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Grey Zones: Performances, Perspectives, and Possibilities in Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral project investigates the use of theatre practice to engage across the 'victim'/'perpetrator' binary in the Kashmir valley; a binary that is framed in this project as a tripartite division between Civil Society, Militants/Ex-Militants, and the Indian Armed Forces. Using Primo Levi's (1988) concept of "grey zones" to investigate how narratives from these spaces might be given theatrical form, this thesis utilised six concepts to frame the aesthetic, pedagogic, and ethical principles of a practice-based-research undertaking: Immersive Theatre, Documentary Theatre, devised theatre workshops, affect, situational ethics, and performance auto-ethnography.

With one Kashmiri theatre company operating as my central collaborator, the first two phases consisted of devised theatre workshops and performances with Civil Society and Ex-Militants in Kashmir. Exploring instances from these projects through thick description, critical analyses, and auto-ethnographic writing, the grey zones of Civil Society in Kashmir are situated as being within acts of aggression that occur between civilians who are differently privileged, while it is Ex-militants who are discovered as occupying a liminal space when studying narratives of militancy in the region. By contrasting these two phases of practice-based research with the third phase of 'failed' attempts to engage with the Indian Armed Forces, this thesis postulates that the grey zones within the experience of government soldiers might only be accessed by making theatre with cadets at military academies. By drawing out the parallels and disjunctures between the manifestations of the three phases of theatre practice, this project offers outcomes that contribute to scholarship around theatrical interventions in times and places of war.

The concluding outcomes are framed by one question: if an outside theatre maker were to create *one* performance piece that contains cross-community narratives from Kashmir, what ethical, pedagogical, and aesthetic considerations might arise as a result. Amongst the strategies that are put forward to answer this question, there are three outcomes that are particularly significant: a re-articulation of grey zones as existing both *between* and *within* each of the three groups; the proposal of a process-based spectatorship when utilising novelty in form and content; a re-framing of the discussion around affect and effect by considering artists' intention and spectators' response vis-à-vis a theatrical creation.

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To Veronica,
For coffee, conversations, guidance, and inspiration.

To the Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi (EKTA),
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To Doug,
My pillar.

To the late Sri P.V. Nair,
This one is for you, Apoopaa.

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INTRODUCTION

The intentions, potential, and limitations of applying theatre in times and places of war might best be encapsulated by James Thompson and Richard Schechner's (2004) writing on 'Why social theatre?' Underscoring the idea that this kind of theatre seeks to have a purpose beyond an aesthetic culmination, Thompson and Schechner highlight the malleability of the term Social Theatre – that when theatre is put to use in less conventional contexts with specifically designed objectives, an interdisciplinarity emerges. For instance, theatre that targets school-going students tends to borrow from the field of Education; theatre projects that address issues surrounding HIV/AIDS draw from scholarship in the realm of Public Health; theatre that seeks to develop community activism intersects with concepts from Development Economics. Given the Social Theatre basis of this doctoral project therefore, interdisciplinarity lays at its core: an interdisciplinarity that is woven around using theatre as a practice-based methodology. It draws from Performance Studies, Anthropology, and Philosophy to investigate the aesthetic, pedagogical, and ethical strategies that a theatre practitioner might employ when devising workshops and performances between Civil Society, government Armed Forces, and Militants/Ex-militants in Kashmir.¹ This introductory chapter will begin by putting forward the rationale behind this doctoral undertaking, followed by a literature review of theatre in times/places of war. Moving on subsequently to a discussion about the Kashmiri context, the chapter culminates with the articulation of this doctoral project's design. The conceptual framework, the practice undertaken with each of three community groups in Kashmir (Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian government's Armed Forces) forms the content of the chapters that follow, leading to the last chapter that puts forward the conclusions that have emerged as a result of this work. Ultimately, this doctoral project's contribution to new knowledge lies in its articulation and exploration of theatre as an aesthetic, pedagogic, and ethically informed practice that nuances the spaces between 'victim' and 'perpetrator' in Kashmir.

¹ In this thesis when the categories of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and Armed Forces are used to refer to a large group of people, the terms are capitalised. However, when referring to specific individuals who comprise these groups i.e., civilians, fighters, soldiers, the lower case has been utilised.

² I particularly mention the Indian government here since the Pakistani government's involvement with Militant/Ex-militant groups in

Rationale

In a true war story, if there's a moral at all, it's like the thread that makes the cloth. You can't tease it out. You can't extract the meaning without unravelling the deeper meaning. And in the end, really, there's nothing much to say about a true war story, except maybe 'Oh' (Balfour, 2012:35).

My work with theatre in times and places of war began more than ten years ago, in northern Uganda. Since then, as my research and practice have evolved, my theatre-based interventions in conflict and post-conflict zones have taken place in a number of different capacities: as a student, researcher, workshop facilitator, director, and writer. While my first few years of theatre-in-war research were framed by being a complete outsider to the contexts in which I intervened, the struggles and ethical implications that came from being in that position led to my return to India in 2008. Once there, given my intention to continue my work in conflict zones, it was perhaps only natural that a year later – in 2009 -- I made my first trip to the region of Jammu and Kashmir (a more detailed overview of the conflict in J&K is provided later on in this introductory chapter). My first visits to J&K took place before the doctoral project commenced in 2013 and it was precisely because of these prior visits, that this project was conceptualised. My initial visits to Kashmir in 2009, and later in 2012, led to the observation of a three-pronged division that consistently emerged in narratives surrounding the conflicts in the region; a division that separates J&K into three groups that are defined by larger perceptions of 'victimhood' and 'perpetration':

Civil Society: an umbrella term that is used to encompass those who were/are 'victims' of violence but are unlikely to have used violence themselves

Militants/Ex-militants: individuals who use/have used violence as a strategy and are/were *not* (explicitly, at least) supported by the Indian government²

Armed Forces: Indian government soldiers who are stationed in the Indian-Administered area of J&K and are generally perceived as being 'perpetrators' of various human rights violations against civilians and (suspected) Militants/Ex-militants

² I particularly mention the Indian government here since the Pakistani government's involvement with Militant/Ex-militant groups in Kashmir is an entirely different area of study. In this vein, I clarify at various points in this thesis that when I use the term Armed Forces, I refer to Indian government troops. While Pakistani Armed Forces are also a presence in parts of Kashmir, this project does not in any way seek to conflate the narratives/perceptions of these two government troops. The scope of this research is limited to the Indian dimensions of the conflicts in Kashmir.

The more I read about and worked in J&K, the more deeply entrenched I found this triangular constellation to be; a provocation that led to my realization that all my prior work in conflict zones -- in fact that most theatre work in conflict/post-conflict zones as shown in the Literature Review that follows -- is centred around working with those who are considered 'victims' of violence.

In a majority of theatre-in-war projects represented in academic scholarship, the 'victim' is considered as "the recipient of undeserved harm" and thus amenable to/deserving of theatrical interventions; while 'perpetrators' are considered to be individuals/groups that are "evaluated as deliberately inflicting harm or hurt on another or assisting in that harmful deed" (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:63) and thus, as falling outside the scope of Social Theatre efforts. However as anyone who has spent significant amounts of time in conflict zones might realise quite quickly, a clear distinction between 'victim' and 'perpetrator' is extremely hard to sustain; especially as an outsider. To an outsider who has no personal stake in/affiliation to the conflict in question, victimhood and perpetration are often two points on a spectrum; a spectrum on which individuals align themselves/find themselves aligned at different points at different times. While it would be simplistic to say that everyone in a context of war is both 'victim' and 'perpetrator', what might be said is that the binary between the two notions that have come to define war (of victim and perpetrator) is insufficient to capture the many identity based affiliations that comprise one's positioning as a recipient/inflictor of violence during a time and place of war.

This zone between 'victims' and 'perpetrators' might be viewed through the lens of what Primo Levi (Levi in Agamben, 1999:21) puts forward as the "gray zone", a space in which "the long chain of conjunction between victim and executioner comes loose, where the oppressed becomes oppressor and the executioner in turn appears as victim". The more I encountered the tripartite grouping in Kashmir therefore, the more I began to wonder about how the idea of grey zones might apply to notions of victimhood and perpetration in J&K. It is important to clarify here that this thesis does *not* seek to apply "grey zones" strictly in Levi's terms. Instead, Levi's proposition functions as a point of departure to encapsulate spaces that are nebulous, unclear, and not black or white. Where "grey zones" refers specifically to Levi's use of the term, it is so acknowledged; however, in a majority of the instances of its usage in this writing, the term indicates the author's approach to this zone as

an in between space; a space that is defined by uncertainty. In this vein, by “starting from this uncertain terrain and from this opaque zone of indistinction” (Hughes, 2007:5) between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’, this thesis asks what these grey zones are in Kashmir and how theatre might facilitate an exploration of them.

A theatrical exploration of the grey zones between victimhood and perpetration in an active conflict zone like Kashmir immediately becomes intertwined with the identity politics embodied by the researcher/practitioner: her context and the manner in which she positions herself with regards to the conflicts. My pre-doctoral work in Kashmir revealed that any manner of cross-community interaction between Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Armed Forces in J&K is near impossible for the region’s locals to undertake because of the ‘gazes’ that many Kashmiris (I learned in interviews and conversations) perceive themselves to be at the receiving end of: the gaze of the Indian government, the gaze of the Pakistani government, the gaze of Militants, and the gaze of Civil Society. Being subject to varying kinds and degrees of, what might be called, ‘surveillance’ coalesces with each Kashmiri’s personal affiliations to the region’s conflicts; creating an amalgamation of causes that makes cross-community work between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ groups extremely dangerous for local artists to undertake. Outsider theatre practitioners therefore, while subject to other kinds of risks, find themselves presented with avenues for cross-community work that might not be available for Kashmiri creators. As James Thompson (2003:20) has pointed out, “One of applied theatre’s strengths is in its status as the outsider, the visitor and the guest”; a statement that finds substantiation in what Frederique Lecomte (in Balfour, Hughes and Thompson, 2009:185) says about her positioning as an outsider theatre maker in Burundi, working across ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ groups:

In Burundi, I am not engaged in the conflict at all, thus it is complicated. The rebels told me, 'It is because you are white and because you are a woman that you can do what you are doing now because it would be impossible for a Burundian, a Hutu or a Tutsi to do this, especially in this period.'... The problem is that it is a pity that it is not possible for a Burundian to make this kind of show but they can do another... perhaps a didactic play or a sensitization play. My play is asking questions, listening [to] every part of the society... In one way it is because I am a woman and because I am white that I can do that but in another way it's not, it's because I am an artist, using theatre as a tool [...].

By building on the strengths of being an outsider therefore, this doctoral project attempts to explore Kashmir’s grey zones in conversation with what Carolyn Nordstrom (2004) calls the

“shadows of war” i.e., the places that are deemed inaccessible, unworthy of being accessed, and relegated to the margins. Defining place by what is “non-place”, Nordstrom (2004:37) furthers her idea of the “shadows of war” by articulating these non-places as “the elsewhere that is populated by shadowy figures in dark coats: the realms constructed in popular thought as the province of misery and danger... the homeless, the criminal, the illicit, the marginal”. This project attempts to step into some of the shadowy non-places of Kashmir, then, begins with an acknowledgement that “in the dramatic arena of violence” there are multiple positions “such as facilitators, gatekeepers, reporters, bystanders, producers and go-betweens, that together in complex relations co-construct the mix that both enables and constrains the likelihood of atrocious deeds” (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:63). Since many of these subject positions are relegated to the shadows when we consider ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ to be the two primary positions within the dramatic arena of violence, the rationale for a project like this – while ethically and methodologically problematic -- is supported by the likes of Slavoj Zizek (2002:543) who suggests that “the truly radical thing would [be] to focus precisely on the disturbing choices: to invite people like dedicated racists, whose choice-whose difference-does make a difference”.

Although the goals of this work are generally in agreement with Zizek’s statement above, it is necessary to elucidate that the objectives of delving into “disturbing choices” in Kashmir – with Militants/Ex-militants and the Indian Armed Forces in particular – have not been designed with the intention of condoning or justifying acts of violence. As Don Foster, Paul Haupt, and Marésa De Beer (2005) propose in their work with a multitude of ‘perpetrators’ of apartheid in South Africa, there is an important need to clarify when working with any kind of ‘perpetrator’ of violence, the differentiation between *understanding* and *empathy*. Foster et al. (2005:90) draw from a leading Holocaust scholar, Christopher Browning (1992), who writes that “Explaining is not excusing, understanding is not forgiving” and in the spirit of Browning’s statement, this project’s use of theatre to work across and between individuals/groups who are considered ‘perpetrators’ does not seek to excuse or forgive their violent acts. However, and here I differ slightly from Browning, neither is this work about addressing acts of violence with the purpose of explaining or understanding them. Rather, in keeping with the shadowy, non-places referred to earlier, this doctoral

undertaking (simply) attempts a theatre-based approach to Kashmir's grey zones by including voices that speak to "disturbing choices" (Zizek, 2002:543).

Although this project moves away from the existing binary between 'victim' and 'perpetrator', the problematic of setting up another kind of categorisation through categories like Civil Society, Militant/Ex-Militant, and Armed Forces comes with its own ethical and political quagmires. How might this project negotiate the risks of "sensationalising" or "sentimentalising" the figures of the civilian, militant/ex-militant, and the soldier (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:52)? When delving into the grey zones of Kashmir, how might the perils of what Rita Barnard (2006) describes in her examination of the Oprah Winfrey Book Club phenomenon as the "glamour of misery" which generates "therapeutic biographies" that lead to a romanticisation of suffering and redemption be evaded (in Mackey, 2013:102)? How might this writing be cognizant of the politics of "who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power", while acknowledging the risks of participating in a "culture of testimony" (Mackey 2013:101)? In dealing with these complex questions "I would be lying if I said that all the theoretical implications were clear to me before designing the project"; much of the time the practice in this doctoral project was "a trial-and-error experience" and the theory that exists "has been derived from my experiences" (Schinina, 2004:34).

Despite the many questions that arise in such an effort, using theatre in the grey zones of Kashmir contains one remarkable possibility: of being simultaneously an aesthetic and anthropological tool that might generate "a new understanding of the problem" without the requirement of having "to solve it" (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Open Courseware, 2007). Although, like Guglielmo Schinina says above, not all the theoretical implications of using theatre in Kashmir were clear to me at the beginning, my desire to use theatre as a tool toward attempting a new understanding of J&K's conflicts was articulated by taking from Dwight Conquergood's (1991) insistence on the power of theatrical processes and performances to be anthropological tools. Conquergood (in Denzin, 2003:13) argues "that we should treat performances as a complementary form of research publication, an alternative method or way of interpreting and presenting the results of an ethnographer's work". In its use of theatre as a means through which to generate new understandings and interpretations of Kashmir's grey zones, this project approaches theory as "itself a practice"

(Barrett & Bolt, 2007:116), with the understanding that “theorising out of practice is a very different way of thinking than applying theory to practice” (Barrett and Bolt, 2007:33).

The grey zone between theory and practice, the shadows of war that emerge when using theatre as an anthropological tool, and the non-places between victim and perpetrator in Kashmir all meant that this work could not be executed and articulated in a “neat and predictable way” (Smith and Dean, 2009:214). Instead, since “the problem, or many problems, emerge[d] over time according to the needs of the practice” (Smith and Dean, 2009:214), the project in its initial stages was framed by multiple research problems:

Research problem 1: Setting up the workshops

- What strategies may be used to identify participants and spaces when setting up workshops with members of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Armed Forces?
- What are the concepts that guide the workshop design?

Research problem 2: Executing the workshops

- What aspects of the workshop design change in order to suit the needs of each participant group and how might these changes be analysed?
- What are the outcomes of each workshop?

Research problem 3: Creating one performance

- What choices guide the scripting of one performance from the narratives obtained in the different workshops?
- What remains/is lost/is adapted in the script writing process?
- What theatrical form is decided as being most suitable?
- Where can this cross-community performance be staged?
- How are audiences negotiated i.e., do all collaborators come to the same performance or does the context call for different performances for each contributor group?

- Would it be possible to create cross-community immersive experiences?³ i.e., where Civil Society is immersed in experiences of the Armed Forces and Militants/Ex-Militants; where Militants/Ex-militants are immersed in experiences of the Armed Forces and Civil Society; where the Armed Forces are immersed in experiences of the Civil Society and Militants/Ex-Militants.
- How do contributors from the various workshops respond to the aesthetics and ethics of creating one performance piece that weaves together their different, cross-community, narratives?

While research questions change and evolve even in more traditional research projects, “the practice-led researcher may find problem definition is unstable for as long as practice is ongoing”; therefore, in a project that is predicated upon the practice of making and performing theatre, it is perhaps only “when the practice is done that the final research problem will be decided” (Smith and Dean, 2009:214): a statement that will be returned to in the concluding chapter.

An Overview of Theatre in Times/Places of War

At the core of scholarship surrounding performance in places/times of war lies the University of Manchester’s In Place of War⁴ institute, directed by James Thompson. Of all of Thompson’s work, it is his experiences in Sri Lanka and his prison-based programmes in the UK that guide his explorations around the subject of performance in places of war. In *Bewilderment and Beyond* (2003), Thompson presents the idea of “bewilderment” as an affective process that does not seek to clarify issues, but rather works to create a sense of bewilderment in its audiences and creators. Not only does this bewilderment, Thompson claims, assist in creating a more ethical approach to the work by not overstating the possible effects of the theatre project; but bewilderment also preserves a necessary humility in addressing the complexities of violence-ridden contexts in which these performances are created and performed. As Thompson (2003:22-23) states, “The state of bewilderment is a shorthand for the importance and positive effect of amazement, fascination and doubt” and

³ Immersive Theatre as an aesthetic is discussed in Chapter One.

⁴ In Place of War has produced a number of theoretical explorations around the idea of performance in response to violent conflict – primarily by James Thompson (2003, 2005, 2009), Michael Balfour (2009), and Jenny Hughes (2011). The Institute has also created a virtual community that seeks to connect individuals/groups that create performance in response to war (In Place of War, 2012).

is “the position of the theatre-maker who has conducted a piece of work in a community and struggles to find the words that can appropriately articulate the experience”. Furthering the notion of bewilderment, Thompson calls for a strong distinction between effect and affect when discussing the potentialities of performance in war zones. By highlighting the potential of affective objectives, Thompson (2009:182) postulates that:

Starting from affect does not mean a flight from clear statements or a fierce denunciation of acts of injustice – but grounds it in our humility and lack of superiority. The pause, then our stammering, can find a voice to condemn or console – but it exhibits a tender, embodied connection to the suffering it denounces, rather than its cool detachment from it.

In conversation with Thompson, Jenny Hughes’ (2011) work – also as part of *In Place of War* – brings ‘performance’ into conversation with ‘terror’. As part of this dialogue, Hughes investigates the importance given to imagination in the UK government’s training manuals for soldiers, while also considering acts of ‘terror’ from the recent past, like Youtube postings of beheadings, through the lens of Performance Studies. Drawing from Theodor Adorno (1970) and Jacques Rancière (2010), Hughes discusses the idea of an art that brings about a “capacity to shudder” (Hughes, 2011:107) and “create dissensus”, underscoring Rancière’s notions about “critical art as lacking a clear political project” (Hughes, 2011:126). Building on these ideas, the realm of Documentary/Verbatim Theatre⁵ is one to which Hughes pays considerable attention, and in so doing, suggests three primary modalities in which this form of theatre might be used to highlight themes of war and terror: the “forensic, the exceptional, and the composed” (2011:93). By forensic, Hughes (2011:93) refers to plays that hinge upon transcripts/archives that are available in the public domain; by exceptional she “refers to the staging of testimony from spaces of exception”, and by the composed, Hughes refers to plays that are both forensically obtained from archives but also composed by directors/playwrights. Since this doctoral project emphasises exceptional and composed approaches to Documentary Theatre, this aesthetic strategy’s basis in ‘fact’ necessitates some consideration. Carol Martin (2006) in her work *Bodies of Evidence* draws on Diana Taylor’s (2003) concepts of the “archive” and the “repertoire” to present the argument that “history and memory exist on two parallel but not identical lines: the archive (documents) and the repertoire (embodied memory, oral tradition)” (Martin, 2006:10).

⁵ I use both *Documentary* and *Verbatim* here, since the two forms are closely related by virtue of their basis in ‘archive’ and ‘fact’. However, in the remainder of this literature review I only use the term Documentary Theatre, taking Verbatim Theatre to be a sub-genre of the form.

Martin then suggests that perhaps what is as important as that which is recorded in the archives, is what is *not* there – an idea that might be extended to community-based theatre workshops that draw on the narratives of its participants i.e., that what is said is only as important as what is not said. Similarly Chou and Bleiker (2010), in their considerations of George Packer's (2008) dramatizations of war using Documentary Theatre, suggest that these forms of docu-dramas become important especially in contexts where the media is heavily censored i.e., that under the auspices of theatrical creation and performance, narratives that are usually censored in the mainstream might be brought to light.

In addition to Documentary Theatre, there are other important ways in which theatre is used in times/places of war. For example, techniques from Augusto Boal's (1985) Theatre of the Oppressed are often used as tools to brainstorm solutions; story-telling exercises are utilised in trauma therapy – endeavours that have been strongly critiqued by James Thompson (2005) and Laura Edmondson (2005), and of course, there exist a number of theatre projects which use an amalgamation of techniques to represent a wide range of documentary and fictitious realities of war. This overview will now move onto a survey of theatre practitioners/practices/projects across conflict/post-conflict zones. By beginning with theatre practices from the Middle East, the overview from this region particularly considers theatrical interventions that are conducted by Israeli theatre directors in/about the conflicts in Palestine; since, as a theatre director from 'mainland'⁶ India who is creating work in/about Kashmir, there are various parallels to be found in being the citizen of a (perceived) 'colonial power' who seeks to dramatise narratives of the 'colonised'.⁷

In her overview of Nora Chilton's work with Documentary Theatre in Israel, Linda Ben-Zvi (2006:45) discusses Chilton's three objectives in her work: "(1) a desire to reinstate the voices and experiences of those written out of history; (2) a belief that the words of individuals telling their stories can provide a powerful corrective to the mediatized versions of reality claiming legitimacy; and (3) a recognition of the power of performance to challenge the master narratives and discourses of history". Similar to techniques used by Anna Deavere Smith⁸ in the United States, Chilton's work is seen as "writing a reaction to rather

⁶ The term 'mainland' is used to denote the fact that this researcher is from a part of India that does not question its allegiance to the Indian nation state; a belonging that is far more contentious in J&K and the North-Eastern parts of what is currently, 'India'.

⁷ More information on these dynamics to the conflicts in Kashmir can be found later on in this introduction.

⁸ More information about Smith's work can be found later in this review.

than a record of history" (Ben-Zvi, 2006:45). Using Martin Buber's 'I-Thou' relationship as the basis for her work, Chilton does not only consider the aesthetic outcomes i.e., the script/performance, but also considers the learning processes in play for the actors – who, in portraying characters of those who are considered as 'Other' – "learn about themselves, and break out of their cocoons of self-absorption by trying to see their relationship to, and their responsibility for, others in society" (Ben-Zvi, 2006:45). While analyses of Chilton's work tend to veer toward an optimistic outlook as to the role of theatre in response to the conflicts in the region, other works from Israel/Palestine focus on the complications of these projects. For instance, when discussing theatre projects that work with schools in Israel, Anat Gesser-Edelsburg (2012:97) mentions that the "feelings of pessimism and hopelessness" of the conflict bleed through any attempt to dramatise it, thus reducing any sense of self-efficacy that its spectators might have. In addition to the struggles of conveying hope in a situation of (seeming) hopelessness, Gesser-Edelsburg (2011:72) discusses ethical questions around appropriation that are faced by Israeli theatre practitioners who seek to perform issues relating to Palestine. Such questions are immensely relevant to this project and shall be addressed in the following chapters.

British playwright David Hare's (1999) way of tackling the ethics of appropriation in a play about Israel/Palestine is to invoke auto-ethnography in his *Via Dolorosa*. Written as a one-person show, Hare's piece is set against the backdrop of his travels to the region, drawing from conversations with individuals who hold varying political positions vis-à-vis the conflicts in Israel/Palestine. Situated within the framework of targeting his own lived experience as a British theatre maker, Hare focusses on his personal positioning in the region, attempting not to explain or to make incomprehensible⁹ the happenings in the region, but seeking instead to focus on his own assimilation -- or rather, his attempts to assimilate-- the many points of view that were shared with him during his visit to Israel/ Palestine.

In attempting to situate this research as one that seeks to explore my personal positioning in relation to 'perpetrators' in Kashmir, it is necessary to return to the work by Foster, Haupt, and De Beer (2005) with various 'perpetrators' from South Africa's years of apartheid. Situating their work within the context of existing studies around the nature of violence,

⁹ The phrase 'not to explain or to make incomprehensible' is with reference to Giorgio Agamben's (1999) use of these ideas in *Remnants of Auschwitz*; an idea that I will return to later in this literature review.

Foster, Haupt, and De Beer complicate the idea of the 'perpetrator' by considering different approaches to how these individuals are understood. By discussing Hannah Arendt's (1963) thoughts on the "banality of evil", Stanley Milgram's (1974) experiments that evidenced the role of authority in the committing of acts of violence, and acts of violence being routinised as in the Rwandan genocide, *Theatre of Violence* (Foster, Haupt and De Beer, 2005:66) puts forth the idea of a "relational model" which seeks "a shift in the direction of search"; where "the origins of violence" are suggested not as being "within the enclosed figure of the individual perpetrator, but in the constellation of relations between persons, groups, ideologies and juxtaposed positionings". Drawing on this relational model of addressing conflict, *Theatre of Violence* complicates the ethics/politics of working across/between 'victim' and 'perpetrator' by acknowledging the skewed power dynamics that often exist between members of these two groups. It is in addressing these imbalances of power that Foster, Haupt, and De Beer (2005:90) carefully delineate the difference between understanding and empathy (as mentioned earlier), quoting one of the leading Holocaust scholars in writing on Nazi perpetrators, Browning (1992:xx): "What I do not accept, however, are the old clichés that to explain is to excuse, to understand is to forgive. Explaining is not excusing, understanding is not forgiving".

Browning's statement might be further explored using Amartya Sen's *Identity and Violence*, a work that is premised on the idea that a "decolonization of the mind demands a firm departure from the temptation of solitary identities and priorities" (Sen, 2006:99). Sen cautions his readers that seeing individuals in their singularities could lead to a disregard for the plural networks and communities of which the individuals see themselves as being a part; seeing individuals as singularly identified then, might create a drastically simplified and reduced understanding of humanity. In agreement with Sen, this doctoral project – although considering a tripartite community categorisation of Kashmiri identity groups as Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and Indian Armed Forces -- seeks to move away from the singularities of identity tags like 'civilian', 'soldier', and 'militant', looking instead to explore the many grey zones that exist between these categories. The exploration of such a liminality of identities in dramatic representations of conflict can be seen in works like *The Line* (Market Theatre, 2012), which is the culmination of South African director Gina Shmukler's research on trauma and theatre making. Once again inspired by Documentary Theatre, *The Line* "is

constructed from a series of interviews with South Africans involved or affected by the xenophobic attacks that took place in May 2008” and “explores the fragility of goodness and questions how the attacks were born, who is responsible, what makes good people do bad things and how one crosses the line” (Market Theatre, 2012).

Sen’s focus on the multiplicities of our identities also finds resonance with Judith Butler’s (2009) questioning of whose lives are considered grievable, specifically in the context of war. Taking Butler’s thoughts into account, not only is it integral to a project like this to look beyond singular identity tags but also, it is instrumental to consider whose story is told and whose story is considered worthy of being listened to. An example of a literary effort that recognises multiple identities in the face of war, while including the lives that are usually not considered as grievable, is Boubacar Boris Diop’s (2006) *Murambi: The Book of Bones*. By invoking testimonies from survivors and perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide alongside creative fictionalizations of the events themselves, Diop weaves together narratives of both ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ in his complex novel. A work that has won critical acclaim both within and outside Rwanda, *Book of Bones* puts forth the possibility for a work of art to blur lines between ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’; inviting its audience to remember and bear witness to the grey zones of the Rwandan genocide. Diop’s multi-faceted book is an example of an artistic work that uses the advantages that come from the outside positioning of its creator and the fictional quality of its form,¹⁰ to address questions/issues that would be outside the purview of local artists – at least for a time.

When speaking of transgressing boundaries between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’, Mahmood Mamdani (2001) and Frantz Fanon’s (1986, 2004) work concerning the impact of colonialism on legacies of contemporary intrastate conflicts are positions to consider carefully. Fanon, discussing the many layers to the post-colonial condition, both explains why violence becomes necessary in struggles for revolution and simultaneously critiques the post-colonial mind wherein the systems and oppressions of colonialism still abound. If one were to consider/extend this idea to the psychology that might make up the average Indian soldier who is stationed in Kashmir, or the average young man who takes up arms to fight the Indian ‘occupation’, the (post) colonial conditions/contexts involved warrant a questioning of these

¹⁰ One might use the term ‘composed’ to talk about works like *Book of Bones*, to take from Jenny Hughes’ (2011) use of this category, to talk about Documentary Theatre approaches that creatively integrate ‘fact’ and fiction.

individuals' classification as 'victim'/'perpetrator'. Fanon and Mamdani's ideas around the structural underpinnings of violence take dramatic form in a piece like Peter Weiss' 1966 production, *The Investigation*. A performance that works with observations/archives from the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963-1965, *The Investigation* juxtaposes accounts of 'victims' alongside statements from 'perpetrators' and judges at these trials. In so doing, Weiss communicates the various hegemonic structures that are at play when considering war and genocide. Weiss' work has seen many adaptations, most notably perhaps, a 2007 production created by Dorcy Rugamba and Isabelle Gyselinx, setting *The Investigation* in the context of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide (Tessler, 2007). 'Victims' and 'perpetrators' come from a structurally unequal world and Weiss' work, alongside Rugamba and Gyselinx's adaptation, weaves opposing narratives together in order to highlight the structural violence that Mamdani and Fanon theorise.

In addition to looking at such theatrical representations of violence through the lens of post-colonial frameworks, "peace education" is the term that Ifat Maoz (2004 in Gesser-Edelsburg, 2011) uses to describe strategies that seek to work across conflicting/opposing groups, explaining the three general ways of working toward peace education: projects that work toward coexistence by seeking to battle stereotypes, those that emphasise the conflict by addressing asymmetrical power relations and creating an awareness among the majority about the experiences of the minority, and projects that fall between these two realms. A theatre-based approach that works between coexistence and conflict, drawing together cultures/ways of being that are in opposition to each other might be said to be "intracultural", as described by Rustom Bharucha (1993). Positing the *intra* as an alternative to the *inter* Bharucha mentions, specifically, the need for intracultural projects in a diverse context like India. Intracultural work would – by its nature—both employ strategies to battle cultural stereotypes and would simultaneously draw attention to the working of local/regional/national power dynamics. Thus the concept of intraculturalism becomes a useful tool with which to negotiate the line between coexistence and conflict, when looking at this project through the lens of Maoz's ideas around peace education.

In looking at intracultural theatre projects that work across opposing sides in a conflict toward such a peace education, one particular project in Northern Ireland emerges. *The*

*Wedding Community Play*¹¹ was undertaken by Gerri Moriarty (2004) and Jo Egan and involved working with groups of Catholics and Protestants in Belfast. Working initially with the two groups separately, the play brought together Protestant and Catholic creators/actors at a residential weekend during which their separately created performances were integrated. In describing the creators' approach to such intracultural work, Moriarty speaks to the necessity of keeping the two groups apart initially and working slowly toward a joint process. Realising that the participants were stepping outside their cultural comfort zones, Moriarty and Egan took care to ease the groups into their first, joint meeting. What *The Wedding Community Play* points toward therefore, is the idea that cross-community/peace education work might not always mean that all parties participate in a theatrical practice at the same time.

Adopting a different approach to peace education through cross-community narratives *The Laramie Project* (2001) is a docudrama created by Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project, which is based on interviews conducted by the theatre company with individuals from Laramie, Wyoming. Using the 1998 killing of Matthew Shepard as its focus, this play invokes material depicting varied opinions about the death of this young man. Highlighting the issue of homophobia, Kaufman and his team showcase interviews with 'victims' (people who were close to Shepard), 'perpetrators' (those involved in killing Shepard), and various bystanders from the town of Laramie, in order to portray a complex picture of a small town's response to a violent hate crime. Ten years later, "Moisés Kaufman and members of Tectonic Theater Project returned to Laramie to find out what has happened" (Project, 2010). *The Wedding Community Play* and *The Laramie Project* therefore provide examples of intracultural, peace education-inspired practices that might be undertaken by a theatre maker who is seeking to work between/across opposing groups in conflict zones.

¹¹ "The Wedding Community Play [...] was a promenade theatre performance by bus. The audience were to be taken, on the bus, on the morning of the wedding to a tiny terraced house in Protestant Loyalist East Belfast and another terraced house, just around the corner in Catholic Nationalist Short Strand. They would be like 'flies on the wall'-- sitting in real kitchens, bedrooms and front rooms-- watching and listening to the action. Then they would go to a real church in the centre of Belfast for the highly stylised wedding ceremony and to a hotel for the wedding reception, as if they were guests. The whole performance, including travel, took about four hours...My colleague, Jo Egan and I decided that we would begin work with separate workshops for the Catholic and Protestant groups, but that these would be minimal-- two workshops each as separate groups, before bringing the groups together in workshops and at a residential weekend. We thought that there might be a need for each to have a space where they could be free to explore without feeling 'censored' by the presence of the other. We also thought that each should feel listened to and know that we, as workshop facilitators appreciated their concerns and ideas. However, we also felt that, if this went on for too long-- for example, over six workshops, it would allow people to fall into traditional patterns of behaviour and thinking..." (Balfour et al., 2009:133-134).

Similarly, Anna Deavere Smith's plays *Twilight Los Angeles* (1994) and *Fires in the Mirror* (1998) use techniques of Documentary Theatre in order to highlight issues related to intracultural violence in the United States (US). While the latter includes interviews with members from Jewish and African-American communities in response to the Crown Heights crisis in 1991,¹² the former weaves together different individuals' responses to the Rodney King trial and verdict in 1992.¹³ Written as monologues and performed by Smith as a one-person show, both plays involve interviews with members from opposing groups toward presenting a piece that humanises an 'Other'. While Smith's later plays also continue in this style, it is these two ventures that brought her name into the limelight for transgressing imaginary/real lines that exist between intracultural communities that are in conflict with each other. The poly-vocal and multi-narrative schema followed by works like *The Wedding Community Play*, *The Laramie Project*, *Twilight Los Angeles*, and *Fires in the Mirror* -- especially in the linking of voices that stand on opposing sides of an issue/conflict -- makes the creative processes and aesthetic outcomes of such works particularly relevant to this thesis.

When looking at poly-vocal theatrical efforts that address "disturbing choices" (Zizek, 2002:543), Robin Soans' (2005) *Talking to Terrorists* becomes pertinent to this project. A play that invokes narratives from former 'terrorists', ex-bureaucrats, soldiers from the UK government, and members of civil society like psychologists, journalists and social workers, *Talking to Terrorists* explores the stories of those who have executed violent actions, those who were/are victims of those actions, and those who have played a role in preventing those acts of violence. By conducting interviews and consulting archives around the theme of 'terrorism', this piece has received extremely positive responses for dealing with the question of what makes someone a terrorist. However, one of the ex-IRA men that Soans' team interviewed had this to say about his own depiction in the play: "I come across very cold and calculating in it, and maybe in the interview that's what came across, I don't know... a couple of interviews can't sum up a human being, it can't do it, so it's a big leap of faith talking to anyone like that" (Magee in Hughes 2011:111); a response that sums up many of

¹² The Crown Heights Riot was a three-day riot that occurred in August 1991 in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York. The riots began on August 19, 1991, after a child of Guyanese immigrants was struck and killed by an automobile in the motorcade of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the leader of an Orthodox Jewish sect. The riot unleashed simmering tensions of the Crown Heights' black community against the Orthodox Jewish community.

¹³ Rodney Glen King (1965-2012) was an African-American construction worker who, while on parole for robbery, became nationally known after being beaten by Los Angeles police officers following a high-speed car chase. Videotaped footage of this incident inflamed public outrage and anger about police brutality, racism, and other social inequalities throughout the United States.

the ethical quagmires of this poly-vocal doctoral undertaking in Kashmir's grey zones. It needs to be clarified here that the term poly-vocal does not necessarily imply the showcasing of narratives *across* community lines; poly-vocal could also refer to the inclusion of multiple voices from *within* a singularly identified group. For example: *Black Watch* (Burke, 2010) is a production that weaves together personal stories of ex-soldiers from the Scottish Black Watch regiment that served in Iraq. This piece is poly-vocal and intracultural in its invoking of different soldier voices alongside excerpts from news reports and other archives, including – both implicitly and explicitly – an insight into the (biased) narrative of the researcher/creator.

When dealing with controversial themes, opposing groups, and poly-vocal narratives it is useful to consider “aesthetics of discomfort”, a term that Edmondson (2009) uses to talk about Erik Ehn's playwriting -- as an outsider -- about the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Edmondson draws from Giorgio Agamben (1999), who in talking about remembering Auschwitz, discusses those who seek to understand/explain the Holocaust and those who stress its absolute incomprehensibility; pointing out that the “only way forward lies in investigating the space between those two options” (cited in Edmondson, 2011:69). Drawing also from Michael Taussig (1986) who calls for a “poetics of destruction and revelation” (in Edmondson, 2009:69) when talking about violence, Edmondson declares that seeking an art that discomfits and troubles the categories of violence is perhaps the only ethical way for an outside theatre maker to deal with a conflict in which she has no part. Placing an ethical questioning of the aestheticisation of violence alongside Taussig's ideas, Edmondson lauds Ehn for not attempting to explain the causes (the why) of the Rwandan genocide and choosing instead to concede a “dramaturgical defeat” (Edmondson, 2009:79). Edmondson's analysis is primarily based on Ehn's play *Maria Kizito* (2008) that has as its protagonist a Hutu nun, who is a ‘perpetrator’ of the genocide. By addressing this contentious narrative, Ehn blurs fact and fiction through an aesthetics of discomfort. In so doing *Maria Kizito* complicates the victim/perpetrator binary by exemplifying what Hughes (2011:9) describes as “aesthetics of uncertainty”. Borrowing from Janet Wolff (2008:5), Hughes (2011:9) describes the aesthetics of uncertainty as an approach that involves “looking to the marginal, indirect and oblique in artistic practice for a 'new discourse of value without a foundation in certainties or universals”.

Consequently, by being rooted in a theatrical exploration of multiple uncertainties – between practice and theory, between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’, between fact and fiction -- the particularity of this doctoral project lies in the use of theatre as a practice-based methodology to explore grey zones between Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir. While the chapters that follow this introduction will return to ideas outlined in this overview, the final introductory element that is necessary here is a brief overview of Kashmir.

An Overview of Kashmir¹⁴

Commonly referred to as J&K, the ‘Indian’¹⁵ state of Jammu & Kashmir includes the regions of Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir. Divided across religious lines, Jammu consists of a Hindu majority population; Ladakh has a Buddhist majority, while Kashmir is the only state in India that contains a Muslim majority. While Ladakh is involved in territorial disputes between the governments of India and China, the question of Jammu’s national affiliation is often brought up in debates surrounding what it would mean to have a ‘free’ Kashmir – it has been postulated that the Hindu dominated Jammu would prefer to stay with the government of India. When Kashmir is spoken of therefore, one usually is referring to the Kashmir Valley, the Muslim dominated region in J&K. Similarly, when this writing refers to Kashmir, I refer specifically to the Valley and do not include the regions of Jammu and Ladakh within the auspices of the term.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first prime minister, explains the importance of Kashmir thus: “We have always regarded the Kashmir problem as symbolic for us, as it has far-reaching consequences in India. Kashmir is symbolic as it illustrates that we are a secular state” (in Menon, 2013:168). Nehru pledged that a referendum would be held “when peace and law and order have been established” (Menon, 2013:168) in Kashmir, giving Kashmiris the chance to vote on the region’s national affiliation i.e., whether or not it would remain under the auspices of the Indian nation state. However this promised plebiscite is yet to happen

¹⁴ Versions of this particular overview have been used in this researcher’s published articles (Dinesh, 2015a); (Dinesh, 2015b); (Dinesh 2015c). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a full account of the histories and conflicts in Kashmir, this introduction provides a general overview that is necessary to frame the subsequent work. In the chapters that follow, where necessary, more extensive contextual information is supplied. However those interested in the histories and politics of Kashmir’s conflicts should explore the sheer plethora of archival resources that are available – some of which are listed in the Bibliography -- based on which particular dimension of the conflict they would like more information on.

¹⁵ I use Indian in quotation marks to underscore the struggles ongoing in the state of J&K for independence from the Indian government.

and Indian leaders who have followed Nehru have stated the referendum will be implemented only after Pakistan withdraws its troops from the parts of Kashmir that the latter administers/occupies. In addition, any talk of a plebiscite in Kashmir also brings up a number of additional questions: are Jammu and Ladakh also included in the referendum? What options would the plebiscite present: staying with/separating from India; remaining with/becoming part of/breaking away from Pakistan; attaining an independent Kashmiri nation state; or some/all of these options? Since 1947 therefore, Kashmir has been at the focal point of many conflicts. At an international level there have been multiple disputes between the governments of India and Pakistan as to the frontiers of Kashmir, culminating in the creation of a Line of Control (LoC) after the Indo-Pak war of 1972. This line separates Indian-Administered Kashmir from Pakistan-Administered Kashmir¹⁶ and currently, is a line across which Indian and Pakistani security forces engage in combat. At a local/regional/national level, there are various conflicts at play in Kashmir: political disputes between the Indian central government leadership and the leaders of different political parties in Kashmir;¹⁷ violent disputes between Kashmiri civilians and the Indian government's soldiers stationed in Kashmir; disputes between militants/separatists and the government's forces/civilians, and so on. Given the many conflicts that are in motion therefore, I must clarify that this overview about Kashmir is *not* on "the interstate dimension (India-Pakistan) of the conflict, but rather on the intrastate dimension (India-Kashmir) of it" (Munshi, 2013:252).

When considering the intrastate dimensions of Kashmir then, there are three primary categories/groups into which people are generally seen as being divided: Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian Armed Forces. There are of course various, multi-faceted, affiliations within each of these larger community groups however, one's political position (as a mainland Indian) vis-à-vis Kashmir is often denoted by with which of these three groups one interacts. Generally speaking, those who maintain links with Civil Society are assumed as holding views against all agents that use violence albeit with different ideas as to where Kashmir belongs; those who are keen to understand the points of view of

¹⁶ *Indian-Administered Kashmir* and *Pakistan-Administered Kashmir* are sometimes referred to as *Indian-Occupied Kashmir*, *Pakistan-Controlled Kashmir*, etc., based on the political affiliations of those using the terms.

¹⁷ Each of the Kashmiri political groups has different agendas as to whether the Valley/ should be independent, stay a part of either India or Pakistan. They also hold differing opinions as to whether or not Jammu and Ladakh should be included in a plebiscite.

Militants are usually automatically classified as being pro-*azadi*¹⁸ or pro-Pakistan, and those who maintain relationships with the Indian government's Armed Forces are immediately termed agents of India who are looking to subvert the Kashmiri freedom/pro-Pakistan movement. While the conflicts in Kashmir continue, much of the rest of India remains in a state of oblivion about the complexities of the on-going violence in the area.¹⁹ Rudimentary (often, biased) media reports and the geographical isolation of Kashmir have led to a widespread lack of awareness in the rest of the nation about the many nuances to the conflicts. Kashmir is spoken of either in simplistic terms as an India-Pakistan conflict; or as a war zone where the sole perpetrators are the Militants/Armed Forces because of their acts of violence, and more recently, Kashmir has come to be touted as a tourist's paradise, with conscious attempts to eliminate narratives of violence. In the midst of this cacophony of opinions, the average non-Kashmiri Indian has very little access to any variety of experience when considering Kashmir. With incredible pressure to take a stand – pro-India, pro-Pakistan, or pro-*azadi* – Indians from the mainland either do not have an opinion about 'the Kashmir issue', or when they/we do, are expected to choose a side. The idea of looking at the conflicts in Kashmir as multi-directional, or as relational, is not a stance that is common: partly for fear of repercussions from 'Other' groups and partly because of a grave lack of information. There is a lack here therefore, an absence of efforts that seek to explore and understand the different points of view that are at play in talking about the Kashmir issue. It is this lack, this grey zone, which this doctoral project seeks to fill, through the use of theatre.

When speaking of theatre in the Kashmiri context, Bhawani Bashir Yasir's (2009) fellowship thesis is one of the few works to provide an extensive overview. Yasir divides the history of Kashmiri drama into three periods: "1) The Buddhist and Hindu period which lasted till early fourteenth century (2) The Muslim (Sultanate and Mughal) period which lasted for another five hundred years and (3) the contemporary period of the twentieth century" (Yasir, 2009). Yasir considers the time period of 4th-7th centuries AD as being the pinnacle of the performing arts in Kashmir, a pinnacle that began to see its decline because of the

¹⁸ *Azadi* is the Kashmiri/Urdu/Hindi word for *Freedom/Independence/Liberty* and is the term used to describe the movement for an independent Kashmiri nation-state.

¹⁹ Statements in this paragraph, regarding views about Kashmir in 'mainland' India, are based on the researcher's personal experiences having grown up in the southern part of the country, living in the western part of India, and traveling extensively across the Indian sub-continent.

subsequent turbulences “after [the] 12th century—viz- the invasions, attacks, floods, famines, raids, fires and epidemics” (Yasir, 2009). As a result of these turbulences, archival materials such as books, manuscripts, and scripts have been lost and one of the few surviving folk forms is the Kashmiri folk theatre form of Bhand Pather, a form in which “Kashmiri folk performers travel from place to place with their extensive repertoires” (Menon, 2013:162) using improvisation, dance, Sufi music, and puppetry, in addition to dramatic dialogues.²⁰

Yasir (2009) divides the theatrical timeline of Kashmir into seven major periods beginning with the “Dharmic Theatre (1925-1940)”, when works were based on religious and mythological ideas. Following this period during which theatre was spiritually inclined, Yasir speaks to the emergence of a “Progressive Theatre (1941-1950)”, when theatrical works took inspiration from independence movements in the Indian sub-continent and particularly from the partition between India and Pakistan. Given the post-independence context, Yasir presents the advent of a “Theatre of Propaganda” between 1951 and 1960, a time during which theatrical works in Kashmir were defined by post-partition politics between the two nation states that lay claim to the Valley. Subsequently shaped by geo-political disputes between India and Pakistan, Kashmir is said to have witnessed a “Renaissance Period” between 1961 and 1970, a decade during which the Indian government increased its efforts to sponsor artistic projects in the region. Kashmiri plays/playwrights emerged, and Bhand Pather was revived. This period of renaissance, Yasir claims, was then followed by a “Theatre of Revolution” between 1971 and 1979; when the Kashmir Theatre Federation was established, artists found themselves in an environment which encouraged further experimentation, and Doordarshan Kashmir – a government sponsored television channel – began to significantly affect Kashmir’s theatrical activity. This revolutionary period then set the stage for the “Golden Era (1981-1990)” in which amateur and professional theatre artists in Kashmir were encouraged both by the emergence of drama festivals in the region and by efforts of the Sangeet Natak Academy and the National School of Drama – two of the largest cultural institutions supported by the Indian Government -- to ensure the presence of Kashmiri theatre artists in the ventures of these organisations. However, this surge in artistic production was critically affected between 1991 and 2001 in what Yasir calls the “Black Era” of theatrical activity. This was a time during which “the theatre of Kashmir went into coma”

²⁰ The artists in Bhand Pather perform in different spaces (be they fields, courtyards, mountains, or streets) and use satire to subversively present their opposition to structures of power (Menon, 2013:162); more information on Bhand Pather can be found in Chapter Four.

(Yasir, 2009) under the threat of violence from various armed outfits, a decade during which artistic activity in the Kashmir valley drastically declined. Therefore, after the decline of the militancy post-2001, a movement for artistic revival was necessary; a revival that has seen the revitalization of traditional folk forms of theatre like the Bhand Pather, the staging of original and adapted texts in Kashmir, theatrical tours by amateur and professional artists from Kashmir to cities in mainland India, and the occasional theatre project that is implemented in Kashmir by visiting artists.

Although this overview does not do justice to the particularities of each phase within the evolution of theatre in Kashmir, Yasir's timeline reveals two ideas that are relevant to the framing of this project. First, the restrictions placed on theatre during the Black Era demonstrate the controversial positioning of theatre within Kashmir. I have been told, during the practice aspects of this project, that theatrical endeavours are against the mandates of Islam. Viewed as being a form of entertainment that takes the focus of an individual away from the disciplined worship of a higher power, Militants are said to have persecuted theatre artists at the height of the militancy during the 1990s. Even today, theatre artists are cognizant of the ways in which their work might be considered sacrilegious; putting them at risk from physical dangers (from Militants) and social alienation (from their Civil Society counterparts). In addition to underlining the notion that theatre can be a contentious undertaking in Kashmir, Yasir's thesis emphasises the survival of the folk form of Bhand Pather and provokes a consideration of the aesthetic choices in this performance style that have led to its endurance despite the shifting socio-political climate in the region. The survival of Bhand Pather and the controversial positioning of theatre in Kashmir are points that will be discussed in further detail in the chapters that follow.

Given this political and theatrical context of Kashmir and the research problems articulated earlier, this project was designed to occur in three phases. Phase one focussed on identifying civilian collaborators in Kashmir and the primary partnership that emerged as a result was with the Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi (EKTA) in Srinagar. A theatre company that is headed by alumni from the National School of Drama in Delhi, EKTA is one of the more active theatre ensembles in Kashmir and a partnership with them was integral to the implementation of phase two: a phase that while initially conceptualised to include workshops with active militants, had to be redesigned to involve only Ex-militants. In a

similar vein, while phase three was originally designed to involve the practice of theatre with/for/about the Indian Armed Forces stationed in Kashmir, the project design had to adapt and evolve when multiple efforts to reach out to the Armed Forces did not come to fruition. Regardless of these constantly evolving strategies – a quality inherent to practice-based-research – each phase of this project was built around the three overarching ideas of pedagogy, aesthetics and ethics; each of which will be further analysed and framed in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In creating a bricolage, the bricoleur appropriates available methods, strategies and empirical materials or invents or pieces together new tools as necessary. The choice of research practices depends upon the questions asked. The questions depend on their context, what is available in that context, and what the researcher can do in that setting (Barrett and Bolt, 2007:127).

The contribution of this research project to new knowledge lies in the use of theatre as a practice-based methodology to explore grey zones between Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian Armed Forces' soldiers in Kashmir. In so doing, this project was/is among the first of its kind in Kashmir and had to adapt constantly to the various risks that come with working across community lines in an active conflict zone. Furthermore, the practice-based quality of this research led to the conceptual framework intentionally being built on what Barrett and Bolt refer to in the quotation above as a "bricolage" i.e., a borrowing of concepts from various disciplines, unified in their being appropriate to what might emerge through practice. As a starting point, the bricolage in this project's conceptual framework stemmed from a consideration of the three overarching ideas that underscored the different phases of the practice:

- ***Pedagogy***: the principles that would shape the researcher-subject relationship in workshops, interviews, and performances
- ***Aesthetics***: the artistic dimensions to the theatre performances, workshops, and interviews
- ***Ethics***: considerations that affected/resulted from the theatre-based researcher's positioning in the context of Kashmir

These three larger ideas of pedagogy, aesthetics, and ethics are further elucidated in this bricolaged conceptual framework as an interlaced conversation between six concepts that together give shape to the practice-based methodology; the six concepts of affect, situational ethics, Immersive Theatre, Documentary Theatre, devised theatre workshops, and performance auto-ethnography.

The Methodology

L. Hervey Wadsworth (2000:7; in Brown 2013:118), the original voice on art-based research in Dance Movement Theory, defined artistic enquiry as a research process that uses artistic methods of gathering, analysing and/or presenting data, that engages in and acknowledges a creative process, and that is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s). Building on this understanding of art-based research, although social science techniques like chain/snowball sampling (in finding contacts/participants/collaborators), textual analysis (in the study of archival material), and observation (observing the dynamics of workshops and performances) were employed in different stages of this project, the practice of creating and performing theatre lay at the heart of this work. Brad Haseman (in Smith & Dean, 2009:6) takes this idea of practice-based artistic inquiry further and terms it “performative research” where “practice is the principal research activity” in which practitioners “tend to ‘dive in’, to commence practising to see what emerges” (in Smith & Dean, 2009:6). Although Haseman acknowledges that practitioners who implement performative research strategies borrow from the qualitative research tradition, he clarifies that these borrowed strategies are adapted and moulded so as to resonate with the practice in question. Haseman says (in Smith & Dean, 2009:6), that “performative researchers progress their studies by employing variations of: reflective practice, participant observation, performance ethnography, ethnodrama, biographical/autobiographical/narrative inquiry, and the inquiry cycle from action research”. Haseman’s comparative table below (in Barrett and Bolt, 2007:151) depicts the defining qualities of such performative research:

Table 1: Elements of Performative Research

Quantitative Research	Qualitative Research	Performative Research
‘The activity or operation of expressing something as a quantity or amount – for example, in numbers, graphs, or formulas’ (Schwandt 2001:215).	‘All forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data i.e., nonnumeric data in the form of words’ (Schwandt 2001:213).	Expressed in non-numeric data, but in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code.
The scientific method	Multi-method	Multi-method led by practice

Haseman's articulations above indicate the importance of responsiveness on the part of the performative researcher, a responsiveness that demands malleability in the researcher's pedagogical, aesthetic, and ethical strategies. Pedagogically, having to respond to the needs of the moment keeps the researcher constantly off-balance and demands -- in the context of a theatre workshop -- the use of a pedagogical framework that is flexible. If a theatre workshop needs to allow its design to evolve based on what emerges daily in the rehearsal room, the pedagogical flexibility elicited from researcher/workshop facilitator in turn leads to an inevitable renegotiation of their ethical positioning. This ethical positioning then influences how workshops, interviews, and performances are designed and composed; qualities of creation that make these practices aesthetic undertakings just as much as they are pedagogical strategies. Being off-balance therefore, breaks away from more traditional facilitator-practitioner, director-actor, and researcher-subject hierarchies and places the researcher "beside the work [on] a horizontal position" where they are "not above, beyond or looking over, but next to and with" (Thompson, 2009:132-134). Returning to the idea of the bricolage then, practice-based approaches to research seem to carry "a dual imperative: to provide direction and at the same time be willing to give up control and follow the surprise of what is emerging" (Levine, 2013:24). This fluidity required of the researcher, a fluidity that demands an ethical positioning that is "next to and with" the work, simultaneously leads to the possible cultivation of "an essentially aesthetic attitude, one that can transform the scholarly task of doing research into art-making" (Levine, 2013: 26-27). Therefore, by placing Stephen Levine's notion of the aesthetic potential of research as art-making in conversation with the pedagogical and ethical possibilities contained in Haseman's understanding of performative research, one cannot fail to see the centrality of pedagogy, ethics, and aesthetics to this project's conceptual framework.

The Six Concepts: A Conversation

The fact that, in and of itself, affect has no point is its critical point of departure, and if the fact that there 'is no point to it' offends those who seek clear prescriptions, end goals or fixed visions, the response must be that no change is possible without enthusiasm, commitment and a passionate sense of the possibility of a better life (Thompson, 2009:128).

The theatre practices undertaken in this research project could be seen as falling under a number of different umbrellas including Applied Theatre, Social Theatre, Community

Theatre, and Political Theatre. While each of these terms has its own histories, challenges, and potentials it is important to clarify that it is not within the scope of this thesis to enter into a discussion about what might be the most appropriate term to classify this work. For example, some of the aesthetic techniques borrow from the broad genre of Social Theatre; certain pedagogic strategies are taken from the realm of Community Theatre, and particular ethical strategies have been informed by scholarship around Applied Theatre. In the spirit of a bricolage therefore, while the choices of specific strategies (in the relevant chapters) have been acknowledged in the context of the theatrical framework from which the practices stem, the implementation of a vortex of theatrical techniques – from an ethical standpoint – draws from Thompson (2005:239) who says:

anyone brave, inspired, committed, reckless or fearless enough to create theatre in a moment of war cannot have their practice reduced to the non-applied or the applied: the entertaining or the efficacious. The work can simultaneously be done because of and in spite of the conflict: a) a distraction from and a reaction to horror; b) a flight from and confrontation of painful memories; c) a celebration of resistance and mourning of its futility; d) a plea for peace and a call to arms.

And yet the work does not have to be one of these things instead aiming to “be simultaneously none of these aspects, but also a vortex of them all” (Thompson, 2005:239). Although this deviation from established terminologies and frameworks might “antagonize the dogma of change” (Balfour, 2009:355), working with a vortex of techniques rather than pre-defined categories creates the possibility for the theatre practitioner/researcher to work beyond the ideologies of a genre and look to the intentionality and necessity of the project’s practice. While the ‘necessity’ for theatre-based work in the grey zones of Kashmir was strongly and variously debated during the course of this research – more information on these instances of deliberation can be found in the chapters that follow. What was less contentious was the understanding that this doctoral undertaking might offer unpredictable (albeit problematic) sets of cross-community webs, interactions, and insights that could take on their own trajectory beyond the confines of the project. The idea of a vortex then, emphasises that the particular potential of this work lies precisely in the unpredictability of its resonances – an unpredictability that locates the work, intentionally, in various grey zones. Giorgio Agamben (1999) critiques, in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, the tendency for those who study the Holocaust to either attempt an understanding/explanation of violence or to stress its sheer incomprehensibility. By questioning both these tendencies, Agamben

(1999:13) suggests that, “the only way forward lies in investigating the space between those two options” i.e., in the grey zone between focussing on that which might be understood and that which is incomprehensible. Furthering the idea of this in-between space, Michael Balfour (2007:3) draws from Primo Levi – as does Agamben – to recognise that the practice of performance in a conflict zone inhabits “a grey zone, one in which it may be neither good nor evil, neither free of ideology, nor completely evacuated of humanising properties (Levi, 1998:23)”. Furthermore, it is precisely this inevitability of grey zones in times/places of war that leads Thompson (2009:111) to call for a participatory theatre that focusses “on affect rather than effect”: making *affect* an important concept in this project.

Extrapolating upon the potential of affect, Thompson (2009:111) states that by avoiding “the anticipation or extraction of meaning as the primary impulse of an applied theatre process”, the theatre practitioner/researcher in times/places of war might come to realise that “working with affect awakens individuals to possibilities beyond themselves without an insistence on what the experience is – what meanings should be attached”. While this insistence on affect could be seen as an excuse for theatre-in-war practitioners to be absolved from having to provide clear articulations for the repercussions of their work, Thompson (2009:182) clarifies that “starting from affect does not mean a flight from clear statements or a fierce denunciation of acts of injustice – but grounds it in our humility and lack of superiority”. Perhaps then, it would be appropriate to consider this, as Balfour (2009:356) does, as an intentional move *away* from “the need for change rhetoric, impact assessments and the strain for verifiable measurements in defining applied theatre” to place an emphasis instead on research that generates “propositions about how theatre actually works”; a statement that resonates with the overarching goal of this project to generate propositions about how theatre might operate within the grey zones of Kashmir.

This project’s approach to affect therefore, like its approach to the binaries of victimhood and perpetration in Kashmir, is strongly rooted in the idea of grey zones: nebulous and uncertain terrain that is characteristic of theatrical efforts that seek to be *more* than the form itself. Speaking of the potential of this uncertain terrain in the context of Applied Theatre, Helen Nicholson (2005:24) states that this “gift of theatre” has the potential to dislodge “fixed and uneven boundaries of ‘self’ and ‘other’ [and] produce open-ended, reciprocal relationships that support participants’ identifications with a range of subject

positions". Furthering Nicholson's proposal, Jenny Hughes (2011:163) reiterates a move away from a "homogeneity of exchange", asking instead for a generosity in which "the gift becomes associated with shifting roles, spontaneity, desire, loss and risk", thus creating a reciprocity that can "be perceived as a provocation to theatre practitioners to place uncertainty at the centre of their encounters with participants". In this spirit, this project maintains a deliberate balance between doubt and clarity – a balance that in practice may be struggled with, as the reader will have occasion to see in the chapters that follow. Although some might see this lack of certainty as being disingenuous or insufficiently rigorous, this research considers uncertainty to in "no way [imply] resignation" (Thompson, 2003:22-23). Instead, the importance of doubt and uncertainty – in the provocation of affect -- is seen as a strength; one that Amartya Sen (2006:122) substantiates, by drawing from Sir Francis Bacon (1605), to say that doubts have the double use of guarding us against errors and in "initiating and furthering a process of inquiry, which can have the effect of enriching our understanding" of issues that "would have [otherwise] been passed by lightly without intervention".

The importance of doubt and uncertainty for the affective framework of this project are also in dialogue with ideas from Sundar Sarukkai (2007a) who has written eloquently about his and others notions of the 'outsider' with regard to anthropological efforts in India. Sarukkai takes from Gopal Guru (2002) who discusses a "moral right to theorize" and asks provocative questions around who has the right to theorise an experience; ultimately asking if those who do not have the lived experience of an event have the right to theorise about it. Doubt, uncertainty, and grey zones return as important aspects in clarifying this project's "moral right to theorise", prompting an articulation that this performative research project does not, at any point, claim an understanding of *the* experience of Kashmiris. Instead, by working with Agamben's in-between spaces, the ethical framing of this research involves a cognisance of the ways in which my particular lived experience intersects with the lived experiences that are explored through the practice of theatre in Kashmir. Ultimately therefore, this uncomfortable positioning that emphasises the grey zones of practice seeks to catalyse affect and is underpinned by the idea that "the pursuit of discomfort rather than joy [might be] a more productive—even ethical—path" (Edmondson, 2009:82).

This ethical pursuit of discomfort toward affect invokes the concept of *situational ethics*, which is a post-structuralist “kind of anti-theoretical, case-by-case applied ethics” (Becker, 1995:738). In this approach to ethics, to determine the right action, “one examines the ethical problem in context of situations, as they occur” (Becker, 1995:738) and in order to be present to ethical questions as they emerge, the theatre practitioner might be said to “wrestle with the politics of when to do less and listen more” (Edmondson, 2011:8). Finding oneself in this position of discomfort increases the vulnerability of the researcher – which in cases of making theatre across community groups in a conflict zone, renders the researcher more susceptible to different kinds of harm. This harm stems from “a strong identification with the researched. This can mean that the researcher is unavoidably vulnerable and that there is a considerably larger element of risk and uncertainty than with more formal methods” (Tisdale in B.deMarrais & Lapan, 2014:29). Furthermore, identification, discomfort and vulnerability – as an outsider looking in – gives rise to ethical questions around the presence/absence of the researcher in the work that is created about the local context. In her poignant critique of film maker Jennie Livingston’s absence from her documentary film *Paris is Burning* (1990), bell hooks (1992:151) critiques the manner in which the viewers of the film are “watching an ethnographic film” that documents the lives of “natives” without being allowed an opportunity to “recognize that they are watching a work shaped and formed by a perspective and standpoint specific to Livingston”. This invisibility of the researcher, hooks contends (1992:151), leads to a fraught ethical standing where Livingston “assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counter-hegemonic”. Considering an application of situational ethics to the affective framework of doubt and uncertainty in this project therefore, was not only about how I would work with Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir; rather, it was also about how I would ethically negotiate her own positioning within the context without assuming “a privileged location of innocence” (hooks, 1992:151). Therefore, by focussing on an ethical approach that was framed by the specificity of situations and the creation of affect – rather than the generality of a large context and an attempt toward effect/impact – uncertainties around power, privilege, discomfort, and vulnerability were issues contended with in every phase of this project. However, although uncertainty was inherent to the use of concepts like affect and situational ethics, when these concepts were interlaced with

aesthetic strategies like *Immersive* and *Documentary Theatre*, interesting possibilities emerged.

When my quests to explore the potential/limitation of theatre in times/places of war began in northern Uganda in 2005, I saw the potential of theatre in conflict and post-conflict zones through the lens of Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre (1985). However, working with a form like Forum Theatre which seeks to find solutions for issues that audiences explicitly identify with, seemed to dangerously over-simplify complex histories; an over-simplification that, in retrospect, I began to see as an effort to understand/explain violence in terms that I (in addition to my audiences and collaborators) could comprehend. Given the various layers and nuances to working in a context as complex as Rwanda then, I began to see the importance of working with theatrical forms that would be more 'experimental' and 'novel' to the context in question, using their unfamiliar aesthetic to address grey zones, rather than build on their familiarity in the context to inspire answers and/or certainties. This aesthetic novelty, I soon realised, was not simply about using an aesthetic form that would be unfamiliar to local collaborators and audiences. Rather, the idea of novelty began to show more potential when the aesthetic form chosen was novel for the theatre researcher/practitioner as well. Pedagogically and ethically, working with an aesthetic form in which the theatre practitioner herself was not an 'expert', created more possibilities for the facilitator-director to be genuinely situated beside the work and to create a level playing field in which the focus could be just as much on *how* stories of war are told as it is on *what* is told. The choice of the particular aesthetic forms of Immersive and Documentary Theatre in this project therefore, emerged from outcomes of my prior experiences of making/researching theatre in times and places of war: of desiring aesthetic forms that would lend themselves to exploring grey zones and forms that would be novel to the researcher, the local collaborators, and local audiences alike.

With these goals in mind, Immersive Theatre and Documentary Theatre were the two aesthetic forms chosen for this research project. While the idea of 'novelty' is one that I will return to in the subsequent chapters, an interesting repercussion of this focus on novelty was its impact on primary Kashmiri collaborators. Within the broad genres of Immersive and Documentary Theatre, there are two exemplar projects that have influenced this project: *Un Voyage pas Comme les Autres sur les Chemins del'Exil* (Haedicke, 2002); referred to as

Chemins from this point forward) and *This is Camp-X-Ray* (UHC Collective, 2006). Both performances use techniques from Documentary Theatre that are then adapted in creating an Immersive Theatre experience for the spectators. Forsyth and Megson (2009:227–228) propose that documentary forms of theatre may have certain functions in common, tending to exhibit a manifestation of a combination or permutation of the following: reassessing “international/national/local histories”, celebrating narratives of “repressed or marginalised communities and groups”, investigating “contentious events and issues in local, national and international contexts”; disseminating knowledge in a manner that employs “an operational concept of ‘pleasurable learning’”, and finally, interrogating the concept of the documentary. In this spirit, *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray*, show elements of these five functions:

Table 2: Descriptions of *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray*

Chemins

[...] the visitor is put into the situation so he or she can live the fear, the uprooting, the wandering, and the difficulties of acclimating to the receiving country (Haedicke, 2002:102).

Spectators of *Chemins* are asked to embody asylum seekers in the European Union through character profiles given to them at the beginning of the immersive experience. These character profiles document the narratives of ‘real-life’ asylum seekers and with coloured stickers placed on their foreheads as crude markers of their race, spectators are asked to undertake activities – like clearing immigration lines, folding laundry for extended periods of time, being attacked along the passageways of the performance space – as the character allocated to them. For the duration of *Chemins* therefore, each spectator undertakes an individual journey as an asylum seeker to the European Union.

This is Camp X-Ray

The camp is intended to raise awareness of the human rights issues around the real camp, but also to question the way in which information about it has been presented to us by the government and media, and to challenge the widespread apathy over these gross abuses of international law (UHC Collective, 2003).

This is Camp X-Ray is the re-creation of a US government controlled prison in Guantanamo Bay in a public Manchester building, creating two kinds of audiences. The first audience group includes a handful of individuals who volunteer to be spectator-participants and become prison inmates for a durational performance in which they live/are treated as prisoners for multiple days. The second audience group is composed of bystanders who pass by the installation every day, highlighting the way in which the Manchester residents [who were imprisoned in Camp X-Ray at the time] are (in) visible in the public consciousness of their city.

In addition to their being inspired by current events in the spirit of Documentary Theatre, the descriptions in Table 2 put forth a strategy of immersion that is shared by both *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray* i.e., the creation of an environment/experience in which the spectator is asked to physically embody an(Other). The participants in both these

experiences are asked to graft the identities of Others onto their own bodies, making the archive of the Other the repertoire of the Self. This embodiment of an(Other) is furthered by another common strategy that is shared by the two pieces: the design of a solitary journey that each audience member undertakes, unlike the collective audience experience that defines many more 'traditional' theatrical performances. Unlike a genre corresponding to the Theatre of the Oppressed, for example, where agency is found in a collective witnessing and solving of a shared issue, in performances like *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray*, the spectator-participant must negotiate an immersive experience that is aimed at discomfiting and assaulting them in isolation.

Immersive Theatre is a hard-to-define genre, as Josephine Machon (2013:xvi) has indicated, "because *it is not one*. However, the use of immersion in performance does expose qualities, features and forms that enable us to know what 'it' is when we are experiencing it" (emphasis in original). Etymologically, the term immersive "developed from computing terminology, [and] describes that which provides information or stimulation for a number of senses, not only sight and sound" (Machon, 2013:21). At the heart of Immersive Theatre is the embodied experience of an event to which we are unlikely to have access in our everyday lives and makes, (Machon (2013:31) quotes now from Alan Kaprow (1995)), "the line between art and life" becomes "fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible". Like Kaprow (in Machon 2013:31), who seeks "a heightened experience of the everyday, in which viewers were formally fused with the space-time of the performance and thereby lost their identity as 'audience'", spectators in an Immersive Theatre experience such as *Chemins* or *This is Camp X-Ray* might be termed in various ways: as spectator-participants, spect-actors, or as participants. Susan Haedicke (2002) puts forth a useful distinction when considering the potential of immersive performances for its spectator-participants by drawing from Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani (in Haedicke 2002:116) and clarifying the distinction between "decisive" shifts and "definitive" shifts; a differentiation which enables an acknowledgment of real changes in thinking and action (decisive shifts) without claiming "a complete rupture in social, economic, and political relations and forms of knowledge [definitive shifts]". Immersive performances like *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray* therefore, attempt to create experiential settings where decisive (affective) shifts in attitude are made probable through embodied, individualised, spectatorial experiences.

Immersive experiences such as *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray* also resonate with Hans-Thies Lehman's (2006) concept of the "post dramatic [which encompasses a] shift from representation as the focus of dramatic enquiry to the relations between actor and audience" (in Shaughnessy, 2012:12). Nicola Shaughnessy links Lehman's thesis to Norman K. Denzin's (2003:24) call for a "turn to a performance-based approach to culture, politics and pedagogy", an aesthetic in which the traditional audience is said to disappear and instead become collaborators who "are co-constructed by the event" (Denzin, 2003:41). In their re-constructions, de-constructions, and co-constructions of spectators' identities, pieces like *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray* bring together Documentary and Immersive Theatre to create "scenarios" (Taylor, 2009:1888), which Diana Taylor puts forward as "frameworks for thinking" that range from the "theatrical as-if simulations of catastrophic events such as nuclear war to hypothetical what-if setups such as a ticking bomb to acts of torture" and also "to scenarios that aim to heal victims by working through trauma". This project's approach to Immersive and Documentary Theatre pieces therefore, was framed by the intention to catalyse decisive shifts both for myself and my Kashmiri collaborators.

Although the paragraphs above speak to the potential of Immersive and Documentary Theatre in comparison to more 'traditional' theatrical performances, these aesthetic forms are not exempt from the ethical, pedagogical, and aesthetic dilemmas with which all theatrical representations of violence must negotiate. Robert Skloot (1982:17) speaks to the conundrum of misrepresentation when discussing the *Theatre of the Holocaust* and says that "the writer on the Holocaust is caught in a dilemma: how to give stage images their full burden of meaning without making them unrecognizable through abstraction or untruthful through replication". Although this project's efforts to use theatre in Kashmir's grey zones was designed, from the outset, with the understanding that "multi-sidedness does not mean equal-sidedness" (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:62), the following chapters in this thesis will reveal the many dilemmas around balance and misrepresentation that arose. Anat Gesser-Edelburg speaks to the relevance of this dilemma in the context of the Palestine/Israel conflicts and given the parallels between an Israeli theatre maker attempting to give dramatic shape to Palestinian narratives, and a mainland Indian theatre maker (like myself) working with the theatricalisation of Kashmiri experiences, it is worth quoting from Gesser-Edelburg (2011:72) at length here:

[Jewish Israeli playwrights] face the question of which narrative they are presenting on the stage: the Jewish Israeli one or the Palestinian? If they would like to present the Palestinian side, do they have the moral and practical authority to do so? Or, by presenting the Palestinian story through their own constructive statement are they not appropriating or 'stealing' the Palestinian story on the stage? And if so, what is the alternative? If the goal of political art is to influence the society you live in and make it see the perspective of the 'Other', does the decision not to 'appropriate' the Palestinian narrative not sterilize that art and necessarily lead to silence and an absence of meaningful political action by Jewish Israeli artists?

Mindful of all these complexities therefore, the aesthetic concepts of Immersive and Documentary Theatre in this research had to be shaped and re-shaped based on what emerged in the practice.

Shaping and re-shaping the strategies adopted meant that pedagogy operated at multiple levels: the most obvious linkage being in the use of *devised workshops*; workshops in which pedagogy was conceptualised as a dialogic process that would result in the collaborative creation of an original piece of theatre. Given that devised theatre processes are underscored by non-hierarchical pedagogical strategies and are intended to function as learning spaces for facilitator and participant alike, it is often more relevant to refer to the person conducting the workshop as the 'facilitator-director' and to the individuals participating in the workshops as 'participant-creators'. Such an atmosphere of co-learning then, in the spirit of the responsiveness called for by a performative research methodology, is not exempt from various ethical quagmires. A look at Hazel Barnes' (2005) discussion of questions of ownership that emerge in devised theatre processes in the South African context will reveal the multiple ways in which the affective environments of these workshops demand a consistent, situational approach to ethics. While it was foreseeable from the outset of this project that dialogic pedagogical ideas would frame the devised theatre workshops with various Kashmiri collaborators, a more unexpected manifestation was the way in which pedagogy emerged as being important both during interviews that took place with Ex-Militants (more on this in Chapter Three) and in considerations of how spectators might best access the aesthetics of each performance. The place of pedagogy therefore, went beyond its expected centrality in the design and execution of the devised workshops with EKTA, affecting every practice and ultimately, intersecting with the realms of ethics and aesthetics.

Ethics, pedagogy, and aesthetics also come together in the use of *performance auto-ethnography* whilst writing this thesis. The complexities of writing about theatre in times/places of war has been eloquently put forward by James Thompson (2005) -- who draws from Diana Taylor's (1997) thoughts on hegemonic systems of power that manifest in representations of Argentina's Dirty War -- to justify a writing style that "presents its opposition to the violence and oppression of war through its disavowal of neat accounts and some of the conventions of 'academic writing'" (2005:5; quotes in original). Therefore, like Thompson, it is has become vital for me to consider *how* I write about my work and not just *what* I say about it. In this spirit, the reflexive analyses that form part of the chapters in this writing might be considered a form of performance auto-ethnography that is described by Norman K. Denzin (2009:258) as "mystory", which is "simultaneously a personal mythology, a public story, a personal narrative and a performance that critiques". By including "a series of quotations, documents and texts, placed side-by-side, producing a de-centred, multi-voiced text with voices and speakers speaking back and forth", the mystory attempts to re-conceptualise how research processes and outcomes are subsequently represented (Denzin, 2009:258). While my pre-doctoral efforts in Kashmir were framed through the lens of performance ethnography, multiple visits to Kashmir over the years have underscored the need to replace performance ethnography with performance auto-ethnography.²¹ This replacement draws from complicated *intracultural* (Bharucha, 1993) identity politics: my relationship to a nation that is seen by some as a 'colonial oppressor' in Kashmir, my presence as a woman in a context that is dominated by men and male-ness, my history as someone with Hindu familial ties in a primarily Muslim context, and in the use of a common second language to communicate with local collaborators.²² Such intracultural affinities and fractures between myself as researcher and my Kashmiri co-creators, interviewees, and spectators resulted in an inside/outside positioning that made auto-ethnographic strategies almost inevitable in how a project like this was both executed and written. Given the various intracultural markers and layers to my presence in Kashmir therefore, auto-ethnography became central in its use of personal experience as "a starting point, an object of inquiry

²¹ A version of this paragraph has appeared in *Experiences in Kashmir: An Obligation to (My)story*; a virtual presentation made by myself at the *Obligations in Contemporary Theatre and Performance Practices* colloquium that was hosted at the University of Exeter (Dinesh, 2014b). Extracts from the Auto-ethnographic Excerpt has also appeared in an article in the South African Theatre Journal entitled *In-between spaces: theatrical explorations from Rwanda to Kashmir* (Dinesh, 2015b).

²² The common second language being Urdu for the participant-creators and Hindi for this facilitator-director; two languages that are hard to tell apart in their spoken, colloquial forms.

that [could] be affirmed, critically interrogated, and used as a resource to engage broader modes of knowledge and understanding” (Denzin, 2003:1). While more specific auto-ethnographic responses will accompany each chapter, I include here the first response piece that I wrote after a visit to Kashmir in 2012.²³

INDIAN DOGS GO BACK.

Being Indian has always been a big part of my identity. At 15, at an international high school, my Indian-ness began to be brought to my attention. At 17, as an international student in the US, my nationality came to define me some more - questions like "Why do you speak English?" and "Do y'all still ride on elephants?" stoked the fire of my new found patriotism. At 24, it was this Indian-ness that brought me home after years of nomadism. Coimbatore, Pune, Ahmedabad, Paud, Thrissur, Mussoorie, Dimapur, Kupwara, Udaipur, Imphal, Kohima, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Bhavnagar, Nasik, Madras, Anantnag. Each of these places was a part of this all-encompassing 'India' to which I felt I had to return. But after spending the last month in Kashmir, I realise that this list of places needs to be edited.

INDIAN DOGS GO BACK.

"It's only for the Indian government and armed forces," I was told. "We have nothing against Indians like you."...Indians like me. Indians who are nationalistic in our own right. Who pay taxes to support that government and those armed forces that you say oppress you. Maybe you don't intend to include me in that statement that has been spray-painted across many walls in the city. But somewhere, somehow, I am one of those Indian dogs. And it is impossible for me to not take that personally. As evidence of my own culpability within what is often described in Kashmir as an 'occupation'.

INDIAN DOGS GO BACK.

I had never heard Kashmir being described as an occupation before my trip there last month. I knew about the movement for a free Kashmir, and assumed in all my ignorance that this was just one more group like those who were pro-India or pro-Pakistan. One more group to add to the confusion surrounding Kashmir. There is so much I didn't and don't know about Azadi. The movement toward independence that most of the Kashmiris I met clamour for. There were of course the few who greeted me as a fellow Indian, who said their freedom fighters were a bunch of clueless agitation junkies. But I cannot deny that these pro-India folks were a minority amongst the Kashmiris I met.

INDIAN DOGS GO BACK.

The more I see it, the more I say it to myself, the less it affects me. I don't know if that's a good thing.

INDIAN DOGS GO BACK.

I look at the army officers who patrol the streets, who man the check posts, who stand around beautiful rice fields for security reasons that no one else seems to understand. They look so young. So so young. And I wonder. Do these boys know what they are fighting for? "Do you know what you are here for?" I wanted to ask these soldiers. But I couldn't seem to do it. Because I didn't know what that one action could trigger. In an atmosphere that was fraught with tension and fragility, every action had a potentially disastrous consequence. The snow-kissed hills and cloudy peaks surround what seems to be an atmosphere of fear and mistrust. What are you doing here? Why do you want to teach theatre? What are you getting out of this? Three weeks in the valley felt like a year. Surrounded by a claustrophobic male gaze, it was difficult to not attribute paternalistic social customs to be the shortcomings of a particular religious philosophy. Difficult to not look at everything,

²³ A version of this paragraph has appeared in *Experiences in Kashmir: An Obligation to (My)story*; a virtual presentation made by this researcher at the *Obligations in Contemporary Theatre and Performance Practices* colloquium that was hosted at the University of Exeter in 2014.

from washing clothes to taking a bus, with the gendered lens of being the 'weaker' sex. Difficult to just be....The girls I worked with, the men and women I interacted with, everyone, seemed to be constantly unsure of what was ok and what was not. Is this against the religion? Or the culture? Or the politics? Or the government? Or the freedom movement? The categories overflowed.

The 29 year old who loves pelting stones at soldiers from the Indian Army.

The 55 year old National School of Drama graduate who runs a theatre academy in Srinagar.

The 30 year old who sells guns to the same army that his closest friends detest.

The teenage girls who love dancing. But cannot in public.

The 30 year old who detests the Indian government but understands his arms dealer friend's business.

The 22 year old woman who single handedly runs a home for vulnerable girls.

The 6 year old who screams "Freedom" during the rehearsal of a play. Completely out of context.

The 24-year-old police officer from my hometown whose biggest problem is the antiquated police jeep he has for his posting in Kashmir.

The 30-year-old journalists who talk about censorship.

The 64 year old who has a case pending against him at the Supreme Court. For sedition.

The 58 year old man who hated my blue jeans.

The 61-year-old Kashmiri Pandit who can never return home.

I went on this trip thinking of it as a reccie - a first trip to lay down the groundwork for future theatre projects in Kashmir. And like many of my other experiences, I woke up every morning with one question: "What can theatre really do here?"

Teaching theatre for the last year, spending time with my young students in Pune, I realise the value of long-term, multi-disciplinary approaches to learning. Just theatre itself can't do much. Just a three-week project can't do much. But when art understands the wider context in which it is situated, and uses its position within that context to negotiate the possibilities it contains, that is when things begin to happen. So I have returned with a little more certainty. Certainty that there is a space for my theatre work in Kashmir. Certainty that there are complexities about the context that I have not even begun to understand. Certainty about my own insignificance in all of this. And a certainty that this experience, this journey, has challenged every part of my being – the part that is defined by my Indian-ness, by my femininity, by my being an artist.

After years of wandering around conflict and post-conflict zones, observing from the vantage point of the outsider - here is a war that is personal. There are possible consequences to every one of my actions now: writing this piece, going back to Kashmir, making a theatre piece about Azadi, staying silent. Every action has a consequence now. A possible price attached. Suddenly, this war is personal.

And I'm not sure what happens next.

Auto-ethnographic Excerpt 1: Account after a pre-doctoral project visit to Kashmir in 2012

In addition to the inclusion of auto-ethnographic excerpts in this writing, performance auto-ethnography during the process of research manifested in the consideration of certain aspects of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and Armed Forces lives in Kashmir *as* performances. Viewing religion and gender for example, *as* performances, helped me to situate myself in the context; functioning, in other words, as an ethnographic study of my own life. While "it is easy to understand why such a method would be looked upon with suspicion" because of "the excessive presence of subjectivity in such a process" (Sarukkai, 2007b:1409), performance auto-ethnography "becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project" which involves "the shared ownership of the performance project itself" (Denzin,

2003:17). The relevance of auto-ethnography, specifically in the context of the Indian sub-continent, is further supported by Sundar Sarukkai (2007b) who quotes considerably from the Indian anthropologist M. N. Srinivas (1996) to highlight “an underlying difference between an Indian anthropologist studying Indian tribals as against the 'foreign' anthropologist.” Given that the anthropologist from India inhabits the “same cultural universe”, Srinivas suggests that “the tribals are never totally the other”, creating a space in which the researcher embodies a positioning that might best be described as a “self-in-the-other” (in Sarukkai, 2007b:1408). It is this grey zone of the self-in-the-other that I inhabit in Kashmir, an embodiment that makes performance auto-ethnography inextricable from the way in which a performative research project such as this is designed, executed, and written.

The six concepts of performance auto-ethnography, affect, situational ethics, Immersive Theatre, Documentary Theatre, and devised theatre workshops function as symbiotic points of departure for this project’s performative research methodology; intersecting in multi-dimensional ways with the ethics, aesthetics, and pedagogy of theatre practice in the grey zones of Kashmir. Building on the discussion above, this thesis will move on to an analysis of the first phase of the project: of creating theatre with/for/about Kashmiri Civil Society.

CHAPTER TWO: CAGES & CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society is still a somewhat controversial term, precisely because of the ambiguities associated with it. Though it is differently defined by various theorists, “the minimal definition would include the idea of a non-state autonomous sphere; empowerment of citizens; trust-building associational life; interaction with rather than subordination to the state” (Rudolph 2000:1762 in Heredia, 2009).

Civil Society is a complex term, a term whose ambiguity initially went unaddressed in this project. It was assumed, in the early stages, that the identification of civilian participants would imply the use of theatre workshops and performances with individuals/groups who, as the quotation above suggests, belonged to a non-state-related autonomous sphere, worked with notions of empowerment, trust, and interaction, and -- as I thought I had gleaned from my pre-doctoral work in J&K -- had never personally been involved in the use of violence i.e., the broad, un-nuanced idea of the ‘victim’. However, as the project evolved and the resonances between Civil Society, autonomy, and empowerment remained, the practice of making theatre soon revealed my naiveté in assuming an unproblematic absence in the use of violence by Kashmir’s Civil Society. While not all civilians might be/have been involved in the execution of violence in the same way as government soldiers, militants, and other armed outfits, there are/were multiple ways in which many Kashmiri civilians have used violence: by pelting government troops with stones -- a strategy that has come to define protests in Kashmir; as forays into militant groups that were later forsaken for a multitude of reasons; and as ‘relational’ acts of violence that are far less visible in the context of the obvious manifestations of armed conflict. As analyses of Peter Weiss’ (1966) *The Investigation* reveals, “coerced complicity” (Thomas, 2010:573) is inevitable in times of extended conflict – a complicity that is all-pervasive and leaves very few individuals completely free from enactments of violence. The term Civil Society in Kashmir is therefore extremely murky and this project’s initial approach of using this category as a broad umbrella term to include those who had never been involved in the use of violence had to evolve in response to practice. Ultimately, while it is not the intention to attempt a definition of Civil Society per se, the workshops and performances in this phase led to a supposition of who civilians in the grey zone might be; a postulation to which I will return in the concluding section of this chapter.

Exploring what Civil Society means in Kashmir and more particularly, considering the grey zones of narratives within this particularly identified group, consisted of multiple phases – exploratory workshops that occurred before the formal launching of the undertaking with a home for vulnerable girls and with students at a higher education institution in the town of Anantnag (a.k.a. Islamabad) in south Kashmir. These two workshops in turn informed the third Civil Society focussed undertaking of a three-week workshop with the Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi (EKTA) in Srinagar. Since the endeavours in Anantnag played a significant role in shaping my subsequent understanding of the place of theatre within the grey zones of Kashmiri Civil Society, this chapter will briefly discuss these two workshops before moving into a close analysis of the workshop and performances of *Cages* with EKTA. Prior to delving into the workshops and performances however, it is necessary to return to the concept of performance auto-ethnography and construct a framework for the myriad ways in which elements of the theatrical and the performative intersect with Civil Society in Kashmir.

Performances & Kashmiri Civil Society

As mentioned in Chapter One, performance auto-ethnography is an important concept that frames this doctoral project. However, in addition to the use of the “mystory” (Denzin, 2009:258) to tease out the auto-ethnographical components in the written thesis, looking at certain aspects of civilian, militant/ex-militant, and soldier life in Kashmir through the lens of performance became particularly useful in situating myself during the workshops and performances. More specifically, there was one question that guided this Performance Studies based approach to the context: what are the elements that might be considered *as* performances in Kashmiri Civil Society and how might such a consideration refine the positioning of an outside theatre practitioner in the grey zones of Kashmir? Before embarking on this question though, it must be clarified that while this section applies the lens of performance to aspects that fall within the scope of civilian life in Kashmir, it is certainly not the intention of this work to suggest that the individuals enacting these performances consider them as such. In other words, it is not about asking what *is* performance; rather, to borrow from Richard Schechner’s (1995) distinction, it is about considering what an exploration of these elements *as* performances might contribute

toward the auto-ethnographic framing of this project. There are five elements that are considered *as* performances in this section: religion, gender, political affiliations, protest, and film, each of which have contributed to the performance-based auto-ethnography in multi-dimensional ways.

A sensitive subject, the centrality of *religion* in the everyday life of Kashmiris is undeniable: from the call of the *azaan*²⁴ that punctuates life in every Kashmiri town and village; to the *nimaaz*²⁵ that must be practised multiple times over the course of one day; to personal and familial rituals that connote an individual/community's approach to religiosity. Religiosity manifests in how one costumes oneself in public spheres, in the kinds of religious references that emerge in an individual's speech patterns, in the movements/choreographies of specific religious rituals, and the ways in which men and women navigate spaces, reverently and irreverently. Performances of religious identity in Kashmir therefore, might be said to link to a social and cultural fabric in which the performative elements of clothing, speech, body language, and sites coalesce toward revealing (to those who understand those codes) the socio-political web in which each particular performer is entwined. Furthermore, in the specific context of this research project, religious practices affected workshop and performance schedules,²⁶ religious beliefs dictated what kind of language was permissible in our plays, and religious codes also underscored the kinds of exercises that could be used in the workshops.

Apart from these ways in which performative elements of religion underpinned this project, what was particularly important to consider was my own performance of a religious affiliation. Coming from a practicing Hindu family, but not tied to a Hindu identity myself, I had to carefully think about how to answer the deceptively simple question that I was frequently faced with in Kashmir: "Are you a Muslim?" While this question technically warrants a yes/no answer in a context where religiosity is seen as an affiliation to a particular religious community rather than a questioning of the concept of religion itself, it was not a simple question to respond to. What if the person I was speaking to was fundamentalist in their beliefs? Given the controversial issues surrounding the emigration of

²⁴ Islamic call to prayer from mosques, usually broadcast through loudspeakers five times a day.

²⁵ The ritualistic prayer that follows the *azaan*, practiced five times a day.

²⁶ For example: my first workshop with EKTA took place while actors were fasting for Ramadan and as a consequence, could not do physically demanding exercises. In addition, the times at which our sessions began and ended were influenced by when the actors needed to pray and/or break their fasts. More on this later in this chapter.

Kashmiri Hindus from the Valley and the larger Hindu-Muslim conflicts that dominate narratives in the Indian sub-continent, would I just be seen as part of a larger, conservative, Hindu majority if I answered in the negative (that I was *not* Muslim)? However, was I willing to lie, answer in the affirmative, and alter my performances so as to mitigate the risk of being seen as the Other; since a change in clothing and certain physical/verbal characteristics would easily enable me to 'pass' as Muslim in Kashmir? After initially stuttered responses that explicitly indicated my discomfort at being asked about my religious affiliation, I began to answer as follows: "My family is Hindu. I am not anything". This response seemed to destabilise a possibly contentious conversation by moving the exchanges away from the potentially polarising binaries of Hindu and Muslim, to nebulous grey zones of religious identity. In a context where religion is generally assumed to be part of every individual's daily life, an encounter with an(Other) who claimed *no* religion – which is of course different from being *anti* religion -- allowed an in-between space that circumvented simplistic affiliations.

In addition to religion, an important element to consider *as* performance in Kashmir, is **gender**. Given that the performativity of gender has been widely discussed in the realm of Performance Studies, the focus here is not about justifying if/how gender in Kashmir is performative. Instead, by starting from the premise that Judith Butler's (1990) notions around the performativity of gender are relevant to the Kashmiri context, how might reading gender *as* performance assist my auto-ethnographic positioning. In Kashmir where multiple performative elements connote femininities, masculinities, and androgynities -- clothing, body language, the spaces that are occupied -- the complex ways in which gender is performed and is perceived as being performed, becomes intricately intertwined with every aspect of civilian life. Therefore, during the various phases of this work the performativity of gender emerged in many explicit and implicit ways, most significantly to the auto-ethnographic impetus of this consideration, in local collaborators' responses to my own performances of gender.

While the complexities brought on by gender were expected from the outset, the all encompassing, pervasive gendered gaze toward this female researcher was unanticipated. Although there were multiple instances in which this gendered aspect to my presence in Kashmir became problematic, of particular note was the evolution of how my

unconventional performances of gender (unconventional in the Kashmiri context) evolved with EKTA. Given EKTA's central role in this work and our consistent collaboration over the last three years, there has been an arc in how my embodiments of womanhood are responded to by my collaborators. From the first workshop for *Cages* where discomfort shaped the collective experience, over the years I have come to be seen by the group's artists – it seems – as not female and yet, not not-female. Since I do not perform femininity the way Kashmiri women are expected to, I am not treated like a (Kashmiri) woman and yet, I am biologically not male and therefore, cannot be treated like a man. What has opened up therefore, at EKTA, is an in-between space, a grey zone, between being male and female. This grey zone, while problematic, allows me a certain freedom at EKTA; a freedom that is hindered as soon as I step outside of the rehearsal room and into public spaces where my way of performing/being womanhood has elicited shock, surprise, and sometimes, disgust.

Apart from my auto-ethnographic reflections, questions around gender also emerged in other aspects of this work. For example, when mixed-gender workshops/sessions were possible, there seemed to be an intergenerational tension that emerged i.e., older people in the group were interpreted/observed as closely watching the actions of their younger counterparts and implicitly enforcing 'discipline' in how inter-gender interactions manifested. During the course of my time with EKTA I was witness to, and participant in, many conversations in which older members of the group commented on how the young men and women in EKTA needed "to be careful" of their behaviour. In parallel, the young male and female actors of EKTA have spoken to me of their frustrations at being judged for their relationships with colleagues of the other sex. The omnipresence of gender then, makes its consideration *as* performance to be inevitable both auto-ethnographically and ethnographically: from the ethics of my wanting to don a burkha and escape the male gaze to my difference from Kashmiri women being pointed out as both praiseworthy and open to criticism. Each time I arrive in Kashmir therefore, I ask myself the question: how will I navigate being a woman this time?

The politics and performance of gender is further layered when ***political affiliations*** come into play; affiliations that present in myriad ways in Kashmir: in loud declarations in public spaces, in hushed conversations in restaurants and street corners, in heated arguments within households and rehearsal spaces, and in diatribes that are circulated on social media.

The ways in which members of the ambiguously categorised Civil Society perform their political affiliations in/about Kashmir are performances to which I paid close attention when assessing risks during this project. Who the visitor is, where s/he is from, and what s/he represents dictate how political affiliations are shared in interviews and workshops, and therefore, observations of how individuals' performed/were perceived as performing their political affiliations were vital before I entered any new space. In informing my risk assessments with information on how individuals/groups performed their political affiliations, there is one fundamental question that framed my observations: does the person/group perform a certain degree of openness toward engaging with a mainland Indian woman-theatre-maker? This was not a scientific process where I could always logically deconstruct an individual's speech/actions to evaluate the risks of engagement. However, like most practice-based-research projects that have to adopt a position of situational ethics and evolve with what emerges, I would interpret political affiliations from speech patterns and body language, using those interpretations to then guide my assessment of risk in that instance.

Analogous with how gender and religion affected my auto-ethnographic ruminations, I also had to carefully consider how I would perform my own political affiliations (or lack thereof) in each instance. While I do not have a particular political affiliation with regard to the conflicts in Kashmir -- in fact it is the absence of any personal affiliation that drives this project's goal to work in the grey zones -- an absence of a political affiliation in a time of war becomes a political affiliation in itself. I soon realised that my lack of a clearly articulated political position of where Kashmir should belong was viewed with suspicion by many of the people I met: was I not choosing a side because I did not know the difference between 'victim' and 'perpetrator', or between 'right' and 'wrong'? Was I performing neutrality when I actually had a deep-seated agenda/bias behind the work? Was I an ignorant do-gooder from mainland India who did not care enough to actually take a stand; using Kashmir/Kashmiris as 'subjects' in a doctoral project? Neutrality, or the lack of political affiliations in Kashmir, was as contentious as having one and this lack of affiliation became/is problematic during my practice. As James Thompson (2003:195) has said, "if we do not articulate why we do the work, someone else will do it for us" -- so, how would I articulate and perform my neutral political affiliation without discounting the valid desire for one from

my Kashmiri collaborators? Although my political opinions as to where Kashmir belongs are as uncertain now as they were when I began this work, this question often became a point of contention with my more critical co-creators, interviewees, and spectators. My particular (a)political stand is understandably seen, by some, as being disingenuous; since how one aligns with India/Pakistan/Kashmiri independence in turn frames the entire realm of Civil Society *protest*.

While the realm of protest is one in which many performative strategies are at use in Kashmir, I shall cite two specific examples here: that of the protests that are organised by the family members of the disappeared in the Association of the Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) and the techniques adopted by stone-pelters as a form of protest against the Indian Armed Forces. I choose these two examples because the former, APDP, is a powerful instance of Kashmiri women breaking the male dominance of public spaces albeit in an acceptable way i.e., in their roles as grieving mothers/wives. The second example of protest – of the stone-pelters – has been chosen because of its ubiquity i.e., almost every Kashmiri civilian I have met has engaged in pelting stones at the Armed Forces at some point or another. The importance of these two examples of performative protest is especially relevant in underlining why my own lack of a political position remains problematic in Kashmir. For when almost everyone you meet has been part of a protest against the disappearance of a loved one and/or taken up a stone to pelt the Indian Armed Forces, the grey zone that an outsider embodies when unwilling to partake in these emblematic performances of protest is perceived as a cop-out, an excuse, and at worst, as complicity with the regimes of oppression at play in Kashmir. Despite my cognisance of how this stand is perceived, and despite having to find new ways to perform my neutrality ethically, this is a conundrum that I have been unable to resolve. I present my own uncertain political position as my grey zone, knowing that for those men and women who take part in APDP events and stone-pelting protests, my neutrality is/will always be suspect.

On the 28th of every month, the women activists of the APDP gather to demonstrate against enforced disappearances. Their protest at prominent spots in the capital city of Srinagar resembles a family funeral, albeit the presence of signs and photographs of the disappeared. Many of the women weep and lament, displaying their grief in full public glare. They sing elegies that honour the lives of their lost sons, and make promises to continue searching for them. In sheer exhaustion from the passionate lamentations some women faint while others sob uncontrollably (Samar Magazine, 2011).

With striking parallels to the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of the Plaza Mayo) in Argentina a – movement that has been widely analysed by Diana Taylor and the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics in the Americas (Hemispheric Institute, 2009)-- Kashmiri women invoke the rhetoric of universal human rights to claim their disappeared family members and friends. By taking over a public space in Srinagar once a month while carrying photos of their disappeared kith and kin, the participants in APDP’s protests – mostly women -- pursue court cases, stage demonstrations, and conduct workshops to increase awareness about the issue of disappearances. In Kashmir especially, where “the spectacle of public grieving is in direct opposition to the value of privacy, which is dear to Kashmiri culture, especially when it pertains to womenfolk” (Samar Magazine, 2011), the very presence of women protesting in public spaces becomes performative. The presence of these women and the importance of their performative protest in public spaces will emerge again later in this chapter, as a counterpoint to the narratives of Kashmiri women which emerged in *Cages*, the performance that resulted from my workshop with EKTA.



Figures 1&2: APDP Protests (Tantray, 2014)

Compared to the mothers of APDP, the stone-pelters create a different spectacle of protest. With stones in their hands, young men (and occasionally, young women) take to the streets of Kashmir every time there is a public ‘strike’. Referred to as a *hartal*, it is common in Kashmir for leaders of political groups to declare a *hartal* on any given day as their stance against an act of injustice committed by the Indian Armed Forces, as an act of protest against the local/national governments’ agendas, or as an act of mourning/commemoration. When *hartals* are in effect, schools are closed, shops are shut down, and it is recommended that everyone stay indoors. Only stone-pelters take to the streets during *hartals*, hurling variously sized stones at the Indian Armed Forces and while the identity and intentions of these stone-pelters is subject for extensive discussion, this discussion lies outside the scope

of this thesis. What is relevant to this project however, is a consideration of how the pelting of stones has become a way in which young people in Kashmir perform their resistance to an ‘occupation’, creating the space for a political engagement that could be a one-time event in a young person’s life or a life-time commitment. The performances of stone-pelters are interpreted in different ways by different audiences - as an inconvenience, as resistance, as idealism, as hopelessness, and/or as frustration. The performativity of these protests and a consideration of them *as* performances primarily impacted my understanding of the context and of my Kashmir collaborators. Considering the performative elements of the actions gave me some insight into how many of my collaborators in EKTA – especially the young men – had given shape to their own frustrations of living under ‘occupation’. Looking at the realm of protests shaped a more nuanced understanding of the Kashmiri context for me; an understanding that while not always evident in the final performances, both impacted my interpersonal interaction with actors/spectators and aided more informed reflections as to how the theatre workshops and performances in this project fit within larger conversations amongst Kashmiri Civil Society.



Figure 3: Stone-pelting (India TV, 2010)

My auto-ethnographic insights as a mainland Indian theatre practitioner -- who is non-Muslim, a woman, and problematically ‘neutral’ – are also heavily influenced by the broad realm of film i.e., the ways in which Kashmir/Kashmiris are depicted through the lens of cinema under the auspices of the commercial film industry of ‘Bollywood’ and in smaller, independent documentary efforts. With regards to the former, given Bollywood’s “investment in melodrama and the interruption of narrative by song and dance sequences” (Kabir, 2010:375), Kashmir’s showcasing began in the 1960s where “the space of Kashmir is moulded, through narrative, into a postcolonial playground for metropolitan Indians” (Kabir, 2010:374). Subsequently, during the 1970s and 1980s, the Kashmir valley became primarily a “visual backdrop for romantic song sequences” and with the upsurge in the militancy in

1989, films after/during this period deliberately invoke narratives of separatism/ militancy and foreground “the Kashmiri as Muslim, engaged in a dialectic relationship with both Islam within India and the Indian nation-state” (Kabir, 2010:374-375). In all these phases Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2010:376) argues that from a narrative standpoint, “the function of the Kashmir Valley remains unchanged”. In pre-militancy movies about Kashmir, “non-Kashmiri protagonists (usually male) travel to Kashmir, fall in love with Kashmiris, and let the romance plot do the rest” (Kabir, 2010:376). In films that followed in the 1980s and 1990s, while the romantic storyline still presents, “more frequently romance implodes into the Valley” and the narrative draws on the fraught relationships and “competing world-views” of the Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri characters (Kabir, 2010:376). The valley and its residents remain the background for these narratives that use music and romance to reflect “changing national preoccupations” (Kabir, 2010:376): the glorification of the natural paradise of Kashmir (as a part of India) in the 1960s and 1970s, to narratives of separatism and violence that focus on religious affiliations and contain a more-than-occasional instance of the patriotic Indian Armed Forces’ soldier. It is worth quoting at length from Kabir here:

Films of the 1990s and 2000s present the Valley within a new national tango of self and other, with lights, camera and action shifting instead to its surrounding mountains. As verdant meadows make way for jagged peaks, romance is replaced by war. Earlier the space for song, dance and a tumble in the snow, the Valley is now criss-crossed by armies, infiltrators and militants. This narrowing gap between the cinematic and the real Valley prompts a new question: how have different generations of Valley audiences responded to the history of their interpellation within Bollywood? (Kabir, 2005:94).

Kabir continues her provocative questioning of how films about Kashmir are received by Kashmiris and draws from Tejaswini Niranjana (in Kabir 2005:84) to ask how “the camera [has] negotiated the relationship between voyeurism and tourism, between tourists and terrorists”. Speaking of the “entire generation of Kashmiris” who have grown up under conditions of violence and “the contradictions of being emotionally alienated from and infrastructurally dependent on India”, Kabir (2005:95) points to the conundrum of a larger Kashmiri struggle for independence whilst being “fully embedded within another India – that of popular culture and its attendant discourses of representation and pleasure”. Given the wide dissemination and consumption of Bollywood in Kashmir, just as anywhere in mainland India, creates a “paradoxical duality [that] must be seen as a specific aspect of the complex, even schizophrenic subject position of the Kashmiri” (Kabir, 2005:95). Kabir presents a poem

written by Agni Shekhar, a “Kashmiri poet displaced from Srinagar to Jammu, and leader of the radical Kashmiri Pandit group, Panun Kashmir [who] addresses a Bollywood songwriter” (2005:96):

Mr, let my bleeding wounds
Sleep for some time
My questions slept just now.
Don't call me a rose.
I'm a forgotten memory
I'll wake up.
Don't call me a song
I'll burn on the snow-capped mountain.
I want a balm.
Some answers.
The season of my writing
And vengeance.
I am burning on
The back of time past
And the front of time future.
Don't sell me after embellishing me
In a film song.

The contentious questions that surface in a discussion about representations of Kashmir and Kashmiris in Bollywood find different resonances in the realm of documentary/non-commercial efforts to cinematically perform the Valley. While “the gradual disintegration of self” that is performed in non-Bollywood films seems to be generally commended by Kashmiri audiences, there are still challenges that these representations face because:

When Kashmiris in these documentaries address their problems – of needing to buy bread during curfew, of attending funerals, of looking at pictures of the ‘disappeared’, sharing stories they might have told multiple times – even the camera begins to leer at them, documenting nervous ticks, a lost limb, lingering even longer on cigarettes and chai. Such blatant voyeurism is not necessary, but when the filmmakers themselves are outsiders, this is to be expected (Unnikrishnan, 2011).

The manner in which Bollywood and non-commercial films perform Kashmir and Kashmiris became an important aspect to consider given how many of this project's collaborators (spectators to the performances, primarily) were far more familiar with the medium of cinema than the theatre. Given a general cynicism that seems to exist in Kashmir about filmic attempts to speak about/to Kashmir's realities, it was inevitable then that the objectives to theatrically perform Kashmiri narratives were judged vis-à-vis Kabir's (2005:95) "paradoxical duality".

*Workshops 1 & 2: Initial explorations*²⁷

Looking at the spheres of religion, gender, political affiliations, protest, and cinema *as* performances shaped the evolution of my work in Kashmir, beginning in 2012 in the town of Anantnag, where a colleague from the U.K. and I were involved in two theatre projects. As an initial venture into exploring the feasibility of this doctoral undertaking, the identification of Civil Society groups with which to work was effected in an ad-hoc manner. Multiple Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organizations in J&K were contacted with two requirements in mind: that the organisation have an interest in theatre workshops for some/all of its members and that the organisation seem 'legitimate' i.e., where communication via phone or email would be possible prior to the visit and where evidence was available in the form of newspaper articles, internet archives, or feedback from past collaborators attesting to the veracity of the organizations' claims.

As a result of such processes, a few months of preparation led to my trip to Anantnag in July 2012; a trip that resulted in a three-week workshop conducted in a home for vulnerable girls and a week long workshop at a College for young men in the same town.²⁸ The objectives of both these projects were simple: both facilitators were theatre makers who wanted to share their skills in areas where such cultural opportunities are hard to come by. There was no effect that was expected or desired; rather, in the spirit of affect, the projects were designed and executed with the understanding that unpredictable and intangible responses would abound for the facilitator-directors and the participant-creators. This affect operated at multiple levels: for the outsider-facilitator-directors, being immersed in the context of the

²⁷ A version of this section on the work in Anantnag can be found in my article entitled *Toward a Theatre of Doubts: Pedagogy, Ethics, Theatre, and War*. The *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities* accepted this article for publication in 2013 however; the final publication details have not yet been communicated.

²⁸ The home and the College are intentionally anonymous in this writing since my collaboration with them pre-dated the doctoral project.

girls' home and the boys' college created auto-ethnographic insights that went on to shape subsequent work in Kashmir. At another level, given that both groups of workshop participants had next to no experience with theatre, many of the aesthetic and pedagogical choices that were made in the execution and design of the practice contained affective potential.

Before analysing instances from Anantnag that have shaped this project, it is necessary to revisit the idea of *novelty* that was discussed in the introductory chapter. My prior work with theatre in times/places of war has led to a working conclusion that when working with content that is (painfully) familiar to workshop participants in contexts of violence, affective theatrical interventions need to prioritise the novelty of aesthetic form. Since devised workshops, in their use of participatory pedagogies, rely entirely on the lived experience of their participant-creators as fodder for the theatre that is created, the importance of working with novelty becomes an ethical choice. At one level this focus on novelty allows for a distancing from the personal, which in a Brechtian fashion creates a space for thoughtful engagement rather than emotional catharsis. Although there are arguments to be made with regard to the potential and challenges of each of these positions of thoughtful engagement in comparison to emotional catharsis, my experience indicates that creating distance through aesthetic novelty creates possibilities for an affect that I deem to be more ethical for an outside theatre-in-war practitioner. It is with this underlying idea of novelty in mind therefore, that the workshops in Anantnag were conceptualised and designed.

James Thompson (2005) has pointed out that the processes of storytelling and story collection are extremely contentious in times/places of war. By asking participants in community theatre workshops to tell their stories of war, outside facilitators implicitly/explicitly force local collaborators to open up wounds over which affect they have no control. Therefore, in order to prevent the workshop at the Boys' College from falling into this ethical quagmire of story collection, the workshop participants were not asked to say anything about the conflicts surrounding them. Instead they were asked to write monologues about anything that was on their minds – as long as it was a question, a doubt. Instead of creating a piece with a 'message', which seemed to be the initial inclination of the participant-creators, the workshop asked the young men to share questions about anything that mattered to them. Not being asked to take a stand but instead, to share uncertainty

seemed to heighten novelty for the young men who were used to classroom scenarios in which there was no allowance for doubt. In addition, it soon became evident that the College operated in the manner of many educational institutions in the Indian sub-continent; there was a visible hierarchy of power and when a professor ran a class, s/he completely controlled what happened in that space. The games and exercises that were first introduced during the workshop therefore, immediately had the effect of creating bewilderment among the participants. The young men in the workshop did not know quite how they should categorise the workshop leaders – as teachers or as peers -- finally settling on considering us their directors. While this positioning in the context of the College still afforded the facilitators some power in the rehearsal room, it was not the same kind of power that was afforded professors. The young men in this workshop were free to disagree with us, to challenge us, and to pose questions at every step of the process – all novel pedagogical approaches in that particular context. Despite these intentions however, using novelty to allow a distancing from the intensity of the context, it must be said that with both participant groups in Anantnag there were always moments that forced the facilitators to recognise the all-pervasive presence of conflict. For instance, in exploring a site-specific exercise with the young girls, one group of participants created a short skit that featured the character of a king. The king appeared at a public rally in one scene, staged on a balcony in the home, and the children in the audience were all supposed to shout out “Zindabad (All Hail!). In the midst of this scene however, one of the youngest girls in the group screamed out instead, “Azadi” (Freedom!). Given that much of the sloganeering that she had heard/witnessed in her town involved the constant chanting of *Azadi*, the young girl could not help but bring into what was meant to be an exercise of imagination, the reality of the context surrounding her.

In addition to these instances that shaped my understanding of the local context, there were many auto-ethnographic insights that emerged during the practice in Anantnag. As I referred to in the auto-ethnographic excerpt in Chapter One, “Indian dogs go home” was a slogan painted on many a wall in Anantnag. While this experience was initially bewildering for me, I understood quite soon that the way in which I performed my Indian-ness would make or break my work in Kashmir. Focussing on theatre as the central component of my presence in Anantnag addressed this consideration greatly, i.e., it was not my Indian-ness that defined

my presence, just my theatre-ness. However, while national identity was in some way easier to navigate, what was much more challenging were questions around gender: from arguments with a patronising older gentleman²⁹ who insisted (daily) that I should not wear jeans but don the traditional attire of a *salwaar kameez*,³⁰ to befriending young men who told me “I never thought a woman could ever be just a friend, like a man”. The incessant awareness of being a woman in Anantnag has resulted in affective marks that continue to emerge in unpredictable ways years after the practice on the ground.

While much of my education about the Kashmiri context was inspired by these two initial projects, the primary outcome vis-à-vis this project was the reconsideration of who should comprise my Civil Society collaborators. Working with boys in the College and the girls at the home were extremely educative experiences however, it was undeniable that adding theatre to the schedule of school/college going young men and women who were also amateurs in the theatre, led to a certain limitation of rigor – both in terms of artistry and in terms of risk. With regards to the former, given the importance of aesthetics in this project, working with complete amateurs presented a significant hurdle. Since the very basics of theatre had to be explored with first time creators like the workshop participants in Anantnag, there was little room for experimentation with Immersive and Documentary Theatre – aesthetic choices that I was inclined toward. I must admit here that while there were theoretical underpinnings to my choices of these two forms, as discussed in Chapter One, there was also an element of unjustifiable artistic preference that underscored these choices. Immersive and Documentary Theatre were the forms that I was interested in as a theatre practitioner and these were forms that an amateur workshop participant group did not seem capable of working with given time and logistical constraints. Additionally, with regard to the second limitation of risk, it became apparent in these two workshops that working with young people would be far more ethically problematic than working with more-experienced colleagues who would be better placed to make informed choices about the extent of their participation in the grey zones between Civil Society, Militants/Ex-Militants, and the Armed Forces. Therefore the two workshops above, in addition to fostering a more nuanced understanding of the Kashmiri context, led to a search for Kashmiri collaborators who would both be aware of the complexities of working across community groups and speak the

²⁹ A patron at the home for vulnerable girls.

³⁰ Traditional attire for women in the Indian sub-continent that comprises of a long tunic worn with loose pants.

language of the theatre; a search that led to the filtering of how Civil Society partners were chosen and resulted in an investigation into existing theatre companies in Kashmir. As a result, in the spirit of snowball sampling, I was connected with a theatre company in Srinagar which is run by an alumnus of the College in Anantnag; a connection that took me to the Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi (EKTA).

Workshop 3: EKTA

EKTA – the short abbreviation of ENSEMBLE KASHMIR THEATRE AKADEMI, was founded by Bhawani Bashir Yasir – (an Alumnus of National School of Drama, New Delhi), in 1988 but it could not remain functional after the militant insurgency in 1990. It was again re-invigorated in 2004 to re-enforce a new spirit and start in the erstwhile dead-theatre-movement of Kashmir, on one hand and to rejuvenate, strengthen and promote the theatre of Kashmir, on the other. Under the aegis of the Ensemble – EKTA School of Drama-&-Repertory was established in March 2006, to pave way for providing professional training in theatre-arts to the promising, upcoming and young talented artistes of Kashmir, who are deprived of such avenues to go outside the State and at the same time to build the artistic, aesthetic, creative sensibility and the professional standards of the theatre in Kashmir to help it to preserve its rich heritage and to reach to the zenith of its glory (EnsembleKashmirTheatreAkademi, n.d.).

My first workshop with EKTA took place during a three-week time frame in July-August 2013. While the initial objective for the workshop was to treat it as one part in the Civil Society component to this doctoral project, this three-week undertaking led to the formation of a close partnership between this researcher and EKTA artists; a partnership that cemented EKTA's centrality to the subsequent phases in this research.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogy & the Actors

As described in Chapter One, Immersive and Documentary Theatre were the aesthetic forms that shaped the performances in this project, so as to build on the novelty that my prior work had deemed necessary in times and places of war. The choice to work with these particular aesthetic strategies therefore necessitated a careful consideration of the workshop pedagogy since EKTA actors were generally unfamiliar with both these chosen forms and had more experience with proscenium and script-based works.³¹ In designing the workshops, while all the while cognisant of the ethical dilemmas that came from being a mainland theatre maker in Kashmir, a useful starting point emerged from research into the

³¹ The director of EKTA informed me of this in conversations leading up to the workshop.

multi-sensorial dimensions of Immersive Theatre. Josephine Machon (2013:21) says that Immersive Theatre “provides information or stimulation for a number of senses, not only sight and sound”; an emphasis on multi-sensoriality that sets Immersive Theatre apart from other forms of more ‘conventional’ theatre performances that tend to focus on the two sensorial processes of the vision and hearing of spectators. Since Immersive Theatre is composed of manifold sensory stimuli that work as “a patchwork quilt of sensation” that “affects memory” (Di Benedetto, 2010:167), the workshop for EKTA was designed with the notion of a “patchwork of sensation” as its point of departure. Table 3 provides an overview of the way in which the workshop with EKTA was designed, with the five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell at its core.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Days 6 –14	Days 15 –18
<p>Warm up exercises/ Ensemble building activities</p> <p>Introduction to the idea of site-specific theatre.</p> <p>Devising exercises that involved the concepts of: site specificity, and audience interaction.</p> <p>End with explanation of Immersive Theatre</p> <p>Example of the day³²</p>	<p>Focus of the day: SIGHT</p> <p>Warm up exercises/ Ensemble building activities</p> <p>Exercises related to Boal’s Image Theatre and other exercises that involved playing with sight (or the lack thereof)</p> <p>Devising Exercise: Focus on the audience’s sense of sight and your understanding of, immersion/site specificity, and create a piece on a topic of your choice.</p> <p>Example of the day</p>	<p>Focus of the day: SOUND</p> <p>Warm up exercises/ Ensemble building activities</p> <p>Exercises related to dramatic uses of sounds and silences.</p> <p>Devising Exercise: Focus on the audience’s sense of sound and your understanding of, immersion/site specificity, and create a piece that relates to <i>a person who inspires you</i>.</p> <p>Example of the day</p>	<p>Focus of the day: SMELL, TOUCH, TASTE</p> <p>Warm up exercises/ Ensemble building activities</p> <p>Exercises related to dramatic uses of smells, tastes, and touch.</p> <p>Devising Exercise: Focus on all five senses + immersion + site sensitivity Topic: <i>A woman who inspires you</i>.³³</p> <p>Example of the day</p>	<p>Share the <i>Chemins</i> as an example that invokes all five senses.</p> <p>Brainstorm themes for the final performance.</p> <p>Topics suggested include: stone-pelters, children, youth, women, markets, outsiders to Kashmir, different religions (communal violence), stories of political leaders, Below Poverty Line experiences, Kashmiri Diaspora & migrants, and Kashmiri shawl weavers.</p> <p>Develop the popular ideas, which were: Women, Kashmiri Diaspora & Migrants, and Stonepelters</p> <p>Based on the developed ideas, the group voted to choose one topic: Women</p> <p>Write down stories you know of interesting women; preferably women we could contact if necessary</p>	<p>Building and rehearsing <i>Cages</i> (Dinesh & EKTA, 2013a)</p>	<p>11 SHOWS!</p>

Table 3: Workshop design for EKTA

After one week of devising exercises and training in elements of Immersive and Documentary Theatre, EKTA actors decided that they would like to talk about ‘Women’ in their final piece.³⁴ Starting from the idea that the conflicts in the region had led to a number of young men’s killing/ abduction/ arrests/disappearances, EKTA actors wanted to explore the complexities of being a woman in a patriarchal conflict zone where avenues of political

³² The *Example of the day* on each day of the workshop invoked the presentation of, and discussion about, an Immersive Theatre piece that was deemed particularly relevant to the ‘sense’ being explored that day. For example, the day focussing on *Sight* included the presentation of a theatrical performance in which spectators were blindfolded and led around the performance space by actors, so as to heighten the audience members’ senses of hearing and touch. This pedagogical strategy was adopted so as to give EKTA creators multiple examples of immersive theatrical environments.

³³ Since all the persons chosen in the Devising Exercise the day before, were men.

³⁴ A version of this section has appeared in *In-Between Spaces: Theatrical Explorations from Rwanda to Kashmir* (Dinesh, 2015b). However, extensive changes have been made to the published writing.

and activist involvement are mostly reserved for male members of the population. How were the conflicts in Kashmir affecting its women whose traditions of engaging with the public sphere was entirely different from those of Kashmir's men?

Cages was conceptualised from the outset, through the exercises on Day 5 of the workshop process, as a performance that would involve only two spectators at any given time and Table 4 (below) charts a photo-based narrative of how the final performance functioned. In addition to this description of what the performances entailed, the how of *Cages* might be looked at through the lens of what Diana Taylor (2009:1888) has called “scenarios”, i.e., “frameworks for thinking”. When looking at the following table then, the reader might consider *Cages* to be composed of three larger scenarios: *Cage #1* presents the first scenario, while *Cages #2* and *#3* showcase two additional frameworks for thinking. Each of these scenarios arose from the contributions of the participant-creators, each of whom contributed stories about women that they wanted to showcase in the piece. Bringing in the Documentary Theatre component through this particular methodological approach, *Cage #1* was said to reflect the ‘true’³⁵ story of a young woman in the town of Kupwara that lies close to the border with Pakistan, while *Cages #2* and *#3* were said to be inspired by personal experiences of members from EKTA and their families.

Table 3: *Cages*' Structure (All photos courtesy of EKTA)



Cage #1

Situated at the entrance to the house – on the veranda and right inside the front door – is an installation depicting the story of a young girl who at the tender age of three had seen her entire family being gunned down. Frightened, the girl had sought refuge in a chicken coop in her family's backyard, and haunted by the trauma of what she had seen, made the chicken coop her home as the years went by. Cared for by her older sister who had to put her life on hold to be her younger sister's caretaker, this story explores the relationship between these two young women. The girl in the cage is the first image that greets the two audience members when they arrive, and while the guests progress onward to the other journeys in the play, the two young women continue living out their day -- punctuating the other two households' events in the *mohalla*/neighbourhood (below) with occasional sounds, shrieks, and visits.

³⁵ I use quotation marks since I could only rely on the conviction of one of the workshop participants – who contributed this story – for its veracity. Whether or not this story is fact or fiction, however, becomes less significant in a piece of Documentary Theatre that seeks to be “composed” (Hughes, 2011:93).



Cage #2

One audience member is ushered in by an actor. "Where have you been my sister, Shazia?", he tells the audience

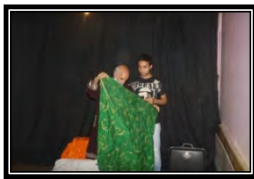
member, "everyone is waiting for you. We must go inside." Immediately understanding that he has been given a character in the play, the audience member enters the building with the actor playing his brother, and is taken into a room which he soon understands to be his maternal home.



Cage #3

The other audience member is ushered in by another actor. "Where have you been my sister,

Shahista?", he tells the audience member, "You can't go wandering off like this before your wedding! You need to come inside immediately. Your new family is going to come soon." Immediately understanding that he has been given a character in the play, the audience member enters the building with the actor playing his brother, and is taken into a room which he soon understands to be his maternal home.



The audience member is asked wear bridal clothes and await *her* father-in-law who will now be coming to see *her*.



Also given bridal clothes, the second audience member dresses himself as a bride, and is visited by *her* father-in law who negotiates with *her*

brother, the 'gifts' that need to be given to the bride's new husband. The word 'dowry' is never used, but the bride knows that it is her price that is being negotiated and it is up to her how she reacts in that situation.



The bride is visited by her father-in law who negotiates with her brother, the 'gifts' that need to be given to him and his son. The word

'dowry' is never used, but the bride knows that it is her price that is being negotiated and it is up to her how she (as the active audience) reacts in that situation. An agreement is reached between the two men, and the bride is then taken by her brother and left at her in-laws' home (another room in the building). She begins to realise that her husband is not around and that no one seems to know where he is.



An agreement is reached between the two men, and the bride is then taken by her brother to be left at her in-law's home (another

room in the building). She begins to realise that her husband is not around and that no one seems to know where he is. Her father-in-law and brother find out eventually that he has been 'taken away' by unidentified men, and they have no idea where he is. Now considered part of her husband's home, her brother leaves the bride there, and tells her to become a part of her new family.



The bride is made to change out of her bridal clothes into more everyday female attire, and is put to work in her new home – cleaning rice, washing vessels, sewing shirts, making *chai*/tea – all the while listening to her in-laws talk about her husband; the husband who has still not been seen.



The bride is made to change out of her bridal clothes into more everyday female attire, and is put to work in her new home – cleaning

rice, washing vessels, sewing shirts, making *chai*/tea – forced to do what her father-in-law tells her to. And if she refuses, well, her character and that of her family could be called into question.



When a visitor comes to the bride's new home, she realises that her new husband has decided to cross the border to Pakistan. He sends her a

letter, and money to his parents, and asks that his new wife send him a letter in return. The visitor, the guide, leaves and the bride has to get back to work in her new home.

The postman soon comes bearing a letter, a letter in which the bride's new husband asks for a divorce. From the letter, it is understood that the

young man was taken away by Indian forces, has moved to mainland India, and now has a new wife – or at least, that's what the letter says.



A little while later, the visitor returns, takes the bride's father-in-law out of the room, and tells him that his son has been martyred.

The bride hears this through the door and when her father-in-law returns into the home – broken – all he tells her is, "There has been some bad news. We need to do a *Khatam Sharif*³⁶ to pray for your husband."

The bride's brother is asked to come back, and he now must take her home again. In the midst of this heart-breaking conversation between the



bride's brother and her father-in-law – again a conversation that she is a passive witness to – a visitor comes to tell them about the death of a neighbour's son, and that they must come to the *Khatam Sharif* that is to be held in his honour. Resolving to clear up the details later, the men guide the young wife into the space where the *Khatam Sharif* takes place.

Through all of these stories, actions continue to take place in the hallways between the rooms where the audience/brides are. Creating the *mohalla* atmosphere, the actors continue interacting with each other in their characters, even though the audience members are not watching them. This leads to sounds from one conversation invading into others' spaces, enabling the audience member to always be aware that there are many other stories that are happening around her. She is just one more story.



The audience members are led to the prayers (in another room), and are made to stay in the women's space of the *Khatam Sharif* while the men lead the prayer on the other side of the room that has been divided by a curtain. Acutely aware of being separated from the men even within this pious context, the audience/brides are ushered out of the room once the prayers end.



The actor who ushers the audience member back through the hallway and veranda that he initially entered through, asks him to now take off the women's clothing that he has worn over his own attire, and thanks him for coming.

³⁶ A ritual in Islam that was said to represent a prayer for peace in Kashmir.

As the audience members leave, they see the two girls again, continuing on with their lives that are centered around the chicken coop...



Each of these three scenarios in *Cages* was meant to operate as a different framework through which a spectator-participant might approach the grey zones to civilian experiences in Kashmir. While the functioning of *Cages #2* and *#3* are discussed extensively later in this chapter, it is necessary to speak briefly to *Cage #1*: a scenario that was crafted so as to provoke a meditation upon the idea of 'normality'; where living in a chicken coop had become 'normal' for one young woman in Kashmir. In the Kashmiri context, where interviewees have often spoken to the insufficiency of psychological support for Civil Society, how would spectator-participants react to the girl in the chicken coop? The girl in the chicken coop and her sister met each spectator-participant when they arrived and departed from *Cages*, but their screams, shouts, and conversations often invaded the spheres of the other two scenarios. At moments, when the actress playing the girl in the chicken coop felt inspired, she would physically enter the 'homes' in the other two cages, rendering her present throughout the audience experience. Furthermore, since this particular scenario was placed on the outer courtyard of EKTA, the girl in the chicken coop often had passers-by stopping to look at her with the same problematic gaze of objectification that the real girl on whom the scenario was based, is said to be subject i.e., she is said to have become akin to a 'tourist site' in her village in Kupwara. Also particularly interesting were instances when children from a neighbouring school came to chat with the girl in the chicken coop, seeing her as their peer and wanting to play with her. *Cages* therefore, had multiple levels of spectatorship, similar to *This is Camp X-Ray*, where the twenty-two spectators were simply the most direct participants; differing levels of spectatorship that resulted from the performance's emphasis on *site*.

Mike Pearson (2010:8) says that a "variety of terms have stemmed from the term site-specific performance including 'site-determined', 'site-referenced', 'site-conscious', 'site-responsive', 'context-specific'". Pearson (2010:7) further states that "the term refers to a staging and performance conceived on the basis of a place in the real world (ergo outside an established theatre)" and the creation of a performance in "this found space throws new

light on it”, fostering new and unpredictable relationships between the space and the performers/spectators who interact with it. By using EKTA’s existing premises as the space for this performance and by making *Cages* responsive to the site itself, the performance enabled different relationships between the EKTA building and its artists, many of whom also live at the premises. The concept of site was, therefore, central to *Cages* and in addition to catalysing a renegotiation in how the creators interacted with the site, the private and intimate rooms in which *Cages* #2 and #3 were staged became integral to the creation of an immersive environment. Instead of performing the piece in the proscenium in one of the larger rehearsal rooms – something that EKTA had done in earlier performances -- the staging of the *Cages* in the smaller rooms in the building that usually served as bedrooms, offices, and the kitchen heightened the importance of the sub-text of the piece: to highlight the quotidian, grey zone conflicts in the private spaces of people’s homes amidst the larger, more public narratives of war.

Creating a design like *Cages* demanded that EKTA’s actors be trained strongly in improvisation, which was not difficult given how closely the actors identified with the characters that they played. The scenarios that *Cages* depicted were extremely relevant to the actors’ lives and simulated their own relationships with wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters-in-law. Therefore, a performance like *Cages* created what might be called “relational art” in which the “conventional, ‘banking’ style of art” is replaced with a process of collaboration between director, performer, and spectator; a collaboration that “is positioned as a political practice that engenders multiple authorship and multiple ownership”(Heddon, Iball & Zerihan, 2012:129). EKTA actors were co-authors and co-owners of the event, creating a practice that resonates with Alan Kaprow's (1995:239) guidelines “which propose the criteria or 'regulations' for the event 'provide for a variety of moves that make the outcome always uncertain’”(in Machon, 2013:31). In this spirit, while the conditions for the stories in *Cages* were set, the responses of the actors changed based on the contribution of audience members in their own roles (as brides). For instance, if one of the audience members was a difficult bride, the actor playing her father-in-law had to figure out how best to deal with the individual in a manner that was both considerate to any discomfort the spectator might have been feeling and realistic in the context of the experience that we were trying to depict. In one of our performances for example, Spectator

A (who had been brought to the performance by his friend, Spectator B) refused to don women's clothes despite much insistence from the actor playing his brother. At his wits' end, the actor decided to improvise by saying "Look, you don't want to get married? Let's go talk to your friend and see if she can calm you down". The actor then walked Spectator A over to the scenario in which his enthusiastic friend, Spectator B, was well on his/her way to getting married. As soon as Spectator A saw that his friend was playing along, he too decided to engage with the performance; an incident that stood out for the wonderful improvisational skills of the actor playing Spectator A's brother.

Cages was viewed by twenty-two spectators over the course of four days and eleven shows,³⁷ and given that there were parallel storylines in the piece and that the actors and their audiences moved between various rooms of EKTA's premises, this facilitator-director had very little control over what actually took place in the interaction between audience and actor. In addition, since the text was devised in Hindi/Urdu but finally spoken in Kashmiri, the participant-creators had much more control over what was said than the director did. For instance, during one of the performances, when his son was to participate as the audience-bride to his father-in-law character, a senior actor from EKTA decided that he would not be able to play his role in front of someone who was biologically related to him. Couched in statements that alluded to an authoritative father-son relationship, the actor – two minutes before the performance began – interchanged roles with a less experienced and younger actor who had a supporting role in the play and refused to act alongside his son. Now, while such personal/professional boundaries are often areas for conflict in the theatre, what set this instance apart was the fact that I, as the director, did not find out about this exchange of roles and professional-personal blurring until *after* the show was over. Given that I was not privy to the show itself, it was not until the audience members had left that I learned about the showdown that had happened backstage.

Frustrations and other immediate reactions aside, this mix-up became poignant because it forced this mainland Indian outsider who was directing the workshop and was in a powerful position in a context that was frustrated with Indian power-holders, to be completely vulnerable and powerless. While a more conventional play would have given me, an

³⁷ A version of this section has appeared in *Delusions of singularity: Aesthetics, discomfort and bewilderment in Kashmir* (Dinesh, 2015a). However, extensive changes have been made to the published writing.

opportunity to see actors' responses before the show and attempt to problem solve; or in the worst case scenario, to stop the show midway if there were to be a serious glitch like the one described above, the Immersive Theatre form and the power it gave the actors (over the director) did not allow me to do either of those things; I was not even a spectator. James Thompson (2005:10-11) provides an interesting point of consideration here when he says that: "Hosts provide a welcome that might on the surface appear unconditional, but they are also extremely aware of the power dynamics evident in the host/guest relationship". In diluting the power that I enjoyed in the context – as director, as guest, and as a 'mainland' Indian – the use of Immersive and Documentary Theatre in *Cages* seemed to present an ethically and pedagogically nuanced aesthetic strategy.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogy & the Spectator-participant

The immersive experience begins the moment you first hear about it (Machon, 2013:23). While the content of *Cages* was something that was extremely familiar in the Kashmiri context, the aesthetic choice to combine Documentary and Immersive Theatre strategies was novel for the EKTA artists and the twenty-two audience participants. The composition of the three frameworks in *Cages* seemed to create a strong sense of bewilderment amongst its spectators by becoming "an activity with new physical and emotional demands" that contained the potential to "dislocate bodies and disrupt accustomed patterns of behaviour" and by crafting a process that resonated with "the familiar by recreating forgotten actions or webs of understanding" (Thompson, 2003:23-24). Since the spectators were very much the protagonists of *Cages*, and were the ones who possibly faced the most amount of disruption in "accustomed patterns of behaviour", audience members in this case, might more appropriately be referred to as *spectator-participants*. While there are many illuminating moments when considering the spectator-participants, the first point of discussion arises in the invitation for male spectator-participants to embody women. bell hooks (1992:146), in talking about the film *Paris is Burning*, puts forward the idea that "the experience of men dressing as women" has always been considered "by the dominant heterosexist cultural gaze as a sign that one is symbolically crossing over from a realm of power into a realm of powerlessness". Therefore, given the patriarchies that govern much of mainland India and Kashmir, "to choose to appear as 'female' when one is 'male' is always constructed in the

patriarchal mind-set as a loss, as a choice worthy only of ridicule” (hooks, 1992:146). Given this possibility of ridicule/shame for our spectator-participants amidst cultural constructions of masculinity in Kashmir, EKTA and I had to mitigate the risks of any potential backlash for the Company by ensuring that only “open-minded”³⁸ people were invited to the performance and as a result, the choice of who to invite to participate in the scenarios was left entirely to members of EKTA. In addition to male spectator-participants’ hesitation to taking on female roles, I understood the artists’ use of the term open-minded to refer to the larger risks of performing theatre in Kashmir – where some consider the art form to be against an Islamic code of conduct. Since even a ‘conventional’, proscenium performance could be risky in Kashmir; an experimental work such as *Cages* contained the possibility of becoming dangerous. Hence EKTA members’ desire to ensure that *Cages*’ spectator-participants would be individuals who were known as being open to theatrical undertakings.

The spectator-participants were dressed as brides in two parallel storylines that occurred in the performance, scenarios that occurred simultaneously but were executed by different actors whose scenes sometimes intersected. The two spectator-participants who entered together thus went on two separate journeys, only coming together again at the end of the experience. Both were involved in their own bride price negotiations, had to perform household chores at the behest of their in-laws, and never saw their husbands – in one scenario the bride comes to discover that her husband has been abducted and relocated by the Indian Armed Forces under suspicious circumstances; in the other, the wife is informed that her husband had joined a militant group and was killed while attempting to cross the border to Pakistan. Both husbands are never seen as a result of different manifestations of the violence in Kashmir and the brides/spectator-participants come together at a prayer ceremony called the *Khatam Sharif* to mark the end of the piece in prayer for the peace of their husband’s souls. Given the religiosity of the Kashmiri context, the ritual of the *Khatam Sharif* also presented a moment of doubling: where actors and spectator-participants engaged with the prayers both as themselves and as their characters. In addition to the performance itself, we sought to prepare the spectator-participants for this novel mode of spectatorship through pre-show sessions that took the form of five to ten minute information conversations and post-show discussions to help the spectator-participants

³⁸ This was the term used by my EKTA collaborators.

debrief. It was the post-show discussions that were particularly revealing and shall be discussed further on in this chapter.

Given that *Cages* was specifically designed for an audience of Kashmiri men to create frameworks for thinking about the grey zones of relational violence in a context where primary narratives of violence centre surround political affiliations, the familiar and unfamiliar in this piece were crafted with a degree of specificity. This specificity led to the inhabitation of the space between explanation and incomprehensibility that Giorgio Agamben (1999) calls for, and it was perhaps predictable then that when we had the occasional spectator-participant who did not fit our specific profile – someone from outside Kashmir or a female audience member – the affect that the piece created seemed to be notably different. For instance, while the Kashmiri male spectators discussed the unconventionality of the form and the way in which their embodiment of a woman affected their perception of an all too familiar scenario, the audience member from ‘mainland’ India made specific mention that there was just too much novelty in the piece. As someone who was unfamiliar with Kashmiri wedding traditions and gender roles in the Kashmiri household, she found the combination of unfamiliar form and unfamiliar content to be incomprehensible. Similarly the two female audience members who experienced the piece had a different affective experience from the Kashmiri male spectator-participants. Being Kashmiri women who had a heightened sense of familiarity with the content, embodying what they already were was a doubling that seemed not to be novel enough; essentially, they were playing themselves. As Judith Butler (2004:145-146) has said, “identification always relies upon a difference that it seeks to overcome” and the premise for such an identification is that the “one with whom I identify is not me, and that ‘not being me’ is the condition of the identification”. Since the element of “not being me” was absent for the Kashmiri women audience members, *Cages* seemed to render their being overpowered by the experience – a reliving of that which they already knew. One of the women articulated *Cages’* impact on her much after the event demonstrating what Thompson (2005:235) says about affective outcomes, that “they can linger”; where lingering “implies that affect does not have to happen at the moment of the performance but can either be sustained beyond it or occur at a different time” (Thompson, 2005:331). In this spirit of lingering, a few days after her participation in *Cages*, this female spectator-participant commented on a photo of

herself playing the bride on Facebook (posted by her husband) and summed up her experience thus:



Sabiya Rashid: “enacted a role showing the agony of a girl, who gets married but never saw her husband as he is arrested by armed forces on the day of marriage, lives with the father-in-law and each coming day looks forward for her beloved one, but one fine day gets a letter along with the divorce papers, scattering all her dreams. It is not a story, I think some where someone is living this life”

Figure 4: Sabiya Rashid's comments on Facebook, in response to her participation in *Cages*. (Photo Courtesy: Ajaz Rashid)

Despite multiple instances of such lingering affects where audience members to *Cages* referred back to their spectatorial experience, it became important for me to grapple with the challenges that this combination of Immersive and Documentary Theatres presented for its spectator-participants.

The anxiety that immersive forms can evoke has been mentioned by Nicola Shaughnessy (2012), who draws from Lyn Gardner (2009) to articulate concerns about the ethics, risks, and anxiety of such immersive forms. It is worth quoting extensively from Shaughnessy (2012:192) here:

Theatre is changing so rapidly that many of the old conventions are going out the window. There may not be any seats. You may not know quite where to stand. There may not be any other spectators - or, indeed, any actors. You may discover that you are the show, which raises questions about exactly who is taking the risk and who should be paying...Anxiety kills theatre...The makers of immersive and interactive theatre experiences who are creating work that is exploring new ways of engaging with audiences are in completely new territory, both physically and mentally. They are going to have to find ways to create experiences for their audiences where risks can be taken without causing audience anxiety to rocket.

Cognisance of the anxiety-inducing qualities in a performance like *Cages* therefore, necessitated a more nuanced meditation on the notion of novelty. While this project was initially designed with an insufficiently problematised understanding of novelty, the anxiety provoked by the unfamiliar in *Cages* led me to consider, carefully, what Daniel Berlyne (1960:64) has suggested: that unfamiliar practices “do not achieve maximum strength with a

maximum of novelty”, but rather, with "an intermediate level of novelty". By using the novelty of the Immersive Theatre form in Kashmir so as to heighten affect, *Cages* had possibly erred on the side of “maximum novelty” whereas a more intermediate novelty might have been far more ethically and pedagogically sound.

While EKTA creators and I had thought about tackling the discomfort of spectator-participants with the immersive experience through the intentional creation of pre- and post-performance discussions, this strategy seemed insufficient in the situation itself. The two spectator-participants to each performance were requested to arrive half an hour before *Cages* in order to familiarise themselves with the larger objectives of the piece and to inform them about the participatory quality of the work.³⁹ These conversations before/after each performance were conducted with the aim of easing audiences in and out of an embodied spectatorship that could potentially cause anxiety. However, these informal conversations ultimately seemed insufficient to reduce anxiety for a public that had very little access to theatrical literacy and thus, few tools with which to decode a performance event like *Cages*. Therefore while the pre and post-performance conversations with spectator-participants became immensely insightful for us, the creators, it soon emerged that ‘more’ would need to be done. It was in questioning of what this ‘more’ might mean that the idea for a process-based spectatorship came about; an idea that went on to become one of the primary outcomes of this project and one that shall be returned to at various points in this thesis.

The second strategy that was used to reduce their anxiety, which was more successful, lay in the character of the bride’s brother. This character was designed to function as a caring guide into the world of *Cages*, in contrast to immersive experiences like *Chemins* and *This is Camp X-Ray* that use authoritarian guides that employ fear to ensure audience participation. In *Chemins*, for example, actors who play menacing immigration officers demand the participation of audience in the piece. In fact, audience members who do not listen to the instructions of these officers, are threatened with expulsion from the performance (Haedicke, 2002:106); an expulsion that occurs at the very beginning of *Chemins* to one

³⁹The EKTA director and actors invited people they knew, who were less likely to be ‘offended’ in embodying a woman, to *Cages*. Invitations were subsequently made by telephone/email and the spectator-participants were informed that there would be audience participation required in the performances. However, it came to light during the pre-performance discussions that this information had not been well understood by many of the spectators.

audience member – possibly an actor who was placed in the audience -- so as to induce fear in the other audience members about the real consequences for their lack of participation. Regardless of whether or not this first instance was staged in *Chemins*, the use of fear to inspire audience participation in Immersive Theatre was carefully questioned in the Kashmiri context. Given the nature of the conflicts and the ways in which Kashmiris have to deal with various aggressions on a daily basis, using fear to invoke participation was not something that was desired. It was precisely for this reason then, that the character of the brother was created towards using a more caring ways of inviting the spectator-participants to immerse themselves in *Cages*. As Table 4 describes, the actors performing the role of the brides' brother, established – or rather, sought to establish—a fraternal and caring way to involve the audience members in the piece. That said, it cannot be discounted that even 'care' can have aggressive qualities and the brother character in *Cages* was certainly insistent in his embodiment of affection. In addition, the actor playing the brother also knew that if a spectator-participant was particularly difficult and/or refused to participate, s/he could be asked to leave the performance with the brother saying something like: "I can see you are determined to be rebellious and cast aspersions on our family name, Shazia, so maybe you should just go". Therefore although the brother was designed to be a caring character, he did have immense control over the situation, a control that was unavailable to the spectator-participant.

A thought-provoking perspective on why/how *Cages* provoked anxiety came from a Colonel in the Indian Armed Forces, who was one of the performance spectator-participants – the Colonel is the spectator-participant from outside Kashmir who was referenced earlier in this chapter. Initially a contact that had been made as part of the future phases of this doctoral collaboration with the Indian Armed Forces, the Colonel's participation in *Cages* was noteworthy for a number of reasons. While some of these reasons will be analysed further in Chapter Four, in the context of *Cages* the Colonel's presence was particularly significant because it was the first time that EKTA had hosted an army official on their premises. Both sides were aware of the risks vis-à-vis security and public opinion and therefore, the Colonel arrived in an unmarked jeep and dressed in plainclothes. As anticipated, given the specificity with which *Cages* had been created for a target audience of Kashmiri men, the Colonel highlighted the overwhelming sense of novelty in the piece, both in form and content.

Additionally however, in the post-performance debrief, the Colonel expressed his reservations that there had been no solutions or alternatives proposed. He articulated his discomfort with the 'victim' narrative that he interpreted *Cages* as perpetuating notions of Kashmiri women, alluding to the possibility that this performance of *what is* rather than *what might be* lay at the crux of the anxiety produced by the experience.

This critique from the Colonel might benefit consideration through social cognitive theory which "is based on the assumption that one of the things that influences learning and forming positions" is observing if a particular receives "positive or negative rewards" (Gesser-Edelsburg, 2011:73). The Colonel seemed to be looking for, in *Cages*, the presentation of a behavioural model that would present Kashmiri women as being more than 'victim', of being agents in their own lives. The limitations of not presenting models in the theatre has been discussed by Anat Gesser-Edelburg (2011:73) who, in speaking about dramatic representations of Israel-Palestine says, "[...] theatre creators showed the attitude of Israeli soldiers towards the Palestinian population in the occupied territories in a negative light, but did not show the audience positive models or characters that undergo transformations to more tolerant positions". Similarly, *Cages* showed the subjugated positions of many Kashmiri women without presenting models or characters that underwent transformations to less victimised positions. The post-show discussion after this particular performance therefore led to a heated debate between the Colonel, the second spectator who watched the show that day, and the director of EKTA – each of whom had a different opinion as to whether or not a positive model was necessary in the piece.⁴⁰

Another interesting response to *Cages* emerged from a Kashmiri journalist who came to one of the first performances. In the initial shows – the script evolved each day based on suggestions from audience members – one of the absent husbands is characterised as having been killed on the border between India and Pakistan, thus establishing to those with local knowledge that he was involved in the militancy. In the parallel scenario, the absent husband sends a letter to the bride/spectator-participant saying that he had found a new wife and would not be returning home – not specifying, in the letter, how he had left Kashmir in the first place. Given this ambiguity, this journalist spectator-participant

⁴⁰ Despite the conversation ending with all parties agreeing to disagree, the Colonel invited EKTA to perform one of their shows a few months later at the Badamibagh Cantonment – the main base of the Armed Forces in Srinagar (this is further analysed in Chapter Four).

interpreted both scenarios in *Cages #2* and *#3* as implicating Kashmiri militants and asked me in our post-show debrief if the performance was trying to place more blame on Kashmiri militants as compared to the Indian Armed Forces. While our initial aim had been to focus on the experiences of women and not focus on who was to blame for the women's subjugation, this response revealed that in a context like Kashmir, it is impossible for attributions of blame to remain unspoken. Returning to earlier mentions in discussions around the performative components to political affiliations, the use of detail in one scenario when countered by ambiguity in the other was seen as performing an anti-militant (and pro-India) agenda. Therefore, the letter in the more ambiguous scenario had to be extensively edited so as to place blame on the Armed Forces and thus balance the implication of the militancy in the parallel framework.

While this clarification in the letter eventually addressed questions of blame, the journalist insisted on an interview with me after the show and asked, in various ways, "Why don't Indian artists care about Kashmir?" Put in an extremely tenuous situation of not wanting to answer such a vague, accusatory question while realising the sensitive nature of what I was being asked, the conversation became tense in a matter of minutes; a discomfort that brought back the slogan I had seen on many a Kashmiri wall ('Indian Dogs Go Back') and re-opened ethical questions around the relevance of this project in a context such as Kashmir. While discussions with EKTA about a longer-term partnership on the doctoral project had begun much before the conversation with this journalist, this particular incident reaffirmed my decision that it would be integral for the following stages of the work to bring on board strong, local partners - partners who would be willing to experiment with the aesthetic components of the project, while aware of the potential (and risks) to theatrical practice in the grey zones of Kashmir. It was the conversation with this journalist therefore, that cemented my resolve to continue working with EKTA in the subsequent phases of the project, although the initial idea had been to work with the theatre company only in the Civil Society component of this work: another instance where situational ethics informed a change in approach, in response to that which emerged through practice.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogy & the Facilitator-director

The workshops and performances of *Cages* also resulted in many auto ethnographic insights for me: the first having to do with the performativity of religion. While age, gender, and nationality were embodiments and performances that I had to carefully negotiate in the work with EKTA, agnosticism during a time of Ramadan in Kashmir was perhaps the most significant component to the performativity of identities in this three-week period. Actors who wake up at three in the morning to eat -- because they cannot imbibe any food, drink, or any other substance till sunset -- make for easily tired and moody collaborators; especially when the person conducting the workshop is not fasting herself. Ramadan played a significant role in the dynamics of this workshop: in the ease with which tempers rose to the surface; in the constant illnesses that actors were affected by due to dehydration, hunger, or exhaustion; in the rehearsal/performance schedules that had to be entirely based on times for prayer. The second important insight was a debunking of my assumption that the project with EKTA would only be part of the Civil Society focus in the larger doctoral undertaking of also invoking narratives from/with/about Militants/Ex-Militants and the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir. The practices involved in the creation and performances of *Cages* quickly revealed that some of my collaborators in EKTA were ex-militants themselves; thus two of the identity-based groups that I had initially assumed as being mutually exclusive, began to overlap. The performativity of religious/militancy-based identities was only furthered by considerations of gender.

In addressing the role of women in Palestinian theatre, Jamal Abu-Ghosheh (in Nassar, 2006:23) says, “the absence of women on the Palestinian stage makes it hard to challenge the stereotypes and the traditional images of women”. Similarly, various social, religious, and cultural expectations of Kashmiri women leads to the consequence that “women who want to work in theatre have to be a ‘bit open and liberal’” (Nassar, 2006:23). In Kashmir, women who want to participate in theatre have to become “initiators and role models for other women” (Nassar, 2006:23) and given the (in)tangible pressures of participating in the theatre under such circumstances, many women performers drop out. Reflecting on questions of gender, EKTA’s director has often mentioned the company’s problems with recruiting women saying that single, young women who join the Company are likely to drop out because of the way they are subsequently viewed by family, friends, and society in

general. Parents of young women actors are reluctant to let their daughters go out to rehearsals at night, to travel outside Kashmir, and to take part in an activity where they would be mingling with men; on the other hand, married women, the EKTA director said, were just as likely to drop out because of household chores and disapproving husbands/in-laws. Because of these societal pressures and implications, the director of EKTA often has had to adopt a more ‘heavy handed’ approach in how inter-gender relationships manifest in the rehearsal room and the irony of creating a piece like *Cages* at EKTA cannot be ignored.

BANG.

The office door is slammed shut, locked. The performance is set to begin in five minutes and I go to knock on the door – one of the actresses has been called into the office for meeting, I’m told. I stop myself from knocking because loud voices emerge. Uncle’s and hers.

BANG BANG

I knock. The voices continue but the door is not opened for me. “She’ll be here in a minute”, Uncle says.

BANG BANG BANG

My third attempt is more successful and Uncle opens the door, the actress comes out looking shaken up and *Cages* gets ready to be performed for its fifth time. “Our neighbours saw her sitting outside on the stairs yesterday”, Uncle said, “She was talking to one of the boys; one of the male actors....This is Kashmir, you know. They see her, they talk, we will never get other girls to be part of EKTA. We need to be careful.”

<Silence>

We have a conversation like this and then perform a piece like *Cages* that critiques the different standards that are at play for women in Kashmir.

We have a conversation like this, and go back to speaking in pre and post performance chats about how things might need to change for women in the region.

We have a conversation like this, the actress goes out, gets into the manufactured chicken coop, and gets ready to begin her next performance. She performs brilliantly, as always; but today, instead of staying behind to chat with her colleagues after the show, she leaves. Immediately.

We have this conversation and there will be no conversations between young men and women on the stairs of EKTA today. The neighbours will have nothing to say.

Auto-ethnographic Excerpt 2

Outcomes

Long after *Cages*, in a conversation with the director of EKTA, I was told that the actors might have chosen to work with the topic of ‘Women’ amidst all the other topics that were proposed (indicated in Table 1), because it was the least controversial. EKTA’s director

suggested that talking about the “pain of a woman”⁴¹ and her status as ‘victim’ are unquestionable in Kashmir, whereas talking about the stone-pelters for example, would have been much more controversial. It is also possible that EKTA members chose the theme of ‘Women’ because there was an implicit assumption that this particular theme would interest me – despite my efforts not to bias the choice of subject in any way. In either case, the nuances of this choice of civilian narrative is interesting to analyse, since it presents the possibility of deciphering which Civil Society narratives in Kashmir are seen as being more acceptable; a consideration that was heightened more poignantly in the next phase of the research with Militants/Ex-Militants.

Apart from the acceptability of narratives, the process of *Cages* contained interesting revelations about the grey zones of civilian experience in Kashmir. While the overlap with Civil Society and the use of violence (through protest and the militancy) has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Cages* revealed a possible approach to the grey zone that is rooted in the notion of “relational” violence. A concept that Foster, Haupt, and DeBeer (2005:66) put forward in *Theatre of Violence*, relational violence speaks to the understanding that even in larger situations of conflict, other acts of violence exist that are subsumed under the more dominant narratives of the context. In Kashmir then, since dominant narratives of victimhood and perpetration revolve around political affiliations about whether Kashmir should be an independent nation state, part of India, or part of Pakistan, *Cages’* way of tackling gendered relationships drew attention to such a relational understanding of violence. For instance, a Kashmiri civilian who is harassed by an Indian Armed Forces officer is certainly a ‘victim’; however, when the same man goes home and promotes patriarchy in problematic ways, he becomes a relational ‘perpetrator’. Approaching relational violence in a time/place of war therefore, seems to be where the grey zones of Civil Society might manifest.

In addition to these larger outcomes vis-à-vis the context, the aesthetic form of *Cages* that combined Immersive and Documentary Theatre presented multiple lenses through which affect was problematised. While some of the male spectator-participants left the experience in tears and one spectator claimed that he would return home and ask his wife how she had felt on their wedding day -- thus alluding to possible “lingering” affects (Thompson,

⁴¹ An expression used by EKTA members and spectator-participants to *Cages*.

2009:157) -- it was the reaction of the two women, the Colonel, and the journalist that revealed the limitations of the aesthetic of the piece. In pieces like *Chemins*, *This is Camp X-Ray*, and *Cages*, there is a very obvious attempt to graft the identity of the more oppressed Other onto the body of the spectator-participant who is (relationally) more privileged. The visible risks in this type of embodiment therefore, lie in the creation of an essentialised narrative; one in which the more oppressed Other is seen as being an all-encompassing 'victim' who somehow *needs* the awareness of the privileged Other to alleviate their (relative) subjugation. By painting a 'victimised' image of women in Kashmir then, *Cages* might be critiqued – like the Colonel did – for not having given sufficient attention to the many ways in which Kashmiri women do resist and subvert hegemonic constructs of womanhood (as in the case of APDP women); of not providing any positive models of behaviour. *Cages* then, problematically, fell into Chandra Mohanty's (1988) critique of 'Western' impositions of feminism in 'post-colonial' contexts; reiterating the narrative of a woman who is less vocal and visible in public spheres being necessarily a 'victim' to patriarchy in all facets of her life. Ultimately, while *Cages* talked about relational violence as framed by gender within the dominant narratives of Kashmir, the performance did *not* pay sufficient attention to the grey zones *within* the idea of women's agency in Kashmir. Therefore, while I still remain intrigued by the potential *Cages* demonstrated in working with a "relational" approach to violence and considering a different kind of inequality than the ones that tend to dominate narratives about the conflicts in Kashmir, I am forced to wonder, from the anomalous reactions of the Colonel, the two women, and the journalist, to think about 'balance' during theatrical interventions in times/places of war. 'Balance' not being simply about an equal number of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' narratives in the theatrical piece, but balance in terms of nuancing a homogenously identified Civil Society group like 'Women'. This question of balance is returned to in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

As a result, *Cages* has prompted me to think about the complexities of two ideas: affect and spectatorship. While the initial stages of the project had unproblematically accepted James Thompson's argument *for* affect as a point of departure, *Cages* prompted a questioning of what different kinds of affects manifest when theatre is practiced in times/places of war. Affect, as it manifested for the spectator-participants of *Cages*, was starkly different from the affective outcomes for the EKTA creators, which in turn was different from that of the

affective qualities of my auto-ethnographic insights. In addition, the responses from the journalist spectator-participant suggested that while this research could 'get away with' affective objectives when talking about a topic like 'Women', that was a generally acceptable narrative of victimhood in Kashmir, would affect be a sufficient explanation when working with the more contentious voices of 'perpetrators' like Militants/Ex-militants and the Armed Forces? Related to this question, another important outcome from this phase of the project was the emergence of a consideration around 'process-based spectatorship'. For instance, when the concepts guiding the ideas of aesthetics, pedagogy, and ethics in this research were initially considered, pedagogy was seen primarily as a framework affecting my co-creators in Kashmir; the spectator experience was seen as being far more closely tied to ethical and aesthetic considerations. However, given that pre- and post-performance discussions for the spectator-participants seemed insufficient in reducing anxiety and/or framing my intentions, I began to consider what it might mean for spectators to be trained in the same way as actors. For instance, what if the spectator-participants had had to do some basic theatre exercises in role-play prior to their immersion in the performance? Could role-play and basic improvisation exercises have given the spectator-participants better tools with which to decode scenarios? Should I have added, to these theatrical skill-building sessions for spectator-participants, a more considered articulation of the goals of the project instead of sharing *Cages* as a stand-alone performance? While these questions pointed toward an extremely interesting possibility for this project's contribution to new knowledge, did process-based spectatorship seem necessary for *Cages* because of its use of extreme novelty in aesthetic form? What if the next project were to use intermediate novelty -- would process-based spectatorship still seem relevant? Therefore, the idea of a process-based spectatorship needed to first be checked against the notion of novelty i.e., did it seem to hold potential because of the novel content from Kashmir's grey zones, or did process-based spectatorship emerge as relevant to *Cages* because of the excessive novelty in the use of the Immersive and Documentary Theatre forms? With these outcomes in mind, the next phase of the practice in Kashmir involved a meditation on the following questions:

- What are the grey zones of Militant/Ex-Militant narratives in Kashmir?
- Would affect be a sufficient framing for work that deals with 'perpetrator' narratives of Militants/Ex-Militants?

- Would process-based spectatorship still seem necessary if the work moved toward an *intermediate* rather than extreme use of novelty in the aesthetics of Immersive and Documentary Theatre?

CHAPTER THREE: STORIES, WORDS, & EX/MILITANTS

Research work with victims might be easier to undertake both methodologically and morally; after all, these are the people who suffered. But this research route also faces some moral dilemmas. If there is complete silence about perpetrators, it assists in keeping their violence 'out of public record and social consciousness' (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros & Zimbardo in Foster, Haupt and De Beer, 2005:91).

In this Chapter, the term 'perpetrator' is generally seen as being applicable to Militants/Ex-militants⁴² or members of the Indian government's Armed Forces; an observation that emerged during pre-doctoral trips to J&K and was important in the conceptualisation of this project. However, although the term 'perpetrator' has been used on occasion in this writing, it is important to clarify that the term has been employed only if/when particular authors/creators have used it in their scholarship. When I put forward my own notions and observations, care is taken not to use this term and alternative vocabulary like Militants, Ex-militants, or expressions such as 'those who use/have used violence' are used in place of 'perpetrator'. This linguistic choice is conscious, so as to dilute the accusatory tone that usually underscores the use of the term 'perpetrator' and to highlight instead, the problematic grey zones in this research the goal of which is to create theatre with or about those who use/have used violence in Kashmir. From the politics and ethics of terminology to the implementation of practical strategies in theatre workshops and performances therefore, there were multiple steps that went into planning the practical component to this phase in the research; beginning with an investigation into existing scholarship that explores questions surrounding those who use/have used violence.

Hannah Arendt's (1963) *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is one of the seminal texts in contemporary philosophy to consider how ordinary people come to commit extraordinary acts of violence. Arendt's thesis suggests that agents of violence are often nondescript and not the sensational performers who are described by contemporary media discourses around terror and terrorism. Since Arendt's postulation around the "banality" of evil, "it is not only Holocaust studies that have alluded to [her] thesis; a number of recent studies of torturers from various places have emphasised the ordinariness of those they studied" (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:56). Furthermore, after the acts of violence were committed or when wars

⁴² Where Ex-militants is capitalised, I use the term to refer to a group of people so identified. Where the term is not capitalised (i.e., ex-militants), I use the term to refer to specific individuals from within the larger group; individuals who were in direct contact with this researcher at different points in the work.

have ended, little evidence was found “apart from a medium range of ‘burnout’, that such people were out of the ordinary” (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:56). It has been postulated that ‘perpetrators’ often go back to extremely ordinary lives and “these studies argue that ordinary people are transformed by particular practices in their routine work environments into killers and murderers – they are not dispositionally predisposed towards violence” (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:56). Drawing a comparison between dominant media images of those who commit violence and academic portrayals of similar groups, Foster, Haupt & De Beer (2005:321) say that while “the dominant media stereotype portrays perpetrators as monsters...the dominant academic image is the opposite. It paints them as ordinary people (gender ignored, but assumed as male) diligently under sway of modern bureaucratic compartmentalisation (the banality of evil thesis), or as obedient to authority and conforming to social pressures (the situationist thesis)”. So what is the grey zone in this conversation about approaching narratives of those who use/have used violence? What is the space in-between romanticising/demonising those who commit violence and relegating their acts to the realm of the ordinary/the banal?

One approach to dealing with these questions has been to suggest that it is individuals that have been victims of systematised oppression who become perpetrators of violence themselves. However given that it is extremely “difficult to measure oppression” and “since the impact of oppression may be felt subjectively to greater or lesser degrees by individuals,” perhaps it is not actual oppression but rather “perceived oppression [that] may be the proper cognitive-emotional variable to examine as a potential risk factor for terrorism” (Victoroff, 2005:20). Even such a consideration of “perceived oppression” comes with various caveats however, since as A.P. Silke (in Victoroff, 2005:21) puts forth, “Very few individuals of aggrieved minorities go on to become active terrorists. The question has always been, why did these particular individuals engage in terrorism when most of their compatriots did not?” Looking at acts of perpetration solely as a response to a past victimisation thus limits a thesis because of the inherent relativism in such a generalised view of those who commit violence. The limitation to this thesis that links past victimisation and an individual’s propensity to use violence is further countered by the idea that “terrorism is associated with the trait of novelty seeking” and since planning and executing such activities might provide a “thrilling action outside the realm of ordinary experience”,

certain “theorists have opined that political violence may satisfy innate, perhaps genetically determined needs for high-level stimulation, risk, and catharsis” (Victoroff, 2005:28). While it has been suggested that young adolescents are more pliable thus, open to being conditioned to violence – certainly something that can be seen in the discussions around the recruitment of child-soldiers– later in life as Bernard Saper (in Victoroff, 2005:28) puts it, “once belief systems, resentments and desperate response tendencies are rigidly instilled they are virtually impossible to modify belatedly”. Consequently, the maturity that comes from life experience has been seen by those who converse with “retired terrorists [who] have revealed a mellowing of attitude, consistent with the theory that enthusiasm for terrorist action is primarily a developmental phenomenon of late adolescence and early adulthood” (Victoroff, 2005:28).

Although the initial goal of this project was to reach out to active militants in Kashmir and investigate the spaces/potential/limitations that might exist for theatre with those who are currently perpetrating acts of violence, I soon had to contend with the unpredictable nature of this terrain. As James Thompson (2005:144) says from his experiences of making theatre in times/places of war, “mapping safety is crucial for an analysis of the place of performance in place of war” and “when the risk is unmappable because it is palpable, then that space for performance is destroyed”. Since the risk of working with active militants was “unmappable” and thus “palpable”, I was advised by various colleagues in Kashmir that the most logical route would be to work with Kashmiri Ex-militants (hence the idea of the “retired terrorist” highlighted earlier), either in the context of prisons or more informally within the broad realm of the reintegration of these individuals within Civil Society. Since working in a prison context emerged as highly problematic since I would have only been given access to those individuals that the government deemed accessible, the final methodological choice to reach out to Ex-Militants was made. While this narrowing down of collaborators to Ex-Militants still stood the risk of being unmappable, it seemed a relatively less palpable strategy than contacting active militants and certainly more ethical than the government choosing incarcerated militant voices for me.

In one of the few existing studies of the militant experience in Kashmir, Shobna Sonpar (2008:147) presents relevant conclusions from her qualitative study with “24 men who had been involved in militancy and are now in civilian life (except for one who later returned to

militancy)". In analysing why these individuals had initially joined the militancy, Sonpar (2008:148) proposes that "poverty, lack of education and psychopathology" were not significant factors, what was revealed as having the most relevance was "the socio-cultural context". The individuals that Sonpar (2008:148) interviewed spoke of a "psychological alienation" that had occurred for them in the years preceding the militancy and that due to a pervasive "culture of fear and collective trauma", there was a heightened awareness amongst them of being both "Kashmiri and Muslim". More than 50% of the individuals Sonpar interviewed were younger than nineteen years of age when they joined the militancy, making "developmental issues around identity, ego ideals and autonomy psychologically salient". Sonpar (2008:148-149) further elaborates that while being in the "socially idealized role of the mujahid or holy warrior enhanced self-worth", there were "varying degrees of dissociation" that seemed to mark these individuals' relation to violence "as potential victim and perpetrator". The respondents spoke to "troubling feelings of fear, doubt, guilt and loss, as well as an awareness of violence as a mode of power that readily gets out of hand" (Sonpar, 2008:148-149). Of their return to civilian life, the respondents spoke about the physical harassment meted out to them by the Indian Armed Forces, not to mention the psychological stress of returning to a 'normal' life. Many of these surrendered militants that she interviewed also spoke to the long-term effects of interrogation and torture, expressing anxiety about either never being able to marry or if married, being unable to adequately provide for their families. "Socially, the respondents were in an ambiguous position since they were in neither of the idealized roles of active militant, nor martyr" (Sonpar, 2008:149), a sentiment that was widely corroborated in the interviews that led to the performance created as part of this research project. This liminality that Sonpar alludes to – between militant and martyr – was extremely significant in this phase of the project; an idea that will be returned to in the concluding section of this chapter.

Performance & the Kashmiri Militancy

While retired terrorists and their voices form the crux of this phase of the research, we shall now take a brief detour to those aspects of the militancy in Kashmir that might augment this theoretical consideration in being analysed *as* performances, or in being seen in conversation with the larger notion *of* performance. Just as Chapter Two included a

meditation around how certain aspects to civilian life might benefit from being looked at *as* performances, this chapter briefly considers some strategies of the Kashmiri militancy that might be similarly approached. It is imperative to clarify, again, that I do not seek to ubiquitously subsume aspects of the Militant/Ex-militant experience under the broad genre of performance; since as Rustom Bharucha (in Mackey & Fisher, 2011:374) has pointed out, “No discipline, I would argue, can assume such expertise without seriously reducing or conflating the socio-political registers of different realities and contexts”. However, given the serious dearth of information when looking to access narratives of Militants and Ex-militants in Kashmir, the consideration of certain aspects of the Kashmiri militancy *as* performances has been integral to my own auto-ethnographic positioning in this phase of the work.

As an existing example of such Performance Studies’ approach to acts of violence, Jenny Hughes (2011) analyses the video of Ken Bigley’s (2004) beheading by presenting an examination of how acts of ‘terrorism’ might be read *as* performances. Hughes (2011:37) says that “the videos demonstrated militant Islam’s awareness of the power of performance as a weapon of war” by using a careful arrangement of “set, props and costume” in these “scripted performances” which some have suggested that the militants “rehearsed by decapitating chickens and sheep ‘so as to appear professional’ (Carroll 2005)”. Hughes (2011:37) also points out that these videos targeted different audiences and draws from journalist Jason Burke who argues that, “this theatre of terror was intended for an audience of the Muslim world in the stalls, the West in the cheap seats”. Although Hughes’ approach reveals surprising and insightful perspectives about the use of violence as invoking strategies that are usually associated with theatre and performance, one is forced to ask at what point it is useful/ethical/necessary to consider such acts, like Bigley’s beheading, *as* performances.

Bringing performance into conversation with the Kashmiri militancy, it is significant to point out that during the height of the militancy in Kashmir, in the 1990s, militant groups specifically targeted the region’s intellectuals and artists. Kashmiri playwright M.L. Kemmu in his 1994 play *Dakh Yeli Tsalan*, for instance, “critically portrays Kashmiri militants as intolerant of the perpetuation of falsehoods within theatre, and as single-minded in their violent pursuit of political freedom” (Menon, 2013:171). Given that certain readings of Islam are said to consider any type of public performance to be against the tenets of the religion, the persecution of artists was/is validated by some militants in Kashmir through the lens of

faith. This might be seen in the particular example of the Bhands, performers of the Kashmiri folk form Bhand Pather, some of who “were actively persecuted, and even killed by militants who objected to dance, music, and drama” (Menon, 2013:165-166). Therefore, not only might we see as performances the acts of violence that are committed by Kashmiri militants, we also see how performances as aesthetic products are implicated in certain militant beliefs. Although I was initially unaware of anti-theatre dimensions to militant ideologies in Kashmir, there were concrete instances during the interviews and performances where we, the artist-interviewers, came up against the ideological oppositions to the theatre of our ex-militant interviewees (prior/current) In response to such occurrences, the research had to move beyond the *as/is* performance binary and discern what various factions in the militancy in Kashmir opine *about* performance as an art form. While initial visits to Kashmir had revealed that the performativity of gender would emerge in all phases of this project – see the previous chapter’s discussion on women performers in EKTA, for example -- the explicit link between particular Kashmiri militant ideologies and the very notion of creating theatre/performance was an insight that had eluded me.

With respect to gender, while Chapter Two considers the ways in which the performativity of gender in Kashmir influenced my own auto-ethnographic positioning, what is worthy of discussion here is the way in which narratives of gender are *invisible* in dominant narratives surrounding the militancy in Kashmir. As will be apparent from the interviews and performances that are later described in this chapter, the idea of ‘woman as militant’ was absent during the research. While the role of women in ‘softer’ roles of community mobilisation was mentioned more often, I was told in my interviews leading up and during in this phase of the research, that there is only one female ex-militant to be found in Kashmir and that she was not in the region during my visit. And yet, there is archival material available in the public realm that contradicts what I was often told in Kashmir. For example, Swati Parashar’s work on women and the militancy in Kashmir writes:

I do not want to glorify the women by saying that we held guns and all that because this will create trouble for the women folk, for this reason only I do not want to say anything about women holding guns. Otherwise, I used to have a gun under my bed there is nothing great about it. At that time every locality used to have 2 to 3 militant (women) (Parashar, 2011:298).

In light of what is mentioned above, Cynthia Enloe (2004:107) says, “cultural constructions of masculinity in many societies have been dependent not simply on celebrating men as soldiers, but on simultaneously elevating women as mothers-of-soldiering-sons, valuing women chiefly for their maternal sacrifices for the nation”. Echoing Enloe’s ideas, it has been postulated that the militancy in Kashmir has primarily given rise to two kinds of gendered responses: one that presents women as victims upon whom militants have imposed their ideology (as we problematically represented in *Cages*); the second which speaks to the involvement of Kashmiri women in the militancy but only within “the confines of their accepted gendered roles—as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters” (Parashar, 2011:302).

Archival research however, shows different dimensions to the roles that women took on leading up to and during the militancy in Kashmir and says that beginning with the “the early Islamic period women participated in armed conflict either by organizing food and water and taking care of the wounded or through playing a crucial part in the actual fighting when needed” (Parashar, 2011:296). In contradiction to dominant narratives of women’s roles in Islam, Parashar (2011:296) says that, “women in early Islam were politically vigilant to ensure that the rulers were not deviating from established Islamic principles”. In contemporary Kashmir, the first example one sees of the participation of women in a militia group is from 1947, when various groups of armed volunteers assisted the Indian army in defending Srinagar from Pakistani aggression. “A striking innovation during this time was the women’s militia in conservative Kashmir and several hundred armed women (Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims) [who] joined the militia and received arms training” (Parashar, 2011:296), to defend themselves and their homes when under attack. As evidenced also by the picture below, this heritage of women being trained as militia points toward the possibility that women’s active (violent) participation in the militancy since the 1990s might not be “a radical rupture from the past but an extension of role and responsibilities they had demonstrated in other violent situations in the past” (Parashar, 2011:297).



Figure 5: “The woman in the foreground depicted lying on the ground and aiming a rifle is Zuni Gujjari, a woman from a milkman’s family who became renowned as a militant supporter of the National Conference, the main Kashmiri nationalist party. The black and white photograph is of members of the Women’s Self Defence Corps, a women’s militia set up largely by Communist supporters of the National Conference in October-November 1947, when Srinagar was in danger of being overrun by an army of Pakistani tribesmen” (Whitehead, n.d.: 1-2).

Parashar also borrows Rita Manchanda’s (2001) assessment of women’s engagement in the Kashmiri militancy during the 1990s. The first mode of involvement included the public participation of women in protests against the Indian state and Armed Forces; coming out onto the streets in favour of the militancy and raising slogans about *Azadi* (Freedom). It is said that mothers put “henna on the hands of her son and sends him off not to a bride but to fight a holy war; a martyr’s mother who refuses to mourn at her son’s funeral” (Parashar, 2011:309). Parashar (2011:299) says that “a common slogan of the times” that was quoted to her in her interviews was “*aye mard-e-mujahid jag zara, ab waqt-e shahadat aaya hai*” (O holy warriors arise and awake, the time for martyrdom has come!). Apart from this very public support of the militancy, women “sheltered militants in their homes, cooked for them, and took care of them, all the while nurturing nationalist aspirations like the Kashmiri men” (Parashar, 2011:299). Early on in the militancy it has also been suggested “a number of young Kashmiri women even travelled across the border to Pakistan to receive training in arms and ammunitions but there is no information about whether they actually participated in armed attacks” (Parashar, 2011:299). Later on however, Parashar (2011:299) indicates that a deep sense of disillusionment set in amongst Kashmiri women who then “began to speak against the militancy and its damaging impact on their lives”. As a result, women’s support for the militancy was seen to decline “in the late 1990s, after the militants took to petty crimes in the Kashmir Valley and began to exploit the people for personal gain” (Parashar, 2011:299). It is perhaps inevitable then, that it is this subsequent disillusionment and stepping back of women from active roles in the militancy that has come to define contemporary narratives of gender during/after the 1990s in Kashmir. While the archival

research discussed above led me to ask many of my Ex-militant interviewees if there were women Ex-militants that I could speak with, I was generally met with bemused smiles and the response that women did not fight during the militancy in Kashmir. This silence about ‘woman as warrior’ provides much room to be studied *as* a larger performance that seeks to subsume the identity of Kashmiri ‘woman as victim’; a trap into which I had myself fallen and perpetuated with *Cages*.

This theoretical framing – of what might make someone a ‘perpetrator’ of violence more generally, what has led to individuals joining the militancy specifically in the Kashmiri context, militants attitudes toward the art form of the theatre, and the performativity of gender in narratives of the Kashmiri militancy – was important in shaping my auto-ethnographic positioning whilst working with Ex-militants. For example, why particular individuals joined the militancy tied in with whether or not they were willing to talk to a mainland Indian like me. The strength of their opinions about the theatre had an influence on openness to speak with a theatre maker and the interviewees’ approaches to gender, in turn, an impact on how they viewed my presence as a lone woman in male-dominated spheres of interaction. Before going into the work that occurred as a result of these considerations, I include below a short auto-ethnographic excerpt that emerged during this phase of the project:

“No no, that’s not what I wanted you to show”, he said, “the guy comes to his house while his parents are away and try to get him to join the militancy”.

The EKTA actors try to perform the scene the way they are being directed.

“No no, you’re not doing it right. Let me just show you how to do it”.

The EKTA actors look at me with twinkles in their eyes. Hadn’t this guy just said that he had never done theatre before?

We had been sitting in that one room, in a dilapidated old building in a part of Srinagar that I had never been to before, for about seven hours. A room that smelled of stale cigarette smoke, filled with about ten men of various ages: smoking, watching the improvisation, waiting for their turn to speak to me, listening to music, and smoking some more. Amidst the vibrant chaos of the moment, the women came in carrying chai and bread and I got the feeling that I always do when I occupy male-dominated spheres in Kashmir and encounter, suddenly, what I am *supposed* to be doing in that context. Discomfort. Acute discomfort. The women sit down after they serve the chai and biscuits though. They stay and chat about their families, about their experiences while their husbands went away to fight or were imprisoned, about their day jobs as teachers. Their husbands speak of the times they left them during the militancy, of their failures as husbands....

“When we first got married,
we only had one blanket to share between the two of us.
If I pulled it too much, she would fall out of it,

if she pulled it too much, I would fall out”.

“Life in jail was better.
In there, I had time to read, to pray, to sleep.
Now I have to worry about my wife, our children, and providing for them.
Life in jail was better.”

“Sometimes I think I should never have married this girl.
What have I given her except sorrow?”

“No, I wouldn’t be comfortable with you speaking to my wife.
I had to leave her for about 15 years, when I went to Pakistan...
I don’t know how she took care of our children and managed.
I don’t know how she did it...
I don’t want her to have to talk about it.”

The Ex-militants of Kashmir, their wives, their fights... an entire world unto itself.

Auto-ethnographic Excerpt 3

*Meri Kahani Meri Zabani, My Story My Words*⁴³

The practice in this phase of the project emerged in collaboration with EKTA and an organization -- the Jammu and Kashmir Human Welfare Association, JKHWA -- that works for the rehabilitation of Ex-militants in Kashmir. This organisation was identified through online social media networks and is among the few groups with an online presence that claim to work with/for/about Ex-militants in Kashmir. JKHWA was the only one that responded favourably to my desire to engage with Ex-militants through theatre making. Like the Civil Society phase therefore, that relied on snowball connections and informal risk assessments to find collaborators, JKHWA’s founder and myself were in constant communication in the months leading up to the fieldwork; JKHWA was also informally vetted by EKTA’s director so as to ensure some degree of accountability vis-à-vis the organization’s work in Kashmir. While JKHWA’s founder/facilitator said that the Ex-militants he knew would not want to participate in a theatre workshop – due to a lack of time and understanding of what ‘theatre’ is – he agreed to organise conversations for me, with his colleagues. Therefore, he identified individuals he thought would be interesting for us – two actors from EKTA who wanted to accompany me -- to speak with vis-à-vis their experiences of the militancy in Kashmir. The facilitator introduced us to men who had been part of the militancy at some point in their lives, had crossed over to Pakistan or Afghanistan to be trained and had decided – for various reasons – to put down their guns. Clearly, there was a bias as to whom

⁴³ (Dinesh & EKTA, 2014a)

I was introduced and a profile that the interviewees fit: all of them were ‘surrendered’ militants who had given up violence, all of them were somehow connected with JKHWA, and all of them were open to meeting someone from mainland India; a willingness that in Kashmir already reads to many as being ‘pro-India’. Ultimately, the interviews with members of JKHWA contributed material that inspired a Documentary Theatre performance entitled *Meri Kahani Meri Zabani* (MKMZ; translates in English to My Story My Words). The rest of this chapter will now peruse the many nuances within the aesthetics, pedagogy, and ethics in MMKZ -- during the interviews, the workshop processes, the performances and the post-show discussions.

MKMZ⁴⁴ sought to perform the narratives of Ex-militants in Kashmir through a process that consisted of three steps: the first step was composed of interviews with Kashmiri Ex-militants, the second step involved collaborating with EKTA to weave the interviews into a performance piece, and the third step involved trial performances of the piece for the interviewees and subsequent showings of MKMZ for small audiences of non-interviewees. While the interviewees were complimentary of the integrity with which their words were put into performance, many of our non-interviewee audience members reacted negatively to what they perceived as the performance’s misrepresentation of the ‘truth’. The non-interviewee audience members accused the ex-militants of lying in their interviews and as a consequence we, the creators of the piece, were accused of performing propaganda. This critical response put me, as the facilitator-director, at the crux of a conflict: the conflict between an ‘honest’ representation of the interviewees’ words and the misrepresentation that was perceived by the non-interviewees who saw the piece. This conflict between representation and misrepresentation lay at the heart of MKMZ and provoked insights that were as auto-ethnographic as they were ethnographic.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogy & the Interviews

As described in Chapter One, Jenny Hughes (2011:93) draws attention to Documentary Theatre and suggests three primary modalities in which this form of performance might be used to highlight themes of war and terror: the exceptional, the forensic and the composed. By exceptional, Hughes “refers to the staging of testimony from spaces of exception” as

⁴⁴ This section borrows from my article (Dinesh, 2015c). However, extensive alterations have been made to the published writing.

inspired by Giorgio Agamben's (2005) articulations of the concept; by forensic, Hughes refers to plays that hinge upon transcripts/archives that are available in the public realm; by the composed, Hughes refers to plays that are both forensically obtained from archives but also composed by directors/ playwrights. MKMZ involved elements of all three and by exploring each of these strategies, the following pages seek to poetically perform the project's layers of (mis) representation.

It might be argued that Kashmir has been in a state of exception since 1947 and that the surge of the militancy in the 1990s further proliferated this status. By using the term 'state of exception' here, I mean that Kashmir being seen/described by differently invested parties as a war zone leads to their justifying an 'exceptional' use of control/violence in Kashmir as compared to most other parts of the sub-continent. While the ways in which this 'exceptional' treatment of Kashmir manifests is outside the scope of this writing, what intrigued me in MKMZ was to consider Ex-militants as inhabiting their own spaces of exception within this larger crisis-ridden context. The Indian state's fears of militant induced crises, civilians' mistrust of former militants and active militants' derogatory view of their 'surrendered' comrades have led to these ex-fighters inhabiting a liminal space in which exceptional treatment is both expected and meted out to them; at least, that is what was indicated to me in the interviews. For instance, many of the interviewees told me that government forces, active militants, and civilians alike constantly police ex-militants. Drawing parallels with the experiences of some Vietnam war veterans upon their return to United States, the experiences of these Kashmiri ex-militants might be seen through Peter Goldman et al.'s (1983) comments that the fighters returned "to a kind of embarrassed silence", their country having "burdened them with its own guilt on the one hand for having lost the war and on the other for having fought it at all" (in Taft-Kaufman, 2000:28). Given that the Kashmiri militancy is seen by many as having not accomplished anything towards resolving the conflicts in the region, Taft-Kaufman (2000:28) bring together a variety of sources to caution us that "such forgetfulness...is wilful and isolating: it drives wedges between the individual and the collective fate to which he or she is forced to submit".

In Kashmir, Ex-militants or those suspected of being returned fighters, are the first to be arrested when there is any incidence of violence in their neighbourhoods. Ex-militants are very rarely issued passports and many of them live in isolation within their own

communities. Considered 'failures' for the number of civilian casualties during the years of the militancy and for the lack of tangible outcomes from more than a decade of violence, there was a strong sense amongst the interviewees that there has been/is a systematic elimination of Ex-militants from the socio-political fabric of Kashmir; making them part of what Agamben (2005:2) refers to as "categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system". This is not to say that all Ex-militants find themselves in these spaces of exception; there are some individuals who now play visible roles in the political arena of Kashmir. However it is perhaps fair to say that the men I spoke with as part of MKMZ were *not* the high-ranking militants; *not* the commanders. Most of the ex-militants who spoke to me were/claimed to be middlemen in their militant groups; the men whose names seldom made the limelight; the men whose surrender was publicised under policies of 'rehabilitation' by the Indian government and viewed by many others (previous comrades, family members, and so on) as colluding with the Indian Armed Forces. This last group that has been accused of collusion with the Indian government forces – with and without evidence – creates another layer of tension among the Ex-militant communities.. The *Ikhwans*, as these 'renegades' are commonly referred to, are said to be Kashmiri ex-militants who are now paid by the Indian Government's Armed Forces to carry out the state's agenda. Since *Ikhwans* are said to be "inflated to positions of superiority over their fellow-oppressed people" and are "armed by the dominant group" to "resort to violence against their own people", to be called an *Ikhwani* is to be classified as a traitor who collaborates "with the dominant group instead of challenging it" (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:70). One of the strongest critiques of MKMZ therefore, came from one of our spectators who said that we had created an *Ikhwani* piece i.e., a piece that only included the narratives of those who had 'sold out' to India – there will be further discussion around this below.

Given this fraught context, what could I ask Ex-militants in an interview? Balfour, Hughes and Thompson (2009:86) draw from Julie Salverson's (1996) comments on the ethics of asking for and telling risky stories that as "artists and educators, we must continually ask ourselves: in what context are risky stories being told? Within what frameworks did they originate? And what is the cost to the speaker?" At the heart of these questions lies the notion of responsibility that, for a mainland Indian theatre maker in Kashmir, meant "an understanding that there are stakes for those with whom we work-- stakes that exist, but

are never more than partially knowable” (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:86). Wary that the process of soliciting narratives from the interviewees to create a theatre piece might become a problematic reproduction "of cultural colonialism that is at the very least voyeuristic” (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:86), how could I engage with the ex-militants in a manner that would respect their ‘truths’ while being conscious of the many political machinations that were at play between that which was said and that which was not? How could I negotiate the “responsibility of the witness” and access the codes within the narratives that were being shared with me without “thoughtlessly soliciting autobiographies” (Thompson, 2005:217)? How could I design my interviews so as to disturb the interviewees’ intentional and unintentional (mis)representations of themselves, while simultaneously being aware that “a story retold can erase others” (Thompson, 2005:217)? How would I negotiate “the responsibility of the witness” and contend with the likely consequence of dismantling the story of the teller (Thompson, 2005:217)? How would I consider the different relationships to the stories i.e., the relation between the story and its teller, versus the subsequent relationships between their stories and the EKTA actors/spectators, and work toward what Thompson (2005:217) calls “an equality of differences”?

In order to address all these questions, the interviews were designed so as to create an atmosphere that would be imaginative and playful, almost as a theatre workshop for one person i.e., the interviewee. The questions and activities that are presented in Table 5, below, were therefore chosen so as to include elements of play and enable an ambience in which the researcher’s queries would be less likely to be conflated with a request for stories of trauma and suffering. But, like most theatre practice that seeks to work outside traditional contexts, there emerged an enormous gap between intention and action.

Table 4: Design of Interviews in July 2014

<p>Main questions</p> <p>For the ex-militant interviewees</p> <p>1. Show the edited video of <i>Cages</i> and by using that as an example, ask the interviewees to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the audience member were to embody <i>you</i>, instead of the bride in <i>Cages</i>, what experience would you want to give them? • The event/situation in <i>Cages</i> is what happens to a woman during/after a wedding. If you had to choose such a situation/event for the embodiment of your experience, what would that be? • The bride in <i>Cages</i> undertook actions like washing dishes and cooking, actions that are considered daily activities for women in Kashmir, what actions define you? <p>2. If there were to be a play about your life, what one incident would you want to include about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why you joined the militancy
--

- Your life during militancy
- The transition point – when you decided you wanted to leave the militancy
- Life as an ex-militant

3. What are three words you would use to describe yourself and why?
4. If you could record a message to someone who is completely different from you, whom would you choose and what would you say?
5. If you had to create a three-minute movie about your life, for someone who has NOT had that experience, what would you put in it?
 - EKTA actors are directed by the interviewee, as indicated in the Auto-ethnographic Excerpt above.
6. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live and why?
7. If you didn't have these problems, what would you want to be and why?

For the ex-militant interviewee's wife, if possible

1. Have you ever wanted to get a divorce from your husband or questioned his actions?
2. Being the wife of an ex-militant, what have you had to endure?
3. What are the dreams that you have had to give up on to support your husband?
4. How did your parents/his parents support you while your husband was a militant, and how has that changed now?

For the ex-militant interviewees' children, if possible

1. Have you ever wondered if your father has done wrong?
2. Have you had to face accusations for his actions?
3. Would your life have been different if father had not been militant?

Back up ideas

1. If you were the interviewer and had to design an interview for you, what would you ask yourself? What do you think anyone interviewing you should know about you?
 - Once they have drafted the interview questions, I will ask them exactly those questions and record responses.
2. Share the graphic novel created about a Kashmiri ex-militant's life (Naseer Ahmed and Saurabh Singh's *Kashmir Pending*):
 - What are your responses to such approaches to articulate the militant experience?
 - Where does it succeed and where does it fail?
3. Ask interviewees to create timelines in pairs, where one person speaks to significant moments in their life while the other records them on a sheet of paper in a timeline format. The person recording can ask questions. Once each person has their timeline, they choose a 'turning point' moment which they can:
 - Free write about
 - Audio record
 - Write a poem about
 - Create a collage about
4. Ask interviewees to create a pictorial map of where they live and the routines and routes they take every day:
 - What is your regular, daily, routine?
 - What memories do particular places in your city hold for you?
 - Map your daily walks around your community and take photos of sites that you have had associations with (people, places, etc)
5. Create a rough script together of the interviewee's daily activities from 8 am to 10 pm on an ordinary/special day (as they want) or shoot a video of a significant day or event in their lives.
 - If you had the chance to document/create one short movie/script about yourself, what would you choose? How can we go about making that video?
 - If you had the chance to document/create one short movie about an Other, how would you do that?
 - What would happen in this performance of an every day in your life?

With these plans and back-up plans in place, the interviews began with me together with two actors from EKTA showing interviewees the video of *Cages*. While one of the goals of this screening was to share something of our work, our primary objective in beginning each interview with the video was to address the potential issue of our interviewees maybe not understanding what we meant by 'theatre'. So as to prevent this potential gap in our communication, each interview began with a framing of our work with the video of *Cages* – using our previous production as a means of explaining what a theatrical adaptation of their words might become. Despite these intentions however, showing the video seemed an insufficient strategy by which to explain this concept. Only two or three of the more than twenty people we interviewed had had any exposure to the theatre and it was these few individuals who expressed an understanding of MKMZ from the outset. A majority of the individuals however, especially those without an understanding of the concept of 'theatre', explicitly expressed their scepticism toward outsiders who asked about their experiences. Additionally, since the recording of *Cages* was viewed on a laptop, many interviewees thought the researcher was a television director/journalist/producer despite multiple attempts to clarify our positioning. As a result of this misunderstanding, given their prior experiences with watching TV and reading newspapers, their responses were (mis)represented to us as such. The proclivity of media channels in Kashmir and mainland India to focus on themes of 'trauma' and 'suffering' when talking about the region seemed to influence the responses in our interviews. As Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith (in Forsyth & Megson, 2009:217) indicate, "repeated narrations of trauma can perpetually freeze narrators in the role of victims of such abuse". Therefore, although we tried "to pay careful attention to the repressive and exclusionary functions of witnessing narratives of crisis at one remove" (Hughes 2011:107), both the EKTA actors and myself were caught in a complex web of our own making; of "hearing a story offered by the teller as 'true'" that placed us, as listeners, "in an ethical relation to that story" (Thompson 2005:217) that we could not disavow.

A second struggle in the interview process arose in how the sessions functioned. While the interview design in Table 5 was created with the understanding that there would be an intimate, private, and closed space in which the interviews would be conducted, the reality was significantly different. On a majority of the occasions, while the JKHWA Facilitator had

scheduled the interview to take place with one or two particular individuals, multiple people from the primary interviewee's locality/family would join the session and while a day would initially begin with the plan to interview one person for a couple of hours, it would become a six to seven hour long expedition that involved talking to about ten people. While I could have made strict demands for the kind of interview scenario that had initially been imagined, this is where the notion of situational ethics became prevalent in my choice of approach. Realising that my presence in the homes of Ex-militants was extremely complex and risky -- my positioning as a young, mainland Indian woman in a fairly remote location, with a male-dominated group of Kashmiri Ex-militants that was (possibly) under the surveillance of variously invested parties -- I made a conscious effort to not control or dictate the larger structures at play. Many a time therefore, the design of the interviews as above had to be completely discarded. Each interview changed and morphed: sometimes becoming an informal chat; sometimes manifesting as a rehearsed speech; other times ending with an elaborate meal in rooms filled with men smoking cigarettes. The idea of executing the interviews as theatre workshops for a small participant group therefore, became a theoretical exercise that while useful for myself and the EKTA collaborators to frame the process, did not succeed during the actual practice of the interviews.

In addition to this constant change of events, what was most unexpected about the ex-militant interviewees' narratives of suffering and victimisation was the distancing that those narratives then allowed them from their acts of 'perpetration' when they were active militants. Foster, Haupt and De Beer (2005:63) draw from Roy Baumeister (1997) who "showed a sharp difference in the perspectives of victims and perpetrators" that might be considered a "magnitude gap". In this space, there is a "discrepancy between the importance of the deed to victim and perpetrator. The act is of far greater significance for the victims; to the perpetrator it is 'often a very small thing'" (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:63). While it might have been the case that it was a question of trust (the interviewees not knowing if they could trust us) instead of it being the case that these ex-militants did not recognise the significance of their violent actions, the distance that the interviewees maintained from their acts of violence substantiate what Baumeister says, that for these ex-militants "the memory of the event fades more quickly". This further suggests that acts of violence might appear "less evil" to the perpetrators, who "ironically [count] themselves as

victims” and veer toward defending their violent actions in a manner that serves to “lessen their responsibility” (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:63). Resonating with this postulation, the Kashmiri ex-militants who were interviewed for MKMZ tended to ignore or gloss over their own acts of violence while stressing their own victimisations, creating a conundrum for us as theatre makers.

Michael Balfour (2007:7) speaks to a similar dilemma when speaking with a soldier in Kosovo who mentions very little in his testimony about “the atrocities he encountered and must have been a part of”. Attributing the cause for this silence to “the nature of the interview (with a theatre academic)” Balfour (2007:7) says that, “the rhetoric of heroism and martyrdom obscured analyses” in this soldier’s testimony “and generated generalised anecdotes that were often hard to penetrate”. Likewise, what the Kashmiri ex-militant interviewees were willing to put forward in their conversations were their own experiences of hardship during and after the militancy: of being victimised by Indian and/or Pakistani governments prior to their taking up militancy; of being victimised after the militancy when they had elected to put down their guns; of the suffering that was caused by their families and neighbours’ rejection of them because of their past acts; of injustices meted out to them during the militancy by the hierarchies within their own militant ranks, and by government forces when they were captured/incarcerated. There was a deafening silence then, about their lives during the militancy itself; about times in which these men did not/had not seen themselves as ‘victims’ but rather, as agents of action in their own lives. Although there is no denying the veracity of the various (perceived) victimisations that the interviewees shared with us, when this victimhood was *not* placed into conversation with their own perpetration during the militancy, the task of deciphering the sub-text became extremely problematic.

This conflict between the said and the unsaid, between truth and falsehood, while extremely contentious, was a grey zone that I approached in the spirit of an artist rather than as a citizen. In the words of Harold Pinter (in Hughes 2007:151):

There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false. I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?

Prioritising my identity as an artist during the interviews therefore, rather than that of a citizen who asks what is true and false, this researcher's response to the interviewees' silence about their acts of violence meant an acceptance of their narratives as being both true *and* false; an ethical recognition that significantly shaped the subsequent choices that were made in MKMZ. It cannot be ignored however, that this positioning was not acceptable to many of my colleagues in Kashmir who, as described in Chapter Two's considerations around political affiliations *as* performances, saw my absence of focus on truth and falsehood to be disingenuous and insufficient in the Kashmiri context. Again, as mentioned earlier, this greyness in my own political affiliations (or lack thereof) is a point of much contention during every project I undertake in Kashmir and at the moment of writing this dissertation, remains an unresolved conundrum.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogy & the Workshops

I come across very cold and calculating in it, and maybe in the interview that's what came across, I don't know... a couple of interviews can't sum up a human being, it can't do it, so it's a big leap of faith talking to anyone like that (Magee in Hughes, 2011:111).

Robin Soans' *Talking to Terrorists* is a work that has received some attention for drawing in narratives from the space of 'terrorism'. However, Patrick Duggan (2013:154) draws from Amanda Stuart-Fisher's (2011:113) critique of the play which suggests "that the work while telling stories of terrorism that are 'often horrific, brutal, and true'", nevertheless offers little beyond a "word-for-word re-telling of personal stories of terrorism", all of which reinforce a simplistic message that "all terrorism is bad and therefore we shouldn't do it". Duggan (2013:154) extrapolates further from Stuart-Fisher's argument, that *Talking to Terrorists* "neither penetrates the trauma or the act of terrorism, nor discloses any insight into the politics of these situations". In order to prevent MKMZ from falling into such a trap of possible reductionism, it was imperative for me, as facilitator-director, to consider the place of fiction in the process of transposing the words of the interviewees into a Documentary and Immersive Theatre performance. Building on the spirit of the quotation from Harold Pinter that ended the section above, was there a place for the non-verbatim/fictional/abstract in seeing their words as being both true *and* false? The potential for the fictional in Documentary Theatre might be seen in Hughes' comments (2011) about David Hare's play *Stuff Happens* where she suggests that "writing fictional speech provides

an opportunity to bring out the things that do not get said in life, the things that no-one quite catches hold of, because life goes very fast". Hughes (2011:114) further comments that "this embracing of the not quite spoken" becomes integral to a performance that seeks to target "the limitations of democracy and its assumptions about the transparency of speech in the public sphere". By exploring the grey zone between reality and fiction in Documentary Theatre efforts therefore, a play like *Stuff Happens* presents the "artistic paradox" that "by telling lies we [might] reach the truth" (Hughes, 2011:114).

In order to take forward this consideration of fiction in the creation of MKMZ, I turned to the forensic strategy of Documentary Theatre that Hughes (2011) employs, so as to nuance the material from the interviews. This forensic approach entailed a detailed consultation of publically available archival materials about the experience of Kashmiri Militants/Ex-militants: the occasional newspaper article, the relatively unknown graphic novel, archives from friends and colleagues who did not want to be interviewed but shared their experiences of the militancy, and other similar material. Ultimately however, as with any other process of editing, what was retained and what was edited out was eventually an artistic decision that might be seen through the Barthesian (1993) concepts of the "studium" and the "punctum": the studium being the larger context of Kashmir and the commonalities that were shared in the interviews; the punctum, as Roland Barthes writes (1993:27), being those moments from the interviews and archival research "which pricks me and bruises". These Barthesian ideas of the studium and the punctum are significant to the creation of MKMZ since the process of editing hours of interview footage into one performance involved choosing material that somehow "pricked me". It must be acknowledged, here that in this process of editing the interview footage and archival material to give shape to MKMZ, persuasive voices had to be cut out "because of editorial judgements about the overall narrative shape and structure"; edits that while necessary so as to give the performance an aesthetic cohesion "are not necessarily the correct judgements" (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:21).

Table 5: Process of Scripting MKMZ (All photos courtesy of Dinesh & EKTA, 2014a)

Step 1: Creating the general rules

MKMZ will involve:

- 1) Four monologues culled from interview transcripts, encompassing the four main themes that emerged in more than twenty interviews: **The Idealist, The Framed, The Disillusioned, The Returned.**
- 2) Symbolic pieces that use one phrase + one action from the interview material; inspired by Marina Abramovic's *Art must be beautiful, the artist must be beautiful* (1975) where Abramovic repeats this one phrase alongside the singular act of the artist brushing her hair.
- 3) Three composed (fictional/creative) strategies, that drew from forensic archival research, to nuance the truth/falsehood of the verbatim text in the monologues:
 - The poet-guides who recite couplets when leading the audience from one scene to the next
 - The aesthetic elements (installations, sounds, and smells)
 - The 'man with the hen'

Step 2: Workshop the structure above with EKTA and script the piece.

Step 3: Final Structure of MKMZ

Audience enters Room 1 where the poet-guides greet them.



Audience is taken to Room 2 where a young man repeatedly writes 'I am not...' on scattered pieces of paper whilst singing Kailash Kher's (2004) song "Lauta do, lauta do, Kashmir dobara"

- *Return Kashmir to me again*: a song that the founder of JKHWA claimed was his favourite piece of music and would like to be included in MKMZ



Audience is taken to Room 3 (**The Idealist Monologue**), where they witness a monologue by an ideologue ex-militant. This monologue could be summed up with the character's line: "I am not ashamed of what I did. Yes, some mistakes happened but we were fighting for Kashmir."



Audience is taken to Room 4 where they see a young man trying to talk, while shackled, saying repeatedly, "We are helpless people, we cannot do anything for our lives."

- The line came from an interview about one individual's experience as an ex-militant in Kashmir
- The action was devised in response to an interviewee's accounts of his time in prison



Audience is taken to Room 5 (**The Framed Monologue**): a monologue



about a young man who is a 'paper militant'; someone who was never involved in the militancy but was seen hosting a militant in his home and thus, was branded one himself.

Audience is taken to Room 6 where three characters are in an asylum repeating the phrases "I am not Hindustani. I am not Pakistani. Then who am I?"

- The piece was created in response to a general sentiment in the interviews, of Kashmiris being stuck between the larger state powers of India and Pakistan while not identifying completely with either



Audience is taken to Room 7 (*The Returned Monologue*): monologue by a young Pakistani woman who married a Kashmiri militant across the border and has come back to his homeland. In her words: 'I keep lecturing my husband and telling him, you have done this to yourself. We could have stayed there and had a better life but instead you kept saying: "We'll go to Kashmir, We'll go to Kashmir"'



Audience is taken back to Room 1 where the poet-guides bid them farewell.



Version 1 of MKMZ, before audience feedback, included a fourth monologue from a Disillusioned Militant who was critical of Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir and a symbolic performance that showed a young man repeatedly washing his hair and saying: "I dyed my hair and got an allergy. Whose fault is that? Mine? Or the dye's?" -- a direct quote from one of the interviews. The reasons behind the edits of these two segments are addressed later in this chapter

Revisiting Primo Levi's idea of the "grey zone", Laura Edmondson's (2009) analyses of Erik Ehn's work *Maria Kizito* became useful in the process of creating MKMZ. Noticing the parallels between what Ehn does in his dramatic adaptation of 'perpetrator' narratives during the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and my own objectives with MKMZ, I borrowed elements from "Ehn's unique approach to testimony" (Edmondson, 2009:70). While in many Documentary Theatre projects "survivor testimonies are usually endowed with the status of absolute and incontestable truths" (Edmondson, 2009:70), I wanted to draw from what Edmondson describes as the novelty of Ehn's approach to be i.e., that the testimonies could be seen instead as "bits and pieces of a memory that [have] been overwhelmed by...events in excess of our frames of reference, a memory that cannot be totalized and contained in linear packaging" (Edmondson, 2009:70). Referring to a difference between dramatic and narrative modes where "dramatic form shows, narrative form tells" (Taft-Kaufman, 2000:21), MKMZ's approach to creating a dramatic piece from the interviewees' bits and

pieces of memory was guided by the notion that “it is precisely what is not in the archive, what is added by making the archive into repertory, that infuses documentary theatre with its particular theatrical viability” (Martin, 2006:11).

It is important to mention here that Immersive Theatre, while relevant to the final design of MKMZ as a site-sensitive, promenade performance, was not as significant an aesthetic concept as in *Cages*. This choice was informed by the ethical problematic of the *extreme* aesthetic novelty in *Cages*, as discussed in Chapter Two, alongside a testing of whether process-based spectatorship would emerge as being relevant when the form was less novel. With these considerations in mind, MKMZ was centred on Hughes’s three categories of Documentary Theatre and wove together the “forensic” and “composed”, with “exceptional” strategies. Many hours of recorded interviews were distilled into four monologues and smaller image-based vignettes that aimed to use story-telling techniques to also showcase what was unspoken in the interviews. As Thompson (2009:18) says, “storytelling is a wonderfully rich, diverse and delicate way of reflecting and mediating our lived experience, but only if it is not cajoled into a simple solution for that narrow band of suffering called trauma”; it was this non-simplistic storytelling that the monologues and vignettes sought to perform.

While the use of voices from “spaces of exception” (i.e., the interviews) were the points of departure for the four verbatim monologues and the one line/one action vignettes inspired by Marina Abramovic, as described in Table 6, the forensic and composed strategies became useful in three ways: in the creation of poet-guides, in the creation of the ‘man with the hen’, and in the design elements of the performance. In order to highlight the implications of these aesthetic choices, it is worth drawing again from Julie Salverson (in Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:87-88) who says that the “overemphasis upon a single, authentic story does not allow for sufficient complexity, nuance, and multiple points of entry” since the danger of a single story lies in its being essentialised or romanticised by those witnessing it. Instead, Salverson (in Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:87-88) puts forward an approach that “speaks of 'story' not as a fixed, knowable, finite thing, but as an open one that changes and carries with it the possibility of reformings and retellings”, suggesting that “if the overly symbolic or abstract is evasive, the overly literal is a lie”.

The two poet-guides brought together the composed and the forensic through the realm of poetry. The poet-guides were characterised as *shayars*/poets and given that Urdu *shayaris*/couplets rely on quick wit and contextual allusions, one of the actors playing a poet-guide worked with director of EKTA to include existing couplets that hold particular resonances in Kashmir and to write new couplets that would nuance the verbatim text in the monologues and vignettes. The form of the *shayari* is a widely popular form of art in Kashmir and as C.M. Naim (1969) has observed, “In Urdu society, poetry is the most public form of literature. Mushairas, or public readings of poetry, are still extremely popular, just as the habit of quoting poetry in everyday speech is as strong as ever” (in Menon, 2013:113-114). Jisha Menon further considers the importance of the form of the *ghazal*, which holds similarities to the *shayari*, by drawing from Kashmiri poet Aga Shahid Ali (in Menon, 2013:113-114) who might be quoted at length to substantiate the significance of our characterization of the poet-guides:

The audience waits to see what the poet will do with the scheme established in the opening couplet... when the poet recites the first line of a couplet, the audience recites it back to him, and then the poet repeats it, and the audience again follows suit. This back and forth creates an immensely seductive tension because everyone is waiting to see how the suspense will be resolved in terms of the scheme established in the opening couplet; that is, the first line of every succeeding couplet sets the reader (or listener) up so that the second line amplifies, surprises, explodes ...the audience is so primed, so roused by this time that it would break in with the poet at the end.

The significance of the *shayari* as an aesthetic, pedagogical, and ethical strategy in MKMZ also emerges because of the ways in which such forms of Urdu poetry resist a “reification of self and other” and “disconcert the self with the recognition of the sameness of the other, without collapsing the distinction between them” (Menon, 2013:115-116). It is this in-between/grey zone quality to the *shayari* that heightens its centrality to MKMZ, in “the gentle oscillation between experience and expectation: between the haunting memory of former such ghazals and the imaginative variation on an established theme” (Menon, 2013:116). By framing our forensic research with the composed strategy of the *shayari* therefore, the EKTA creators and I hoped to create a poetics that would address the problematic (mis)representations of the militancy that were voiced/silenced during the interviews.

The second “composed” strategy of Documentary Theatre involved the creation of an unnamed character that we came to call ‘the man with the hen’ who walked along with the audience members through the entire piece. Telling the very simple tale of a man carrying a hen who is ultimately convinced by those around him that he is in fact carrying a cat, the story of the ‘man with the hen’⁴⁵ was shared by one of the interviewees as an allegory for many of the current realities of Kashmir – of what had happened to many militants, of what had happened to the rehabilitation process, and of what had happened with many facets of the conflict. The ‘man with the hen’ therefore, could be seen as a strategy of the “difficult return” (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:211) where a character represents “a form of memorialization where history is allowed to remain problematic and unresolved in the present”. The ‘man with the hen’ was characterised so as to “make provocative connections between past and present” and to “demand critical; interrogation of contemporary realities, rather than safely bracket off the past from the present” (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:211). As a result, this strategy of a “difficult return” became an element from the exceptional space of ex-militant narratives that were substantiated by forensic research, and composed with aesthetic strategies so as to create a poetic link between fragmented voices and narratives.

The intersection of Hughes’ proposals around forensic and composed strategies to Documentary Theatre was also useful in the design of MKMZ as a site-specific, promenade performance. The setting and promenade strategies were inspired by two ideas: as a metanarrative about the fragmentation in narratives and voices when it comes to dealing with political questions in Kashmir and as a critique of our (myself as researcher and the EKTA creators’) vicarious and problematic witnessing of Ex-militant experiences. As Annette Markham (2005:815-816) says, “the fragmented narrative can function as political action in many ways”, to resist traditional systems of knowing and representation and to “open the space for reflexivity for” creators and performers alike. Given that personally, I also did not want the piece to be seen as exhibiting any kind of propaganda, the choice of aesthetic design sought to help me “see—through disjuncture—[my] own habits of interpretation, to reveal, or at least question, taken-for-granted patterns of sense making” (Markham,

⁴⁵ The story that was initially told involved a goat that is eventually seen as a dog (as opposed to a hen that is seen as a cat). However, since we wanted to include a live animal in the creation of a multi-sensorial environment, it was deemed more financially and logistically feasible by EKTA members that we use a live hen rather than a live goat.

2005:815-816). Since “fragments also tend to reveal and, therefore, make available the interstices of reading” the spectator is forced into a position of alienation and being defamiliarised, creating a grey zone between familiarity and unfamiliarity (Markham, 2005:815-816). With this site-specificity and promenade approach to this piece, “multiplicity [was] made more possible” and “power [was] more distributed” (Markham 2005:815-816) with the intention of creating an affective and multisensory experience for the spectators. Furthermore, since the outcomes of *Cages* had influenced my decision to reduce the degree of aesthetic novelty in MKMZ, there was an attempt to create an intermediary novel experience based on Documentary Theatre that borrowed some strategies from Immersive Theatre.

The choice of EKTA's own premises as the site of a multisensory aesthetic design thus became an important sensorial strategy through which the audience was "not separated from it but *in* it, of it, surrounded by it, dwelling in it, travelling through it" (Machon, 2013:127). Therefore, although I would not call the spectators of MKMZ spectator-participants in the same way as *Cages*, the audience members were still involved in a multi-sensorial approach through the usage of site and through the integration of particular installations: disembodied clothes that hung down from the ceilings to represent massacres, graveyards that were created with shards of glass, white tubes that were laid out on various passages in the building to represent the 'minefield' quality that was a thread in the interviews, and ropes strewn on parts of the floor and hung as nooses in other places to recall images of hangings that militants executed during the heights of Kashmir's violence. The space was "thus integrated within and as the world in which the audience-participants are immersed" (Machon, 2013:127).



Figure 6: 'The man with the hen' (EKTA & Dinesh, 2014)

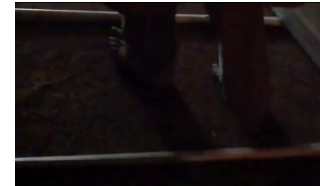


Figure 7: Pipes lay across the floor, symbolising incarceration and the care needed for every step taken (EKTA & Dinesh, 2014).



Figure 8: Stairs covered with bloodstains and styrofoam (EKTA & Dinesh, 2014).

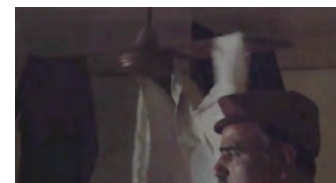


Figure 9: Clothes hang from the ceiling (behind the actor), symbolic of mass killings (EKTA & Dinesh, 2014).

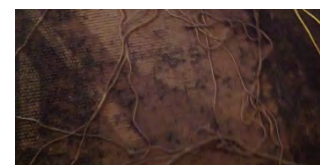


Figure 10: Ropes lay across passageways, symbolising the rope used by Militants to publicly hang traitors (EKTA & Dinesh, 2014).

EKTA collaborators and I saw these strategies as supplying an aesthetic sub-text to the interviewees' words and foregrounding the "ethics of positioning testimonial truth" within "an anti-realistic theatrical frame" (Edmondson, 2009:73). Although this surfaced concerns around whether MKMZ would "be interpreted as distorting that truth and thus sabotaging the survivors' mission", as Robert Skloot says of Erik Ehn's work, these choices were implemented with the belief that "facts have their place in law courts and official testimonies but that understanding human action, if it can be understood at all, comes in forms other than the rational and the literal" (in Edmondson, 2009:73).

Despite these attempts to address the interviewees' contentious words through the use of forensic and composed strategies, EKTA's creators maintained a fraught relationship with the process of MKMZ. While the creation of the three strategies above – the poet-guides, 'the man with the hen', the site-specificity/design -- assuaged some concerns around performing the interviewees' "lies", as some of the actors called them, it was apparent that the actors were uncomfortable with the victimised narrative that a majority of the interviewees painted of themselves. Although an ethical obligation to the interviewees meant that we could not alter the main premise of the verbatim texts that were used, one of my pedagogical choices to address the actors' concerns manifested most effectively in one exercise. In this exercise I asked two of the most senior actors at EKTA, who were playing the poet guides, to become anchors on a TV news show in an improvised scenario. It is worth noting here that it was not a coincidence that the poet-guides were the two oldest members of EKTA; this was a casting choice that was made as these two actors had had the most life experience at EKTA vis-à-vis the militancy and were best positioned to nuance/challenge the monologues through the aesthetic form of the *shayaris*. As the TV news anchors in this improvisation, they were asked to replicate debates they might have seen on news channels that have the tendency of turning into heated arguments with host and guest fighting it out on the air. In this spirit, the talk show hosts would improvise interviews with each of the characters speaking monologues in MKMZ, who would in turn use their verbatim lines from the performance to frame responses. However, in the improvisation, the news anchors could stop the characters mid-speech and confront them with questions about what they (the TV anchors) saw to be lies or omissions in the monologues – a confrontation that was not possible with the real interviewees. In this exercise therefore, the actors being

interviewed had to improvise responses -- in character -- to the news anchors' challenges and predictably, this exercise soon resulted in the talk show hosts backing each of the characters into a corner; in much the same way that the ex-militant interviewees described being confronted constantly by Civil Society. Although I primarily designed this exercise to use *play* as a means for EKTA actors to air their discomfort with the interviewees' words, the response to MKMZ from Audience B (see below) made me question whether this exercise should have been scripted and integrated as a composed element in MKMZ.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogy & the Performances

Whether or not these strategies – the poet-guides, the 'man with the hen', and the setting/design elements – performed their intended effect of nuancing the (mis)representations in the verbatim components to the performance is debatable. While the EKTA actors' reservations about the (mis)representations in the interviewees' words were generally addressed through exercises and discussions such as the one mentioned above, we went into the next phase of the project – of performing for an audience – with much trepidation. As I understand it, MKMZ is among the first pieces of its kind in Kashmir, both in using a more 'experimental' form of theatre and in considering the narratives of Ex-militants. Therefore, given the care we needed to take with regards to our own safety, the final step in this phase of the project involved showing the piece to two publics: the first show was for the interviewees themselves (hereon referred to as Audience A), while the guest-lists for the second and third showings (Audience B) for non-interviewees/presumably non Ex-militants were left in the hands of the directors of EKTA and JKHWA respectively.

While neither Audience A nor Audience B took issue with the poet-guides, the 'man with the hen' or the design elements in any way, the complicated responses that we received from Audience B made it seem as though our composed strategies did not have the same power as the verbatim pieces i.e., the monologues and the image-based vignettes. Apart from one audience member in Audience A who told us that he thought the 'man with the hen' was the protagonist of the piece and a handful of members from Audience B who complimented the setting/design elements, not one of the three composed aesthetic strategies seemed to have as much power as the spoken word. Speaking to the complications of audience literacy in the theatre, Pierre Bourdieu (in Shaughnessy 2012:166) has stated that for an audience to

whom the codes and language of a performance are unfamiliar, all that is visible is a cacophony of sound and colour. Therefore, although we had dialled down the level of novelty in MKMZ (compared to *Cages*), given that our audiences had been exposed, if at all, to only script-based proscenium drama – I was told by the Director of EKTA – they only paid attention to the elements of MKMZ that they recognised i.e., the monologues.

In line with Harold Pinter's delineation between the artist and citizen when it comes to looking for truths and falsehoods, Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (2009) have pointed out how the reception of Verbatim Theatre is marked by a preoccupation with what is real and what is not; or a tension that defined our spectators' experiences in MKMZ. While the responses we received from Audience A were generally positive,⁴⁶ Audience B reacted with much more opposition. The conversation after our second show became heated and despite our clarifications: (1) that MKMZ was a work-in-progress, (2) that the piece aimed to approach the notion of the testimonies being both true *and* false, and (3) that the composed and forensic strategies strove to balance the monologues, our justifications were not accepted by this audience of Kashmiri artists and intellectuals. I was told in no uncertain terms that MKMZ was a propaganda piece and very soon, I was enmeshed in what James Thompson (2005) considers as a struggle between the different audiences for a community-based work of theatre. If our first-level audience was the interviewees themselves, how were we to approach this second-level audience of non-interviewees for whom the local context was too charged to allow for any distancing? Since MKMZ presented the interviewees' understanding of their own victimisation, we were at the receiving end of what Michael Balfour (2007:9) has cautioned: "if one asserts that victims should not be constructed heroically, one risks being accused of violating their memory".

While a distanced position of observer might be possible in a time of 'peace', in a time/ place where war is current and omnipresent there were no works-in-progress, only completed works that took a stand. There were no 'ethics of Documentary Theatre' that allowed for truths *and* falsehoods, there was only a choice of truths *or* falsehoods. There were no composed/forensic/exceptional strategies that were possible, just that which was said and that which was not. Although follow-up conversations with the most critical spectators from

⁴⁶ The interviewees commented on the integrity with which their words had been portrayed, but the sub-text added by the composed elements still seemed to go generally unnoticed. It also warrants mentioning that while care was taken to invite every single interviewee for the first performance of MKMZ, only four of the original contributors came to this performance.

Audience B resulted in constructive suggestions, feedback and insights for MKMZ, the immediate discussion following the second performance seemed to implicate the creators of the piece -- primarily myself as the director and a mainland 'Indian' -- as having an agenda to simultaneously undermine and victimise the militancy. One spectator from Audience B took issue with the fact that we had only showcased 'surrendered' militants i.e., people who had somewhere along the line lost faith in their efforts or who had joined the militancy with misplaced ideals and convictions. "What about the true militants?" he asked us. Although this spectator immediately accepted that most idealistic militants who have not already been killed would refuse to speak to someone like me, I was expected (by this spectator) to represent their missing voices.

Along similar lines of contention around (mis)representation, another spectator from Audience B indicated that he was discomfited by how much we had represented what he considered to be, lies. "The only truth is the truth of the victims", he said, and the interviewees had completely misrepresented their actions to us. This contention between what is true and what is false is all pervasive when speaking to non-dominant accounts of war. For example, in a consideration of Ismael Beah's (2007) narrative of experiences as a child-soldier in *A Long Way Gone*, Allison Mackey (2013:102) suggests that the work "has been haunted" by suggestions from the likes of Barbara McMahon (2008) "that Beah's memoir is in fact 'factually flawed'". Similarly members of the global Rwandan community have discredited the narrative of Paul Rusesbagina, the protagonist of *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), because of perceived falsehoods in his story; "these scandals of veracity illustrate the more general problem of autobiography: the slippery divide between truth and fiction and the autobiographical pact undertaken by writer and reader alike" (Mackey, 2013:102). The explosive and intense reaction to MKMZ by members of Audience B also led to a revisiting of what Thompson (2004:151) cautions; that "without extreme care theatre projects that dig up narratives, experiences, and remembrances can blame, enact revenge, and foster animosity as much as they can develop dialogue, respect, or comfort". While the approaches and steps were designed to take the care that Thompson calls for, Audience B's responses made it evident that the 'caring' choices that had been made were not effective. If we accept what Hannah Arendt (1981:262) says that "the very originality of the artist (or the

very novelty of the actor) depends on making himself understood by those who are not artists (or actors)”, had we failed with MKMZ?

A further complication was the presence of the daughter of an Armed Forces Brigadier as a performer in the piece. In response to the young woman’s college requirement to undertake an internship over her summer break, the Brigadier’s daughter had contacted EKTA and was invited by the company’s director to become part of MKMZ. As the daughter of an army man from mainland India who was stationed in Kashmir, this young lady’s presence within the workshops and performances added a cross-community element to the work that was both unexpected and complex; both desirable and undesirable. For example, the actress’ father’s association with the Armed Forces meant that she always came to rehearsals with an armed escort who reported back to her high-ranking parent. Therefore while the actress herself was affable and maintained cordial and friendly interactions with EKTA actors (and vice-versa), both EKTA actors and I refrained from having more ‘controversial’ conversations about the Armed Forces in her presence, choosing instead to have those conversations before/after her armed escort had brought her to/taken her away from the rehearsals. In addition, since this young woman was the only female participant in the workshop, she was cast in the role of the Pakistani woman who launches into a tirade against her Kashmiri extended family for not treating her well. While this complexity was not something that was highlighted explicitly either by the actors or spectators, there was an implicit tension here. Since this monologue was heavily critical of Kashmir and Kashmiris, it was read as being both anti-Pakistan⁴⁷ and anti-Kashmir. Therefore, the politics of this young woman coming from mainland India, while also the daughter of an army officer, brought multiple grey layers both into the process and the performances.

Given the politics of an army officer’s daughter performing in a controversial piece like MKMZ, the director of EKTA began the post-performance discussions by explicitly stating the actress’ military affiliation to the spectators. Although the actress was initially unsure as to the necessity of this open identification, EKTA’s director deemed it to be an ethical choice so that audience members would not later cast aspersions as to why they were not told about this young woman’s Armed Forces link. Ironically however, more than her affiliation with an army officer, this actress’ presence was complicated only when she responded to critique

⁴⁷ Since a Pakistani woman was criticizing Kashmir/Kashmiris and the researcher was from mainland India.

from Audience B by putting forward the idea that perpetration might be relational; a comment that was not received well. While the actress tried to state that we often “fail to recognise that there is perhaps a ‘little perpetrator’ in each one of us” (Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:52), the audience members were not accepting of this opinion at all; especially not from someone who was not Kashmiri and who had not lived through the conflicts herself. This ‘interchangeability’ that the actress alluded to was controversial for much the same reason as Peter Weiss’ *The Investigation*, in which “the apparent transformation of the prisoner into an executioner who murders his father and friends offers a powerful example of what some critics have interpreted as the play’s portrayal of the interchangeability of victims and perpetrators” (Thomas, 2010:568).

We struggled with the criticism from Audience B and while I personally, found the harsh feedback humbling but necessary, EKTA members seemed to find the critical response more embarrassing than helpful. The second performance was therefore followed by hours of discussion and debate, where we considered how to address the feedback in our final (third) performance the next day, intended for guests invited by JKHWA.⁴⁸ However, in the hours following the performance, both the spectators from Audience B who had most vocally expressed their concerns about the piece became our most constructive collaborators. One of the spectators, a poet, sent us a poem that he had written about Kashmir and suggested that we add it into the piece to give it more nuance. The other spectator, a theatre director, came to EKTA’s premises the next morning and spent hours with us during our final rehearsal; explaining his concerns in further detail and suggesting edits that would make the piece more ‘true’. We took many of his suggestions on board and the version of MKMZ that was performed that final afternoon for EKTA’s board members exhibited many little and not-so-little edits:

Table 6: Edits made to MKMZ

Suggested Edits	Spectator’s Reasoning
In The Idealist Monologue , it was suggested that we cut the line “The people [the militant leaders] who were showing us the way, became our looters.”	Since this was the only monologue that presented an idealistic militant, the spectator suggested that this line’s implication – that all militant leaders were corrupt – was incorrect and problematic. There were some heroes, he said, who could not be painted with this brush. The spectator

⁴⁸ To reiterate, the first performance was for the interviewees, the second for JKHWA’s guests, and the third/fourth performances were aimed at EKTA guests.

Suggested Edits

Spectator's Reasoning

	<p>made the valid point that, since we were in fact generalising (to a large extent) the specific stories of interviewees, we had to make that generalization more nuanced.</p>
<p>It was suggested the entire Disillusioned Monologue and its accompanying symbolic performance be cut from the performance.</p>	<p>The spectator said that this was because the monologue was not saying anything new. However, conversations with the EKTA team the day earlier suggested that the problem with this monologue lay in its being critical of Pakistan. "It's fine to be critical of India", I was told, but being critical of Pakistan when many current militants value a cultural affiliation with the country could have possibly dangerous repercussions for EKTA. The actor performing this monologue said something akin to the following: "Do you think militants are going to understand that I am simply a character who is saying these things against Pakistan, and that they are not my words? If a militant sees this monologue and comes to get me, he will have shot me before I have the time to explain that I am only playing a character".</p>
<p>In The Framed Monologue it was suggested that we cut one particular component, where the character narrates the following story:</p> <p>One evening there was a knock on my door and there was a man there. He stayed with us for the night. It was Friday the next day and then, the man heard the azaan. The man said: "They told me there [in Pakistan] that there was no azaan in Kashmir? That's why they sent me here to save Kashmir, since no one prays here".</p> <p>The monologue then went on to talk about how this man had been framed as a militant by the Indian government and that he had no idea as to why this had been done to him.</p>	<p>The spectator took issue with the story since it said that the man from Pakistan did not know that the azaan (call to prayer) happened in Kashmir. "Didn't he cross the border into Kashmir from Pakistan?" the spectator asked. And if he did, would he not have passed through multiple Kashmiri villages en route over multiple days and as a result, heard the call to prayer a number of times? How did he get all the way to the capital of Kashmir from Pakistan without hearing the azaan on his way and realising his mistake? The spectator also pointed out that most people had not been 'framed' without any reason at all and that it was disingenuous for this character to suggest that he did not understand why he had been arrested. The man must have been arrested, the spectator said, because militants were seen in his home. Presenting his own personal experience with militants coming into his home and demanding to be fed, the spectator suggested that we edit this monologue to include a statement on the man being framed because his visitor was in fact implicated in the militancy.</p> <p>While EKTA actors had alluded to some of these problems with the text during the workshop process, they had been unable to sequentially break down the monologues and point out its 'holes' to me (as above). Much of my colleagues' critiques were framed in generic statements like "This is not true", "They are lying to you", and so on – possibly because their familiarity with me led them to believe that I would understand the issues without their having to spell them out. Therefore, having this spectator's specific feedback was extremely useful to see what my colleagues had been reacting to; reactions that I, in my desire to be ethical to the interviewees, had only invoked</p>

Suggested Edits**Spectator's Reasoning**

aesthetic elements to address.

It was suggested that **The Returned** monologue be toned down since the Pakistani woman hurls accusations at Kashmir and Kashmiris. Instead of saying "These Kashmiris" it was suggested that the character say, "These people" and where she said "Kashmir," to say, "this place".

The spectator said that despite the controversial nature of this monologue, it was necessary to have a strong, critical, female voice in the piece. By making the accusations more general though, the spectator suggested that we would be able to balance the contentious nature of the text. Furthermore, it is significant to note that in toning down this monologue and in cutting **The Disillusioned** piece, the most visible anti-Pakistan sentiments were removed from the piece. While I had initially considered **The Returned** not to be anti-Pakistan but anti-Kashmir (thus creating a balance with the anti-India and anti-Pakistan moments in other parts of MKMZ), I was told that presenting a monologue by a Pakistani that was anti-Kashmir would be interpreted as the monologue attempting to antagonise Kashmiris against Pakistan. This explanation clarified what some of the spectators had called 'propaganda' in response to the unedited version of MKMZ.

This process of dialogue and exchange that involved critique and heated debate, contained an element of what Baz Kershaw (1999:66) calls "the radical [that] arises from the 'excesses of performance'-the surplus meanings generated by performance's dynamic interaction with its context and continuous co-production by performers and spectators in ways that cannot be directed, predicted or measured". Kershaw (1999:18) draws on Raymond Williams' analysis of "the radical as being associated with 'vigorous and fundamental change' without ideological orientation, and he welcomes the radical as a gesture 'beyond all forms of the dogmatic, towards kinds of freedom that cannot be envisaged". Containing resonances of Kershaw's understanding of the radical therefore, the critical spectators from Audience B becoming MKMZ's most constructive collaborators was akin to what Jacques Rancière (2010:140) draws attention to as "a dissensual reconfiguration of the common experience of the sensible". These moments of disagreement then, made MKMZ a piece of "critical art" – in Rancière's terms (2010:149) – that thrived in the transient space of "lacking a clear political project outside this materialisation of multiple and shifting sensual fabrics of the world".

Although these particular instances of critical spectators from Audience B becoming MKMZ's most constructive collaborators were radical for me, it cannot be ignored that the contingencies of the critique received from Audience B were different for EKTA members.

EKTA actors were extremely concerned about how their standing in society would be affected as a result of Audience B's criticism – especially since those doing the criticising were well-known artists in the local context. The director of EKTA assured me later that since the process had become a dialogue and since the critics' suggestions had been taken on board, there would be no lasting negative impact on the theatre company. However, ethically, I still contend with how MKMZ might have impacted the ways in which local spectators see EKTA's work. As Thompson (2003:23-24) has pointed out "a shift from certainties may be a positive process for some communities, whereas a return to certainties may be the desire of others". In the contentious responses to MKMZ, a shift from certainties was a positive process for myself as the researcher, but not necessarily so positive for the team from EKTA.

Among the many poignant moments in the process of MKMZ, one of the most striking for me was the disappearance of the facilitator of JKHWA after the first performance for Audience A. While the facilitator was one of the most active members during the interviews, visited many of our rehearsals, and was our most positive audience member in the first showing of MKMZ for the interviewees, his unexplained absence during the next performances left us – EKTA creators and myself – in a state of bewilderment. On the first day of his absence I was told that he had been arrested by the police in the security lead-up to a 'Martyrs Day' demonstration that was to happen in Kashmir -- Ex-militants are often arrested on days of significant political protests/holidays just in case they plan to join the days' activities.⁴⁹ On the second day of his absence we were told that he had been released from lock-up and would be coming to the next performance of MKMZ; when he did not show up that day either, or the next, the EKTA actors and I had no choice but to continue our speculations as to whether his initially positive feedback to our work might not have actually been his honest opinion. I did not see the facilitator for the rest of my time in Kashmir that year and did not hear from him for about a month after I left Kashmir. At this juncture he addressed his unexplained absence/disappearance by promising to explain his absence to me in person the next time I am in Srinagar. Until then, I remain with more doubts than certainties, questioning if I will ever identify the innumerable layers to MKMZ.

⁴⁹ This was said to be during a number of the interviews leading up to MKMZ.

Outcomes

The concluding section in Chapter Two put forward three questions into which the practice with Militants/Ex-militants in Kashmir sought to gain more insight.

- What are the grey zones of Militant/Ex-Militant narratives in Kashmir?
- Is affect a sufficient framing for work that dramatises the narratives of those who have used violence to an audience that has/had been 'victim' to those acts?
- Does process-based spectatorship still seem necessary when the work moves toward an *intermediate* rather than *extreme* use of novelty?

Each of these questions is further explored in this discussion on outcomes, in conversation with both MKMZ and *Cages*.

The grey zones of Civil Society narratives in Kashmir were found to be in narratives of relational violence and invoked a consideration of acts -- as in the case of gender -- that are not dominant narratives of victimhood in a time and place of war. What are the grey zones then, when looking at the Kashmiri militancy? While preliminary articulations of grey zones in this project manifested as a consideration of the space *between* the three groups of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir, MKMZ led to a transformation in this articulation. Rather than considering grey zones as spaces *between* 'victim' and 'perpetrator', the work with ex-militants in MKMZ revealed the shadowy/liminal places *within* the category of the militancy in Kashmir -- a seemingly small shift in articulation whose significance is discussed more extensively in the concluding chapter of this thesis. The practice involved in MKMZ specifically revealed that Kashmiri Ex-militants occupy a particularly uncertain terrain within the larger category of the militancy in Kashmir. Given that these individuals do not see themselves as/are not seen as being part of either Civil Society or the militancy, they inhabit their own grey zones between (a) martyr/freedom fighters: when considered idealistic fighters; (b) terrorist: when perceived as having misplaced/misdirected idealism, and (d) sell-out: when perceived as being corrupt/not idealistic enough. While accessing Ex-militants' narratives that lie within multiple grey zones therefore, it was near impossible to maintain the space as one in which, as Primo Levi says (in Thomas, 2010:578), "the separation of victims and perpetrators is maintained: The

oppressor remains what he is and so does the victim". MKMZ's inability to retain this positioning lies at the crux of its interminable complexity.

An added layer to the complexity in MKMZ emerged when 'victims' in Audience B, whose kith and kin had been affected by some of these Ex-militants' acts of violence, saw/heard narratives of the Other which were at odds with what they knew/what they thought they knew. In this particular context then, when the identity of being a 'victim' is pervasive and important to how individuals and groups situate themselves, is contradiction seen as destabilising the very notion of that person's identity? In presenting narratives of Ex-militants in a performance like MKMZ, were we asking too much of our spectators who were not part of the interview/creative process? "It is sometimes said that a person's present beliefs and attitudes will make him shy away from any effort to learn subject matter that might challenge them", says Allen Tough (1971:65) in talking about the challenges of adult learning. However Tough (1971:65) also argues that people only hold onto their beliefs to the extent that they *have* to and that generally speaking, all individuals are "motivated by the desire to see reality as it actually is, even if it hurts". There are "several examples of a person setting out to develop or change his beliefs and attitudes" and as individuals become "more competent at goal-setting and planning, they may increasingly initiate efforts to change their own beliefs and attitudes" (Tough, 1971:65) Therefore, could MKMZ's friction with Audience B be seen in an inability to locate and frame a desire to see the Ex-militant Other and their reality "as it actually is"?

While Audience B's "demand for a truer image, for more images, for images that convey the full horror and reality of the suffering has its place and importance", I agree with Judith Butler (2004:146) that "it would be a mistake to think that we only need to find the right and true images, and that a certain reality will then be conveyed". Rather, Butler (2004:146) says, "reality is not conveyed by what is represented with the image, but through the challenge to representation that reality delivers". Framed by this notion of reality being contained in the disjuncture of representation rather than finding *right* answers, MKMZ reveals one particular potential – a potential in which "the human is indirectly affirmed in that very disjunction that makes representation impossible" (Butler, 2004:144). By working with disjunctions and contradictions therefore, MKMZ created a rupture in the encounter between Ex-militant archives and the repertoires of non-ex-militants; a rupture that in using

“representation to convey the human” not only failed, but also *showed* its failure (as Butler calls for). In our effort to represent voices that are un-representable in various ways, MKMZ embodied a potentially powerful paradox between seeking to represent Ex-militant narratives while all the while failing/showing the failure of that attempt.

And yet this powerful paradox, while theoretically relevant and poignant, is far more problematic when considered ethically and pedagogically: a problematic that led to a resurgence of process-based spectatorship as an idea. While *Cages* had led to the emergence of process-based spectatorship, the initial assumption was that it was the performance’s *extreme* novelty that made process-based spectatorship seem necessary. It was in response to this outcome that the aesthetic form of MKMZ focussed more on Documentary Theatre rather than Immersive Theatre, to work toward *intermediate* novelty. However when symbolic elements like the poet-guides, ‘the man with the hen’, and the setting/design went unread/unseen by a majority of the spectators, I had to consider if in the context of Kashmir, any theatrical experiment that is not the traditional folk form of Bhand Pather is extremely novel by default. Furthermore, the various complexities to the workshops and performances of MKMZ also revealed that performances that show a ‘single’ community perspective, unless those less contentious ‘victims’ like the women in *Cages*, cannot/should not be performed for those who are outside the interview and workshop process. Single community narratives from groups that have used violence therefore – as Audience B’s responses indicated – cannot/should not be shown to an audience unless they are guided by a process which gives them tools to decode the performance. Therefore although MKMZ might have been less novel in its aesthetic form than *Cages*, the novelty of the content still outweighed that of the form; reemphasising the need for a guided spectatorship process. The importance of process-based spectatorship in Kashmir therefore, especially when there is a mainland theatre maker involved, seems not just preferable, but *essential*. While *Cages* considered this process for spectators as including improvisation and role-play exercises that would prepare spectators to take on roles in immersive environments, processes for spectators for a piece such as MKMZ would need to entail sessions on: (a) tools to read/interpret images; (b) scenarios of structured improvisation, like the one used with EKTA actors involving the TV news anchors, that would provide spectators with frameworks to disagree with the characters; (c) an introduction to Documentary

Theatre that includes details on how interviewees were chosen, how the interviews were designed, and how transcripts were edited; (d) finally, an integral element in designing a process-based spectatorship for a piece like MKMZ would involve a framing of the *intentions* of the creators.

Although the question of intention had emerged during *Cages*, in the interaction with the journalist for example, my intentions with a project like MKMZ were more rigorously scrutinised. While *Cages*' affective objectives seemed to assuage spectators' concerns more readily, the concept of affect was insufficient a response for spectators who asked for a clarification of my intention with MKMZ. Speaking to the no point of affect and the desired unpredictability in the webs of significance that might emerge from MKMZ did not seem to resonate with spectators or the EKTA co-creators themselves. One of the actors for instance, after the critical response from Audience B, expressed this response: 'If militants come to our show and hear the monologue in which I criticise Pakistan, do you think that they are going to understand that this is a play and I am playing a part? No. They'll shoot me before I have a chance to explain myself'. Creating unpredictable webs of significance and affective responses therefore, especially when invoking the controversial voices of those who are considered 'perpetrators', affect seemed insufficient to frame an outside theatre practitioner's intentionality. Although the spectators' not understanding/approving of its sufficiency does not take away from the legitimacy of affect as a concept, it was at this point in the project that I began to see the necessity for more points on the affect/effect spectrum through which a theatre practitioner might frame the intentionality of the work. This affect/effect spectrum is further elucidated in the Conclusions, as one of the primary outcomes of this research project.

With these various outcomes around affect, process-based spectatorship, and grey zones in mind, this thesis now moves to the final phase of the doctoral project: a consideration of narratives from Indian Armed Forces' troops stationed in Kashmir. While the initial idea had been to design the practice around devised theatre workshops and their resulting performances, Chapter Four discusses the ways in which the strategies had to be reinvented in response to multiple unsuccessful attempts to engage with soldiers in the practice of creating and performing theatre.

CHAPTER FOUR: *WAITING...* & THE ARMED FORCES

Not all silences come from a sense of being silenced. But many do. Regardless of the cause, silences rob the public of ideas, of the chance to create bonds of understanding and mutual trust (Enloe, 2004:70).

This project's attempts to reach out to the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir were framed by various silences; silences that led to strategies having to be reinvented and rearticulated. Although the Colonel's presence as a spectator-participant in *Cages* and the Brigadier's daughter's presence in *Meri Kahani Meri Zabani* (MKMZ) created poignant in-roads with regards to the cross-community component, attempts to work solely with the Indian Armed Forces using devised theatre workshops, as with Ex-militants and Civil Society, resulted in a number of failed attempts. Ultimately therefore, this phase in the research had to rely on the idea of "bricolage" that was presented in Chapter Two (Barrett & Bolt, 2007:127) and involved a combination of strategies. It is important to clarify at the outset however, that this writing does *not* seek to provide a factual overview or historical timelines vis-à-vis the Indian Armed Forces' presence and interventions in Kashmir. Nevertheless, although there were no workshops and performances in this phase of the work as with Civil Society and Militants/Ex-militants in *Cages* and MKMZ respectively, there were many personal encounters between myself and the Armed Forces in Kashmir. Using these personal encounters as auto-ethnographic moments of insight, alongside archival research of publically available material, the bricolage in this chapter has been structured as follows:

- 1) *The Image of the Soldier*: A consideration of the soldier/non-soldier⁵⁰ dynamic in Kashmir which puts forward how the Armed Forces seek to perform their relationship to the local context, in contrast with the dominant narratives that one encounters in the media and everyday interactions on the ground
- 2) *The Silence of the Soldier*: Auto-ethnographic accounts of my attempts to work directly with the Armed Forces in Kashmir and the subsequent outcomes of those attempts

⁵⁰ I use the term 'non-soldier' rather than the term 'civilian' to highlight the presence of Militants/Ex-militants within the realm of Civil Society and thus, to underscore the murkiness of the term.

- 3) *The Making of the Soldier*: Analyses of my research work with military cadets at the National Defence Academy (NDA) in western India, alongside a consideration of the various performances that educate/train the soldier who is (eventually) posted in places like Kashmir

In choosing which elements to showcase in this bricolage, there was one fundamental question that was asked: how will this information be pertinent for a theatrical performance that seeks to involve narratives from the Armed Forces in Kashmir?

The Image of the Soldier

The current dynamics in Kashmir between the Armed Forces and Civil Society might best be described by what Carolyn Nordstrom (2004:166) calls “a time of not-war-not-peace... a political reality [that] we do not have a name for”. Talking about times in which “military actions occur that in and of themselves would be called “war” or “low-intensity warfare,” Nordstrom (2004:166-167) argues that in some situations these actions are not labelled as such “because they are hidden by a peace process no one wants to admit is failing”. In such instances “acts of war are called ‘police actions’, ‘banditry’, ‘accidents’ or they are simply not called anything at all—they are silenced in public discussion”. In Kashmir, ‘encounters’ is the term that is used by all parties to refer to offensives of the Armed Forces against those who are considered as threats, sometimes described as being legitimate and at other times as ‘fake’. In this context of not-war-not peace, the Indian Armed Forces and Kashmiri Civil Society are “old acquaintances” (Fanon, 2004:28) and as such, inhabit a setting in which “the good is simply that which is evil from ‘them’” (Fanon, 2004:39). Calling upon Frantz Fanon’s (2004:89) description of the relationship between the “country people” and the “townsman” in post-colonial contexts, there is a resonance to be found with the relationship dynamics between many⁵¹ Kashmiri civilians and Indian Armed Forces personnel in the valley. In the Kashmiri context, “the country people [civilians] are suspicious of the townsman [soldier]” since the soldier dresses in, and is representative of, an authoritarian power that many Kashmiris oppose (Fanon, 2004:89). Similarly, the soldier is as suspicious of the civilian who embodies an often hostile Other and in this fraught dynamic of settler/native,

⁵¹ I say ‘many Kashmiris’ and not just ‘Kashmiris’ because I cannot say in good faith say that all Kashmiris feel this way. However, in my last few years of working in Kashmir, there are perhaps two people amongst the many that I have met who have expressed any positive sentiments toward the Armed Forces.

outsider/insider, coloniser/colonised, the soldier/non-soldier dynamic is not only about antagonism that is based on political and ideological differences. Rather, the soldier (the settler) is seen as excluding the Kashmiri (the native) from various social and economic advantages that provide the soldier/settler/townsmen with unequalled power and privilege.

Fanon's postulations on the settler/native relationship and its applications to Kashmir also finds resonance with existing scholarship about civil-military relations. In his 1957 book *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel P. Huntington describes the differences between the military and civilian worlds as a contrast between attitudes and values between the two groups, where each world operates with its own rules. The primary question for Huntington is about finding a way for the 'liberal' civilian world to maintain its dominance of the military world that is supposed to be in service of Civil Society. Morris Janowitz (1960) agrees with Huntington about separate military and civilian worlds but differs in his conclusions by offering a "theory of convergence" which argues that rather than one world dominating the other, the worlds of the civilian and the military will eventually converge in a "civilianization of the military or a militarization of society". In Kashmir, it might be said that it is Janowitz's convergence theory that has come to define the civil-military dynamic; in the militarisation of Civil Society that is evident in multiple performative ways: most obviously in the placement of army bunkers and checkpoints along all public spaces; an employment of spatial politics that affects every quotidian experience on the streets of Kashmir. Such a consideration of how Kashmir has become/is militarised is an important element to consider when looking at how soldier/non-soldier binaries is performed.

The gaps between government troops and civilians in the United States (US) have been documented by "a striking cultural gap in interviews with Marines", who upon their return home from training camps, seem to "experience a private loathing for public America" (Rahbek-Clemmensen et al., 2012:671-672). Harbouring judgment toward "the physical unfitness of civilians, by the uncouth behaviour they witnessed, and by what they saw as pervasive selfishness and consumerism", the Marines' distaste of civilian cultures points toward a polarisation between military life, "which exhorts unity, discipline, and sacrifice, and the civilian life of individuality, hedonism, and self-gain" (Rahbek-Clemmensen et al., 2012:671-672). The value judgments that are imposed by government trained Armed Forces on Civil Society are constantly reinforced since "every moment of a recruit's existence in the

Army affirms this absolute difference, through a series of performances”, which “establish life as a soldier as fundamentally different, even opposite to, life as a civilian” (Gill, 2009:144). This dichotomous relationship between Armed Forces personnel and Civil Society is further complicated because of a “heterogeneity of connections to the military in the civilian population” (Krueger & Pedraza, 2012:392). From having no personal acquaintances in the Armed Forces in Kashmir, to having family members who are part of the Armed Forces, to having had experiences with torture/imprisonment, define their experience with Indian troops, these varying relationships makes it apparent that “grouping all civilians together overlooks these differences because it assumes common exposure to the military” (Krueger & Pedraza, 2012:392).

In speaking to these varying relationships, the soldier/non-soldier dynamic in Kashmir is perhaps most in the grey when we look at Kashmiris who are part of the Indian Armed Forces. Fanon (1986:9) speaks to such individuals as being “native-with-settler politics”, by putting forward the idea that “in the French colonial army, and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, the black officers serve first of all as interpreters. They [were] used to convey the master’s orders to their fellows, and they too enjoy a certain position of honor”. Primo Levi (in Thomas, 2010:573) exposes the problematic of Fanon’s “native-with-settler” politics in the context of the Holocaust by putting forward anecdotes of a soccer game between the high-ranking German officers and lower ranking Jewish officers, who might be interpreted as natives-with-settler ideologies. Levi speaks to both sides performing in the game, as if the event were suspended outside of the context of the camp and illustrates the grey zone of ambiguity in which victims and perpetrators often become “bound together by the defiling link of coerced complicity” (Thomas, 2010:565). This coerced complicity between Armed Forces and Civil Society is one that has been given some attention by the “classic counterinsurgency theorists, Frank Kitson and Robert Thompson” who, in “discussing colonial campaigns in Malaya, Oman, Kenya and Northern Ireland, both stress the importance of civil-military cooperation in the battle to win the 'hearts and minds' of the public and isolate insurgents from public support” (Hughes, 2011:66). Speaking to “overt uses of performance” that “include the commissioning of media and cultural projects as part of civil-military cooperation and army propaganda campaigns in Malaya”, many of these

operations engage “theatrical performance [to project] positive images of the regime” (Hughes, 2011:66) toward creating varying degrees of coerced complicity.

Applying the abovementioned notions of coerced complicity and Armed Forces performances to garner public support in the context of Kashmir, it is necessary to consider the *Doctrine on Military Psychological Operations* (in Kak, 2013). A document “that aims to create a ‘conducive environment’ for the armed forces” who are stationed in conflict zones around the Indian nation-state, this doctrine provides guiding principles for “activities related to perception management” (Kak, 2013). The Indian Armed Forces’ efforts to manage perceptions, as a result, invoke a number of strategies that seek to perform a positive relationship between soldier and non-soldier in Kashmir. For example, perception management has meant advertising messages on billboards, as below, that are “put up by the Indian military after every few kilometers” (Kak, 2013):

- For help, please call this number...[Courtesy: XYZ Battalion]
- CRPF⁵²: With you, for you.
- CRPF: Peacekeepers of the nation.
- Your security is our priority. Our only aim is your security.
- We need your cooperation.
- Thank you for your cooperation.
- With compliments, from CRPF

In addition to this simple strategy adopted by the Armed Forces to advertise a positive soldier/non-soldier relationship; a particularly relevant article in India’s acclaimed *Outlook* magazine elucidates the perception management efforts as performed by one particular officer: In December 2010, when Lieutenant General Hasnain “took charge of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps” in the Kashmir Valley, he is said to have declared 2011 to be the “Year of the Kashmiri *Awam* (People) during which the army would devote itself to the welfare of the people and be more humane” (Dogra, 2011). An example of a performative strategy undertaken by Hasnain might be seen in his changing the army slogan from “*Jawan*⁵³ *aur awam, aman hai muqam*”⁵⁴ to one that put ‘awam’ before ‘jawan’ to become ‘*Awam aur*

⁵² CRPF is an acronym for the Central Reserve Police Force.

⁵³ *Jawan* is the term used to refer to a junior soldier who has not risen to the ranks of an Officer in the Indian Armed Forces. It is worth mentioning that *jawans* occupy a lower status in Armed Forces ranks, since attaining this position is seen as requiring less education/intelligence – an observation that emerged in conversations with this researcher’s contacts in Kashmir and in the work with military cadets at NDA.

⁵⁴ Translates to “for the jawan and the people, peace is the goal” (Dogra, 2011).

jawan, aman hai muqam' (Dogra, 2011). In addition to linguistic changes in army slogans, Hasnain is said to have been “meticulous in putting the doctrine into action” by instituting a “*Ji Janaab* (Yes Sir)” approach, “where army units coming into Kashmir are administered basic familiarisation capsules” (Dogra, 2011). In these familiarisation capsules, Hasnain is said to interact with soldiers in incoming units on how they might perform their soldiering in culturally sensible/sensitive ways. For example, his instructions are said to be as follows: that troops “must adopt an ‘aap over tum’ policy” i.e., the formal ‘you’ versus the informal ‘you’ in Hindi/Urdu; that troops “must address Kashmiris with a polite ‘janaab’ or ‘begum’ (Sir or Madam) when ordering people to get down from a vehicle for a security check or searching their houses”; that troops must “avoid racing over puddles to avoid splashing water on pedestrians” (Dogra, 2011) – the images below showcase how these efforts are then re-performed in the media, toward larger target audiences across the Indian sub-continent.



Figure 11: “Game changer: A KPL practice match in Srinagar” (Dogra, 2011)



Figure 12: “*Jadu ki jhappi*⁵⁵: Hugging a local at a sunwai in Badgam district” (Dogra, 2011)

Table 7: Extracts (Dogra, 2011)

“He encourages us to voice our *gila-shikvas*⁵⁶. He listens and acts. Handwara’s people have appreciated that a general like him has come to our level.” Abdur Rashid, Handwara Traders’ Association

“I think the army is finally trying to understand problems. It helps in shaping responses though it alone can’t resolve an issue which is political.” Javed Iqbal, Political commentator

“It was strange to hear an army officer talk of human rights violations. I felt that the army too was introspecting and it was laudable.” Dilafroze Qazi, Peace activist

“He said many things at these meetings that generals don’t talk about. For the first time, the army came out in public domain with a civilian face.” Gul Ahmed, Pol Science prof at Kashmir University

“It’s odd that even though he heads the army in Kashmir, people see him more as a compassionate friend rather than an army officer.” Rabia Baji All India Centre for Rural & Urban Development

“We have no heroes to look up to today. Not Omar Abdullah,⁵⁷ or the separatists. We’d like the army to truly change colours and become our heroes.” Ajaz Ahmed, Lecturer in Srinagar college

⁵⁵ Translates to “The magic of a hug”.

⁵⁶ Translates to “complaints”.

⁵⁷ The Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir at the time.

Chander Suta Dogra (2011) also speaks to a “series of seminars inside the Badami Bagh cantonment where civilians, students, academics and NGOs were invited to speak out”. Describing students who asked Hasnain uncomfortable questions about the Armed Forces’ violations in Kashmir, the Lieutenant General is said to have “had the boys and girls eating out of his hand when he congratulated them on speaking their mind”. Dogra (2011) further suggests that the “very boys who might have been tempted to pelt stones at army men last summer now thronged Hasnain for autographs after the event, posed for pictures with him and asked him for help to get into the army”. Such accounts of the soldier/non-soldier dynamic in Kashmir are clearly incomplete, since they do not address the contradiction between these instances of perception management and other narratives that speak to the hostility of the relationship between soldiers and non-soldiers. These contradictory views might best be encapsulated by taking a verse from the poem contributed to MKMZ by one of our critical spectators from Audience B, that said: *“Jo wardi walay janta ka, ab haath batatay rehte hein; un he logon se har ghar ka, ik haath kata, toh uska kya?”* – “The army men who now extend their hands to Kashmir’s common man, if those same men have also chopped a hand in every Kashmiri household, what of that?”

I’ve tried to stop them, I try to control the situation. I can’t. None of us commanders can—though god knows some don’t try. The troops just take off like this and there’s no stopping them. We can’t discipline them. We can’t prosecute them. We can’t dismiss them—we’d have no army left if we did (Nordstrom, 2004:71-72).

What are the causes of this hostile relationship between the Armed Forces and many individuals/groups in the local context? The dominant narrative surrounding the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir is that of the soldier as a ‘perpetrator’ of human rights violations – acts of violence against women; accusations of torture meted out to civilians; fake encounters and unsubstantiated arrests, among other accusations. In a meeting with a Colonel stationed in Kashmir, the same Colonel who was a spectator-participant to *Cages* and subsequently invited EKTA to perform for troops in Srinagar, it seemed that this particular officer was in agreement with the Sri Lankan army commander quoted by Nordstrom above. The Colonel indicated that the soldiers, who commit acts of rape, torture, and other kinds of violence, form a small number of renegades/soldiers-gone-rogue; who tarnish the image of the Indian Armed Forces as a whole.

In informal conversations with other members of the Armed Forces, it was indicated to me that it is the 'uneducated' soldiers who commit such violations. By 'uneducated', these accounts usually refer to the *jawans*; foot soldiers who are seen as not having to undergo the same rigorous training as their officer counterparts, who graduate from Military Academies. In such a scenario then, soldiers who are 'uneducated' and thus, are implied as being from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are seen as not having the 'gentlemanly' attributes of their more highly educated officers who tend to come from upper echelons of the socio-economic spectrum. These class politics in turn become implicated in how accusations of unjustified/unsubstantiated/illegal acts of soldiering are justified, dismissed, or shrouded in silence by the Indian military establishment. The sheer proliferation of media accounts regarding human rights violations by the Armed Forces in Kashmir resonates with writings about the war in Vietnam -- that when a majority of the civilian population disapproves of the military's actions "no distinction" is made "between the warrior and the war"; anyone who went to Vietnam became "part of the war machine" (Taft-Kaufman, 2000:17). Similarly, it seems to have come to a point in the conflicts of Kashmir, where a distinction is no longer made between the warrior and the war. Any member of the Indian Armed Forces is seen as being part of the war machine and although micro-level exceptions often occur, like the Brigadier's daughter participating in MKMZ and the Colonel's interactions with EKTA, these exceptions are not visible outside private spaces i.e., at a macro-level.

In considering the factors that motivate soldiers to fight in such hostile circumstances, Nordstrom (2004:75) postulates that while "military commanders [generally] act according to national tactical and ideological paradigms, the motivations of ground soldiers are harder to decipher". For these ground soldiers, their participation in the war is a mix of "[p]ersonal ideas of violence, interpersonal loyalties and antipathies, individual gain, and responses (often spontaneous and unreasoned) to immediate threats more than generalized conceptions of political conviction" (Nordstrom 2004:75). For these ground soldiers in Kashmir then, for the *jawans*, it might be said that their acts of soldiering and/or unjustified acts of 'perpetration' "become infused with the particular life histories and personalities of the soldiers themselves and the local sociocultural traditions in which they operate" (Nordstrom, 2004:75). In the face of this explosive mix of the personal and the national, it is

perhaps no surprise that there are many emerging narratives that highlight soldiers' (lack of) psychological well-being in the Indian Armed Forces. For example, in a 2010 report (in Rashid, 2014), a parliamentary committee maintained that there were six hundred and thirty five cases reported of suicide or attempted suicide in the Indian Armed Forces from 2003 to 2007. It was further stated that all these suicides might be "attributable to increased stress environment leading to psychological imbalance in the soldiers" (Rashid, 2014). Furthermore, there have also been multiple instances of what are called 'fratricides', where a soldier kills others around him (usually other soldiers) before taking his own life – the image below sets out a timeline of suicides and fratricides among the Armed Forces in Kashmir:



Figure 13: A timeline of fratricide in Kashmir (Rashid, 2014)

Dr Khurshid-ul-Islam, a behavioural scientist at the Institute of Management and Public Administration in Srinagar, says, “that fatigue may be one crucial reason for the recent rise in suicides and fraternal killings” (Hamid, 2006). In addition, Dr Khurshid believes that the proliferation of media information about the outside world might lead to soldiers feeling a strong sense of disconnection between themselves and those they are supposed to be serving. Some officials are said to have conceded that, “the ongoing war in Kashmir is taking its toll on troops, who are reportedly increasingly questioning their role in the conflict” (Hamid, 2006). A health worker working on psychiatric issues in J&K “attributes the recent

increase in stress levels not just to the environment of chronic conflict, but also to the cold weather, long working hours and frustrating bureaucracy” (Hamid, 2006). Now that the step has been taken by the Armed Forces to admit the role that stress plays in the experience of their soldiers in the hostile Kashmiri context, the health worker suggests “a restructuring of duty hours and vacations, incorporating counselling as a part of mandatory training, educating soldiers on what stress signals to watch for in peers, and administering personality tests before placement in high-risk stations” (Hamid, 2006). Furthermore, the Armed Forces in recent years are said to have set up helplines and yoga classes to help soldiers deal with stress and Public Relations officers say that, “Yoga has worked wonders for troops” (Hamid, 2006). Further, the Armed Forces are “also placing emphasis on strengthening officer-soldier relationships”, have employed “entertainment techniques”, and in some cases, “when we feel that a soldier is not showing signs of improvement, we seek the help of psychiatrists” (Hamid, 2006). One particular example of an attempt to employ “entertainment techniques” with troops, while also providing some perspective on the soldier/non-soldier dynamic, might be found in EKTA’s 2013 performance at the Badamibagh Cantonment (BB’Cant) in Srinagar. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Colonel – as a result of his immersion as a participant-spectator in *Cages* -- formed an independent relationship with EKTA and invited them to perform at BB’Cant. In addition to this collaboration becoming an unexpected, affective “web of significance” (Thompson, 2003:70) that emerged as a result of this doctoral project), a poignant point of consideration is the performance that EKTA chose for this event.

Trunouve (Yasir & Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi, 2013) is an EKTA production that is created in the Kashmiri folk tradition of Bhand Pather. While a brief overview of Bhand Pather can be found in the introductory chapter, it is worth exploring this form further so as to understand the relevance behind EKTA’s choice to perform *Trunouve* at BB’Cant. Bhand Pather is a Kashmiri folk form in which performers travel from place to place and incorporate dance, Sufi music, and puppetry in addition to dramatic dialogues. “The Bhands perform in a variety of spaces, which include terraced maize fields, shrine courtyards, and on the streets. Humor is vital to Bhand Pather; in fact, the word ‘Bhand’ itself derives from the Sanskrit band, meaning ‘joke’, and the spirit of comedy infuses this folk theatre” (Menon, 2013:158-159). The crux of performances that use the Bhand Pather form, like *Trunouve*, lies in the

dramatisation of conflicts between those who are caught in asymmetrical power relationships. Although props and design elements in Bhand Pather are sparse, “the most commonly used prop is the koddar, a whip that makes a nasty lashing sound” -- a choice that “is not incidental” since the whip comes to represent “the physical lashing and humiliation that oppressed Kashmiri subjects experience under the heavy-handed rule of their foreign oppressors” (Menon, 2013:159). By employing satire and a subversive approach to comedy therefore, pieces like *Trunouve* employ laughter as a strategy to mock “the royal oppressor” and to poke “holes into his imperturbable kingly facade, and destabilizes and makes visible the cracks in his claim to authority” (Menon, 2013:162). These elements of subversion are only further nuanced by the use of the “phir kath, literally twisted talk, style of dialogue; a rhetorical device that utilizes coded and cryptic idioms” and which enables “the folk performers to use ostensibly innocuous comedy to deliver pointed indictments of contemporary society” (Menon, 2013:163).

The abovementioned characteristics and codes of Bhand Pather suggest that EKTA chose to perform *Trunouve* at BB'Cant, rather than their more overtly political performances that criticise the Armed Forces, so as to “use local metaphors” (Menon, 2013:163) that would make it extremely difficult for their predominantly non-Kashmiri audience to follow. This use of rhetorical and coded language therefore, “enables the Bhand Pather to critique their oppressive rulers, while at the same time disavowing any obvious, immediate reference to political events” (Menon, 2013:163). In so doing, pieces like *Trunouve* foster “an intimate bond and sense of community among those who ‘get’ the joke” (Menon, 2013:164), which in this case would be the EKTA performers and Kashmiris in the audience. Since strategies employed by Bhand Pather create “a line between the insiders and the outsiders and fosters an active sense of belonging within the audience” (Menon, 2013:164), EKTA’s choice to perform *Trunouve* at BB'Cant reveals subversion alongside a willingness to cross community boundaries. The coded quality to *Trunouve* might also be seen as a way in which EKTA could stave off possible negative repercussions and critiques from those who might see a performance for the Indian Armed Forces as being ‘pro-India’.

Extrapolating from the abovementioned ideas, it might be said that a theatrical performance that seeks to involve the Indian Armed Forces in Kashmir needs to be cognisant of multiple dimensions that mould the presence of soldiers in the Valley: the problematic settler/native

or coloniser/colonised dynamic; the ways in which the Armed Forces perform their attempts at perception management; the counter narratives that are found in acts that soldiers perpetrate; the murky zone of fratricides, and finally, the strategies of subversion that enable Civil Society and Armed Forces members to come together in infinitesimal instances of a shared event. Building on these ideas, there are two dramatic representations that I would like to highlight here, precisely for their attempts to address some grey zones in the experience of the Armed Forces in Kashmir: Abhishek Majumdar's (2014) play *The Djinnns of Eidgah* and EKTA's (Yasir & Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi, 2014) production of *Country without a Post Office* (CWOPO). In the former, Majumdar writes about two Indian soldiers who, while guarding a deserted cemetery in Kashmir, attempt to reconcile with their contentious presence in the Valley – a complex negotiation that culminates in the soldiers taking up arms against each other amidst an encroaching, hostile mob. While Majumdar's play embodies some of the grey zones seen in an individual soldier's struggles in Kashmir, CWOPO presents grey zones vis-à-vis the soldier/non-soldier relationship. Although CWOPO places an emphasis on various kinds of violations that are committed by the Indian Armed Forces, towards the end of the piece, we witness a young Kashmiri man hesitantly approach an army bunker. Approaching the bunker with trepidation, the young man tells the soldier that he has been called for an audition at a drama school in mainland India and that the monologues he has to learn for this audition are written in Hindi – a script that he cannot read. Could the soldier read the monologue to him, the young man asks, so that he might transcribe the words in Urdu? This scene in CWOPO ends with the soldier and the young man seated side-by-side, working on the monologue. Built on the personal experience of an EKTA actor, this particular instance in CWOPO alludes to one microcosmic grey zone in the soldier/non-soldier relationship in Kashmir, where the 'perpetrator' is seen as/behaves as something Other. And yet, it must be added here EKTA has yet to perform CWOPO in Kashmir and has only toured the performance outside the Valley; the implication of humanising the Indian soldier in the context of Kashmir is one of which EKTA is extremely conscious and wary. Nevertheless, informed by works like *The Djinnns of Eidgah* and CWOPO, which seek to nuance the Armed Forces' perspective; alongside my personal observations of/archival research into the soldier/non-soldier dynamic in Kashmir, there were multiple attempts made as part of this project to engage more directly with the Armed Forces. It is to these attempts that this discussion will now turn.

The Silence of the Soldier

During the process of *Cages*, I was introduced to a Colonel stationed in Kashmir who ran/runs the Intelligence Warfare efforts of the Indian Armed Forces that, among other things, works with the notion of soft power. As Soumyanetra Munshi (2013:264) says, the goal of this division of the Armed Forces in Kashmir might be understood as having goals to increase Kashmiris' "allegiance for India" by concentrating on "bettering the other components that contribute towards a positive preference for India, that is all the things that make a good life (like viable economic opportunities, political openness, etc.)". As part of this larger goal, the Colonel saw theatre as being able to carve a space within the Armed Forces to foster, what he termed, "cultural education". Given that many of the soldiers who are stationed in Kashmir come from outside the region in question, the Colonel seemed to think that it was through processes of art and theatre that these soldiers might be sensitised as to their performances of their cultural (in)sensibilities in Kashmir. The Colonel could be seen as drawing from what the United States calls Operations Other Than War that force "soldiers to do much more than fight" (Gill, 2009:146). There is now, internationally, a call for soldiers who not only are trained to fight, but who also "speak the language, move easily within the society, and are more likely to understand the population's interests" (Gill, 2009:146-147). Therefore, cultural education and cultural literacy have become added requirements in the contemporary warfare setting, "to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government" via "establishing security for the civilian populace" by winning "the battle [for] people's minds" (Gill, 2009:146-147). In order to effectively carry out these objectives, there has been a focus by various nations to equip their troops "with the necessary tools to interact, communicate, understand, and control" (Gill, 2009:147) local populations.

In light of these ethically complex objectives, and in order to establish some understanding of what the Colonel meant by 'cultural education' in the Kashmiri context, a first attempt was articulated. While the Colonel initially agreed to this proposal for an artist-in-residence programme, my attempt was later met with months of silence and ultimately, did not occur. This initial attempt was then followed by a second proposal that was created at the Colonel's behest. In this request, I was asked to design a project as part of the annual Integration Tours that are funded and conducted by the Indian Armed Forces for Kashmiri civilians in

liaison with organizations in mainland India. For example, Kashmiri farmers are sponsored to visit farmers in Punjab (a state in northern India), where the Punjabi farmers share successful farming techniques with their Kashmiri counterparts. In this vein, the Colonel wanted young people in Kashmir to pursue artistic disciplines on one of these Integration Tours, claiming that this would be a positive way “to channel” young people’s energy. In his belief that that young Kashmiris needed to have more creative tools with which to express their views, the Colonel expressed his opinion that it was only by benefiting from the economic/development opportunities of mainland India that the hostility in Kashmir might decline. Therefore, the Colonel asked me to design a project in collaboration with a school in western India -- where I was Head of Arts at the time -- which would function as an arts-based programme. In this programme, the Colonel requested that Integration Tour participants be provided with skill-building workshops in the arts; to develop skills that they might then further develop upon their return to Kashmir. Aware of, and sensitive to, the many ethical implications of the Colonel’s request – of my subsequent positioning in Kashmir as the host of an Integration Tour, the possible surveillance/control the Armed Forces might have on the programme, the possible repercussions for the Kashmiri participants upon their return to the Valley, among others – the second attempt was designed with the knowledge that the ethics involved might necessitate my withdrawal from the project at a later stage.

When the second attempt also did not lead to any tangible outcomes, an entirely different strategy was adopted for the third attempt. Considering what did *not* work with Attempts 1 and 2, it emerged that a possible reason for the failure of these attempts might have been the tenuous nature of the political climate in Kashmir. Since the intensity of the conflicts is unpredictable, perhaps it was (and remains) untenable for the Armed Forces to commit to projects that require a real-time commitment over days/weeks. Therefore, a third attempt was designed to take logistical challenges into account and create a project *without* the requirement of real-time commitment. In this attempt, I planned to send a list of open-ended questions to selected soldiers, who would then write their responses to me via letters and/or emails. The questions I hoped to ask were as follows:

-- What is your main goal as a soldier posted in Kashmir?

-- If there were a documentary film to be made about your time in Kashmir, what is one incident / experience of yours that must absolutely be included in this documentary?

-- What is the toughest part of what you do?

-- What is the most positive aspect of what you do?

-- How do you think your family deals with what you do?

-- What is one idea that you had about Kashmir that has changed since you've been posted there?

-- What is one thing you do not understand about Kashmir?

-- If there were something you could say to a stone-pelter, what would it be?

-- If there were something you could say to a militant, what would it be?

-- If there was something that you could tell the government about how they are dealing with issues in Kashmir, what would you tell them?

Upon receiving soldiers' responses to these questions, I planned to collaboratively create a play with EKTA by using the material from the emails and letters as our source material. Similarly to first two attempts however, this project proposal has still not been officially approved/disapproved; the silence continues.⁵⁸

Given the silence that shrouds the active soldier experience in Kashmir then, what kind of military space/context might be more accessible/less silent? As in the case of the Ex-militants, there emerged in 2014 (during MKMZ) the possibility of working with Kashmiri Armed Forces Ex-servicemen. However, a new challenge emerged with this population; a problem that made this route onerous to follow. As Auto-ethnographic Excerpt 1 below suggests, a particularly antagonistic interaction between myself and the officer in charge of ex-servicemen related activities in Kashmir kept this population out of bounds for the doctoral project. While strategies are still being forged to work around this hurdle and engage Kashmiri Armed Forces Ex-servicemen in theatre practice, this possibility might only

⁵⁸ One response from the Colonel indicated that the floods in Kashmir (in September 2014 and March/April 2015) and the subsequent relief/rehabilitation efforts had restricted the approval process.

manifest once sufficient time has passed for the tense situation, described below, to have dissipated.

“You should talk to ex-servicemen in Kashmir”, the (other) Colonel who used to accompany the Brigadier’s daughter to MKMZ’s rehearsals and performances said. “They are facing so many problems. You should do one of your theatre workshops with them”.

Taking this as an opportunity to conduct a devised theatre workshop with Kashmiri Ex-servicemen whose voices might resonate/fracture interestingly with Ex-militant narratives, this (other) Colonel and I had a meeting one evening. He, unlike the first who came to *Cages*, did not know what theatre was. But he had been part of a Bollywood crew that had recently been in Kashmir and used Armed Forces’ actors in the movie’s cast. So he knew all about “those artistic people”, he said. You know, the ones “who like to enjoy”. An understanding that I wish he had shared with me before I found myself alone in his company, in an isolated building (which had been made to sound, while we were making plans for the meeting, to be a teeming workplace), with a loaded gun in his desk – a gun that the (other) Colonel proudly showed to me.

My attempts to talk about working with Ex-servicemen in the Valley went to naught. Because, you see, this Colonel thought that all artistic people only “like to enjoy” themselves: the sub-text of this statement being that this (other) Colonel thought that my proposal to create theatre with Ex-servicemen was an opportunity to foist unwanted attention on a female artist (*read: one who does not have a ‘moral’ code*).

This meeting went to naught. When the coordinator of all Ex-servicemen related activities in Kashmir behaves inappropriately, what can a researcher do?

This meeting went to naught in that I didn’t get to make theatre with Kashmiri Ex-servicemen. But it revealed other things: what does a non-soldier do when a soldier is aggressive? What does that non-soldier do in the presence of a loaded weapon that the soldier could use against them? What does that non-soldier do in the face of that kind of fear, not only for themselves but for those who are near and dear to them – how could I complain about this non-gentleman-officer’s behaviour to the Brigadier, without putting EKTA in his crosshairs?

This meeting in no way accomplished what I had hoped.

Auto-ethnographic Excerpt 4: On a meeting that occurred in 2014

In 2013, I had the opportunity to work with military cadets at the National Defence Academy (NDA) in western India -- this experience was seen, at the time, as not being integral to the doctoral project but significant only to the researcher’s learning about the military establishment. However, on the heels of the three failed attempts to engage with the Armed Forces and the improbable nature of working with Ex-servicemen in Kashmir, the practice at NDA emerged as central to this dissertation.

The Making of the Soldier⁵⁹

One of the primary relationships between civilians and military personnel arises in the “civilian involvement in professional military education as putting non-military instructors and students in the same classroom with officers” (Bruneau & Tollefson, 2006:255-256) and

⁵⁹ Parts of this section on *Waiting... are taken from Solidarity and Soldier(ity): Using Theatre in Military Contexts* (Dinesh, 2014c). However, extensive changes have been made to the published writing.

it is to this idea of military education that this analysis now turns. This section begins with a consideration of the workshops/performance I conducted with the Armed Forces cadets in the NDA outside the city of Pune in Western India between August and October 2013. By describing the twice-a-week theatre workshops that led to a performance entitled *Waiting...* the work that developed from this project might be used as a springboard to consider intersections between a military education and the broad realm of theatre/performance.

This endeavour was an attempt to explore what it might mean to use theatre as a pedagogical and aesthetic tool with future government combatants.⁶⁰ Returning to Christopher Browning's quote (in Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005:55) that highlights a distinction between excusing/explaining and understanding/forgiving, this project with NDA cadets used Browning's statement as a point of departure. However, while the intention behind the work drew from Browning in its rejection of clichés around Armed Forces narratives, the project did not seek to understand or explain the cadets either. Rather, framed within what I had discovered about soldier/non-soldier relationships in Kashmir, this project at the NDA sought to function as a gesture toward those who fall outside conventional boundaries of aesthetic events. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (in Thompson, 2009:132-133) describes this affective approach of making a gesture without specific expectations, as a pause; a pause that we take "before we begin to make sense". Thompson (2009:133) further elaborates on this pause as being part of an "ethics of the position of the inquiry" and considers the potential that comes from "research that coexists alongside experiences, processes or objects of interest". By ensuring "that we are only ever collaborators, co-inquirers, experiencing the work in an entirely valid but never superior way" my approach in this project with cadets was about exploring – Thompson (2009:134) now quotes from Rancière (2010) -- "an examination of 'systems of possibilities' rather than assertions of certainties".

The intentionality of this project with NDA cadets who when later posted to conflict zones like Kashmir will most likely be considered 'perpetrators', was therefore not intended to express a unity/agreement with the government's Armed Forces. Rather, this work sought to examine the 'the performativity of these young cadets' military identities – their soldier(ity),

⁶⁰ As in the previous chapter, I use the term 'perpetrator' as little as possible. When used, the term has been utilised in material that is being referenced. Where used by the researcher, 'perpetrator' is put in quotation marks so as to indicate that perpetration is a complex concept and that in its usage this researcher is not looking to assign blame but rather, indicate a use of violence.

if I might call it that – regardless of my acceptance of/agreement with what they expressed. What was at stake in this work was not an explanation of why or how the cadets approached their roles as future ‘perpetrators’ of violence; instead, the project was designed as an attempt to create a space in which theatre would engage those who condone the use of violence and are thus seen (generally) as being outside the purview of aesthetic endeavours. I hoped, through this effort, to gain some insight into the grey zones of the soldiers’ experience in Kashmir.

Table 12: Workshop process at NDA

<p>Waiting...: The Pedagogy</p> <p>Step 1: The cadets were asked to create and perform short plays about any facet of their lives at NDA, as a way to educate their new <i>Dramatics Club</i> facilitator (myself).</p> <p>Step 2: The cadets were asked to write down why they joined the <i>Dramatics Club</i> and what skills they would like to develop.</p> <p>Step 3: The cadets were introduced to the idea of <i>monologues</i> and the theme of <i>Waiting...</i> i.e. something/someone that they were waiting for. They were then asked to draft individual monologues around this theme.</p> <p>Step 4: The cadets were presented with three performance strategies: using linear/fragmented narratives, playing with silences and pauses, and clarifying the target audience for their monologue. With these elements in mind, the cadets were asked to refine the first drafts of their monologues.</p> <p>Step 5: The monologues were then grouped together according to the four main themes that emerged through the cadets’ first drafts: <i>NDA Related Waiting</i>; <i>Friends & Family Related Waiting</i>; <i>Idealistic Waiting</i>; <i>Miscellaneous Waiting</i>.</p> <p>Step 6: The cadets were shown a video of the <i>Lonely Soldier Monologues</i> (Benedict, 2009), a performance that is based on testimonies from US female soldiers who were deployed in Iraq. The screening was followed by a facilitated discussion about strategies that were used in the piece.</p> <p>Step 7: The cadets were divided into four groups based on their interest in one of the four larger monologue themes, and were asked to combine the various monologues under that particular theme into one monologue, taking some creative license as inspired by the <i>Lonely Soldier Monologues</i>.</p> <p>Step 8: The cadets were informed about various production roles and were asked to choose the one that interested them the most. Appropriate reading and facilitated tasks were given to each group to prepare them for their particular role in <i>Waiting...</i> The production roles included direction, stage management, design, acting, and playwriting.</p> <p>Step 9: Taking into account the ideas from all the production teams, a draft for the final script was created; a draft that was later edited, rehearsed, and performed by the cadets.</p> <p>Step 10: <i>Waiting...</i> was performed for an audience of the cadets’ peers at an international school close to the NDA; the students in the audience, in turn, performed a piece for the cadets. The performances were followed by a talkback between the two groups of young people, with them responding to each other’s performances.</p>
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Pedagogy at the NDA follows hierarchies, discipline, and punishment. It was noteworthy therefore, that each of the plays created by the cadets in Step 1 – where they were asked to create and perform short plays about any aspect of their lives at NDA – invariably described

a form of punishment that was part of the cadets’ training. I was later informed by colleagues at NDA that these short plays might be seen as evidence of an unspoken understanding at the institution, that being harshly punished by instructors and senior students is integral to younger cadets’ becoming disciplined officers and gentlemen. Given this context, a process-based approach such as the one I implemented faced a number of roadblocks. The cadets were used to disciplinarian pedagogies, and the idea of being asked what they would like to talk about, what they would like to learn, led to an initial phase of chaos – for instance, cadets fell asleep when at the beginning of each session, I asked them to just close their eyes and listen to a piece of music!⁶¹ In responses to these circumstances therefore, my pedagogy evolved from being one that aimed to work with the Dramatic Club’s thirty-five cadets collectively, to one that placed an emphasis on choice – cadets were given four or five possible options of tasks they could undertake during each of my sessions. These tasks included relatively ‘easy’ ones like reading excerpts from plays and production role handbooks, to the more challenging tasks of being playwrights and creating original texts. Cadets could engage however they chose to and for those who did not want to engage at all, – in consultation with the civilian officers who had to monitor my sessions – I put in place a five-minute rule. If anyone was more than five minutes late, he would not be allowed to join the class; however, he would still get his attendance sheet signed. So, the cadet who really did not want to make theatre had the option of showing up late and yet, not facing any disciplinary consequences for that choice. This approach transformed the space from being chaotic, to being creative.

Table 13: Script of *Waiting...*

<p><i>Waiting...</i>: The Script</p> <p>Each of the segments from <i>Waiting for Godot</i> is the same excerpt, to establish the repetitive nature of waiting. Every time the segment is repeated, although, the primary emotion with which the scene is played is different. The primary emotion is indicated at the beginning of every scene and may be adapted as the director sees fit. Will this emotion be shown in the staging? The body language? The voice? The lighting? The same two actors always perform these segments.</p> <p>Each scene has two parts: Part 1 (which is the excerpt from <i>Waiting for Godot</i>) and Part 2 (which includes the cadets’ monologues). At a minimum, the piece requires 6 actors. However, this is subject to the director’s concept.</p> <p>Scene 1: Part 1 <u>Primary Emotion: Sorrow</u></p>
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⁶¹ This idea was inspired by Marilyn Nelson’s (2001) meditation time at the beginning of her poetry sessions at the West Point Military Academy in the United States.

Estragon: Let's go.
Vladimir: We can't.
Estragon: Why not?
Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.
Estragon: (*despairingly*). Ah! (*Pause.*) You're sure it was here?
Vladimir: What?
Estragon: That we were to wait.
Vladimir: He said by the tree. (*They look at the tree.*) Do you see any others?
Estragon: What is it?
Vladimir: I don't know. A willow.
Estragon: Where are the leaves?
Vladimir: It must be dead.
Estragon: No more weeping.
Vladimir: Or perhaps it's not the season.
Estragon: Looks to me more like a bush.
Vladimir: A shrub.
Estragon: A bush.
Vladimir: A—. What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place
Estragon: He should be here.
Vladimir: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
Estragon: And if he doesn't come?
Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.
Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.
Vladimir: Possibly.
Estragon: And so on.
Vladimir: The point is— *Estragon*: Until he comes.

Scene 1: Part 2

What am I waiting for? Hmm...you know, two years ago I was living in Jammu. It was raining heavily and I was thinking of the assignment I had to complete and submit the next day. Amidst all this, I heard the melodious sound of a flute coming from somewhere. I turned my head around to find an old man sitting on the doorstep of an old age home, playing the flute in the most incredible way I had ever heard. Tears were rolling down his cheeks....This man sat on the doorstep every day, playing his flute, waiting, hoping that his son – his son who had just left him there – would realise his mistake and come back for him. It's just...fathers and sons just have this bond, you know? ...

My father was an army man and when I got into the Academy, he was happier than I was! Seeing his joy, his pride, seeing that I might be able to do for him what the flute-playing man's son does not....I am waiting for the day my father will see me in this uniform, with stars shining in his eyes, flagging off the aircraft which is being flown by his son.

Scene 2: Part 1

Primary Emotion: Happiness. *Repeat same scene as Scene 1: Part 1.*

Scene 2: Part 2

What am I waiting for? When I was a kid, I was told I was worthless, that since I was not good in academics, I was good for nothing. No one ever asked me what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go...And then, in the eighth grade I watched the Bollywood movie *Border*. For the first time in my life, I was fascinated by the armed forces and that night when I went to bed, I had a dream. An incredible dream.

An army of 300 brave Spartans charging over the enemy territory. The anger and blood in their eyes, the feeling of patriotism for their land. One among them – a young soldier—charging; making his way out to shed the blood of his enemy. Trrr...trrr....trr...trrrrrrrrrrr.. To fly, to wear the uniform, to do something for my land...

So, when you ask me what I'm waiting for, well, I wait for the day a war breaks out and I get called to march ahead...I wait for the day I can shed every drop of my blood in serving my motherland and her boundaries, and

when I come back from war, to continue my work to make this country a better place. It's this wait that keeps me alive.

And all those people who told me I'm worthless, I'm waiting for the chance to prove them wrong.

Scene 3: Part 1

Primary Emotion: Anger. Repeat same scene as Scenes 1, 2: Part 1.

Scene 3: Part 2

What am I waiting for? I'm waiting for her. For her to come back to me and say to me that yes, she was wrong in her choice. I want her to feel that I was the best guy she could have ever met, and she made the biggest mistake of her life by choosing him. I am just waiting for the day that I will finish the Academy, become an officer, and go to her wearing that shining olive green uniform ...Is that why she left me? Because I am an army man and she would have to be both the father and mother to our children? ...I don't know. All I know is that I want her to regret choosing him. And he, he will realise that he too made the biggest mistake of his life by betraying such a good friend like me...

What am I waiting for? I'm waiting for a true friend, true love. But what does this 'truth' look like? How does it behave? Do I ask for too much from the people in my life? I don't know... Maybe I'm asking for too much...(Pause)

An army man getting desperate about a girl... You know, I think it's because I have too much time on my hands now. These peace postings, they give you too much time to think. Next week though, next week I'm being posted to Kashmir and then, I'm sure I'll forget all about the past.

And I will find someone new. Someone better. I guess that's something worth waiting for!

Scene 4: Part 1

Primary Emotion: Desperation. Repeat same scene as Scenes 1, 2, 3: Part 1.

Scene 4: Part 2

What am I waiting for? You know, I wanted to become a doctor...or to just focus on buying a new car...or to start a chain of restaurants... but then, I got selected into the National Defence Academy... And now, now my life is so...screwed up. Running ...7 km, 10 km, 12 km, 20 km, punishments for minor mistakes, physical strength but intellectual degradation....I am eagerly waiting for the day when I'll finish the Academy. I feel suffocated; like I'm caged in some kind of prison.

But until that happens, I wait for the term break, count the Days Left to Go Home, clear my Physical Training tests, finish cross country runs, try to clear my exams. Most of all, I wait to go home. For that day when I can wake up, pack my bags, check my tickets, get ready in jeans and a t-shirt, board the train, and leave the Academy. I close my eyes on the train and see people all around me, cheering, clapping. I'm playing on my guitar, performing to the words of my own life. Or, or, I'm sitting on a veranda with a good book, a hot cup of chai... (Long pause)

You know what I'm waiting for? I'm waiting for the day that I have a child and then he or she gets to live her life her way. I'm waiting for her to have the freedom and the independence that I... (Pause)

Every day that passes by makes me think that I am a day closer to what I am waiting for. For the wait to be over.

Scene 5: Part 1

Primary Emotion: Hope. Repeat same scene as Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4: Part 1.

The civilian officers who were my liaisons with the cadets, and whose presence was mandatory when an 'outsider' like myself was working on NDA's premises, mentioned to me at our first meeting that theatre – to the cadets and to NDA in general – implied a form of entertainment that was influenced by the genre of Bollywood. According to this logic, I was

told, plays at NDA must not make audiences think – since the cadets had rigorous training schedules that were physically and mentally demanding – but must only be an entertaining break from the required discipline of their everyday schedules. While the civilian instructors’ view of Bollywood being entirely devoid of commentary and critique is itself debatable, given my own preferences for an aesthetics of uncertainty and discomfort, I decided to use Samuel Beckett’s (2011) *Waiting for Godot* as my primarily stimulus in this project. I made this choice because of the affect that Beckett accomplishes through the characters of Estragon and Vladimir; asking his audiences, by extension, to consider the existential question of what each of us might be waiting for in our lives. Using the notion of ‘waiting’ as my point of departure then, was a choice I made so as to get to know the cadets better; to understand what they were waiting for in their lives, and in so doing, to get a glimpse into why these young men might have decided to join the Armed Forces establishment.

Deciding to frame the script around *Waiting for Godot*, using the cadet’s own monologues, and staging the performance in the round then, were conscious choices on my part – aesthetically, ethically, and pedagogically – choices that I had to consistently defend for the cadets I was working with. Talking about the Theatre of the Absurd as a movement sparked many vibrant discussions with the cadets around what makes a performance ‘successful’ and what it means to create work that audiences ‘like’. Similarly, discussing staging a piece in the round instead of the proscenium which was accepted among the cadets as the only way to stage a performance, sparked discussions that kept going back to one question for them: if audiences did not ‘like’ a performance, could that theatrical production be considered successful? As for the monologues, they asked me: “But why will people want to listen to what we have to say?” Nevertheless, while *Waiting...* might not have managed to get the cadets to change their minds entirely about other values of theatre apart from its potential to entertain, there was some critical questioning that was generated. Ultimately though, they only accepted my aesthetic choices because their final performance was not to be at NDA for their peers/commanding officers, but was instead to be performed for a group of international students at a nearby College where I worked at the time. Assuaged by the fact that they would be performing for an audience that they believed would ‘get’ the piece in a way that their peers/commanding officers would not, this choice of our target audience became the only way in which the cadets were willing to experiment with form and content.

The monologues, as mentioned in the pedagogical overview above, were four theme-based collations of the thirty-five initial monologues that were written by the cadets. The monologues were as stimulating as they were banal; as clear as they were obscure; as honest as they were not. There were many noteworthy insights that emerged during the process of creating the monologues. For instance, many of the monologues described the cadets' waiting to graduate from the NDA. Talking about the intellectual degradation that came from the Academy's primary focus on physical training, cadets mentioned the stress and fatigue of disciplinary mechanisms, and the acute homesickness that led to a countdown of DLTGH (Days Left To Go Home). There seemed to be an acute dissatisfaction with the current phase of their educational lives, and most of those who discussed their frustrations with the Academy expressed their confusion at the kind of education they were receiving – waiting for the day that they could leave the place. While many who expressed this angst did not articulate why then they continued to stay at NDA and seek this military education, some mentioned reasons that ranged from fulfilling parents' dreams, to getting a free education, to embodying the romantic image of a military hero as performed in Bollywood films. There were the few of course, who spoke of their nationalistic/patriotic fervour to fight for their nation. My "congenital pacifism", to borrow again from Marilyn Nelson (2001:553), was constantly challenged by these particular instances. Given that patriotism and nationalism are ideals that are highly critiqued, questioned – and even mocked – in other contexts in which I work, the sincerity with which the cadets spoke of "spilling blood" and "conquering enemies" was a quality that was provocative and stimulating; a sincerity that has layered my thinking about these young men whose participation as soldiers in India's conflict zones will, in the future, become actions with which I will struggle.

The dubious position that the arts occupy at the NDA was revealed at many instances during the process. Theatre sessions were cancelled a number of times for reasons ranging from football matches to examinations or dinners, and requests for the Dramatics Club to throw together performances at a week's notice – "It's only a play after all, how long can it take to put one together?" Apart from dealing with the pedagogical challenges of working within a military context then, the complexities of my work were augmented by the very 'low' position that the arts seemed to occupy there. While the Commandant of the Academy told me in a meeting that he always wanted to be a performer and that he thought the cadets

would have a lot to learn from theatrical processes, his belief certainly did not filter down into lower ranks at the Academy. My focus on affect, on emphasizing the potential of the “no point” or the “bewilderment” that James Thompson (2003; 2009) describes, seemed to be at odds with an education that was grounded firmly in an evaluation of effect. How to work within effect-based systems while not losing sight of the rich possibility of affect then, was a constant renegotiation between my civilian officer monitors, the cadets, the NDA, and myself.

A performativity of identities had to be juggled in this renegotiation – that of being a theatre maker in a context that does not seem to value art; that of being a woman in an institution that does not allow female students; that of being a civilian in a civil-military binary that remains an unaddressed area of study and reflection in India. These negotiations and renegotiations continued throughout the process and found their way into the final performance of *Waiting...* for an audience of young people from different parts of the world. The performance was mired in complexities: battling NDA’s rules that cadets must not come into contact with foreign nationals; negotiating with officers in command, on the day of the show, who wanted to cancel the performance for a football game; facilitating discussions between young people: one group from an educational institution that espouses non-violent ideologies and the other group from an institution that trains ‘warriors’. In the talk back after the performances, the two groups of young people reflected on each other’s work, resulting in the cadets making one particularly poignant statement: “We never thought someone would find our words interesting”.

Ultimately, many of the revelations that arose from the process and performance of *Waiting...* began to link back to larger ideas surrounding militaristic education and training that craft the performances of a soldier in a context like Kashmir. In these performances, conventional soldierly acts such as “weapon handling, field craft, and the driving of military vehicles both on and off roads” becomes relevant alongside less obvious performances of soldier(ity) -- “lighting a cigarette or a cooking fire in high winds and heavy rain, keeping one’s kit dry in the field, cooking military rations with a palatable result, and holding one’s liquor on a night out” (Kummel, Caforio & Dandekar, 2009: 22). Through these many performances, soldiers are implicitly and explicitly trained for periods of isolation and loneliness under hard physical duress since “it is possible that a soldier could be on a

mission” for extended phases “without leaving the camp at all, without having tasted meals typical for the country, without having seen the local currency or having listened to the language of the host country” (Kummel, Caforio & Dandekar, 2009:43). Ultimately therefore, while parts of the soldier experience are governed by “potentially existing dangers”, the life of the soldier is also framed “by routine, boredom, sometimes a too small workload and the feeling of ‘being locked up’ inside the camp” (Kummel, Caforio & Dandekar, 2009:43). In addition to the identity crises that these times of isolation and claustrophobia could lead to – resulting many times in suicides and fratricides -- military anthropologist Donna Winslow (1997:55–56) has also highlighted the particular role that uniforms and badges play for troops finding their identity. While it is possible “to take off the uniform and to bask in the sun” in the less visible “relaxation zones”, these informal spaces are also ones in which soldiers’ behaviour is monitored by superiors [referring back to the relationship between *jawans* and officers in the Indian Armed Forces] (Winslow, 1997:55–56). These hierarchical relationships also problematically manifest in “jokes and pranks [that] form an important factor in creating camaraderie, motivation and identity” (Kummel, Caforio & Dandekar, 2009:52); a culture of joking and pranking that contributes to acts of hazing/bullying that was alluded to by some of the NDA cadets. Given this larger framework of military education/training in sculpting a soldier’s performances of soldiering, what is the place for theatre and the arts in the repertoire of government troops?

In attempting to situate the place for the arts in this larger context of educating and training soldiers, it is relevant to look at the accounts of civilian teachers who offer courses on poetry and literature at the West Point Academy in the US. Elizabeth Samet (2002:112) for example, says that her course on poetry “surprises many cadets” and speaks to the high number of soldiers who begin the class “with a conviction that poetry can have nothing whatever to do with soldiering” but “come away with a recognition of the long-standing connections between literature and war; of the historical role of poetry in shaping culture, attitudes, and values; and of the ongoing imperative for military officers to be able to use language with precision”. The place of poetry/literature/theatre in the education of military cadets is therefore part of a broader debate; “a debate as old as the institution itself – about whether the Military Academy’s primary mission is to train or to educate Army officers” (Samet, 2002:117). Marilyn Nelson (2001:553) adds to Samet’s accounts by suggesting that the place

of the arts in a military education might lie in “help[ing] my cadets recognize, even disobey, stupid and unjust orders, and to give wise and well-considered ones”.

The links between artistic efforts and the military are not as sparse as one might initially believe. Michael Balfour (2007:3) draws from “Celtic (and Norse) history [where] there are stories about how warrior armies celebrated their victories back at camp. Often based on hillside encampments the soldiers and fighters would gravitate to one or other side of the hill to celebrate and rest”; creating satires of opposing forces, celebratory events of victories, and morale-boosters before battles. However, Balfour (2007:5) then draws from George Brandt’s (2001:123) experiences during the Second World War, that “there is no cause to praise these theatrical activities beyond their merits. They served the needs of the moment and that was enough. They were effective morale boosters for participants and spectators alike – for as long as the effects lasted”. Balfour (2007:5) then moves on to contemporary wars saying that they “are no different in exploiting theatrical techniques to motivate troops, recruit new soldiers, or to bolster support among the local population”. In Afghanistan, the “visit of popular English entertainers” to perform for their government’s troops “is just a recent manifestation of a long tradition; all modern armies send entertainers to the front line to bring comedy and song to their troops” (Dixon, 2010:270). Zhriki, a soldier in Kosovo, is Balfour’s (2007:4) primary source and defines his practice “as ‘military theatre’, because the show was about raising morale for the soldiers, reminding them of the cause and ‘giving them something to fight for’ (Zhriki, 2006)”. While Zhriki’s first audience is the soldiers, his second audience is comprised of locals in villages for whom the performance’s objective “was ‘to help them forget and to say we are protecting you’” (Balfour, 2007:4). The third audience Zhriki speaks to are the outsiders that they wanted to perform for; showing “that the army were not terrorists” and “that we had art (Zhriki, 2006)”. It helped to document that the KLA⁶² were not a rabble, but an organised force with intellectuals who had their own theatre” (Balfour, 2007:4).

In addition to such direct manifestations of theatre in the context of military activities, Balfour, Hughes and Thompson (2009:229) talk about the performance-like nature of war and emphasise the adopted tactics of performance that Armed Forces use toward various affects/effects. For example, Jisha Menon (in Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:1-2) speaks

⁶² KLA is an acronym for the Kosovo Liberation Army.

about the Wagah border ceremony (performance) between India and Pakistan that works “as a reminder that performance's claim to be instead of war is often hard to disentangle from regimes of power”, suggesting that “performance may well be a continuation of war and politics by other means”. Hughes (2011:2) furthers the link between performance and military efforts by citing examples of Hollywood catastrophe movie specialists who are recruited by the US government, following the events of September 11th 2001, “with the aim of imagining possible scenarios for future attacks and how to fight them” (Zizek 2002:16). Furthermore, as part of this larger machinery that has been instituted by the US in its war on terror, “the official 9/11 Commission report called for 'institutionalising imagination' at the highest levels of military and administrative bodies responsible for the security of the nation” (Hughes, 2011:2). It is to this aspect of institutionalizing imagination in military training that this analysis will now turn.

Speaking about the US Army, Zack Whitman Gill (2009:141) describes “‘theatre immersion’: a system of training that utilizes professional actors, scripts, sets, props, and an audience in a pain-staking effort to mimetically simulate war”. In these exercises soldiers are required to participate in “scenarios that simulated real-life military operations” (Hughes, 2011:67) and it is these scenarios that Diana Taylor (2009:1888) has called “frameworks for thinking”, where instructors “stage fake shootings, using sheep's blood and guts to create the appearance of a real accident that had occurred during a simulated training scenario, testing a soldier's ability to respond to emergency” (Hughes, 2011:67). In at least one case, in such immersive environments, a soldier's career was ended for unnecessarily “‘killing’ civilians” (Filkins & Burns, 2006). In this process of theatrical immersion as military training, “the Army now produces subjects—soldiers—through performance, who are uniquely equipped to confront the de-centred, fragmented, and destabilizing nature of war” (Gill, 2009:143). Gill (2009:148) further suggests that in this immersion, akin to the goals of *Cages*, “the boundary between rehearsal and performance is seamless” and in these theatre immersions therefore, “troops must “feel they have arrived in Iraq or Afghanistan”. Eventually therefore, in these immersive environments, “soldiers will find the environment so real that they will make their mistakes here first, so they do not make them in Iraq”” (Filkins & Burns, 2006 in Gill, 2009:148). These immersive learning environments, like those we saw in *Cages*, are extremely fraught with complexities. For example, speaking about the character of “Mr.

Hakim”, a hot dog salesman who goes from charming to killing US soldiers in an immersive training exercise, “the most obvious lesson [...] is to never trust any Iraqis, no matter how friendly they seem. It is a lesson that, unlearned, has killed many American soldiers on combat duty in Iraq” (Gill, 2009:150).

Scott Magelssen (2009:67-68) says that soldiers in immersive training environments become actors who “perform roles in an unfolding and coproduced narrative” and that they “can control the narrative to a certain degree: by stopping a particular inject, by behaving outside expectations, by altering the trajectory of the thread through really good or really bad behaviour.” However, and here is where the complexities emerge, soldier-actors in such immersive scenarios are “always reined in within the tightly controlled world” (Magelssen, 2009:67-68). In the context of military training then, “theatre immersion works to institute combat-as-rehearsal, in which soldiers have already been exposed to the horrors of war and are trained to remain so collected in their decision making that combat becomes simply another rehearsal”; a rehearsal that is “always downplayed as merely another step towards a perpetually deferred performance” (Gill, 2009:154). Similar to *Cages* and MKMZ then, in this immersive combat-as-rehearsal, *failure* of representation is as important as the representations themselves. In immersive training environments that are created for soldiers, “it is therefore of the utmost importance that the mimesis continuously fails, that soldiers never fully suspend their disbelief in training and remain capable of reflecting on their actions” (Gill, 2009:154). It is important to mention here that the abovementioned analyses and scholarly accounts of immersive training environments primarily draw from the US context and information about these techniques in the Indian Armed Forces is not publicly available.⁶³

The use of Immersive Theatre techniques in military training provokes three important points of consideration. First, what kinds of learning do immersive environments facilitate that non-immersive environments do not? Jeanne Meister (Testa in Taylor, 2009:1890) argues that “the ‘serious games’ that train the military” lead to a 75 percent retention rate’ as opposed to five percent for lectures with PowerPoint and ten percent for reading”. While this idea is further explored in the concluding chapter, Meister’s conclusion points toward the pedagogical potential of Immersive Theatre and suggests the need for more rigorous

⁶³ My questions regarding the same, to the Colonel, went unanswered.

inquiry into the form's impact on its spectator-participants from a cognitive standpoint. Second, if soldiers in immersive environments are constantly exposed to violence such that the deaths they cause are not really deaths, what is the likelihood that the soldier becomes more desensitised to the act of killing? Consequently, is a rehearsal of any kind of oppression likely to desensitise participants to acts that do not contain the same gravity in rehearsal as they do outside that space? For instance, in what circumstances would embodying a woman in *Cages* potentially desensitise a male spectator-participant from the relative subjugation experienced by some Kashmiri women? In addition to these considerations around desensitization, the use of Immersive Theatre scenarios in the military establishment also forces me to contemplate my own artistic leanings toward this form: what are the ethical implications of using Immersive Theatre in an active conflict zone like Kashmir, when the form itself might be implicated within the military establishment?

Outcomes

The bricolaged methodology in this phase of the project led to outcomes that intersect interestingly with those that emerged through *Cages* and MKMZ. While *Cages* revealed a possible approach to grey zones that is rooted in the notion of relational violence between differently privileged civilians and MKMZ pointed toward the shadowy/liminal places *within* the category of the militancy in Kashmir rather than *between* Civil Society and Militant/Ex-militants as initially anticipated, this phase points toward a third type of grey zone. The identification of military educational environments as a space for theatre practice was initially a logistical choice in response to my failed attempts to reach out to the Armed Forces in Kashmir. What the practice revealed however, was that military cadets occupy a grey zone in their embodiments of soldiering; embodiments that are nebulous precisely because these individuals are not yet what they might become. Therefore, working with cadets who *might* one day be posted to Kashmir, seems to point toward one link in the chain between 'victim' and 'perpetrator, which might be remoulded by the practice of making and performing theatre.

This target group identification also has interesting repercussions on considerations of affect. While intangible post-performance outcomes were sufficient for Kashmiri audiences for *Cages* and insufficient for non-ex-militant Kashmiri audiences for MKMZ, *Waiting...* led

me to more carefully consider the difference between affect and effect. Although affect might have no desired/articulated objective and be strengthened by unpredictable short-term and long-term traces in performer and spectators, is not affect still an effect? When this project was initially conceptualised, I perceived the two concepts of affect and effect as being distinguished by the simplistic understanding that effect is somehow *in opposition to* affect; effect is a tangible outcome, while affect is not. Effect then, in this more naïve understanding, was seen as linking with instrumentalism and utilitarianism; whereas affect was prized – by me -- as *not* being focussed on a specific result/outcome. While MKMZ pointed me toward the limitations of affect as an articulation of intention, especially when making theatre in a time/place of war, working with/around Armed Forces narratives in Kashmir has led to the desire to *nuance* the conversation between the affect and effect i.e., looking for the grey zones between the two, rather than seeing them as categories in a mutually exclusive relationship.

The need for this more careful delineation between affect and effect also presents itself when we look at how process-based spectatorship manifested in *Waiting...*, albeit unintentionally. As mentioned earlier, NDA cadets performed for students at a neighbouring institution; the students at the College were specifically the theatre students that I was teaching at the time. The College, in its pursuit of ideals for peace and sustainability, had a large student population that was anti-military interventions (generally speaking) and therefore, the cross-community performance of *Waiting...* stood the risk of both groups being antagonised by the Other's opinions around the use of violence. However, there were two factors that mitigated the emergence of any antagonism: 1) that both groups had been prepared for this event with an explanation of their respective institutional affiliations; 2) that the framing of the performances within an educational environment meant that, by default, we had audiences who wanted to learn about the Other. It is interesting to return here to Allen Tough's (1971:65) statements on adult learning that were mentioned in the concluding section of MKMZ, where there was a reflection on individuals being willing to change their minds only if there was a motivation to "initiate efforts to change their own beliefs and attitudes". Although I did not quite understand how to place that motivation within the context of MKMZ, the performance of *Waiting...*, by virtue of being placed in an educational environment, seemed to naturally inculcate a willingness to "see reality as it

actually is, even if it hurts” (Tough, 1971:65). What this resulted in then, was a critical reflection of the spaces in which, and the spectators for whom, *Cages* and MKMZ had been performed in Kashmir. Would the contentious outcomes have been different if the target audience for MKMZ had been the College students in Anantnag? Would there have been more of a motivation to see the Other if the performances had taken place *not* at EKTA – which as an artistic, public space is seen as one where political positions must be taken rather than questioned or explored?

Additionally, as a result of being placed in an educational environment, the notion of novelty in this phase of the project was linked more closely to pedagogy than aesthetics. While *Cages* and MKMZ considered novelty vis-à-vis Immersive and Documentary Theatre, novelty in this phase was more important pedagogically. In addition to the ways in which my own pedagogical performances were extremely novel in the context of a military environment like NDA, novel approaches to pedagogy had to develop due to constantly having to re-design attempts to work with the Armed Forces -- from a first attempt that was based around a formal pedagogical approach of organising artist in residency programme; to a more involved, non-hierarchical pedagogy of created arts-based Integration Tours; to a blended learning pedagogy that would mix real and virtual word interactions in the email writing project. Novelty in pedagogy in these instances then, became simultaneously aesthetic and ethical strategies: aesthetic in how these strategies had to be crafted and designed; ethical in their needing to be constantly responsive to what emerged through practice. Therefore, while novelty in the use of aesthetics (like Immersive and Documentary Theatre) considered how intermediate/extreme novelty would primarily affect spectators in *Cages* and MKMZ, novelty in terms of pedagogy puts forward the possibility of exploring how intermediate/extreme levels of novelty might foster diverse pedagogical outcomes for co-creators.

In addition to these pedagogical considerations, the archival research around military narratives alongside the ‘failed’ attempts, put forward two ideas that might shape the final aesthetic of a theatrical performance about Armed Forces narratives in Kashmir: the importance of silence and the need for a performance structure that allows for poly-vocality. Apart from direct instances of human rights violations where the soldier might less contentiously be termed ‘perpetrator’, discussions around winning hearts and minds -- not

to mention instances of fratricide and suicide -- present the murkier sides of the soldier experience. The aesthetic of any theatrical performance that takes on the challenge of representing the grey zones of the soldier experience in Kashmir therefore, will have to find dramatic strategies that while showcasing the problematic silence in which the military establishment is shrouded/shrouds itself, also puts forward the multiple dimensions to victimhood and perpetration amongst the soldier population. That said, what does it mean practically, to aestheticise the silence of the Armed Forces? What does it mean to aesthetically represent grey zones in narratives that are as fraught as those of the Armed Forces in Kashmir? Given how MKMZ revealed that humanising/victimising personas like Ex-militants is extremely contentious, and possibly dangerous, is there even a space to showcase non-perpetrator dimensions to the character of the soldier in the context of Kashmir? These are questions that I continue to grapple with as EKTA and I work on crafting a performance that includes soldier voices – a project that is to follow the completion of this thesis. Despite these questions that remain however, there are some considerations that will shape any future performance that includes non-mainstream narratives of soldier as perpetrator, for a Kashmiri audience. First, performances that address the soldier experience in Kashmir will need to be supported by a process-based approach to spectatorship that will frame the creators' intention and give the spectators the tools to decipher particular aesthetic choices/codes. Second, there is a need in such performances for a narrative/dramatic structure that balances soldiers' voices with the perspectives/narratives of those non-soldiers who are (indisputable) victims to the soldiers' acts of violence. And finally, it is important to consider the politics of location and to identify a performance space that is linked with learning and exploration, rather than with political positioning.

While the outcomes above link closely with the aesthetic, pedagogical, and ethical concepts that this doctoral project was framed around, a more wide-ranging outcome from this bricolage emerges in the unanticipated implication of Immersive Theatre within the military context. Apart from the ethical considerations that arise when Immersive Theatre is put to use outside the military context in an active conflict zone, a larger question emerges here: why, and how, do immersive environments stay with participants differently in comparison with non-immersive and more 'conventional' spectator experiences? While it is instinctively apparent to me that multi-sensory environments will heighten the possibility of leaving

traces of the theatrical experience in the spectator's repertoire, why does this affect occur? Do the processes of cognition operate differently when an action is embodied with *multiple* sensory stimuli rather than with the *two* expected senses of seeing and hearing that are the more widely used modes of spectatorship in the theatre? Do multi-sensory, immersive environments create more nuanced 'grey zones' of theatrical experience where Self and Other more obviously collide and fracture, or do they more powerfully desensitise its spectator-participants from acts of oppression and thus, strengthen existing polarities? It is with these questions in mind that this thesis will now move to its concluding chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, this doctoral project did not begin with one concrete research question. Instead, in the spirit of practice-based research, there were three larger problems that shaped this project with the understanding that more focussed questions would “emerge over time according to the needs of the practice” (Smith & Dean, 2009:214). The first research problem sought to consider the strategies that might be employed to identify participants, locate performance/workshop spaces, and design workshops with members of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Armed Forces in Kashmir. The second research problem was centred on the execution of devised theatre workshops: to analyse changes in the workshop design based on the needs of each participant group and to critically reflect on the outcomes of each workshop. The third research problem was focussed on the creation of one performance piece that would integrate narratives obtained in the different workshops. The primary consideration here was whether it would be possible to create cross-community Immersive Theatre experiences where members of Civil Society might be immersed in experiences of the Armed Forces and Militants/Ex-Militants; where Militants/Ex-militants might be immersed in experiences of the Armed Forces and Civil Society; where soldiers from the Armed Forces might be immersed in experiences of the Civil Society and Militants/Ex-Militants. However, while it was intended for this project to address all three aforementioned problems and their subsidiary questions, the constant need for the practice to evolve in response to the context, meant that only the first two problems were investigated and explored within the scope of this doctoral project. In drawing a conclusion to this thesis then, I shall discuss the primary outcomes of my work in Kashmir⁶⁴ in relation to the third research problem, using as a framework the questions that Rustom Bharucha poses (in Mackey & Fisher, 2011:366): “When the play ends, what remains? When the play ends, what begins?”

⁶⁴ The timeline in Auto-Ethnographic Excerpt 1 also mentions pre-doctoral projects that occurred between 2009 and 2013. These outcomes have been included so as to provide the reader with an understanding of the progression in my ideas leading into this doctoral project.

2009-----2010-----	2011-----	2012-----	2013-----	2014-----	2015--
<p>To create cross-community Immersive & Documentary Theatre performances that: immerse Civil Society in the experiences of Militants/Ex-militants and government soldiers (&) immerse government soldiers in the experiences of Militants/Ex-militants and Civil Society (&) immerse Militants/Ex-militants in the experiences of Civil Society and government soldiers. Each of these immersive experiences would emerge from single-community workshops that would then be performed for Other-community audiences: the larger goal being to humanise the Other.</p>	<p>To conduct single-community workshops that result in performances for cross-community audiences (OR) To conduct cross-community workshops that would result in multi-dimensional pieces (OR) To perform cross-community performances for single-community audiences.</p>	<p>As a result of the projects in Anantnag, The need to identify the appropriate local partners presented itself; partners who would both understand the evolving premises of the project and understand the language of the theatre. This choice, to work with <u>one</u> theatre company as the central partner, meant that the project design needed to shift accordingly.</p>	<p>It also emerged in this time that working with active militants would not be possible, the first failed attempts with the Armed Forces occurred, as did the chance to work with military cadets. The earlier objective became nuanced: not to simplistically humanise the Other but to use theatre to explore grey zones between the three groups. <i>Cages</i> emerged in collaboration with EKTA -- cementing EKTA's centrality to this doctoral project, and bringing up other questions around affect, process based spectatorship, and dominant/less dominant narratives.</p>	<p>Workshops with EKTA that used strategies like interviews and archival research to create performances about Militant and Armed Forces experiences. The unanticipated fact that many Ex-militants had no idea of what theatre is, alongside the failed attempts to reach out to the Armed Forces, further underscored the centrality of one Civil Society collaborator that allowed a theatrical exploration of grey zones.</p> <p>Since cross-community audiences were hard to ensure, given the risks of performing contentious narratives through experimental forms, EKTA had control over who saw the piece. The director of EKTA tried to ensure cross-community audiences where possible but there was clearly a bias in who saw the pieces.</p> <p>The further refined problem became: to explore what some of the grey zones might be within the groups; to find more nuanced ways of articulating the importance of process-based spectatorship reasserts itself</p>	

Auto-ethnographic Excerpt 2: An evolution of objectives/strategies

“When the play ends, what remains? When the play ends, what begins?”

For the collaborators: EKTA, the interviewees, and the researcher

What remains and what begins in this project is most visible in the central collaboration between the Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi (EKTA) and this researcher. The first time I walked into EKTA’s premises was on the heels of pre-doctoral workshops in Anantnag, where a renewed focus on my aesthetic choices and a more nuanced understanding of the

risks involved in working across oppositional community lines in Kashmir suggested that it would be most feasible (ethically, aesthetically, pedagogically) to collaborate with an existing theatre group. It was this singular choice that in turn led to the most significant trace of this research being the evolution of my relationship with artists in EKTA.

During the creation of *Cages* in 2013, I was very much EKTA's 'guest' and there existed a formality between the Kashmiri artists and myself. This was visible for example, in how spaces were navigated at EKTA's premises: a two storied building that consists of various rooms which function as bedrooms, offices, a kitchen, and a library. In these spaces, contextual inter-personal dynamics lead to individuals congregating as and when they like, regardless of whether or not a particular space is where someone sleeps. As one might expect then, during my first visit, there were strict understandings of decorum that guided how my personal space – as a female, guest director – was dealt with. Only two of the younger actors would come into 'my' room during the process of *Cages* and in order to engage informally with other members of the team, it was up to me to seek out the spaces in which the artists might be congregating. Furthermore, apart from EKTA members' considerations as my 'hosts', my own reticence as a 'guest' and as a 'woman' in a male-dominated theatre company also shaped the host-guest dynamic.

This relationship with EKTA evolved however, when I was able to invite and host the group's performances-- *Country Without a Post Office* and *Trunouve* -- at the school in which I was teaching in western India. The reversal of the host-guest relationship when EKTA artists became my guests was an indispensable element in the development of our camaraderie; a reciprocal host-guest dynamic which complemented a dialogic process of skill building. Over the last three years I have been told by various members of EKTA that their exposure to the Immersive and Documentary Theatre forms, alongside my use of a devised theatre pedagogy that is in contrast to the more traditional director-actor relationship to which they are accustomed, has benefited them immensely. Similarly, since Immersive and Documentary Theatre were less-known dramatic forms for me – one of the reasons behind their being chosen as the two aesthetic concepts for this project – working with EKTA has led to a development in my own skills as a director/facilitator. This shared sense of skill building has also been furthered by the willingness of EKTA to share their personal repertoires about the Kashmiri context within and outside the workshop spaces, augmenting my understanding of

Kashmir. After an initially formal host-guest dynamic in *Cages* therefore, EKTA and my relationship has seen a significant shift. Now, no longer is 'my room' at EKTA the guest director's private space; instead, it is a communal space in which the artists enter and leave as they please: to chat, to read, to talk, or charge their cell-phones. While there are some elements of the host-guest dynamic that still persist, the evolution in how my personal space has come to be viewed is one very obvious demonstration of how EKTA and my relationship has evolved through this project.

The centrality of EKTA to this project has also led to a cognisance of who *cannot* be collaborators for a cross-community project across 'victim' and 'perpetrator' lines in Kashmir. For instance the required change in this project's target audience from active Militants to Ex-militants, not to mention the many failed attempts to engage with the Armed Forces, has led to the conclusion that in a conflict zone sustained theatrical engagement might *not* be possible with those who are active fighters. I clarify this statement by saying that *sustained* interactions are not possible since my encounters with the Colonel indicate that there is some manoeuvring space with individual fighters who see the value in theatre practice; albeit with varying agendas. However, even these micro-level interactions with active combatants became more probable *because* of an existing relationship with EKTA; a relationship that seemed to function as 'proof' of my legitimacy both as a theatre practitioner and as a non-politically motivated mainland Indian. Although I am certain that some individuals/groups could *not* be collaborated with precisely because of my connection with EKTA – given that each of the artists in EKTA has their own complex relationships to the context – more often than not, this relationship was vital to the cross-community practice in this research being made possible.

The workshops with EKTA have also been integral in pointing toward an unexpected dimension in my thinking around grey zones. As mentioned earlier, when I began this project, it was with the understanding that the term grey zones would refer quite generally to potential spaces of interaction between the Armed Forces, Militants/Ex-Militants, and Civil Society in Kashmir. However, this work has suggested that aside from the anticipated dimensions of grey zones vis-à-vis the demography of audience members and the narratives contained in theatrical performances, the methodology of making and performing theatre presents as a grey zone in Kashmir. Given that theatrical activity is contentious for Kashmiris

who consider the art form to be against the mandates of Islam, the very notion of being present in a rehearsal space and/or performance becomes a complex act. Therefore, by creating an in-between space just by virtue of the nature of the activity, the theatre comes to occupy a liminal space in Kashmir -- if for no one else, for the artists who choose to part-take in the work. Theatrical activity manifests as a grey zone, an in-between space, where non-hierarchical pedagogical styles encounter traditional hierarchies that are defined by age and gender; where different cultural codes that exist within a similar tapestry of traditions from the Indian sub-continent provoke instances of coalescence and fracture; where a mainland Indian director and Kashmiri artists can come together in an undertaking that holds very real ramifications for each one of us. Using performative research and devised theatre workshops in Kashmir therefore, became methodological grey zones in themselves.

As described in Chapter One, this project began with six concepts guiding its framework: performative research, affect, devised theatre, Immersive Theatre, Documentary Theatre, and performance auto-ethnography. While the methodological grey zones created by performative research and devised theatre components has been mentioned above and considerations of affect will be discussed later in this chapter, the outcomes that emerged vis-à-vis my choices Immersive Theatre, Documentary Theatre, and performance auto-ethnography do warrant some discussion here. With regards to the latter, performance auto-ethnography was a concept that I initially chose as an ethical strategy with which to guide my way of seeing, being, and writing about Kashmir. What emerged however, was that performance auto-ethnography in this work was not a choice; it was a necessity. As a theatre practitioner from mainland India, what I represented in Kashmir was impossible to avoid: in the workshops, in the performances, and in the writing of this thesis. The patriarchal conditions that were being addressed in *Cages* do not only affect Kashmiri women; they also affect me, as someone from a similarly patriarchal cultural context. The stories that were recounted in the interviews leading up to *Meri Kahani Meri Zabani* (MKMZ) and the audience responses to the performances hinged on what I represent in the Valley. In each phase of this project therefore, performance auto-ethnography was an indispensable lens through which to expand my understanding of the grey zones that I occupy in Kashmir. I would go so far as to say then, that when a theatre practitioner chooses to intervene in a

time and place of war where they are somehow implicated, an auto-ethnographical component is not only preferable, it is necessary.

While the choice of performance auto-ethnography was one that proved to be vital toward the larger goal of exploring the grey zones in this project, what was achieved with the aesthetic choices of Immersive and Documentary Theatre is less clear. In terms of the novelty of these techniques in Kashmir and the subsequent interest that they generated amongst co-creators and spectators, the two aesthetic forms were appropriate choices. However, it is difficult to say if the insights that were gleaned through the use of these two particular aesthetic forms would have been any different should I have chosen to work with more 'conventional' proscenium theatre. Now, with a better understanding that the theatre itself inhabits a grey zone in Kashmir, it is difficult to state with certainty if the aesthetic choices that were made were in fact significant to the outcomes that emerged. Immersive and Documentary Theatre as aesthetic frameworks were invaluable to my own design of the workshops and conceptualizations of the performances. Nevertheless, these frameworks were perhaps more useful to me as a practitioner creating new work rather than as a researcher looking to explore grey zones between 'victims' and 'perpetrators' in Kashmir.

Similarly unknowable is what begins and remains for this project's secondary collaborators, such as the interviewees in MKMZ. While the founder of the Association has sustained contact with me over the last two years, I remain unsure as to what – if anything – JKHWA's collaboration with MKMZ might signify for the interviewees. Although efforts were made to invite all the Ex-militant interviewees to the first trial performance of MKMZ, only four of the original interviewees attended the showing and given that it was their first time watching a theatrical event, they did not have much to say about the aesthetic shape we had given their narratives. While one person did tell me: "You know, when we were in the militancy we were fighting against people like you, but I did not know that this was what we were fighting against. I didn't know that this is what theatre was"⁶⁵, and other statements have been made to indicate the interviewees' satisfaction with simply being heard/listened to, I am reminded of the constant refrain from many of our interviews: "What are you going to do

⁶⁵ In this response I understood the speaker to be referring to his prior belief of theatre being against the Islamic code of conduct. Coming from an Ex-militant, this statement suggests that the speaker's personal beliefs during the militancy would have distanced him from the likes of EKTA and me. Furthermore, that his beliefs during the militancy might have actually led him to consider us as opponents and possibly carry out efforts to stop our work.

with our stories?” Despite multiple efforts on the part of both EKTA and me to clarify that we were ‘only’ creating a theatrical piece and could not in any way guarantee ‘effect’, our clarifications seemed to come across as insipid in the face of the grave narratives that were being shared with us. Affect seemed an insufficient justification to MKMZ’s interviewees (in addition to the spectators), revealing that that while this project had paid a lot of attention in its framing of the process to co-creators in the theatre workshops, insufficient attention had been paid to the “the role of the spectator, which could be one of the most marginalised categories in theatre discourse” (Bharucha in Mackey & Fisher, 2011:367).

“When the play ends, what remains? When the play ends, what begins?”

For the spectators

While I remain unsure as to whether Immersive and Documentary Theatre were necessary choices of aesthetics, the combination of these forms in *Cages* and MKMZ did present many interesting possibilities vis-à-vis spectatorship. The novelty of these particular aesthetic strategies in Kashmir facilitated a tenuous equilibrium “between the pleasure of discovery, the unexpected, and the unusual, on one hand, and the pleasure of recognition, déjà vu, and the anticipated on the other” (De Marinis & Dwyer, 1987:112). While the process of *Cages* suggested that extreme novelty might *not* be the most useful/ethical way to tackle a theme that contains multiple layers, MKMZ did put forth the potential that lies in integrating a *composed* approach to Documentary Theatre with multi-sensorial strategies from Immersive Theatre to foster an intermediate novelty. Given the many kinds of responses that this project elicited amongst spectators in Kashmir, my meditation on spectatorship in these conclusions is framed by one primary question that relates to research problem three: ***if an outside theatre maker were to create one performance piece that contains narratives from the grey zones in Kashmir, what ethical, pedagogical, and aesthetic considerations might arise as a result of this project?***

Consideration 1: Balance

The layers of spectators’ responses to MKMZ and *Cages* have led to the emergence of ‘balance’ as an important framing idea. This importance of balance might be witnessed in the account, below, from Frederique Lecomte who says:

First, you have to have a balance of actors... I decided not to choose real Hutu and Tutsi and Twa but to take actors with the physical appearance of Hutu, the physical appearance of Tutsi. I learned very early on that the first thing the audience do is count how many Hutus, how many Tutsi and how many Twa, and they say 'OK, it is balanced' based on the appearance. Second, you have to balance the crimes committed by both ethnic groups. For example, you have two columns. The Hutus' crimes are typically using 'machetes', cutting off limbs, pounding babies and so on, while the Tutsi's crimes are typically making spears from bamboo, killing intellectuals, killing fathers of families...Then, when people tell the testimony of a Hutu crime then, just after, we hear a Tutsi crime, and it is like that *sys-tem-at-ic-al-ly* [she emphasizes] (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:181).

While the nature of violence in Burundi is different from the conflicts in Kashmir, Lecomte's thoughts on balance continue to be relevant in this context. Reactions to MKMZ suggest that in any theatrical performance that includes narratives of those who are considered 'perpetrators', a precise, almost mathematical calculation is needed of how these narratives are balanced by the voices of those who are seen as 'victims'. Upon further consideration around how such a balance might be achieved in theatrical performance, I have come to identify one possible strategy: to consider the grey zones that arise *within* each community group rather than to only contemplate the nebulous spaces *between* them. By *within*, I refer to narratives that are contained within the individual categories of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-Militants, and Armed Forces that are less dominant i.e. the experiences that do not conform to the grand narratives that frame each of these groups' positioning in Kashmir. Consequently, while grey zones were initially conceptualised as being sites of intervention *between* Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants and the Armed Forces, the term has now come to imply sites of intervention *between* and *within* each of the larger identity groups. So what are these grey zones in Kashmir?

When considering the grey zones *between* each of the three groups, Kashmiri soldiers in the Indian Armed Forces and Kashmiri Ex-Armed Forces personnel occupy a space between the Armed Forces and Kashmiri Civil Society. In considering grey zones between Civil Society and Militants/Ex-Militants, there emerge the narratives of Ex-Militants who have returned to Civil Society and must deal with the grudges held against them by their communities. Furthermore, this grey zone also contains the voices of the wives/children of Ex-militants, especially the women who have come to Indian Administered/Occupied Kashmir from Azad Kashmir (also referred to as Pakistan Administered/Occupied Kashmir). Finally, when looking at the grey zone between Militants/Ex-Militants and the Armed Forces, we need to consider

the voices and narratives of the *Ikhwanis* who are comprised of Kashmiri Militants/Ex-militants who are now sponsored by/work with the Indian government's Armed Forces. These grey zones between each of the three groups is then further complicated when considering the in-between spaces *within* each of the groups. For instance, when looking at grey zones within Civil Society in Kashmir, we encounter the narratives of Kashmiri women, the experiences of Kashmiri Hindus/Pandits who live within and outside the Kashmir Valley, and the perspectives of Kashmiri civilians who maintain economic ties with the Armed Forces and Militants by supplying fighters with weapons, food, shelter, and information. Likewise, within the larger grouping of Militants/Ex-Militants, we encounter the grey zones that are occupied by incarcerated Militants/Ex-militants, militants who have joined the militancy for reasons other than ideological goals (such as financial gain, for example), and we see grey zones within Militant/Ex-militant narratives in Kashmir when considering women's roles in the militancy. Finally, within the Armed Forces, we see grey zones emerge in a consideration of the perspectives of military cadets who will one-day be posted to conflict zones like Kashmir, of soldiers who are in Kashmir not because of an ideological standpoint but for the financial security that the job affords, and of the narratives surrounding soldiers who reach the point of killing themselves and their colleagues.

In addition to balancing the various grey zones within and between each of the larger groups in a theatrical performance, the processes of *Cages* and MKMZ further suggest that dominant narratives must balance the lesser-known narratives from the grey zones; a need that is highlighted when the theatre maker involved is from mainland India. The inclusion of dominant narratives seems to function (to the project's non-participant spectators) as an indicator that the researcher in question has done the requisite amount of ground work to understand the Kashmiri context, thus making it more likely that the lesser known voices will *not* be seen as the researcher's performing a political agenda. In this vein, it emerged that the two dominant narratives from Civil Society that need to be present in any theatrical performance are those of civilians who have been victimised by the Armed Forces' and Militants' acts of violence and the voices of activists who are engaged in non-violent protest. Within the larger category of Militants/Ex-Militants, the dominant narratives that seem to be deemed necessary are those that involve active militants who are fighting/have been killed based on a commitment to their ideologies and those narratives which simultaneously

highlight the Militants/Ex-militants who are corrupt and/or have perpetrated acts of violence and injustice against Kashmiri civilians. And finally, when looking at the dominant narratives about the Armed Forces in Kashmir, any grey zone approach (like a mention of fratricide) needs to be balanced by putting forward the narratives of soldiers who are driven by nationalistic sentiments and those who have committed grave violations against civilians.

These two dimensions to balance therefore – of looking at grey zones *within* each identity grouping that is then balanced by existing dominant narratives -- need to be carefully calibrated in a performance that showcases multiple perspectives from Civil Society, Militant/Ex-militant, and Armed Forces spectrum in Kashmir. This quest for balance, for a theatre practitioner, then leads to the next question: what are aesthetic strategies that would allow for such a balancing act of narratives?

Consideration 2: Dramatic Strategies

The fragmented narrative can function as political action in many ways: It can resist traditional academic systems, which may acknowledge alternate ways of knowing but nonetheless continue to lock sociological inquiry into normative forms that serve to reify the traditional system itself (Markham, 2005:815-816).

Speaking to the potential of fragmented narratives to create reflexivity for spectators and creators alike, Annette Markham (2005:815-816) further extrapolates that “juxtaposition and fragmentation help authors see—through disjuncture—their own habits of interpretation, to reveal, or at least question, taken-for-granted patterns of sense making”. Fragmented narratives, therefore, seem to allow for an approach to argumentation and aesthetic creation that is not locked into a “single line” and in so doing, “multiplicity is made more possible” (Markham, 2005:815-816). Since power functions differently in fragmented narratives as opposed to more linear/sequential counterparts, such performances “can simultaneously make the author’s particular set of arguments and allow for alternatives by revealing the practices at work in the interpretive process” (Markham, 2005:815-816). The application of such a fragmentation is also substantiated by what Roland Barthes (1977) calls “the death of the author”; a framework in which the traditional role and power of the ‘Author-God’ (or Playwright/Director-God in this case) is challenged. Although Barthes’ essay originally discusses the relationship between a reader and the author of a text, there is an obvious link to be made with how a fragmented narrative may more likely enable a multi-

dimensional space in which the director – the mainland Indian outsider, in this case -- is no longer 'God'. With these considerations in mind, a fragmented approach becomes both an ethical and aesthetic strategy for an outsider theatre maker to create work about grey zones in Kashmir. In this attempt to craft one fragmented performance piece about such grey zones therefore, there is an inevitable intertextuality that emerges: from the outcomes of theatre workshops/performances to that which is gleaned from the researcher's auto-ethnographic insights; from information contained in publically available archival materials to knowledge that is shared in more private encounters. However, what is said/available about narratives in Kashmir always needs to be considered alongside that which is unsaid/silenced and in this fraught relationship, the theatre maker must consider the role of fiction.

The tension between reality and fiction has been widely considered in the realm of Documentary Theatre, where "creating performances from edited archival material can both foreground and problematize the nonfictional even as it uses actors, memorized dialogue, condensed time, precise staging, stage sets, lighting, costumes, and the overall aesthetic structuring of theatrical performance" (Martin, 2006:10). Therefore, although this process of merging fact and fiction is often murky, "documentary theatre creates its own aesthetic imaginaries while claiming a special factual legitimacy" (Martin, 2006:10). Thus, when Harold Pinter calls for a distinction between a citizen's quest for 'truth' in opposition to falsehood and an artist's approach to the nexus between truth *and* falsehood, he is furthered by the likes of Debra Kalmanowitz (2013:38) who suggest that "the closer we get to fiction and multiplicity the closer we sometimes are to the truth". In a similar vein, Sundar Sarukkai (2007b:1409) speaks to the importance of fiction by saying that "if anthropology is willing to go beyond this Other it constructs and into recognising its function as answering the ethical call of the other, then we will have to address the relevance of fiction as ethnographic data". Sarukkai is backed up by Cynthia Oznick (in McNiff, 2013:33) who says that "with regard to works of literature representing the Holocaust" that the "rights of fiction are not the rights of history". Oznick (in McNiff, 2013:33) uses this postulation as a springboard to critique those who accuse artistic works that deviate from dominant narratives for falsifying or delegitimising history, by asking, "Why should the make-believe people in novels be obliged to concur with history, or to confirm to it?"

Therefore, although I remain uncertain if Immersive and Documentary Theatre were necessarily the most appropriate aesthetic choices in this project, the centrality of fiction and fragmented narratives to the execution of *Cages* and MKMZ is an aesthetic outcome that I continue to consider significant.

Consideration 3: Target Audience

Another important consideration in the creation of one performance around Kashmir's grey zones involves a careful framing of who the target audience of such work might be. Would it perhaps be more appropriate, ethically and pedagogically, for a cross-community piece that also gives voice to 'perpetrators' to be focussed toward a non-Kashmiri audience rather than a Kashmiri one? Would a performance of Kashmir's grey zones outside the region lead to less problematic "webs of significance" (Thompson, 2003:70)? I say that "webs of significance" outside Kashmir might be less problematic as a result of a cross-community performance since the creation of new and unpredictable networks of "social energy" within Kashmir contains the risk of being dangerous (Thompson, 2003:70). An example of possibly dangerous "social energy" might be seen in an instance after *Cages*, when I received a phone call from the Armed Forces' Colonel who had been one of the spectator-participants. The Colonel mentioned that he had been receiving phone calls from "suspicious" numbers after his visit to EKTA and since *Cages* was the only event during which he had handed over his cellular phone (to the artists for safekeeping during the performance), the Colonel wanted to know if any members of the ensemble might have tampered with his phone. While he was quick to accept my defence of EKTA's integrity, this conversation revealed the tenuous nature of the "social energy" that *Cages* inspired; one that could have, quite easily, led to negative outcomes for EKTA. Similarly, when we had a spectator in MKMZ's Audience B who said that "the only truth is the truth of the victims", the Armed Forces' escort of the Brigadier's daughter (who was an actor in the piece) took a visible interest in who this spectator was: "Who was that man who got so angry?" he asked us at the end of the evening; a question to which EKTA and I provided a veiled and vague response, since we were unsure what the question implied. Creating "webs of significance" and especially cross-community links thus comes with immense unpredictability and risk in a time and place of war.

This possibility leads me to consider that that perhaps the most appropriate target audience for a cross-community performance that involves narratives of both ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ would be one that is located *outside* Kashmir, in mainland India. This re-articulation of the target audience presents the possibility for an inculcation of “fresh marks” that are made between people and groups (Thompson, 2003:70), but without the baggage of living in the conflict zone itself. The ramifications of creating art as an outsider for a target audience living within that context might be seen in *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*, which speaks to the Birth of a Nation. In this nation:

a team of 'artist-facilitators' arrive in a ruined city, overwhelmed by their own personal crises but full of good intentions to heal the war-affected citizens of the city through the dance, art, writing and performance-installation workshops. In the final moments of the play the artists coerce a blind woman whose tongue has been cut out into participating in an art workshop: 'tell us your story-- please tell us of your pain and struggle so that art can be made and the healing can begin' (Ravenhill in Hughes, 2011:122)

Showing an audience of Kashmiris the perspectives of Militants/Ex-Militants/the Armed Forces might very well encapsulate the irony of the blind woman in the example above, where the justified response of many spectators becomes: “Why are you showing us what we already know?” Therefore, some of the more contentious outcomes that have emerged from conversations after, and critical analyses of, *Cages* and *MKMZ* suggest that the *one* performance piece that EKTA and I are currently working on might best be performed *outside* Kashmir, in mainland India. Just as *This is Camp X-Ray* “radically re-placed the Cuban site, firmly located in the shadows, to a prominent local site, evidencing a link between 'here' and 'there'” (Balfour, Hughes & Thompson, 2009:300; quotation marks in original), a performance piece that targets mainland India might radically demonstrate a link between the non-Kashmir-here and the Kashmir-there. However, while focussing one cross-community performance about grey zones in Kashmir toward the target audience of non-Kashmiris has its own potential, it must then be considered what the positioning of my Kashmiri collaborators would be in this scenario.

Cages and *MKMZ*, while inviting small groups of local audiences that EKTA and JKHWA identified, were presented as ‘final’ performances i.e., as finished products by a Kashmiri theatre company in collaboration with a visiting director. The need which emerged, to more carefully frame my own intentions as the facilitator-director, led me to wonder if it was this

'finished product' marketing of the work that made my non-political intentions seem disingenuous. Although an effort was made to inform spectators that both pieces were works-in-progress and thus, that audience members' feedback would aid in the development of the piece in question, it became evident that that was not how the performances were viewed. In a context like Kashmir where theatrical activity is relatively minimal, a work-in-progress that is performed for invited spectators was viewed as being the same thing as a finished performance; especially with a mainland Indian involved. With this in mind, what if more care was taken to highlight the 'unfinished' quality of the work while simultaneously framing the piece as targeting the consciousness of mainland Indians? What if the performances were created as dramatic readings, where actors always have the scripts in their hands, to remind the audience that the piece is unfinished? Would this performative strategy enable the Kashmiri spectators' to situate the piece as being unfinished, and thus, stimulate constructive feedback rather than contentious disputes? Returning to Allen Tough (1971), who says that adults learn best when they see a reason for doing so, would the objective of helping develop a performance that ultimately targets mainland Indians be seen as reason enough for Kashmiri spectators' less-contentious engagement?

Although this framing does seem to contain potential, it must be mentioned that any effort to perform narratives from Kashmir in the 'mainland' comes with its own complications. Late in 2014, as I write this conclusion, a movie called *Haider* (2014) has come into the spotlight for showcasing Kashmir. A Bollywood adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet, *Haider* draws in narratives from the Kashmiri militancy and stars some of my collaborators from EKTA. While my EKTA colleagues speak positively about the effort the film makes to depict the 'reality' of Kashmir and take Kashmiris voices into account, *Haider* has become a controversial film -- from critiques around the film's credits where the Indian Armed Forces' are thanked for having helped flood victims in Kashmir; to commentaries around the stereotypes that are being propagated about Kashmiri women in the film; to questions about the absence of certain dominant narratives. Performing Kashmir in mainland India therefore -- through film, theatre, literature, or anything else -- is no less contentious than performing Kashmir to Kashmiris. As a result, it must be acknowledged that there are very real risks to artists who take narratives of Kashmir outside the Kashmiri context. In another instance, a festival of non-commercial films was curated by a Kashmiri Pandit in early 2013 and taken to various

cities across mainland India with the objective of drawing attention to lesser-known perspectives to the conflicts in the region. While the screenings proceeded without event in the initial phase of the tour, in the city of Hyderabad, a “mob vandalised screening equipment and carried away a laptop belonging to the “curator of the film festival” (The New Indian Express, 2013). Although the film festival found “safe sanctuaries” in different cities (The Hindu, 2013), this occurrence highlights a quandary for me. If a film festival such as this could turn violent, what would be the consequences of a cross-community performance that explores the grey zones in Kashmir being performed outside Kashmir? Given the tangible risks involved in addressing Kashmir’s issues in mainland India, would it be any safer for EKTA actors to perform grey zone narratives to an audience of mainland Indians? So, if the broad target audience of mainland Indians contains risk, what might be the kinds of settings where the physical risks would be more negotiable when seeking to reach non-Kashmiri audience? Revisiting my own practice in Kashmir and looking at the kinds of sites from which the abovementioned film festival seemed to have garnered the most support for its screenings, it is perhaps unsurprising that educational environments emerge as the most appropriate sites for such performance-based interventions.

In addition to educational environments being comprised of captive audiences who are more likely to be predisposed to seeing the Other for the reasons related to an expansion of (intangible) educational outcomes, these environments also lend themselves well to what has been discussed earlier in this thesis as a process-based spectatorship. The importance of a process-based spectatorship might be seen in the experience of the Freedom Theatre in Palestine, whose director Julian Mer-Khamis (in Mee, 2012:170) says “to create an audience is harder than to create actors”. Speaking to the Freedom Theatre’s experience, Mer-Khamis (in Mee, 2012:170) says that it took them “a year to be able to dim the lights”, an additional “three years to get people not to talk through the show”, and “five years explaining to the audience what their role in live theatre is”; all because “there were many people who had never seen live theatre before”. Process-based spectatorship is therefore influenced by the notion that “the more often we encounter or experience a sensation, emotion, or situation, the more familiar it becomes and thereby creates a more distinct pathway within our brain” (Di Benedetto, 2010:16). Therefore, this approach to spectator training is not simply about making sure that the audience understands the context of the piece and mitigating, to some

extent, the anxiety that a first-time experience of a form like Immersive Theatre might cause for spectators. Rather, training spectators becomes similar in its pedagogical underpinnings to the work of actor training, where it is recognised that being a spectator also involves the necessity for certain skill-sets. Josephine Machon (2013:278-279), for instance, says that “immersive work has to *enable* the audience to be willing participants, to invite curiosity and complicity” (emphasis in original) and that “artists can encourage this desire to engage through pre-performance techniques”. These pre-performance techniques could “include the journey to the event; practical instruction and guidance in the idiolect of the world; or antechambers which steep us in the aesthetic and mood of the work” (Machon, 2013:278-279) and as an extension, the creation of workshops for audience members both preceding and following a performance about Kashmir’s grey zones between Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Armed Forces.

Returning to an exploration of why adults learn, it has been pointed out that adults “engage in learning largely in response to pressures they feel from current life problems” (Knowles, 1967:278). Therefore, since educational institutions are shaped around larger ideas of learning and expanding knowledge, a process-based spectatorship might serve as a way in which to underscore the possible pedagogical relevance of Kashmir’s complexities to the everyday lives of non-Kashmiris. In many ways, this discussion of spectatorship relates to De Marinis’ ideas of the *Model Spectator* wherein there is a certain kind of spectator for whom a work of theatre is created and if “a closed performance is performed for a spectator far removed from its Model Spectator, then things will turn out rather differently” (De Marinis & Dwyer, 1987:103). Given the contentious nature of a performance that works with grey zones in Kashmir; a conflict around which that many non-Kashmiris might have their own views, a process-based spectatorship might present a way to create the necessary conditions for Model Spectators to emerge. It must be clarified here that I do not intend for these process-based efforts to ensure that all spectators interpret the piece in the same way, but rather, I see these processes as creating spaces in which spectators are provided with the tools with which they might contextualise the work. This filtering down of the target audience therefore – to mainland Indians within educational contexts – becomes a significant consideration when seeking to create one balanced piece that uses fragmented

narratives and fiction to create an Immersive and Documentary Theatre performance about grey zones in Kashmir.

Consequently, in exploring who our audiences are and how they might respond to such work, we return to questions of affect.

Consideration 4: Affect

It must be admitted that the initial consideration of affect in this project (as in Chapter One) was entirely underdeveloped. Taking James Thompson's articulations around the notion of affect as the primary point of departure, the reasoning behind my underdeveloped understanding of the implications of affect in Kashmir came from a concurrent ignorance about the nuances of the context. Affect, at this stage, was simplistically compared to effect and seemed to be the most ethical positioning that an outside theatre practitioner could assume in Kashmir. Likening effect to the generation, and subsequent articulation/measurement, of tangible outcomes and concrete solutions, the inference that *affects* are *effects* was a nuance that did not seem necessary to explore. Since the doctoral project was initially framed around identifying the grey zones between three particular identity groups and ascertaining the ethical, pedagogical, and aesthetic implications of making theatre across the 'victim'/'perpetrator' binary in Kashmir, a basic usage of the concept of affect was deemed as being sufficient. However, now that the practice of making theatre on the ground has revealed some of the layers and complexities to such work, I have come to think that the affect/effect binary might not be the most useful tool with which to analyse *how* theatre intervenes in a conflict zone. While affect and effect were worthwhile concepts with which to begin this project and articulate what might happen for spectators as a result of my practice, they did not help answer the question that I get asked in Kashmir: what can theatre do? Or as I interpret this question, how can theatrical experiments intervene within the existing status quo of the conflict? As a result of this project therefore, I have come to consider if by finding ways to more methodically analyse both what artists intend to accomplish and the responses that are evoked, there might emerge a heightened potential to understand how theatre intervenes in a conflict zone. Unable to disentangle myself from the contexts and complexities of the terminology of affect and effect though, this project has led me to reframe my consideration by using the less charged terms of

intention and response. In this approach, I suggest that it might be useful to consider what a theatre practitioner intends to provoke in a time and place of war; before moving on to the responses that manifest among spectators.

When contemplating the possible interactions between artistic intention and spectator responses, it emerged as helpful to consider two different dimensions to the spectatorship process: reception processes and reception results. In this distinction, the former considers “what audiences are thinking, doing, feeling while watching a performance, and in the second case, they investigate audience response to a performance after the event” (Ginters, 2010:9). In concluding this thesis therefore, I propose two kinds interactions between the intention of the artists and the responses of spectators: one that focusses on reception processes and the second that focusses on reception results. The two cases of intention/response interactions that are proposed below are seen as starting points to assist a more careful articulation of both the potential and limitations of theatre in a time and place of war; considerations that warrant research beyond this doctoral undertaking.

Case 1

As I reflect on my experience, however, I ask myself if and how I have really changed. Will I switch careers to fight for the rights of refugees? Will I donate time to ease their plight? Will I do more than put money in the box by the cash register for refugees from Rwanda or Kosovo or Afghanistan or wherever the next conflict forces its citizens into exile? Probably not. And yet . . . I am transformed. Wanmin is still with me. Her identity and mine have merged, and I see her/my face when I hear stories about refugees. I look at issues of immigration with different eyes (Haedicke, 2002:115).

In Case 1 of intention/response interactions, I include works in which there is an intention from the creators to provoke a specific response amongst spectators after the performance ends i.e. after the audience members leave the performance space. For instance, a piece like *Chemins* clearly intends for its audiences to become more aware of, and sensitised toward, policies affecting asylum seekers in the European Union. Similarly, *Cages* and *This is Camp X-Ray* create immersive experiences to place the spectator into the shoes of an Other so as to create an outcome of sensitisation, awareness, and critical empathy. While there are, of course, multiple uncontrollable and intangible responses that are also inherent in such forms of embodied spectatorship (i.e. in the reception processes rather than results), performances like *Cages*, *Chemins*, and *This is Camp X-Ray* seek to catalyse a social consciousness about a very specific political issue – the experience of relational violence

against Kashmiri women in *Cages*, the plight of imprisoned Manchester residents in Guantanamo through *This is Camp X-Ray*, and the status of asylum seekers in the European Union in *Chemins*. The traces that these immersive pieces seek to leave in their spectators are desired to “last beyond the event” and “linger” (Thompson, 2005:235). By lingering, like Thompson, I mean that the response “does not have to happen at the moment of the performance but can either be sustained beyond it or occur at a different time”. Therefore, it might be said that performances in Case 1 hinge on the artist’s intention for a “memorial afterlife” (Ginters, 2010:12).

In addition to a focus on the artists’ intended memorial afterlife for their spectators, this project has led me to consider the importance of evaluating reception results in a context that is both an active conflict zone and is hostile to theatre itself. In addition to being crafted with clear intentions for a memorial afterlife then, performances in Case 1 would need to employ strategies to assess the manifestation of their intended reception results so as to legitimise the theatrical undertaking. It is important to clarify here that when I speak to the need for legitimizing a place for theatre in an active conflict zone, I refer specifically to longer-term repercussions of artistic efforts in a place like Kashmir. While intersections between intention and response might not be as relevant to theatre practitioners who are involved in short-term/one-off projects or those who do not work in active conflict zones, I have come to consider the centrality of these concepts for artistic collaborations – like that between EKTA and myself – which recur over longer periods of time. Therefore, pedagogically, providing spectators with ‘evidence’ of the afterlife of prior performances could become a way in which to invite their return to subsequent efforts. Furthermore, ethically, evaluating the manifestation of a performance’s intended afterlife might also be a way in which to guarantee the safety of the artists who are involved in the undertaking. Finding ways to clearly state intentions and evaluate the afterlife of theatre work in Kashmir might be the only way in which we – EKTA and myself -- might protect ourselves in the longer term from the very real risks to our safety.

In the context of this project, while spectators to both MKMZ and *Cages* have spoken of their memories of both performances in my subsequent visits to Kashmir, I wonder if such anecdotal evidence is sufficient with which to legitimise the space for theatre in a place where: a) theatrical activity is seen as possibly being against an Islamic code of conduct; b)

the conflicts are still active and no resolutions seem imminent; c) spectators are generally wary of an outside theatre maker's intentions in the context. Returning to the example of *Cages*, where the nature of the piece aims for a potential change in patriarchal attitudes, how does a theatre researcher go about assessing the nature of the response generated? The potential here seems to lie within evaluation strategies that take from the realm of the social sciences to assess a performance's memorial afterlife through the use of carefully framed methods.⁶⁶ While a deeper consideration of assessment tools falls outside the scope of this thesis, I consider projects in Case 1 to include artistic efforts that intend to stimulate a particular memorial afterlife and furthermore, that design methods with which to assess the nature of that afterlife.

Case 2

The artist's intention for a memorial afterlife is the primary point of distinction between Case 1 and Case 2 of the intention/response interactions. In contrast to works in Case 1 that focus on reception results, in Case 2, I consider works that focus on reception processes and on the experience that is created for spectators in the performance space. The creators in this case do not intend for, try to control, or seek to predict how spectators' responses might manifest once they leave the performance space and there is no afterlife that is intended (although, of course, an afterlife might very well occur). For instance, this was the approach that we took with MKMZ; focussing on creating a provocative experience for spectators during the performance, without seeking to control what would happen when they left the performance space. Although I used Documentary/Immersive Theatre with the larger idea of creating theatrical scenarios about Ex-militants and their narratives in Kashmir, there was no desire or attempt to control how MKMZ's spectators channelled that experience. While *Cages* sought to somehow create a memorial afterlife of critical empathy toward Kashmiri women, MKMZ presented provocative scenarios to heighten spectators' reception

⁶⁶ While a detailed consideration of possible evaluation mechanisms is outside the scope of this dissertation, here is an example of an evaluation mechanism that might be used for a piece *Cages*. Using the framework of an endorsement experiment, respondents might be divided into control and treatment groups where treated individuals [those who are spectator-participants to *Cages*] are asked to rate their support for an uncontroversial policy that is endorsed (implicitly) in the performance. Those in the control group are shown the same policy without the endorsement i.e. these respondents do not participate in *Cages*. So, for example, if the respondents were asked to rate their support for a policy that seeks more women's participation in local government, would a spectator-participant to *Cages* be more likely to support the policy as compared to those who did not come to the performance? (This approach to the endorsement experiment takes from Shaver and Zhou, 2015).

processes. Although this positioning eventually became problematic, I present MKMZ as an example of Case 2 since there was a conscious attempt (by the creators) to not control how our work should manifest once our spectators left EKTA's premises. In Case 2 therefore, as Thompson states (2009:111), the objective is simply to rouse "individuals to possibilities beyond themselves without an insistence on what the experience is – what meanings should be attached".

That said, while Thompson's defence of this reception process oriented approach might be extremely relevant to a context where theatre is an accepted activity, in an active conflict zone where theatre itself is a grey zone, rousing individuals to possibilities without an articulated emphasis on what the experience might be could become potentially dangerous. For example, in response to MKMZ, it was this question that seemed to lie at the heart of many of our spectators' critique: what meaning were we attaching to the Ex-militants' stories? And when we refused to attach meanings as the creators, it was perhaps inevitable that our spectators would add those meanings themselves. In contexts like Kashmir then, where not insisting on the meaning of an experience could have dangerous consequences, artistic undertakings might benefit from a consideration of how spectators' reception processes could also be evaluated. Although reception processes are perhaps more difficult to assess than reception results, links between spectatorship studies and Cognitive Neuroscience do point toward tools that might become useful in such a quest. While a detailed consideration of these concepts falls outside the scope of this research,⁶⁷ similarly to Case 1, a clear articulation of what happens to spectators during a theatrical performance could become a pedagogical and ethical strategy with which to justify how theatrical work intervenes in an active conflict zone like Kashmir.

The abovementioned proposals of response/intention intersections are presented here as an initial articulation of a larger project that warrants further research. In the constant need that emerged during this project to justify what might remain/begin once my performances in Kashmir end, a central component to my research following this doctoral project will be a more careful consideration of how the two cases I propose above link back to existing scholarship around affect and effect.

⁶⁷ In consultation with Dr. Mark Solms at the University of Cape Town's Psychology department, some of the relevant concepts from Cognitive Neuroscience that have been identified are: Rough and Tumble Play (Panksepp, 1998), the Body Swap Illusion (Petkova & Ehrsson, 2008), and Reality Testing and Monitoring (Prigatano and Schacter, 1991).

“When the play ends, what remains? When the play ends, what begins?”

When Primo Levi (1988) used the term grey zones, he used it to describe the complex positioning of Jewish men and women who held positions of (relative) power in the Nazi establishment. However, as stated earlier, grey zones was used in this project to encapsulate the in-between spaces between three particular groupings of people in Kashmir. While my own fluid approach to the term remained consistent through the various phases of this project and was essential to the practice-based evolution of the research, as I conclude this thesis, I am forced to consider if it might be possible for me to now offer a more precise articulation of what Kashmir’s grey zones might be. Was Levi able to precisely articulate a grey zone between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ -- of the ‘victim’ who is ‘perpetrator’ – because he wrote *after* the Holocaust and not *during* it? Furthermore, was Levi able to articulate such a grey zone because there was a more easily identifiable ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ in the context of the Holocaust; as against a context like Kashmir where the terms ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ are used differently by variously invested parties? Was Levi’s articulation of this grey zone also less contentious because he was a survivor of the Holocaust himself? And if the answer to these questions is in the affirmative, what does a project like this one enable us to discern about the grey zones of Kashmir?

As mentioned earlier in this conclusion, the workshops and performances in this project have led to the identification of various grey zones between and within the three groups: spaces in which the concepts of victimhood and perpetration become murky. And yet, looking at these spaces between and within the categories of Civil Society, Militants/Ex-militants, and the Indian Armed Forces seems insufficient in conveying the innumerable points on the ‘victim’/‘perpetrator’ spectrum in Kashmir. I have come to wonder therefore, if the term grey zones refers not, primarily, to the ‘victim’/‘perpetrator’ spectrum as I initially envisioned. Instead, the term might best refer to the spaces catalysed by the use of theatre as a methodology in an active conflict zone where artistic activity is itself contentious. It might be said, then, that the theatrical process engenders the creation of grey zones in Kashmir: where dominant and less dominant narratives might coalesce and fracture; where narratives of victimhood and perpetration might be problematised and nuanced. So perhaps the more appropriate focus is not on whose narratives occupy grey zones, but how theatre functions as a grey zone across perspectives of victimhood and perpetration in Kashmir.

In the introduction I presented a short piece of auto-ethnographic writing that was composed after my first trip to Kashmir: one that was haunted by the statement 'Indian Dogs Go Back'. Now, in the final stages of this work, I am reminded of this graffiti again, and of a statement made by a Kashmiri friend when he noticed my discomfort in response to the spray-painted message... "That is not meant for Indians like you", he said; a statement that sounded then, like a simplistic deflection from the more serious undercurrents between Kashmiris and mainland Indians.

Four years later, I wonder now if my friend's statement might not have been as glib as I then thought. 'Indian Dogs Go Back' may not be meant for Indians like me; in fact it may not be meant even for all the soldiers in the Armed Forces. Instead, I have come to wonder if the slogan actually targets a certain mind-set: a mind-set, be it amongst mainland Indians/Kashmiris/anyone else that overlooks complexity. That overlooks nuance. That overlooks the space between seeking to understand/explain violence and stressing its incomprehensibility.

"Why aren't you telling our story?": a question that is asked of me by many individuals in Kashmir. Individuals, it seems, who want their experiences to be performed despite the risks contained in that telling. As the yarn unravels then, and as more such instances occur – of people approaching me rather than me approaching them – the potential for this work to evolve are indeed immense.

Potential that both excites and terrifies;
that reveals and obscures;
that (over) complicates and (over) simplifies;
that exists, entirely,
in grey zones.

The Final Auto-ethnographic Excerpt

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