Net neutrality has been a contentious issue among its supporters and opponents. The phrase entered the American lexicon as a result of John Oliver's reporting on his HBO program, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. On December 14, 2017, *NPR* aired a story on its evening news program, *All Things Considered*, "FCC Repeals 'Net Neutrality' Rules For Internet Providers. Alina Selyukh[50] says that "net neutrality… [was an]…extremely painful topic that poor news reporters were just completely struggling to explain." She explains that John Oliver was the one that popularized the current metaphor during his program which in turn "…[caught] fire among these folks [reporters] who'd never heard of net neutrality, never cared about net neutrality," all because "…[he] does his 13-minute rant about it." Selyukh argues that reporters were covering the debate, but doing it poorly and when something is done poorly, the information falls on deaf ears. The Joker System is designed to take information that is either lost through convolution or censorship and reinterpret that information for an audience towards effect.

Oliver uses his program to educate his viewers about policy, but also takes it a one step further by compelling action by the people. The absence of net neutrality means subversion of the people's will because it restricts the flow of information and constraint

[49] As of the completion of this paper, the Trump Administration's FCC ruled to overturn net neutrality rules, thus granting ISPs the authority to create 'fast' and 'slow' lanes for internet traffic.
[50] From NPR's website: "Alina Selyukh is a business reporter at NPR, where she follows the path of the retail and tech industries, tracking how America's biggest companies are influencing the way we spend our time, money, and energy."

on that flow provides control to, for lack of a better term, the oligarchs. John Oliver begins the segment with the line,

> Let's just take a moment together, and appreciate how amazing the Internet is. You can use it to file your taxes, apply for jobs. You can go online right now and buy a case of coyote urine. Do you know how difficult it used to be to obtain coyote urine? You literally had to give a coyote Gatorade and just wait. It was a mess. The system was a mess.

The audience guffaws with laughter. Three parts to this statement speak to the importance of the Internet. It is a place where citizens interact with their government, a place where a person provides for their family, and a place where transactions take place (even the weird stuff like "coyote urine"). Moreover, prior to the advent of high-speed internet, these tasks were cumbersome, to say the least. The Internet, for all its faults, has connected us and made us a more prosperous and egalitarian society. Before all that, Oliver is correct that "the system was a mess."

What follows, Oliver addresses, is the media's inability to explain the importance of net neutrality and the consequences of that inadequacy. The screen changes to show several boring clips of dull and dry anchors attempting to cover the topic. Oliver, however, is able to keep the audience engaged with the material by transitioning between his roll as anchor and satirist. After the clips, "Net neutrality," he says are, "the only two words that promise more boredom in the English language than 'featuring Sting.'" The program has a unique way of identifying the issue, even a boring one, and conveying to the audience why the topic is under addressed and the importance of learning about it and acting on it. The humor slipped in between moments of dry information is a means to keep the audience engaged.

All jokes aside, Oliver explains that,

> …net neutrality actually is hugely important. Essentially it means that all data has to be treated equally, no matter who creates it. It's why the Internet is a weirdly level playing field and startups can supplant established brands. That's how Facebook supplanted MySpace, which supplanted Friendster, which actually supplanted having any friends.

Oliver uniquely explains these concepts by infusing his stories with parody, metaphor, sketches, and pop culture references. These tactics frame the discussion in a manner that can be grasped by experts and laymen alike. He describes that when the FCC was trying to change rules that would allow ISPs to create 'slow' and 'fast' lanes for internet traffic, activists and corporations alike lobbied the government to keep net neutrality rules in place. Oliver describes this joining of unlikely forces like "Lex Luthor knocking on Superman's apartment door and going 'Listen. I know we have our differences but we have got to get rid of that asshole in apartment 3B. He's too loud 'Sup. He's just too loud.'"

During the public comment period of 120 days, Oliver suggested to his audience that they could involve themselves in the discussion. At the beginning of the segment, the audience was challenged to understand the importance of net neutrality and how its absence could affect their daily life. By the end of the segment, during the anti-cathartic moment, Oliver challenged his audience to act during this public comment period and then provided on screen the internet address to which they could comment. Following that, Oliver breaks the fourth wall by saying that he would "like to address the internet commenters out there directly." His direct address is as follows:

> Good evening monsters. This may be the moment that you've spent your whole lives training for. You have been out there ferociously commenting on dance videos of adorable three year olds…But this is the moment you were made for commenters. Like Robb Ralph Macchio, you've been honing your skills waxing cars and painting fences. Well guess what? Now it's time to do some fucking karate. For once in your life, we need you to channel that anger…we need you to get out there and for once in

> your lives, focus your indiscriminate rage in a useful direction. Seize your moment my lovely trolls…Fly my pretties!

The oddest turn of events is that after this episode aired, the amount of comments posted to the FCC website resulted in a crash of their server. The outpouring of the public to involve themselves in the debate resulted in a measurable action by the Obama Administration to direct the FCC to strengthen net neutrality rules, rather than repeal them. The segment was highly effective at educating the audience on an important issue and motivating them to act on their own behalf.

In 2011, Egypt became a democracy. Miral Fahmy of Reuters Magazine writes that, "For decades, authoritarian rule and police brutality ensured the only voice heard from Egypt was that of its leaders. Since popular protests deposed President Hosni Mubarak, the silent majority has erupted into a cacophony." One voice among that "cacophony" was Bassem Youssef who created a satirical news show on *YouTube*, entitled the *B+ Show*. Fahmy quotes Youssef's reaction to Mubarak's departure:

> The shoe that was pressing down on all our necks for 30 years has gone. It's natural that once this shoe disappeared, we hear a lot of noise and shouting. This strange phenomenon is called democracy. Let's not destroy it just because we're scared.

The show became so popular that it was eventually picked up by an Egyptian network and given the full treatment.

Youssef was an Egyptian living under the foot of Mubarak's authoritarian regime. This reality places Youssef closest to Augusto Boal because both men suffered for years under censorship and the threat of retaliation. In a 2014 interview with *60 Minutes*, Bob Simon says of Youssef, who is a Muslim, that he had,

> One of the most popular television shows in the Middle East...He never thought he'd be a comedian, he was a respected heart surgeon. But today,

> he's called the Jon Stewart of Egypt. Unlike Stewart, though, he has been interrogated by the authorities. He's been labeled an infidel and a traitor.

Youssef's Arabic language show was called, *Al-Bernameg*, which literally translates to "The Show." Simon says that "an estimated 30 million people tune in. Egyptians have never seen anything like this before." By comparison, Stewart's average viewing audience was about two million per episode (*Tickling Giants*). Since its launch, *Al-Bernameg* grew in popularity all across the Arab region, until its cancellation in 2014. Its success and struggle inspired a book by Youssef, *Revolution for Dummies: Laughing Through the Arab Spring* and a documentary, *Tickling Giants*. Both provide a first-person account of how the show was conceived, its cancellations by two different networks, and the government's response and retaliation against its host and writers.

In *Tickling Giants,* the audience sees Youssef, a trained heart surgeon, scrubbing up for surgery. A voiceover says, "If I could do anything, I would have my own comedy show. Be like Jon Stewart." This statement speaks to the nature of Egypt and the oppression felt when living under a dictatorship. If Youssef's desire was to be like Jon Stewart, the cavalier level of expression by Stewart would not have been welcome, nor protected under the Mubarak regime. What Youssef discovered through *The Show*'s run was that the removal of one authoritarian does not guarantee another will not rise in its place.

From 1981 until 2011, President Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt. In 2011, as a response to mass protests in Egypt called the Arab Spring, as well as the surrounding regions, Mubarak stepped down. His departure from office meant that Egypt, for the first time, was experiencing newfound freedom, and relevant to Youssef was the freedom of expression. One of the products was *Al-Bernameg*. The show was modeled after

Stewart's *Daily Show*, a satirical look at the news. *Al-Bernameg* is also stylized very much like *TDS* with Youssef acting as anchor and performer, whereby that stylization is modeled on Boal's Joker System. He analyzes the news and pokes fun at it, at the expense of political leaders in the hopes of cutting through the propaganda and rhetoric.

After Murbarak, Egypt elected Mohamed Morsi. Youssef likened him to President George W. Bush, a man radically out of touch with the people and something of a bumbling idiot (*Tickling Giants*). In Youssef's *Revolution for Dummies*, he says Morsi, "…never failed to provide the show with the best material" (173). In one segment, Morsi is shown in front of a large gathering of people, saying, "Be optimistic. I see prosperity in the future. Be optimistic. The Egyptian people are rising." The camera cuts back to Youssef ,who rebuts Morsi's rhetoric as if conveying a secret: [translated] "Mr. President, I want to tell you something. I don't want to shock you with annoying words about our Egypt. Mr. President, the country is fucked up. Believe me. Let me show you." What follows are several clips of reporters commenting on the condition of Egypt's economics, infrastructure, and so forth. Between each clip is Morsi, saying, "Be optimistic."

On April 5, 2013 *Al-Bernameg* covered Morsi's receiving an honorary doctorate from Pakistan's NUST (National University of Science and Technology). Youssef writes in *Revolution for Dummies* that,

> The university…had a peculiar academic outfit. He was dressed in a fancy graduation gown and hood, but the hat was so fucking funny that we made a replica of it. The only difference was, we made it three feet tall and it weighed forty pounds."

Stephen Kalin of *Quartz* writes in his article, "Here are the jokes that got Bassem Youssef, the 'Jon Stewart of Egypt,' arrested," that the segment "liken[ed]…Egyptian

President Mohamed Morsi to a magician drawing ideas out of a hat." Shortly after the airing Youssef received a call from his lawyer that there was a warrant for his arrest (Youssef 153).

Youssef's ridicule of Morsi drew the attention of government censors and Youssef was arrested. The charges, he writes, were,

1. Insulting the president. *Of course.* [*Sic*]
2. Insulting Islam. *Sure.* [*Sic*]
3. Spreading profanity and destroying the fabric of society. *I don't know even know what that is.* Speaking of fabric, we do have fine Egyptian cotton. [*Sic*]
4. Disturbing the social peace. *Seriously who comes up with this crap?* [*Sic*] [154]

"The one charge," that he "was worried about was 'insulting Islam'…[because it]…could not be defended against." He says that that charge, "…was an amazing tool to round up the masses against someone" (154). The case was eventually dropped after a six-hour hearing, but Youssef's arrest exacerbated further harassment of him and his writers and staff (*Tickling Giants*).

Protests against Morsi were mounting in the country by 2013 and the president had delivered a speech to address the tension a few days before the citizens' protest on June 30th. Youssef writes that in the speech, Morsi called out the names of dissenters, Youssef included. He says, paraphrasing Morsi, that "…as President of Egypt and as the supreme leader of the Egyptian army, he demanded respect, and that an insult to him was an insult to the entire country" (173).

On June 30th, the protests resulted in the removal of Morsi with the assistance of the Army, lead by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. General el-Sisi was later elected president by a margin of 96.1% of the vote (*The Guardian*). Following the election, CBC, *Al-Bernameg*'s original network, canceled the show. After months in hiatus, it was picked

up by another network, MBC MASR. In the beginning, President el-Sisi's rise to power was seen as a good thing, until his government started to mirror the actions of Mubarak's and Morsi's. Journalists and student-protestors were imprisoned by the thousands and the consistent pressure by the government forced MTC to cancel *Al-Bernameg*.

In Youssef's former office, hung a poster of Jon Stewart that read, "I am not going to censor myself to comfort your ignorance" (171). The connection and influence of Stewart to Youssef is more than a passing one, and each one holds the other in high regard and both satirists have appeared on each other's respective programs. In 2013, *Time* Magazine named Youssef as one of its 100 most influential people in the world. Stewart wrote the blurb:

> … Bassem Youssef does my job in Egypt. The only real difference between him and me is that he performs his satire in a country still testing the limits of its hard-earned freedom, where those who speak out against the powerful still have much to fear. Yet even under these difficult circumstances, he manages to produce an incredible show: a hilarious blend of mimicry, confusion, outrage and bemusement, highlighting the absurdities and hypocrisies of his country's rebirth…I am an American satirist, and Bassem Youssef is my hero.

Youssef writes about a conversation with Stewart when pressures were being forced on him to self-censor by the new network and the fear that going against that could compromise the integrity of *Al-Bernameg*, along with his safety and that of his staff, if he continued to do the show as satire, rather than straight comedy. Stewart speaking:

> Bassem, remember when I visited you in Egypt? I told you that you need to ask yourself, what do you want to do? Do you want to do comedy? Or do you want to something that lasts longer? When you answer that, you will know what to do. (192)

The conversation speaks to the greater effect of satire. Comedy is ephemeral, whereas effective satire has a lasting and profound effect on the recipients.

After the final cancellation of *Al-Bernameg* by MBC MASR, Youssef, along with his wife and daughter, packed a couple bags and fled the country. Youssef said, "This show…[was] about holding people accountable regardless of who's in charge" (*Tickling Giants*). The statement speaks to the goal of political satire and the theatricality that it encompasses it as a form of expression that delivers information to the people that can be understood and actionable. This is what the show meant to Youssef and to his audience. It was about holding leaders to the account of their people and not the other way around. As the film closes, Youssef says, "Satire was our weapon used to dissect through the lies and rhetoric that were used to control the people."

The charges against Youssef, and the harassment of those involved with *Al-Bernameg,* highlight the powerful and subversive nature of satire. Shows such as his, along with *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, and *Last Week Tonight* demonstrate that they speak truth to power and that that truth is a danger to authoritarian regimes. The point, however, is that this form of satire has a set of practices and theories specifically evolved from and designed to act as a subversive check against authoritarians. The method practiced by current and former news satirists is like the 'canary in the coal mine.' The popularity of Youssef's program among his audience and its hatred among his government demonstrate the pernicious nature of authoritarian regimes. It also speaks to the effectiveness and importance of the material performed in providing valuable information to the people. Stewart appeared as a guest on *Al-Bernameg* on June 21, 2013 and he said something that resonated with Youssef so much so that he quotes Stewart in his book: "If your regime can't take a joke, you don't have a regime" (171).

The intention of this thesis was to discover the thread that connected televised satire with the theatre practitioners of the modern era and then give it a good yank. What I have found is that there is a great deal of commonality found in satirists, actors, and theorists such as Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal, and Jon Stewart. Brecht was a European playwright during World War II, who fought against the Nazis and fascists; Boal was a theatre theorist during the military dictatorship of Brazil; Stewart was a satirist in a neoconservative America. And they were and continue to be the embodiment of one another's philosophies all at once. We should not 'pigeon hole' the accomplishments of these men as one or the other. They responded in the best way they knew to a situation in which they felt otherwise powerless to control. However, they did have the power to influence others through their theatre.

It may be easy to dismiss *The Daily Show* as art because its presentation was made for a screen in a living room rather than a traditional stage. Writing this thesis leads me to believe otherwise. *The Daily Show*'s influence has permeated culture thoroughly. You could argue that *TDS* is only satire or even that it was *really good* satire, but it is more than that. Its structure is a form of political discourse and continues to be replicated across multiple platforms and in multiple countries. However, its success would not have existed without the theorists that came before it. Without Stanislavski, actors would not have had training to create realistic interpretations of life on stage. Brecht used those techniques to produce his plays in protest of the Third Reich, which led to the development of *Verfremdungseffekt*, a theory that compels an audience to action rather than just thought. Boal expanded on Brecht's philosophy, producing the Joker System, which was designed to circumvent the narrative of authoritarian government and produce

theatre relevant to the audience's current circumstances and compel them to action. Stewart combined these tactics on *The Daily Show*, a form of activist theatre whose effects are enduring and continued in numerous other efforts. It is worth the study. Governments need the care and consent of the people they serve and the theories expressed within this thesis are a measure of that preservation and restoration through theatre.

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