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Self-Less Language:

The Bral Acting Method

Leading to the Act of Speech

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Practice as Research PhD: Drama
University of Kent
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Under the supervision of Prof. Paul Allain
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ABSTRACT

My Practice as Research (PaR) thesis, *Self-Less Language. The Bral Acting Method Leading to the Act of Speech*, examines the relationship between creative writing and the Bral Acting Method (BAM) training. In my research I draw extensively from my vocal and physical experience with Song of The Goat Theatre training, which I have explored since 2013. I also refer to my collaboration with Polish company Song of The Goat Theatre as a dramaturg/playwright since 2016.

Stemming from the practice of BAM, the thesis explores the notion of Self-Less Language by focusing on the role of reciprocity between partners/creators. The BAM encompasses working simultaneously with and on all of the creative tools, such as the imagination, the voice, the body and the text. In my thesis, I argue that BAM, as an idiosyncratic actor training, expands the artists' creative potential in its psychophysical aspect, together with extended voice use abilities and imaginative skills. In my opinion, all of the above directly impact creative writing.

In parallel to the practical aspect of my thesis, I have reflected on historical and theoretical influences on the Song of the Goat Theatre's practice. I place it in a context related to theatre practitioners such as Constantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski, and Włodzimierz Staniewski (Gardzienice). I also refer to some principles drawn from Tibetan Buddhism and notions from current scientific discoveries. The thesis introduces some aspects of those phenomena that have been considered to further my understanding and description of BAM and Self-Less Language.

By weaving together the theoretical aspect and practical experience, I endeavour to create a picture of Self-Less Language as one possible way to activate the potential of creative writing. I support the analysis of my artistic process with examples drawn from my own creative writing and selected short film recordings in appendices.

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own and that this work has not been previously submitted in part or whole for any other degree or professional qualification. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is indicated clearly and acknowledged. Due references have been provided on all supporting literature and sources.

Alicja Joanna Bral

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First, I would like to thank Professor Paul Allain for the continuous support in my studies and research, with his patience and immense knowledge. I am very grateful to my second supervisor, Dr Margherita Laera, for her help and insightful comments about my work and the varied questions that incentivised me to widen my research from various perspectives. I want to express my sincere gratitude to my husband Grzegorz Bral for his ongoing support in many ways, emotionally, financially, and intellectually. I am grateful for his trust and courage to give me a chance to collaborate with Song of The Goat theatre as a dramaturg and actress. He encouraged me to make my dream accurate as a poet, artist, and scholar. I want to thank Maciej Rychły, the composer, for being supportive and genuinely benevolent towards me as a friend and colleague at work. I am grateful to my friend Zuzanna Ananiew, who disinterestedly helped me and supported me throughout my writing process.

A Practice as Research thesis is by nature an endeavor that depends significantly on the collaboration of many. I want to thank my colleagues from the Song of the Goat Theatre for their trust and constant support. They have welcomed me on stage and generously supported me with their knowledge and experience. I want to express my gratitude to Song of The Goat Theatre Association for ongoing financial and logistic support. I want to thank the University of Kent for all kind of support and forbearance in the most challenging times of the process.

In the end, I want to express my thankfulness towards all colleagues who took part in the Bral School of Acting workshops. It is thanks to them that I could grow and expand my knowledge of the Bral Acting Method.

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Introduction

The stimulus for this research was the desire to examine my writing practice for the Song of the Goat Theatre (Teatr Pieśń Kozła), with which I have collaborated as a dramaturg since 2016. By the end of 2020 I had had the opportunity to write texts for eight of its productions: *Island* (2016), *Hamlet – a Commentary* (2017), *Seven Gates of Thebes* (2018), *Anty-Gone* (2018), *Ecstasy* (2018), *Cassandra's Report* (2018), *Warrior* (2019) and *Apocrypha* (2020). Working with the Song of the Goat Theatre has given me a way to refine and examine my practice, starting from my experiences with the Bral Acting Method (BAM).

Some other scholars have written about the company from different angles, including Anna Porubcansky, who wrote her PhD on the Song of the Goat Theatre amongst two other groups, Odin Teatret and Gardzienice. Her main interest was to reflect on performance groups who, in addition to their artistic activity, are also involved in social practice. When she examined the practice of the Song of The Goat Theatre she highlighted the common values of their performative practice, namely their 'coordination' actor training and Tibetan Buddhism. She also acknowledged how these relate to community projects such as Brave Festival and their collaboration with ROKPA Charity.¹ Another scholar was Vasiliki Papadelli,² who reflected on her own acting practice entitled *Attunement* from the perspective of, inter alia, work with the company. Her individual movement practice incorporated selected elements from the dance form of Contact Improvisation and the movement training of the Song of the Goat Theatre. In addition, one of the key people who have repeatedly described the achievements of the theatre is the researcher Kalina Stefanova³ who, together with Marvin Carlson, recently edited the book *20 Ground-Breaking Directors of Eastern Europe. 30 Years After the Iron Curtain*, (2021) in which Tomasz Wiśniewski wrote an article about Grzegorz Bral. Wiśniewski is currently working on a theatre monograph that analyses the company

¹ Anna Porubcansky, *Social Performing Groups, and the Building of Community: Odin Theatre, Gardzienice and Song of the Goat Theatre*, Goldsmiths University of London, PhD 2012.

² Vasiliki Papadelli, *Towards a movement practice of Attunement: An incorporation of elements from Song of The Goat Theatre and contact improvisation*, Goldsmiths University of London, PhD 2014.

³ Tomasz Wiśniewski, 'Grzegorz Bral: Cosmopolitan Experiments in Theatre', in: *20 Ground-Breaking Directors of Eastern Europe. 30 Years After the Iron Curtain*, (2021), eds: Kalina Stefanova, Marvin Carlson, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp: 1-15.

between 2014 and 2021. Both works concentrate on the work of the theatre and the director. They are written from the perspective of a researcher whose experience is not based on theatrical practice but on a theatre theorist's reflections.

My research fills the gap in reflections on the Song of the Goat Theatre from the perspective of a theatre practitioner and a playwright examining the function of the word in their performances. My research focuses on the text and the creative writing process of what I call Self-Less Language. It is a unique method of working with words for the needs of the performances, which derives from the Bral Acting Method Training. Bearing in mind the meaning and place of the word in the creative process, I also try to analyse the role of music, actor training and reciprocity between teammates and their influence on the formation of the Self-Less Language. Additionally, I attempt to reflect on the philosophical and theatrical sources for the training and performances of the Song of the Goat Theatre.

At this point, it is important to outline the nature of my involvement with the Song of the Goat Theatre and my educational collaboration with Grzegorz Bral, its director. Between 2013 and 2020, I took part in over a hundred workshops led by Bral. Since 2015, I have observed every Song of the Goat Theatre rehearsal and, because of my role as tour manager, I have seen every performance, both in Poland and abroad. In 2016, I was asked to join the company as a dramaturg. In 2019, my experience was further enriched as I stepped into productions as an actress. Training with the company triggered in me the need to express my creativity through the written text. Through the experience of BAM workshops, rehearsal processes and the analysis of my own creative process, I have concluded that working on text within the Song of the Goat Theatre is an idiosyncratic kind of ensemble work. I have called this profoundly different way of writing the Self-Less Language. This term emerged to express a paradigm whereby the writer-dramaturg works on a text alongside the other creators and performers and is inspired by their work. The uniqueness of working with the text in this way is closely related to the BAM and results directly from its assumptions. In this thesis, I aim to describe the link between the physical and vocal aspects of BAM training and their impact on dramaturgy and language.

Chapter 1 consists of a historical overview of the Song of the Goat Theatre, which was founded in 1996 by Grzegorz Bral and Anna Zubrzycki and has been based in Wrocław ever since. In this chapter, I show how the company has developed and the beginnings of its training method, as well as identifying visible features of various theatrical traditions in its unique acting techniques. The Song of the Goat Theatre is often

regarded as part of the so-called “laboratory theatre” tradition. I focus only on selected features that belong to this theatre tradition, such as the ethno-oratorium⁴ idea (characteristic of the Gardzienice Theatre⁵), Jerzy Grotowski’s *via negativa* concept,⁶ Meyerhold’s Biomechanics⁷ and the Stanislavski System.⁸ Apart from theatrical inspiration, the unique elements and traditions of Tibetan Buddhism have greatly impacted on the development of the Song of the Goat Theatre. This Eastern philosophy has had a special place in the development of Bral’s activities, shaping the theatrical work of the company and the social projects initiated by him, such as the Brave Festival and the Brave Kids’ Festival. It is worth emphasising that Buddhism has a special place in my practice as well. While I was born and raised in the Christian tradition, I have practised Buddhism and meditation for ten years and it has made a significant impact on my creative work. In some traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, creative writing can be a practice of intellectual and spiritual self-development. In my case, this has always been one of the fundamental motivations for work.

As my PhD thesis is practice-based, I have not researched the company’s history in detail. Instead, I have presented a contextual overview of its origins and the theatrical context of its sources and inspirations. In Chapter 2, I have emphasised the distinctive aspects of the Buddhist idea of Coordination, which has constituted the basis for the development of both the pedagogical work of the theatre and its method of building productions. Another influence is the concept of the postdramatic theatre, described in-depth by Hans-Thies Lehmann.⁹ I have referred only to those aspects of postdramatic theatre that have something in common with Song of the Goat Theatre practices. One of these is music and the way that he has described its function within a production. Later in the Chapter II, Subsection 2b, I also refer to Adolphe Appia and how he understands the role of music in performances. Bearing in mind that this work is not a historical survey, but rather a practice-based reflection on my own work, I have not gone into the legacy of the theatre tradition in detail, only outlining some of its features to strengthen my thesis. By its very nature, Practice as Research (PaR) combines ‘doing’ and ‘reflecting’ in one thesis. PaR puts practice at the centre of research. However, it is only

⁴ Leszek Kolankiewicz, „Etnooratorium-swietych obcowanie”, *Res Publica*, (5), 1987.

⁵ OPT GARDZIENICE Founded in 1977 by Włodzimierz Staniewski in the southeast of Poland. For more information see: Paul Allain (2004), *Gardzienice. Polish Theatre in Transition*, Routledge, London.

⁶ Jerzy Grotowski (2019), *Towards a poor theatre*, Methuen Drama, London.

⁷ Edward Braun (1996), *Meyerhold. A revolution in Theatre*, Methuen Drama, London.

⁸ Constantin Stanislavski (1989), *An Actor Prepares*, Routledge, New York.

⁹ Hans Thies-Lehmann (2006), *Postdramatic theatre*, Routledge, New York.

when practice is described and supported by theory that it opens up new areas at the intersection of art and research. While combining art with research is a new and challenging task for those interested in constructing a scientific approach to examining art, Robin Nelson has provided some important guidance in this regard:

PaR involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and introduction where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry. (...) Indeed, to take on a PaR PhD student, I would need to be convinced that the proposed inquiry necessarily entailed practical knowledge which might primarily be demonstrated in practice – that is, knowledge which is a matter of doing rather than abstractly conceived and thus able to be articulated by way of a traditional thesis in words alone. (...) Given the historical divide between theory and practice in the Western intellectual tradition, moreover, it is not surprising that misunderstandings within and without the academy arose when it appeared that arts practices were suddenly becoming acceptable in the research domain.¹⁰

The methodological process of my research is based on both theory and practice. By combining intellectual analysis with practical experience, I have created what is hopefully a solid and research-based picture of the phenomenon of Self-Less Language. This is analysed closely in Chapter 4, but also appears in Chapter 3, which contains descriptions of the company's training processes and how they relate to creative writing. Most of the research material comes from my collaborations with the Song of the Goat Theatre company and many hours of training during workshops. This research is, in part, a systematisation of the BAM as a method of awakening the creative powers within artists. I have presented the creative process of the theatre based on the hermeneutic circle, using diagrams which depict the BAM and Self-Less Language as never-ending processes of self-improvement. In Chapter 5, I describe how the creative process concludes with staging a performance and I explain the BAM's uniqueness and its impact on writing skills for the theatre and the stage. The result is a complete picture of the process of creating dramaturgy, with Self-Less Language being the core analytical concept. Besides music, voice work and the physical aspects of training, it is one of the basic elements in constructing Song of the Goat Theatre productions.

¹⁰ Robin Nelson (2013), *Practice as Research in the Arts. Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp:9-34.

In my research, I did not broadly describe the phenomenon of dramaturgy or the function of a playwright from the perspective of the history of the theatre. The definition of this phenomenon is broad and has varied throughout history. Through the decades, many theorists have separated the role of the dramaturg from that of the playwright and have investigated the entire spectrum of dramaturgical types.¹¹ The literature on dramaturgy is broad and while it may seem indispensable to include a consideration of it in my work, I have chosen a different model for describing my practice, focusing instead on reciprocity in the creative process. In my research, I have answered questions about how the ensemble and its collective work can trigger creativity in the writer and about using words which can facilitate shared understanding and collective emotional experiences. In addition to considerations of theory and context, I have focused on practice as the primary source of research. I have quoted numerous texts that have served as building materials for the Song of the Goat Theatre's productions. I have also used and refer to specific fragments of films from rehearsals and performances.¹² Furthermore, I have included two original dramatical texts, as well as a recording of the *Apocrypha* performance, which can be found in an Appendix 4 to this work, as whole document of the performance.¹³ Such a detailed record of my work is necessary to outline the Self-Less Language creative process accurately.

There is a limit to how much embodied knowledge can be expressed on paper. Many of the experiences of practitioners remain tacit knowledge, rather than overt or describable phenomena.¹⁴ Some aspects of personal experience inevitably get lost while describing them in words, which is obviously an obstacle to fully conveying the power of living creative expertise. At the same time, during my research I came to realise that knowledge gained through experience is subject to a process of extreme individualisation and cannot be considered universal. By its very nature, any attempt to create and describe

¹¹ The role of the dramaturg appears in many books such as: Turner Cathy, Behrndt Synne, (2016) *Dramaturgy and Performance*, Palgrave, London; Mary Luckhurst, (2006), *Dramaturgy a Revolution in Theatre*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Magda Romanska, (2014), *The post-traumatic theatre of Grotowski and Kantor. History and Holocaust in Akropolis and The Dead Class*, Anthem Press; and many more.

¹² In the Appendices list: Appendices 6-21 are fragments of films from various performances, Appendices 22-26 are fragments of films from rehearsals for *Apocrypha*.

¹³ Both fragments of performances and the full recording of *Apocrypha* are official promotional and marketing material. The *Apocrypha* recording should not be used publicly, but only for the scientific purposes of this work. Grzegorz Bral made fragments from the rehearsal during our working process for *Apocrypha* to help actors in the learning process.

¹⁴ The notion of 'tacit knowledge' or 'personal knowledge' was coined and described by Michael Polanyi. See Michael Polanyi (2004), *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Routledge, London.

a repetitive and effective creative method must remain unfulfilled. All training methods create circumstances which have the potential to stimulate creativity. In this thesis, I have described how I perceive the BAM and Self-Less Language and their impact on creative writing. I have emphasised the importance of the connection between vocal and physical training and text work. Nonetheless, I am convinced that despite my attempts at systematising both the BAM and Self-Less Language, these remain as concepts which resist precise elucidation. Their implementation in the creative process depends on the artist's characteristics and determination.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that I have described just one possible way of developing one's creativity, rather than a method for achieving a specific goal. My objective has been that of discussing the potential within the BAM and Self-Less Language for developing creativity in writing.

Chapter I. Background

1. Back to the beginning. A Historical overview.

If you do everything step by step, no magic is needed.
(Akong Rinpoche in conversation with Grzegorz Bral, Lublin 1993)

Song of the Goat Theatre, the internationally known ensemble from Poland, dates to December 1996. At that time, Grzegorz Bral, Anna Zubrzycki and Gabriel Gawin met during their first seven-day workshop in Lublin.¹⁵ They then continued their work at the Grotowski Institute in Wrocław,¹⁶ in January 1997. Their enthusiasm resulted in a three-month long workshop from July to September 1997, in Brzezinka, a working space of the

¹⁵ Personal communication with Grzegorz Bral (Conversation on 8th March 2020).

¹⁶ As it states on the website: "The Grotowski Institute in Wrocław is a municipal arts institution committed to documenting and disseminating knowledge about Jerzy Grotowski and his Laboratory Theatre as well as hosting events corresponding to the ideas laid down by Grotowski's creative practice." For more information see the website: <http://en.grotowski-institute.pl>, Accessed 05th May 2020

Grotowski Institute.¹⁷ The first ensemble was the fruit of that period.¹⁸ The Grotowski Institute hosted the company from 1997 until 2002, when they were offered their own working space, a 13th century refectory on Purkyniego Street in Wrocław. This was their home from 2002 until June 2019.¹⁹

From the very beginning, the ensemble was inclined to Greek theatre. The name of the theatre has its origins in the Greek words *Tragon Ode* - which in translation means Song of The Goat. The theatre refers to the tradition of Greek drama and theatre in the form of its performances. From the beginning, the performances adopted a musical form in which words take on a specific form of musicality (most often in contrast to the background of a melodic line, carried out in a precise rhythm). The performances of the Song of the Goat Theatre often take a bipartite form, in which the actions of the characters are intertwined with polyphonic songs, taking over the role of the Greek quasi-choir. The songs in the performances either include in-depth reflection on the characters or they comment on the course of events. Many researchers have explored the issue of the Greek chorus and its functions for the development of tragedy. The issue itself would require a separate work or a large chapter devoted to these issues. Renaud Gangé and Marianne Govers Hopman's examination of the Greek chorus reflects how the Song of the Goat Theatre work in this area:

Generally speaking, the tragic chorus as a protagonist invited to speak with Aristotle has a status which leads it to interact with the actors of the heroic and dramatic action: the choral group is integrated in the time and space of the plot, of the mythos (still in the Aristotelian meaning of the word) enacted in front of the skēnē. This is its dramatic mediation.²⁰

¹⁷ Brzezinka is a small village in a forest, close to Oleśnica and about 40 km from Wrocław. Between 1971-1981, it was the main working place for Jerzy Grotowski, where he established a small working studio in a rural environment. Together with the actors closest to him, he led a series of workshops as part of the paratheatre phase. For more information see: Archive of Grotowski Institute <https://grotowski.net/en/encyclopedia/paratheatre> (Accessed 2.03.2020)

¹⁸ The group consisted of Grzegorz Bral, Anna Zubrzycki, Gabriel Gawin, Catherine Corrigan, Anna Krotoska, Kamila Klamut, Małgorzata Szczerbowska, Maike Lynden, Agnieszka Jackowiak, Dominika Sośnicka, Jarosław Fret, Dawid Zysnarski, Przemysław Błaszczak, Witold Kozłowski, Terence Mann. (Archive of the Song of the Goat Theatre, notes taken by Grzegorz Bral, while working on the first production)

¹⁹ The studio and offices at Purkyniego are private property for which the company had to pay monthly rent. This became impossible, for financial reasons, in 2019. Since then the company has not had their own headquarters and must rent premises for rehearsals and performances.

²⁰ *Choral Meditation in Greek Tragedy* (2013), (ed) Renaud Gangé, Marianne Govers Hopman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 35.

Although the music in the Song of The Goat Theatre performances has nothing in common with the ancient Greek way of singing as far as we know it, the main rule that the choir is separated from the characters is maintained.

The use of music requires the employment of a specific language, which I will write about later in Chapter IV of my thesis. The language in which the performances were built was based on metaphor (Greek: μεταφορική) which was described by Aristotle in his *Poetics*.²¹ I write about the role of metaphor in the Song of The Goat Theatre later in the thesis. As a dramaturg, I value the function of metaphorical language, as it helps me to include the history and depth of the character in a short line, and at the same time I can tune my writing to the musical structure. I will write more about the function of music later in the thesis, but here I want to mention the basics of what I understand the metaphorical to be:

The duality of the rhetoric and poetics reflects the duality in the use of speech as well as in the situation of speaking. We said that rhetoric was an oratorical technique (...) to know how to persuade (...) Poetics (...) does not depend on rhetoric (...) it purges the feelings of pity and fear (...) Metaphor, however, has a foot in each domain. With respect to structure, it can really consist in just one, unique operation, the transfer of the meaning of words; but with respect to function, it follows the divergent destinies of oratory and tragedy. Metaphor will therefore have a unique structure but two functions: a rhetorical and a poetic function.²²

As dramaturg of the company's latest performances, I can confirm that metaphor has a rhetorical function in my writing, the purpose of which is to strengthen the expression, as well as being for purely poetic purposes.

The resemblance to Greek theatre was visible also in the themes that were often the inspiration for the Song of The Goat. The first performances of the newly formed 'Tragos' theatre ensemble took place at the Grotowski Institute on 5th November 1997. The title of the performance was *Song of the Goat-Dithyramb*. Later, *Dithyramb* was presented during the Confrontation Theatre Festival in Lublin, as part of the 20th anniversary celebration of Gardzienice Theatre, in 1997.²³ In 1998, the company changed its name to the Song of the Goat Theatre. Up until 2020, the theatre had created four performances adapting Greek tragedies for the stage: *Song of the Goat – Dithyramb* (1996), based on

²¹ Arystoteles (2001), *Retoryka. Poetyka*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

²² Paul Ricoeur (2003), *The Rule of Metaphor*, London and New York, Routledge, p.12.

²³ Paul Allain (2004) *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition*, Routledge, London,

The Bacchae by Euripides, *Antigone: Triptych: Seven Gates of Thebes*, *Anty-gone*, *Ecstasy* (2018), *Cassandra's Report* (2018) and *Warrior* (2019), based on *The Trojan Women* by Euripides.

Traditionally, the criticism of tragedy has assumed that there is (or should be) something that can be called a 'true' tragic plot. The most widely accepted master narrative is an integral part of the Aristotelian tradition that for centuries dominated tragic criticism and is still surprisingly resilient today.²⁴

Greek theatre laid the foundations for the development of the European theatre and the ancient tragedy constantly inspires artists all over the world.

The Song of the Goat Theatre has developed an international reputation as one of Europe's most innovative training-based theatre companies, committed to researching new ways of approaching acting and performance. Between 1997-2020, Song of The Goat Theatre produced fourteen performances, many of which have been awarded around the world.²⁵ The company continuously explores how to develop the theatre's potential, which, as it describes, can offer the audience a profound spiritual experience that can reaffirm its sensitivity and humanity. In its pursuit of creating a new world of theatre, the Song of the Goat Theatre practices the ever-evolving Bral Acting Method.²⁶

Every rehearsal and performance serves as a laboratory which enables the company to research the craft of the actor and director, or to develop new techniques, performance languages as well as forms of work. The search for interconnectedness is a distinctive element in the company's practice. It consists of connection, meeting and openness as the seeds of what it considers to be an 'authentic experience' for an audience during each performance. This commitment to close relationships guides the development of each new training approach, which always seeks to integrate movement, voice, song and text to create a performance that has an inherent musicality and connects with the audience

²⁴ *Greek Tragedy* (2003), edit. P.E. Easterling, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp: 180-181.

²⁵ *Song of the Goat - Dithyramb* (1996), *Chronicles a Lamentation* (2001), *Lacrimosa* (2005), *Macbeth* (2008), *Songs of Lear* (2012), *Portraits of the Cherry Orchard* (2013), *Return to The Voice* (2014), *Crazy God* (2016), *Island* (2016), *Hamlet – a Commentary* (2017), *A Grand Inquisitor* (2018), *Antigone-Triptych* (2018), *Cassandra's Report* (2018), *Warrior* (2019), *Apocrypha* (2020).
<http://piesnkozla.pl/en/our-theatre#170-history> Accessed 6th April 2020

²⁶ For more on this see: <http://www.bralschool.com/open-workshops#250-workshop-with-grzegorz-bral> . At the center of the BRAL ACTING METHOD is the performer himself, seen as a source of the act of creation and a complex instrument in which all acting tools are interdependent. The BAM concentrates on searching for an organic interlinking and integration of voice, movement, and imagination within an individual performer, as well as on researching and developing a path of coexistence between a partner and the group as an ensemble (paper archive as well as online materials, by Song of the Goat Theatre, Accessed 16th March 2020.

on a sensory level. Through this training-based theatre process, the Company continues to enrich not only its practice and performance but also to invest in the artistic development of actors and practitioners from different continents.²⁷

In my thesis I use two expressions, ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’, both in relation to acting. Truth in my understanding relates more to the actress’s existence on stage and her experience during the rehearsal process. In his book *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski, by quoting Tortsov, describes how the truth can be understood:

Truth on the stage is whatever we can believe in with sincerity, whether in ourselves or in our colleagues. Truth cannot be separated from belief, nor belief from truth. They cannot exist without each other and without both of them it is impossible to live your part, or to create anything. Everything that happens on the stage must be convincing to the actor himself, to his associates and to the spectators. It must inspire belief in the possibility, in real life, of emotions analogous to those being experienced on the stage by the actor. Each and every moment must be saturated with a belief in the truthfulness of the emotion felt, and in the action carried out, by the actor.²⁸

Thus, according to Stanislavski, ‘truth’ starts from the sincere conviction of an actress in what she believes in regarding her character and the world that is to be created in the performance on stage. This description resembles my way of understanding the phenomenon of the truth in relation to the theatre.

Theatrical ‘authenticity’ is the offspring of the ‘truth’. In my understanding it relates more to an audience perspective or that of the receiver of an event or experience (e.g. an actor during training may have an authentic experience that is the result of actions based on truth). Grotowski described authenticity as the actor’s attitude towards the viewer:

You know that in each of our productions we create a different relationship between actors and audience. In *Dr Faustus*, the spectators are the guests; in *The Constant Prince*, they are the onlookers. But I think the essential thing is that the actor must not act for the audience, he must act in confrontation with the spectators, in their presence. Better still, he must fulfil an authentic act in place of the spectators, an act of extreme yet disciplined sincerity and authenticity. He must give himself and not hold himself back, open up and not close in on himself as this would end in narcissism.²⁹

²⁷ See Archive of the Song of the Goat Theatre for a list of company members.

²⁸ Constantin Stanislavski (2003), *An Actor Prepares*, Routledge, New York, pp:141-142

²⁹ Jerzy Grotowski (2002), *Towards a Poor Theatre*, (ed) Eugenio Barba, Routledge, New York, pp:213-214.

Bral did not have the opportunity to work with Grotowski. Nevertheless, the heritage of the theatrical ethos introduced by him was core to Bral's theatrical experience. Describing the training and work of the Song of the Goat Theatre, one can describe the phenomenon of 'authenticity' referring to the words of the author of *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

Bral and Zubrzycki were former actors of Gardzienice Theatre Association.³⁰ They left Gardzienice in the early 1990's (Bral in 1991, Zubrzycki in 1992) and started to search for a new, independent way of working in the field of theatre. In 1997, Gawin, who worked as a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), introduced Niamh Dowling to Bral and Zubrzycki. Dowling was at that time the Head of the Theatre Department at MMU. In 2004, the theatre was approached by MMU to establish a Master of Arts (MA) Acting Program. The collaboration lasted until 2012, with a new cohort every two years. There has been direct cooperation between the Song of the Goat Theatre and the Bral School of Acting (BSA), a private school established in the United Kingdom by Grzegorz Bral and me, since 2013.

From the beginning, the educational and artistic paths inside the company were very closely intertwined. This unity was so strong that until 2014, Song of the Goat Theatre was comprised only of graduates of its Master's in Art program or exceptional students who took part in one of the extended workshops run by the company.³¹

I began my collaboration with the Song of the Goat Theatre in 2014, first as a marketing and public relations specialist, later as a producer and since 2016, as a dramaturg and playwright. Consequently, my research is the offspring of years-long involvement with the Song of the Goat Theatre's practice.

³⁰ In 2020, accusations of bullying and molestation in the theatre were brought against the founder of Gardzienice, Włodzimierz Staniewski. When submitting this thesis, the case was still not fully resolved. I have no direct experience of this work so cannot comment further, though clearly such cases are part of wider cultural and social issues happening in many parts of the world and not just in the theatre. More on this specific case is available in Polish and English: <https://medium.com/@marianasadovska/mariana-sadovska-coming-out-5bcec0c3cc75>; <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/teatr/joanna-wichowska-gardzienice-polski-teatr-przemoc-naduzycia-rozmowa/#>

³¹ Appendix 1a Chronicles of the Theatre (1996-2020) and Appendix 5 Report on the Activity, and Appendix 1b Catalogue are included in this thesis. All appendices have been collected and prepared by me. In Appendix 1a, I collected the essential facts from the history of Song of the Goat Theatre. For this purpose, I used the theatre's archives, which are not available on the Internet and were collected based on detailed research of documents and reviews of the activities of the Song of the Goat Theatre. Appendix 1b the Catalogue is a collection of short descriptions of performances currently in the theatre repertoire. A catalogue is a tool for my work as a tour manager and producer of TPK performances. Appendix 5 was created as an official record of the theatre's financial and substantive activities and was prepared for the City of Wrocław. The report is publicly available and can be downloaded from the theatre's website: <http://piesnkozla.pl/en/news#385-activity-report>

The concept of being a dramaturg in Europe is more like an evolving idea, rather than the strictly appointed role of someone who brings a text into a theatre production. In many theatres, there is the conventional understanding of this role as one which supports a production by supplying ideas, context and content. There is a strict distinction between a dramaturg and a playwright. The first is seen more as a researcher, who provides context before and during the rehearsal process. This role is strictly related to the actual production. In contrast, the playwright creates an independent piece of written art. The distinction seems clear, but nowadays, both functions can merge. In the introduction to her *Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, Romanska writes:

As dramaturgy attempts to define itself separately from playwriting, the etymology of the word can help us illuminate its many historical and modern uses. Everyone can be a playwright (or, at least, everyone can write a bad play), but not everyone can be a dramaturg (that is, not everyone will actually know how to fix it). Dramaturgy requires the analytical skill of discerning and deconstructing all elements of dramatic structure. (...) A plot is not a story or narrative but rather a dramaturgical scaffolding that arranges the order of storytelling incidents in an order that culminates in cathartic release.³²

Being a dramaturg in the Song of the Goat Theatre requires both aspects mentioned above. One must supply the text, as well as a broader context for generating ideas during the rehearsal process. Writing for the Song of the Goat Theatre demands openness to anything that may occur during practice. We all use the BAM as the basic form of training in each artistic creation. To fully grasp this vague methodological notion, one must understand that its principles are both obvious and sophisticated at the same time. The core concept of the BAM relates to simultaneously establishing a continuous harmonious unity, at all levels of a production, between the ensemble and the individual performer. This approach stems from Bral's personal belief system, which is rooted in Tibetan Buddhism. This ancient philosophy and its principles radiate throughout the director's entire artistic activities. These principles will be described in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For now, it is enough to express the source of the BAM in terms of interconnectedness; a phenomenon in which all the elements of a production – performers, emotions, gestures, voice and words – need to be in balance.

³² Magda Romanska (2016), *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, London and New York, Routledge, pp.1-2.

As a dramaturg of the Song of the Goat Theatre, one must submit to this guiding principle of simultaneous synergy between all the creators and elements of a performance. This surrendering to the central principle of the ensemble raises the need to search for a language that reflects the pre-eminence of the artistic work over the individuality of the writer; one which, in this thesis, is called a Self-Less Language.

Below there is an example of this from a poem in which two characters have a dialogue:

OSWOJENIE

Gertruda

When I was a child, I did not know longing
The open and bright world lasted, I lived
I don't remember what laughter is today
I envy my lieges their freedom
I bottle the suffering up in my heart, which is broken by the pain
Do you know the loneliness which turns my breath into lead?

Claudius

They've deceived us.
They've taken away our innocence, changed our conscience
They made us do it
I will be with you, Gertrude - I'll help you forget it all
Just come with me

Gertruda

My memories revive as they kill life
I see her every day, my little girl
As she was dying, she believed I would save her
They tore my soul out and watched it wither
Each day, next to her dead soul³³

Even though I am the author of the above words, they are a reflection on two characters and their relationships derived from the original drama. The lyrics were written in a process where my interpretation of Shakespeare's drama was interwoven with conversations with the director and the performers. It is ultimately a collaborative process, in which the individual is sublimated.

At this point, it is worth clarifying what I mean by Self-Less Language, because the term is likely to be equated with the word 'egoless'; that is, as a language deprived of any ego. The 'ego', a phenomenon popularised by the psychologist Sigmund Freud, is so complex that its description would require a separate study. Bearing in mind that only specialists can fully understand it in the Freudian sense, I am only interested in emphasising its scientific perspective, without an accompanying analysis. I will focus on

³³ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – A commentary*, premiere 2nd July 2018.

the linguistic distinction between the concepts of 'ego' and 'self'. In direct translation from Greek, Ego *Eγώ* means 'I', being the basis of each person's existence. 'Self' and 'Self-Less' are combined forms which depict the subject's attitude towards the surrounding world, rather than its essence. Self-Less Language thus refers to a form of creativity which is not focused exclusively on the author's personal experiences.³⁴ Instead, it refers to a posture in which the writer tries to capture the perspectives and needs of the other creators of the production and its characters. It can be described as writing through oneself, but with an extensive view that includes and respects others and is *for* others. At the same time, the author preserves her ego, through which she tries to understand the needs and manifestations of others as accurately as possible. H.H Dalai Lama has written that, 'two types of selflessness are differentiated from the perspective of their basis, person and phenomena'.³⁵ From the perspective of the individual, 'selflessness' could be read as 'ego-lessness', while from the perspective of the phenomena, it is like 'altruism in action'. According to this understanding, Self-Less Language can be compared to the altruistic element in language, the task of which is to benefit others or to serve higher causes, such as performance.

Building dramaturgy with Self-Less Language means that every word brought into the artistic frame should serve the benefit of the group and the production itself. The principle of close relationships applies to everybody, with each of the creators giving and receiving at the same time. To know what others need, one must be open and sensitive. Social psychologist Erich Fromm has described this state in the following manner:

(The artist) has to give up holding onto himself, as a thing and begin to experience himself only in the process of creative response; paradoxically enough, if he can experience himself in this process, he loses himself. He transcends boundaries of his own person, and at the very moment when he feels 'I am' he also feels 'I am you', 'I am one with the worlds'.³⁶

Fromm presents a theory of expanded consciousness which helps the creator to grasp a certain degree of generality, while maintaining his/her own creative identity. In this sense,

³⁴ Some concepts of being creative in the theatre are outlined in Suzanne Burgoyne (2018), *Creativity in Theatre. Theory and Action in Theatre/Drama Education*, Springer, New York.

³⁵ H.H Dalai Lama (2020), *Science and Philosophy in the Buddhist Classics. The Mind*, Vol.2, (edit.) Thupten Jinpa, Wisdom Publication, New York, p.23.

³⁶ Erich Fromm (1958), 'The Creative Attitude', in (ed.) Harold Anderson, *Creativity and Its Cultivation*, Harper and Row, New York, p.51.

Self-Less Language expresses an axiological attitude towards language, which serves as an element of the common and coherent work of an ensemble.

As each text and singular word brings with it its own idiosyncratic meaning, a dramaturg/playwright who is part of an ensemble must find the verbal material which will supply the most significant meaning and at the same time which is built with words that open-up the imaginations of the performers and other co-creators. Such a situation can occur thanks to the use of metaphorical language.

Metaphors allow artists to achieve a distance between significant and marked elements, while maintaining a field of mutual understanding. This enables both a kind of neutralizing and, simultaneously, an opening-up of the semantic field, not only for individual language elements but also for physical and musical gestures. By using metaphors, or in other words figurative language, an author can extend the semantic meaning contained in information. Aristotle attached great importance to metaphor and functions in poetic language. In its description, a metaphor can transfer the name of one thing to another. Meaning can be transferred from one object to another by analogy or contrast.³⁷ The use of metaphorical language leaves room for the spectator's interpretation. As a dramaturg in the *Song of the Goat Theatre*, I am constantly searching for this kind of language. The ideal situation would be one in which the audience's imagination was expanded and in which their feelings and subconscious associations were moved. One of the lyrics from *Hamlet – a Commentary* shows Ophelia being compared to a willow tree. We hear in one of the songs "She stood like a leaning willow. She fell slowly as we all saw."³⁸ I introduced the metaphorical picture of a young suicidal woman to highlight how society brought her to this dramatic psychological state in a long process of manipulation and mental abuse. I wanted to stimulate the audience's imagination in order to shed new light on the Shakespearian character.

In one of his texts, French literary theorist, philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes³⁹ reflects on the writer on several levels: as a person who lives at a certain time, as someone who juggles language and content which circulate as cultural input and as someone who 'sings of the early bards', thus reinterpreting codes of meaning. To Barthes, the text is a tissue of meanings and signs, while writing itself is counter-theological; due

³⁷ This knowledge made up part of my education at Gdańsk University. See *Arystoteles. Retoryka.Poetyka*, (2001), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, Polska. pp. 354-357.

³⁸ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – A commentary*, premiere 2nd July 2018. Footage is in [Appendix 21](#).

³⁹ Roland Barthes (2010), 'The Death of the Author,' in (ed.) Richard Howard, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, Hill and Wang, New York.

to an unlimited number of interpretations, it does not allow us to reach an end in terms of sense or possible meanings. The reader's role is of significance here too. He or she actively creates the work through the final process of interpretation. Barthes' theories are especially significant for the Song of the Goat Theatre because productions have always been created with audiences in mind, as highlighted by Bral. He not only wants to provide aesthetic pleasure, by bringing about harmonious visual and vocal experiences, but also to create performances around common human experiences.⁴⁰

As Song of the Goat Theatre productions are developed, additional factors such as music, movement and rhythm gain in significance. However, the dominant metaphor of the entire work is superior to all of these. The existence of a progressive production with an organic structure puts an end to the writer's isolation and allows him or her to enter the living tissue of the work coming into existence.

In the next section, I will explore the relationship between the art created by the Song of the Goat Theatre and the achievements of other theatre practitioners, namely Constantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski and Gardzienice. Each of these phenomena has directly influenced the development of the Song of the Goat Theatre to varying degrees. Due to space limitations, I will assume that a large part of theatre history and the achievements of the afore-mentioned theatre practitioners are well known to readers. As such, I will only address some aspects of their work in order to reinforce my thesis. Inevitably, this point of view may sometimes seem limited or incomplete, but the reader should be aware that the various methods of acting referred to in this work have been described selectively and their treatment should not be taken as a complete picture of the achievements of their creators.

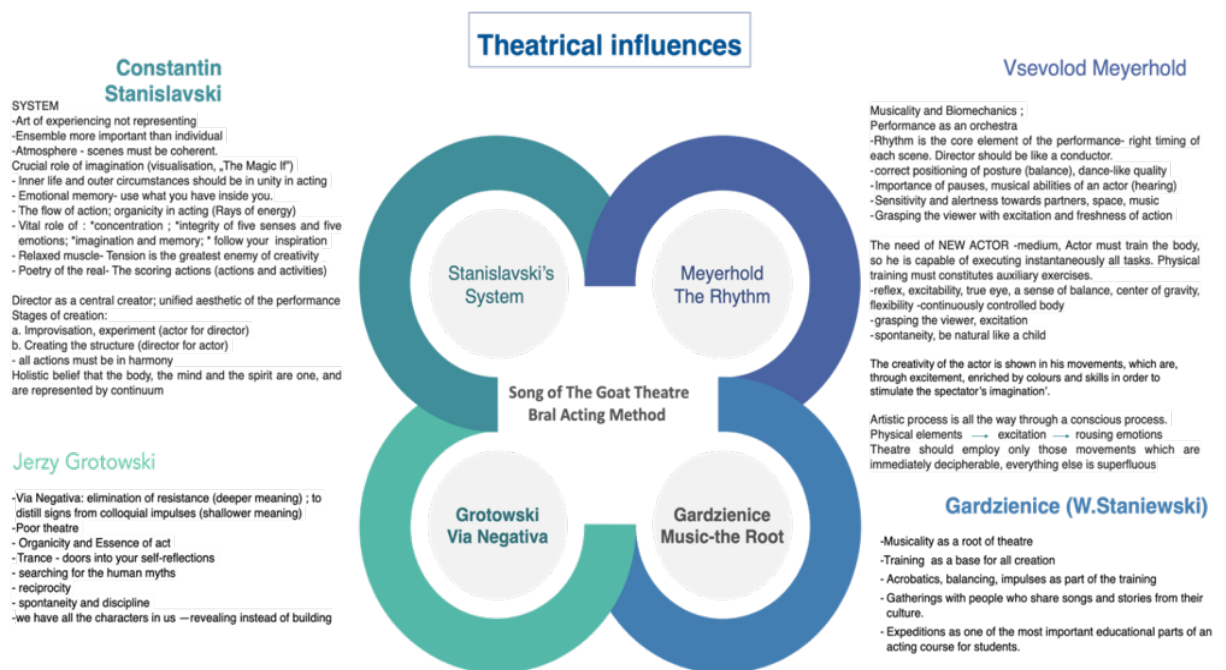
2.Theatrical context - sources and inspirations.

Actor training and the performing arts in general do not evolve in isolation from history or current circumstances. They are predominantly the sum of the experience and inspiration of its practitioners. Theatre develops in parallel to changes in dramaturgy and the ever-changing needs of the audience. It is, in essence, a very intertextual phenomenon, which consists of three dimensions: the past (the knowledge we inherit), the present (in

⁴⁰ My conversation with Bral 20th April 2020.

response to the demands of our time) and the future (for the next generation). History has seen a number of practitioners who have been able to encompass all the needs of their times and those of past times and who were able to incorporate them into one complex system to help younger practitioners. There are also several artists and acting teachers now looking for new methods of working with actors.⁴¹ One of these is Grzegorz Bral, with his practice in the Song of the Goat Theatre.

In what follows, I will outline the main artists who have influenced Bral's artistic development. I will consecutively explain these relations in the form of brief descriptions.



During his lifetime, Bral has had several significant encounters with the profound and inspiring ideas of various theatre reformers. One of these was with Constantin Stanislavski, the creator of the famous System of Acting. Sonia Moore, one of Stanislavski's students, has written a book on this exceptional training, in which she explains that 'The body must *speak* in silence, when there are no words on stage (...) Do not do anything *in general*, it's the enemy of art.'⁴²

Bral might also utter such words to his students and actors during rehearsals or at workshop sessions. In considering his way of doing theatre, one can see that the relation to Stanislavski is not direct, but that it refers to a later period in the development of the System, when Stanislavski paid more attention to the acting craft's physical aspects.

⁴¹ See Alison Hodge (ed.) (2010), *Actor Training*, Routledge, London.

⁴² Sonia Moore (1984), *The Stanislavski System*, Penguin Books, New York p. 23.

However, it cannot be denied that many of Stanislavski's reforming assumptions have become common practice among his successors.⁴³ With this understanding, Stanislavski and his method have introduced into theatre practice elements that have had a significant impact on the Song of the Goat Theatre and the BAM. One of these elements is the profound belief that theatre is the Art of Experiencing and not Representing. This rule also applies to texts created for the stage. Working with the Song of the Goat Theatre, my texts are concerned with the experience of training and the relations between the characters on stage. This specific relationship between my work on the text and the process of rehearsing makes it possible to grasp the words flowing from the experience, rather than only those deriving from representation. I write more on this topic in the following chapters of this work. With this in mind, I must highlight the significant role of The Magic If, Imagination and Emotional Memory in Stanislavski's System.⁴⁴

Subsequently to Stanislavski's own interpretation of how to use these terms, these ideas have had a substantial effect on approaches to life-like constitution that have since operated in the theatre. Firstly, artists should build an accurate Atmosphere for the scene. This can be described thus, in the words of Stanislavski's great student Michael Chekhov, that 'the idea of a play produced on the stage is its spirit; its atmosphere is its soul, and all that is visible and audible is its body'.⁴⁵ Next, actors should analyse and integrate the Inner Life and Outer Circumstances of the character. At the conclusion of this stage, Stanislavski would usually ask: 'Consider: what would I do if I were...?'⁴⁶ This means that individual memory and the power of the imagination should now start working inside the actor. In order to fully absorb the world created for the performance and, furthermore, to saturate the character with what has been called within this practice, "real emotions", actors have to make use of Emotional Memory. This specific state of self-awareness can materialize in those who have experienced similar events or who have trained their imagination to a high level and who possesses a certain degree of compassion.⁴⁷ At the moment at which the actor fully achieves all the stages of emotional experience (переживание - in Russian), he or she must activate exceptional levels of concentration.

⁴³ See Shomit Mitter (1992), *Systems of rehearsal. Stanislavsky, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook*, Oxfordshire, Taylor & Francis Ltd.

⁴⁴ Sonia Moore (1984), op. cit., pp. 25-45.

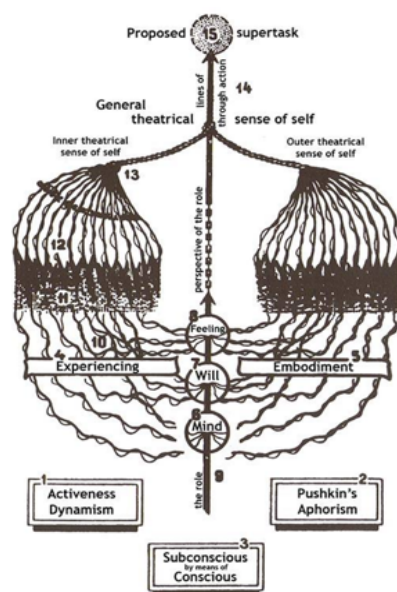
⁴⁵ Michael Chekhov (2014), *To the actor. On the Technique of Acting*, Harper & Row, New York, USA.

⁴⁶ Sonia Moore (1984), op. cit., p. 25.

⁴⁷ My research has focused on Sonia Moore 1984), op. cit.; Alison Hodge, (2010), op. cit., Shomit Mitter, (1992), op. cit.; Constantin Stanislavski, (1989), op.cit.

Such a focus on the present moment⁴⁸ allows the actor to coexist within the ensemble harmoniously. Only if all of this can be achieved is it possible for the ensemble to produce ‘the flow of action.’ Instantly, but voluntarily, they thus send each other ‘rays of energy.’ This flow of action is the basis for the ‘organicity’ of a performance.

According to the principles of the System, the director is the central creator of a performance. He is responsible for the structure, the precise and accurate balance of each scene and clarity in all the characters. Stanislavski divided the whole process of creation into two stages. Firstly, the actors improvise actions and activities to create material for the performance. Physically demanding actions should still occur with relaxed muscles, as tension is the great enemy of creativity. Stanislavsky believed that, ‘in every physical action there is something psychological, and in the psychological something physical.’⁴⁹ Secondly, the director applies a unified aesthetics to the production. All actions have to be in harmony like a musical score. Harmony and unity are essential aspects of Stanislavski’s philosophy. He believes that the body, the mind and the spirit are one and that they represent a continuum. We can see this in a diagram of Stanislavski’s System:



***The System is a guide.
Open and read.***

***The System
is a handbook,
not a philosophy.***

***The moment when
the System
begins to become
a philosophy
is its end.***

(Stanislavsky, *An Actors Work on Himself*, pt. II)

⁴⁸ According to Constantin Stanislavski (2016), *My Life in Art*, Bloomsbury Publication, London, Stanislavski was fascinated by Yoga as well as Eastern philosophy which promotes a unity between the mind, spirit, and body, which can be achieved only in the present moment.

⁴⁹ Alison Hodge (2010), op. cit. p. 7.

There are a few similarities between Stanislavski's System and the Song of the Goat Theatre's practices. Firstly, there is the need for organic harmony in a production. It is essential for Bral that the production is sustainable, in other words, that the process and result are consistent. Bral guides actors through every stage of the rehearsal process, to ensure consistency in all elements. The BAM activates all the acting tools, including the body, the imagination, each gesture and the voice. When actors receive the lyrics and scores, they try to understand them pragmatically, intuitively engaging their imagination and the whole body through physical actions. Additionally, Bral focuses on how to combine all the elements into one consistent performance. I will analyse the BAM separately in Chapter 3, but here I want only to outline its basic features, as compared to other theatre traditions. Like Stanislavski, Bral works in stages: Inspiration, Improvisation, Structure.⁵⁰ Nowadays this is common practice among practitioners, but not all are aware that this is a legacy of Stanislavski's System. The same applies to the vital role of the ensemble. Everyone supports everyone else on stage. Relations between ensemble members have a foundation in the flow of energy between actors. On stage, each person's activities should be balanced with the actions of his or her colleagues.

However, Bral conceives of the importance of rhythm and musicality differently to Stanislavski. In this respect, his understanding is closer to Meyerhold's vision of actor training and the ways of structuring a performance. Vsevolod Meyerhold created Biomechanics, a system of exercises that came about in response to the need for the 'New Actor' of the twentieth century. The characteristic feature of his work which is closest to Bral's practice is musicality, which is the backbone of all Meyerhold's theatrical activities. Edward Braun describes it thus:

Meyerhold defined the musical structure in which the actual music was one element in an over-all rhythmical harmony designed to reveal the 'subtext' of the drama. (...) More than anything, it was this concept of 'musicality' that set Meyerhold apart from every other stage-director of his time.⁵¹

These words could also serve as the hallmark of the Song of the Goat Theatre, distinguishing it from other theatre groups. Of course, there are quite a few ensembles

⁵⁰ The concept of the three stages in the creative process was formulated by Vasily Vasilyevich Kandinsky, (1977), *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover Publications, Dover.

⁵¹ David Roesner (2014), *Musicality in Theatre. Music as a model, method and metaphor in theatre-making*, Routledge, London, p. 76.

that use music as fuel or even the content of their performances. However, Bral has a special way of working with the voice and music.⁵²

Despite Bral's unique approach to these issues, his method has several essential points in accord with Meyerhold's theories. First of all, he has the deep conviction that artistic creation is a conscious process all the way through. Meyerhold developed his own method, Biomechanics, which consisted of acrobatics, synchronized movements with partners, rhythmical exercises, balancing, co-ordinating the space and much more. Posture had to be balanced and movement had to stay smooth with a dance-like quality. The actors had to stay flexible and whatever action they undertook, they had to maintain a strong centre of gravity. All the members of the company had to train every day, with no exceptions and thus they would achieve a continuously controlled and perfectly tuned body.⁵³ 'Training! Training! Training! But if it's the kind of training which exercises only the body and not the mind, then No, thank you! I have no use for actors who know how to move but cannot think.'⁵⁴

Training the body was critical for Meyerhold, as the quotation above demonstrates, but it had to be followed by reflection on every action that the actor undertook. Not even one gesture could be superfluous and only movements which would be immediately decipherable by the audience could be employed. In contrast to the System's main assumptions, Meyerhold⁵⁵ was distrustful of the actor's feelings. From his point of view, they were too unpredictable to serve as a basis for building art. He did recognize the importance of experiencing in the performing arts, but the way in which he stimulated authentic feelings was through the body and through rhythm. This relates closely to Bral's beliefs.⁵⁶

Music is the foundation in each Song of the Goat Theatre performance. For Bral and his ensemble, it is the essence of constant inspiration as well as the fundamental material for building performances. For that reason, the words I use for each specific dramaturgy are

⁵² This issue is extensively discussed in Chapter IV, Subsection 2 of this work.

⁵³ See Alison Hodge (2010), op. cit., pp: 27-42.

⁵⁴ Aleksandr Gladkov (1997), *Meyerhold Speaks, Meyerhold Rehearses*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, p.104.

⁵⁵ My analysis is based on books by Edward Braun (2016), in op. cit: David Roesner, *Musicality in Theatre*, 2014, Routledge, USA; Alison Hodge (2010), op. cit.; David Barnett (2019), *Meyerhold Piscator Brecht*, from II vol. *The Great European Stage Directors*, Methuen Drama, London.

⁵⁶ Statements about the art of Song of the Goat Theatre refer to conversations with its artists as well as my personal experience on stage and in the training of the ensemble. These statements apply only to the years 2013-2020. The remaining facts will be referenced accordingly in the written sources.

developed through a constant dialogue with the composer, and my lyrics are often shaped in relation to music.

The director and the performers search for the intentions and feelings hidden in each sound and word. It is the music and musicality of the words that determine the rhythm of the stage activities in the performances. At the same time, both the music and the words must respect the plot and the director's overarching vision. During a performance, everyone must maintain togetherness, but at the same time individuals should maintain their independence and freedom of character. All this is possible thanks to physical, energetic and rhythmical discipline and, as a result, music and poetry are related to the gestures and movements on stage. In this we see a clear convergence with Meyerhold's admiration for music, as Paul Schmidt explains:

Acting is melody, directing is harmony. I discovered that not long ago, and I astonished myself, the definition was so exact Musical terminology helps us a great deal. I love it because it possesses an almost mathematical exactness.⁵⁷

This exactness in terms of every gesture, sound and action and thus character and performance structure, is embedded in a deep understanding of the precision of musical terminology. Both Meyerhold and Bral use musical means while working on a performance and during workshops with students. Meyerhold 'understood what the art of the stage director was when [he] learned to provide harmony for the melodic line of the performance – which is what acting is.'⁵⁸

For Meyerhold, the 'New Actor' had to have musical abilities. They had to train their bodies and reflexes so that they could maintain a childlike spontaneity, while remaining precise and conscious of all their movements. Work on the character would start from the physical elements, which could help to increase what he/she called 'excitation' in the actor and the spectator. This was the only way that a genuine rousing of the emotions could occur. Everything on stage, including the words, gestures and voices, had to have the right timing and relationships between the scenes, performers and all the other elements; all had to function like a perfectly tuned orchestra. To achieve precision, the actor had to be aware of everything around him/her and inside of him/her,

⁵⁷ Paul Schmidt (ed.) (2014,) *Meyerhold at Work*, University of Texas Press p. 15

⁵⁸ Harlow Robinson, "Love for Three Operas: The Collaboration of Vsevolod Meyerhold and Sergei Prokofiev", *The Russian Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (July 1986), pp. 287-304, published by: Wiley on behalf of The Editors and Board of Trustees of the Russian Review Stable, Accessed: 7th April 2020.

without dwelling on the emotions alone. Bral also adheres to similar principles in his theatre. Actors should train themselves professionally to the point where they can take control of their emotions and not vice-versa. For this to happen, they should activate their mindfulness, which is a form of deep understanding (deep hearing) of every emotion, word and action. This can result in the ensemble being more like an orchestra, rather than a group of separate human beings. At the same time, everybody needs to add their own talent and creativity to the mix.

Accordingly, for Meyerhold, the director also had to constantly work on his craft. He had to be creative, precise, poetic and accurate, with a great sense of taste and balance during training, rehearsals and performance. He had to be like the conductor of a perfectly harmonized orchestra. Gladkov describes this as follows:

The contemporary conductor knows that music is made up not only of notes but also those almost imperceptible *luft-pauses* between the notes. In the theatre, this is called the sub-text, or one may also say, the between text. (...) Rhythm is what overcomes the meter, what disputes meter. Rhythm is knowing how to leap off the meter and back again. The art of such a conductor allows for rhythmical freedom in a measured segment. The art of the conductor lies in mastering the empty moments between rhythmic beats. It is essential that the theatre director also be aware of this.⁵⁹

The theatrical heritage left by Meyerhold has influenced the work of Bral, albeit indirectly. From the beginning of his career, he has combined music and physicality in his work.

Bral has created his own method for working in the theatre, yet the characteristics of his work fall into the somewhat vague category of post-Grotowskian theatre. This ambiguity has resulted partly from the existence of generalizations regarding Jerzy Grotowski's approach and ideas. His legacy is very often attached to every physical and training-based theatre, particularly in Poland, although in my opinion, this is a matter of some misappropriation.⁶⁰ Bral often emphasizes that he never worked with Grotowski and for that reason he could not be continuing his working method. However, he remembers the agitation he experienced while watching Grotowski's performances of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (1969) and *Action* (presented in Poland, December 2010).

⁵⁹ Aleksandr Gladkov (1997), p.135.

⁶⁰ This belief is the result of conversations with professors with whom I was studying during my PhD studies in Poland, eg. Prof. Jan Ciechowicz, as well as my observation of the reception of Polish theatre in the world.

Scholar Tomasz Wiśniewski has documented this impact: ‘Notwithstanding the frequent association with Grotowski, Bral stresses that his sole personal link with him was the formative experience of watching *Apocalypsis cum figuris*... at the age of sixteen. It was this production that fostered his life-long vocation as a theatre-maker.’⁶¹

Jerzy Grotowski’s theatre became renowned around the world, in particular his idea of a Poor Theatre:

Since 1960, my emphasis has been on methodology. Through practical experimentation I sought to answer the questions with which I had begun: What is the theatre? What is unique about it? (...) Two concrete conceptions crystallized: the poor theatre, and performance as an act of transgression. (...) By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found the theatre can exist without make-up, without costumes and scenography ... It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perpetual, direct “live communion”. ... (the) “synthetic theatre” is contemporary theatre, which we readily call the “Rich Theatre” – rich in flaws. (...) Consequently, I propose poverty in theatre.⁶²

Grotowski wanted to find the source of the theatre in the actor and the concept of *via negativa* emerged from his research:

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to estimate his organism’s resistance to his psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns. And the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. Ours then is a *via negativa* not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.⁶³

Grotowski was looking for a ‘stripped back actor’ who would achieve a *Total Act*. There are many scholars who have thoroughly analysed Grotowski’s work and, as such, I do not wish to quote this extensive knowledge here, but only briefly account for what brings Bral’s theatre closer to Grotowski’s philosophy. In an interview, Paul Allain explains what *via negativa* meant for Grotowski:

It’s quite difficult to explain the *via negativa* but he talks about removing psychophysical blocks, making impulses actions. Stanislavsky did acrobatics with his actors and Stanislavsky thought “If you can overcome your fear of doing a leap or

⁶¹ Tomasz Wiśniewski, unpublished article, personal copy accessed 23rd February 2020.

⁶² See Jerzy Grotowski (2002), *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p.16.

a roll, how much easier is it then to overcome a difficult role or a difficult bit of text.” It gets you over that sense of fear and it makes you freer. Grotowski is the same: he is finding that freedom of action, of not hesitating, of turning impulse into action and stopping that self-judgmental voice in the head that’s always saying, “Am I good enough?” Instead, you really commit to something, like the idea of the gift, you give yourself totally: the ‘holy actor,’ it’s an act of submission. However, if it’s too vain, if it’s too egotistical, then it becomes an imposition.⁶⁴

Among all the heritage that now exists in the theatre, including the importance of the physical aspect and the reciprocity constituting ensemble work, one aspect which is especially close to Bral’s way of working is this concept of *via negativa*. The Song of the Goat Theatre’s practice, as well as the BAM, are focused on the elimination of psychological and physical blocks, for the performer to be able to reach their highest possible potential in each action, word and sound. They do this by distilling signs from everyday impulses. Bral is convinced that, potentially, all emotional states exist within us and that they can be activated during training and then on stage. When Bral gives imaginative impulses to the actors during rehearsals, one idea is often reiterated:

Imagine that vocal and verbal structures represent the stream of your mind and take the form of precise words and a vibration of energy and sound. You have the potential of all the characters in you; just let them emerge through you.⁶⁵

One effect of Bral’s belief in this universal potential is that unnecessary words, movements and actions are eliminated. The detailed process of this training will be described in Chapter 3 of the thesis, but for now I will summarise how these influences impact on the theatre, to end this section. The performances of the Song of the Goat Theatre are the result of the symbiotic coexistence of the actor’s improvisation and a distilled structure shaped by the director. Moreover, throughout the entire process, the artists involved are completely aware of the information they project and what the audience can pick up from it. The purpose of the BAM is to create a new world based on a theatrical metaphor. Though this world is fictional, it should stay credible and consistent.

The ideas of Grotowski described briefly above originated in a period which Grotowski himself called the ‘Theatre of Productions’. This creative chapter was

⁶⁴ Paul Allain from an interview with Phil Cleaves on Jerzy Grotowski. Available from <http://essentialdrama.com/practitioners/grotowski/>, Accessed 10th May 2020.

⁶⁵ Grzegorz Bral to his students during a month-long workshop in Wrocław, 17th July 2019.

followed by the paratheatrical period.⁶⁶ Włodzimierz Staniewski, founder and creator of Gardzienice, was then a member of Grotowski's enlarged group, still called the Laboratorium Theatre Company. As described by Alison Hodge, their collaboration came to an end after five years:

Staniewski collaborated closely with Grotowski (...) Gardzienice's emphasis on the interaction with the environment, the extreme physicality of its actor training and its integration of the artistic activities with daily life indicate some clear parallels with Grotowski's own practice at that time. But there were also significant differences of approach, and after five years of collaboration the two practitioners followed separate paths. While Grotowski abandoned the theatre. Staniewski wished to focus on theatre-making (...) in contrast to the increasingly intimate atmosphere of Grotowski's Laboratory conditions.⁶⁷

Staniewski does not like to be associated with Grotowski, although the paratheatrical period inevitably left its mark on Gardzienice's desire to discover 'a new natural environment for theatre.' Paul Allain describes this in his book:

Gardzienice's relationship to paratheatre – as Grotowski called his explorations – is ambiguous and not easily discerned, but it certainly had a formative influence on the company and Staniewski. The company members rarely discuss inspiration and sources and avoid comparisons. They would rather be deemed inspirational, creating new cultural trends, not following them. Staniewski is evasive about his relationship to Grotowski. This he displays both in conversations and concretely in an interview with Richard Schechner: 'I don't like to speak about my connection with Grotowski. Ask Grot about it.' Despite these obstacles, the obscure paths which led to the creation of his rural theatre company can be clearly traced through the activities of student theatre and paratheatre.⁶⁸

Grzegorz Bral joined Gardzienice in 1986, subsequently leaving the company in 1991, exactly five years later. Bral recalls this time as one of the most inspiring periods in his life, when he gained an alternative education as a theatre practitioner. However grateful he may have been, he nonetheless left to find his own path. History has shown

⁶⁶ See Dariusz Kosiński (2009), *Grotowski. Przewodnik*, (Grotowski. A Guide), Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego, Wrocław.

⁶⁷ Włodzimierz Staniewski, Alison Hodge (2004) *Hidden territories. The Theatre of Gardzienice*, Routledge, London, pp 3-4.

⁶⁸ Paul Allain (2004), op. cit., p.45.

that very often one must negate one's 'theatrical father'⁶⁹ to be able to unleash one's own creativity. As a result, the Song of the Goat Theatre does not have much in common with Gardzienice nowadays, although in his first years of theatrical independence, Bral continued to conduct workshops in the style of Gardzienice.⁷⁰ Over the years, Bral's practice has slowly moved away from the knowledge he acquired in Gardzienice, as he has created his own idiosyncratic approach to the theatre. One thing which has remained unchanged is his belief that music can be the central component in theatrical art. Allain describes the importance of music for Gardzienice:

The vocal and musical score defines the physical shape of a performance. Songs lead out the action and provide a verbal text. However, the use of songs tends towards a rhythmical and tonal structure rather than narrative sequence. A musical section is slowly built up in rehearsal: songs might be connected through musical linking passages or only a part of them might be used. They then might underscore a written text or accompany an action. Music provides the base from which all actions unfold.⁷¹

Bral uses music differently from Staniewski⁷² who incorporates folk music to evoke hidden or forgotten traditions. Bral, however, has never drawn inspiration from the rural regions of Poland, but he shares the belief that through music, more subtle and profound meetings with others can occur. In a 2006 radio interview, he stated that:

When you listen...more carefully, when you listen...longer or when you are surrounded by people singing it, you experience this wonderful and quite extraordinary and difficult to understand vibration of the music that penetrates you. [...] With some of the music, you can only talk in metaphysical terms because actually the way they sing connects you more into...nature. It simply connects you to nature, it simply balances you more.⁷³

From the beginning, Song of the Goat Theatre productions have aimed to bring out the spiritual aspects of the voice, music and sound, as a result of our spiritual beliefs. While in the case of Bral this involves Tibetan Buddhism, in my case it's a result of being raised

⁶⁹ This expression operates rather as a cliché. Piotr Gruszczyński describes this phenomenon in his book (2003), *Ojcobójcy. Młodszy zdolniejszy w teatrze polskim*, W.A.B Publishing, Warszawa.

⁷⁰ See Paul Allain (2004), op. cit., pp: 59-79.

⁷¹ Ibidem, p. 62.

⁷² I will describe the importance and function of music in Song of the Goat Theatre in details in Chapter 2, section 2b.

⁷³ Bral in an interview with Robyn Johnston (2006), *into the music 38*, ABC Radio National, Sydney, Australia, aired 16th October 2006, 53'57''.

within Christianity and later in my choice of living according to Buddhist philosophy. The texts I have composed for the theatre company have the utmost respect for the principles and values held by Bral. The need to touch on themes which might be called metaphysical, which is what Bral, Maciej Rychły (Song of the Goat Theatre composer) and myself have in common.

This chapter has shown the historical and theatrical context in which Song of the Goat Theatre productions are created and has specified some of the assumptions of the theatrical traditions which have directly shaped Bral's work. In the next chapter, concerned with Methodology, I will discuss the idiosyncratic features of the Song of the Goat Theatre which make it unique. These are philosophically influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and, in formal terms, are closely related to the concept of 'postdramatic theatre'.⁷⁴

Chapter II. Methodologies.

1. Coordination as an axiological paradigm for the creative process in the Song of the Goat Theatre.

There is a direct flow between how we behave,
how we speak and how we think.
(Chöje Akong Tulku Rinpoche, *Restoring the balance*, 2005,
Eskdalemuir Dumfriesshire, Scotland, UK)

a. From East to West and back again – Coordination as Practice

In the previous chapter, I portrayed the historical and theatrical context in which the Song of the Goat Theatre was established. This chapter describes what makes it unique, including its creators' ethical paradigm. One of the main principles in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy is the assumption that everything is interconnected.⁷⁵ Grzegorz Bral

⁷⁴ Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), *Postdramatic theatre*, translated by Karen Jürs-Munby, Routledge, New York.

⁷⁵ Tibetan Buddhism has a few major principles, one of which is "interconnectedness" or "interdependence". In a western understanding, those terms are not identical, and they may not even be

emphasizes that this premise is the foundation of his work with the BAM. In one interview, Bral recalled a meeting with his teacher, Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche, whose answer to the question of, “how to work with an actor to refine the art of acting?”, was to ‘practise Coordination.’⁷⁶

Since then, Bral’s meditation and theatre practices have been focused on the fullest possible understanding of what Coordination is in every aspect of life. I will discuss the unique character of the BAM in the second part of this chapter. Firstly, I would like to describe the general principles of Coordination according to Buddhist understanding, as the concept has the potential to be one of the ways in which one can function in society as a human being. Akong Tulku Rinpoche opens his considerations with the following words:

The main point is to become helpful. The most helpful is to be coordinated with whatever is happening. To be coordinated means to live in harmony with the environment, with your friends and within yourself. Our main problem is that we are incoherent with each other, we don’t listen to each other. For that reason, we may not understand expressions that people present to us. We don’t take the time to understand each other.⁷⁷

The foundation of Coordination, from the perspective of Tibetan Buddhism, lies in the capability to listen to oneself and to the world. This should be nourished by compassion towards others, as well as by accepting the fact that everything changes constantly.

The confidence that all elements coexist harmoniously and that they are essentially perfect, together with the awareness of the phenomenon of impermanence, has strongly influenced Bral’s life and therefore his professional activities. The conviction that each person has great potential, which can be developed without limitations through practice, is an idiosyncratic characteristic of the BAM. In this respect, Bral’s educational

related. Things can be connected but not necessarily dependent. In Buddhism, which recognizes cause and effect as a major force in life, everything is connected and dependent on everything else.

⁷⁶ Interview with Grzegorz Bral 3rd June 2019.

⁷⁷ The lecture by Akong Tulku Rinpoche, Tara Rokpa Therapy - the significance of the name’, lecture transcribed by Rudolf Jarosewitch, Accessed: 19th August 2007. Akong Rinpoche is Tibetan and his English is idiosyncratic, such that I had to make a few corrections to the original text of his talk in order to make it more understandable for readers. Originally the lecture was as follows:

The sense of help is to give coordination, you become helpful, you are no longer useless. The most helpful is that you are always coordinated whatever is happening, coordination with your friends, within yourself, with the environment. Because our problem is that we don’t coordinate, we don’t listen things, we don’t understand the motions or expressions that people present to us. We don’t take the time to think or to understand.

work, just like the Song of the Goat Theatre's stage work, has been largely inspired by Buddhism. In an article deriving from her PhD thesis, Anna Porubchansky writes:

A fundamental component of Buddhism is the concept of interconnection, which suggests that every element in the world influences and responds equally to every other element. This suggests a world in constant change exists in a permanent state of impermanence. Rinpoche (...) explains that this impermanence not only 'pervades all of the outer world and all our inner experience' (Rinpoche, 1994:23), but can be seen everywhere: in nature, through the change of seasons; and in life, through our shifting emotions and mood, physical and mental development, birth, maturity, and inevitable death.⁷⁸

Understanding the relationship between cause and effect, as well as accepting the impermanence of the reality in which we live, is a starting point for the mindful work which can benefit others. With this in mind, Coordination is both the path and the aim of such activities. Just as in Buddhism everything is seen as interconnected, each action as well as each emotion has consequences in the external world and resonates with the reality around us. Akong Rinpoche writes:

Coordination is the author's special word to indicate all awareness of and consideration for others, a cooperation that results in an effective and harmonious relationship. (...) Tibetan philosophical tradition arises from a holistic vision of reality where mind and body are never separate.⁷⁹

Other philosophies, including Hinduism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism, are also based on a holistic approach to the human being, but for the Song of the Goat Theatre, the Tibetan Buddhist perspective is most salient. A holistic approach to the person assumes that each event has a personal root in each of us, both in physical and psychological terms. This approach has had a significant impact on how I build character drama in theatre productions. In trying to describe this position, one might say that it includes the unspoken principle of refraining from unequivocal human judgment and prioritises the pursuit of discovering the cause of human behaviour.

The premise of Coordination is also an important key for better comprehending the teacher/student relationship between Akong Tulku Rinpoche and Bral. A Tibetan

⁷⁸ Anna Porubchansky, *ibidem* p. 233.

⁷⁹ Akong Tulku Rinpoche (2005), *Restoring the balance*, Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire, pp. 69-77.

lama,⁸⁰ Akong Rinpoche has had a great impact on Bral's professional life for over 25 years. His teachings about how to create projects that can benefit all those who are involved in them are some of his most important lessons. In one interview, Bral recalled one of his first meetings with Akong Rinpoche, when he had one of his first glimpses into how to make use of talent or, to put it in simpler terms, when he came to understand the idea of having a professional capability to be useful and helpful to others. During the meeting he realized that, regardless of one's life circumstances, it is always possible to help others. Motivated by this realisation, Bral started several initiatives, such as a soup kitchen for the homeless, the Brave-Against Cultural Exile project and Brave Kids.⁸¹ These aid and inter-cultural projects were described in 2011 by Porubchansky.⁸²

Apart from the basic principles portrayed above, the multiple aspects of Coordination have been described in detail in Akong Rinpoche's book, *Restoring the balance* (2005). This book discusses the Middle Way,⁸³ within which an individual can harmonize their existence by coordinating all of its aspects. According to Rinpoche, if this knowledge is applied as a practice of everyday life, it can restore the balance between one's perception of the world and what one feels, thinks, says and does. In the Tibetan tradition, this practice – which is a way of training the mind – brings harmony to three aspects of human activity: the body, speech and the mind. The crucial aspects here are mindfulness and awareness, as Rinpoche explains:

Training the mind had more powerful results than training the body. If our mind is trained well, we can change things in our body. When we train the mind, the physical body can achieve many formerly *impossible* things just through effort of the mind. (...) By developing awareness, we learn to be mindful in the present. We can let go all the fixed expectations, habits, and responses that we fall into unconsciously through lack of awareness. (...) Mindfulness has nothing to do with any religion. It is a basic human need.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Lama* in Tibetan means a *high priest*. The title is used to honour the spiritual teacher of the Dharma in Tibetan Buddhism. The term *lama* is not applicable to all monks, but only the highest level of teachers.

⁸¹ Bral belongs to the ROKPA INTERNATIONAL charity organisation (www.rokpa.org), which provides aid all over the world. In 1996-2017, winter soup kitchens for the homeless were run in Lublin and Wrocław, as part of the activities of ROKPA Polska. The Brave Festival was started in 2005 (www.bravefestival.pl), with all the proceeds from the event donated to ROKPA INTERNATIONAL, which uses them to help the needy. The Brave Kids Festival (www.bravekids.eu) was started in 2009, aimed at encouraging children all over the world to form friendships.

⁸² Anna Porubchansky, *op.cit.* (pp. 226-276).

⁸³ Middle Way in Buddhism is a complement of general and specific ethical practices and philosophical views that are said to facilitate enlightenment by avoiding the extremes of self-gratification on the one hand and self-mortification on the other.

⁸⁴ Akong Rinpoche (2005), *op.cit.* p.73.

Among Western scientists, there is no defined position about the nature or function of the mind or consciousness, nor about whether these things even exist. Accordingly, I will now explain how the Buddhist perspective, regarding these things, functions in this thesis. In Tibetan Buddhism, there are extensive explanations regarding these matters, deriving from both philosophical debate and experimental validation resulting from practice.

During the Mind Science symposium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, USA (1991), His Holiness the Dalai Lama explained broadly how the mind can be understood. He presented his description in terms of the terminology of Western science, stating that:

In general, the mind can be defined as an entity that has the nature of mere experience, that is, 'clarity and knowing.' It is the knowing nature or agency, that is called mind, and this is non-material. But within the category of mind, there are also gross levels, such as our sensory perceptions, which cannot function or even come into being without depending on physical organs like our senses. And within the category of the sixth consciousness, the mental consciousness, there are various divisions or types of mental consciousness that are heavily dependent upon the physiological basis, our brain, for their results. These types of mind cannot be understood in isolation from their physiological bases.⁸⁵

Right from the beginning, Bral has developed his theatre and pedagogical work according to the principles of Buddhism and Coordination. Training with actors, as well as classes for students, consist of awakening participants' alertness, consciousness, self-awareness and respect for the presence of others on stage. However, his method has been created for actors who want to be successful in the theatre and film industries and for this reason, the BAM consists of exercises that respect the need to acquire skills attractive to the Western performing arts world. This fluctuation between a Western system of values and Eastern Philosophy is a permanent dialogue in Bral's professional life.

In the Western world, where religion as a system of beliefs seems to be going through a deep crisis⁸⁶ and is unable to deliver a metaphysical experience, some scholars

⁸⁵ H.H Dalailama, *Mind Science*, edited by Daniel Goleman and Robert F. Thurman, (1991) Wisdom Publication, Boston. Reprinted with permission in the November/ December 1995 issue, *Mandala*, the newsmagazine of FPMT.

⁸⁶ See Linda Groff, Paul Smoker, *Spirituality, religion, culture and peace: exploring the foundation for inner-outer peace in the twenty-first century*, article published as part of the Proceedings of the Second UNESCO-Sponsored Conference on The Contribution of Religions to the Culture of Peace, Barcelona, Spain, Dec. 12-18, 1994.

suggest that art and creativity are the sites at which spiritual growth can happen. Peggy Thayer⁸⁷ writes:

Spiritual practice and creative practice share similarities; these can be described as an experience of the interplay of intention/reception, the experience of relationship, and the experience of shifts in one's sense of self, life, and world.⁸⁸

Thayer delves deep in her analysis of the creative process, approaching the subject with a hermeneutic-phenomenological model of description which attempts to combine the spiritual system of the East with the more scientific approach which has dominated Western reality. Bral's artistic and pedagogical practice, as well as my practice as a dramaturg, seek to cultivate art as a means for spiritual growth. Creating a reality on stage has for us a deeper dimension, which is rooted in our spiritual practice.

Many artists make artistic decisions based on intuition rather than on scientific knowledge or previously given solutions. To do this, they must be able to switch their attention from the daily rush of life to an almost contemplative state of mind, arousing in themselves a sensitivity and profound awareness, together with a sensibility towards each of the characters they bring to life on stage. The psychologist Otto Rank sees the source of the creative process more in the universal source, rather than in the individual. Thayer evokes this when speaking of the creative process:⁸⁹

When one begins the creative process, one leaves the ordinary world behind. One steps into the unknown and comes into contact not only with the material from one's personal, deeper self but from the universal creative source. The 'creative experience' takes place at a psychic level deeper than rationality, and its result is a sense of connection to life that extends beyond the present moment in all

Some scholars, philosophers and writers describe our times as a period of certain shifts, which may be characterised as a kind of "crisis of spirituality, crisis of values". Nonetheless, it needs to be pointed out that periods of transition – when the underlying values on which culture and civilization are based undergo rapid change and are challenged – are very disruptive to people's lives and to the effective functioning of societal institutions. Indeed, this can be seen happening today. Crime and violence are on the increase everywhere and fanatics from both the left and right – including religious cults promoting violence in the name of God or spirit (a total contradiction in terms) are multiplying. The transition period does not guarantee an easy ride. But change is inevitable, and it should just be dealt with as constructively and consciously as possible so that we can get through [it] with as little real catastrophes and violence as possible." Accessed 5th June 2020.

⁸⁷ Peggy Thayer is a practising visual artist and writer committed to hermeneutic-phenomenological research in the human sciences.

⁸⁸ Peggy Thayer (2004), *The experience of being Creative as a Spiritual Practice. A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Study*, Peter Lang, New York, p.127.

⁸⁹ See Otto Rank (1936), *Will therapy: The therapeutic applications of will psychology*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, New York.

directions of time ... a sense of more than personal participation in everlasting life.⁹⁰

For Rank, one of the necessary conditions for the appearance of the creative process is the artist's ability to sustain an individual narrative, which is a consequence of their life experience, system of beliefs and talent. Another condition is the ability to identify oneself with one's culture and a collective system of ideas. Rank sees art as a unity of what is universal, with the artist's individualism and what is spiritual, with what is material.

Two forces have shaped Bral's acting technique, his pedagogical and artistic life as well as my dramaturgical writing for the Song of the Goat Theatre. One is the Eastern belief that the mind has unlimited capacity and capability and that we are all interconnected, interdependent and should strive for Coordination. The second is the Western desire for immediate results and a fast acquisition of knowledge and skills.

b. The Teacher-Student Relationship

In some from the Eastern philosophy systems, only long practice in a given domain leads to perfection. This idea pertains to martial arts, spiritual studies and forms of art. Moreover, mental and physical growth often intertwine into one stream of life which the student perfects under the watchful eye of the teacher. For Bral, this can also be applied to acting. In his opinion, growth as an artist very often requires constant work on one's physical and emotional capacity. Consequently, development as an actor can lead the practitioner to spiritual growth, although it does not always have to.⁹¹

While work in regard to the notion of Coordination does not require any particular religious or spiritual affiliations, a social ethics for helping to build an ensemble is needed. What also matters for Bral is openness and honesty in recognizing one's limitations and the will to overcome them in training. If an actor/actress is willing to make the effort, constraints can give him/her a chance for further work on a subtler level, instead of stopping the self-development process. For instance, they can provoke a process of

⁹⁰ See Peggy Thayer (2004), *op. cit.*, p.26.

⁹¹ G. Bral from a conversation with students after a month-long workshop in Wrocław, Poland 9th August 2019.

overcoming psychological or emotional blocks. This aspect of training is close to what Jerzy Grotowski saw as the process of *via negativa* mentioned previously.

There are similarities between Grotowski's understanding of the *via negativa* as a way to achieve full artistic potential on stage, and the way in which Bral sees the process of self-improvement as an artist. The full potential of an actor can be brought to the stage only when they can conquer their own limitations. Even though it may be a long journey, the process of growth starts from the moment of making a sincere decision to do so and it is necessary to travel quite a distance to go beyond one's limits. This temporal perspective allows you to choose a response that takes the emotions into consideration but is not completely subordinated by them. You come to see your situation more clearly and rationally, which gives you the ability to make conscious choices. This applies to both work on oneself and on one's professional development.

The key to making this two-track development possible is often a trusted person, trainer or director-figure who can help one see and understand what is required for change to occur. Because it can inspire creativity in students, actors and one's colleagues, the relationship with a teacher or director is very important for theatre practitioners. If the teacher/director is honest in their work with a student/actor, they can trustingly follow the path of self-development. Akong Rinpoche was such a teacher in the case of Bral, giving him direct instructions on how to work with people to help them to develop. This is how the BAM arose, as something which is in constant development.

The core of the BAM is the belief that all of the acting tools – including the voice, imagination and body – are equally important. This principle is applicable to almost all modern acting techniques, but what makes Bral's method unique is the Buddhist way of linking them together. Actors should strive to activate all aspects of their craft in such a way that they become internally balanced, which means never rejecting any of them. In other words, professional singers might be asked to develop their ability to move or speak the text; people more physically inclined might challenge themselves by singing and speaking on stage; while those whose strength lies in working with the text might have a chance to move and use their voice in choral work. At the same time, during training, students as well as the Song of the Goat Theatre ensemble members work on a particular way of listening to each other on stage. In one interview, Bral emphasized this as follows:

Listen more, listen deeper. There is no limit on how deeply one can understand the partner, or a word, or a sound. Do you think that there is a limit of how much you can

hear in somebody's music? I tell you, there is no limit to hear more in-depth, to understand deeper, to feel deeper, to be more sensitive, to understand deeper. Is there a limit in praising to God? I have prayed one time to God, is that enough? I have prayed a thousand times to God, is that enough? A million times I've prayed – is this enough? I tell you, know there is no limit to feel the subtle sacredness. Moreover, what we try to do with music is that we try to become more and more stable and more sensitive, and there is no limit to this. This is Coordination, you can never be coordinated too much.⁹²

The process of listening in the BAM is conditioned by the level of tenderness and openness towards each other. One can enhance these abilities by being mindful and compassionate towards oneself, as well as towards the others on stage. BAM training consists of many aspects which activate the body, the voice and the imagination, as well as attentiveness towards one's partners and the performance space. The aim of the method is to bring out the full theatrical potential on stage. However, it can also serve as an effective method of opening up creative capabilities in general.

At the beginning of each workshop, Bral emphasizes that the nature of the training lies in practising awareness and broad-mindedness towards oneself and the others on stage. Another crucial aspect is also the desire to access the potential which is within us, no matter how much effort this might necessitate. He also points out the need for reflection and courage, in asking ourselves questions concerning our own barriers and consistently going beyond them.

As I have mentioned above, many Eastern cultures broadly very often see the teacher-student relationship as central in the self-improvement process and in the practice of a given domain. This is the same in the BAM, with each session providing an opportunity for participants to achieve increasingly higher levels of knowledge, concerning a very clearly defined working method. The foundation of the BAM is comprised of a limited set of quite simple exercises. The process of deepening the experience very often lies in multiple repetitions of the same action, with an increasing understanding of one's own experience. The distinctiveness of each session also lies in the varying of the combinations of certain exercise paths and, as such, the possibilities for penetrating them vertically through the depths of experience are unlimited. The belief in an infinite path of growth is another feature that comes from Bral's Buddhist practice.

⁹² Grzegorz Bral from a meeting with the audience in Jerusalem after a performance of *Songs of Lear*, 13th June 2019.

The preceding section introduced some of the philosophical aspects of Tibetan Buddhism which have impacted on Bral's work. The personal philosophy intertwines with professional activities. An idea of coordination and compassion, from the beginning has had a deep impact on social and charitable work of Bral, as well it shapes the Song of the Goat Theatre productions.

There is a long tradition of interweaving cultural traditions in theatre.⁹³ It is impossible to describe in this thesis even a small part of this development, as the phenomenon is too broad. One of the most significant artists was Jerzy Grotowski, who brought a new way of training to Poland inspired by yoga, but he was following in the footsteps of many others such as Stanislavsky and Antonin Artaud.⁹⁴ There are accordingly many extensive studies on the influence of other cultures on the European theatre. One of the main theorists is Fisher-Lichte, for whom

The concept of "intercultural" theatre makes the false assumption that cultures are sealed entities(...) The interweaving of Asian with non-Asian cultures—as in the productions of Suzuki, Terayama Shuji, Ninagawa Yukio, or Miyagi Satoshi—is aesthetically as experimental and bold as those of Brook, Mnouchkine, Barba, and Wilson. (...) A very different sort of transfer between performance cultures occurs in innumerable theatre and performance workshops that take place around the world. Such workshops teach practices and bodily techniques; one group develops them for another.⁹⁵

Fisher-Lichte emphasizes that the actor training technique, based on working with the body, often draws from the tradition of so-called Eastern cultures that have developed effective methods of improving the physical aspect of acting.

In the case of the Song of the Goat Theatre, it would be more appropriate to use the term multicultural or transcultural⁹⁶ rather than intercultural. The theatre gathered artists and students of various nationalities and cultures from the very beginning. As a theatre that grew out of the tradition of laboratory theatres, it is open to the individual

⁹³ For an overview see also Patrice Pavis (2002), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge and also Pavis 'Intercultural Theatre Today', *Forum Modernes Theatre*, Bd. 25/1 (2010), 5–15.

⁹⁴ Maria Kapsali, *The Use of Yoga in Actor Training and Theatre Making*, University of Exeter, PhD 2010.

⁹⁵ Erika Fisher-Lichte (2014), *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies*, New York and London, Routledge, pp:113-139.

⁹⁶ See: David Williams, "'Remembering the others that are I": Transculturalism and myth in the theatre of Peter Brook', in *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996), (ed.) Patrice Pavis, Routledge, London and New York, pp: 67-77.

cultural characteristics of each collaborator. The working model of Song of the Goat Theatre is based on reciprocity, which affects the intercultural exchange of knowledge on performing arts training and theatre. BAM as training is not based on yoga, although the influences of Indian and Tibetan knowledge can be traced within the physical aspect of the training.⁹⁷ Phillip Zarrilli explains the cultural impact on acting with words:

According to a set of assumptions about the conventions and style of the performance, and informing these assumptions are culture-specific assumptions about the body-mind relationship, the nature of the ‘self’, emotions/feelings and the performance context” (...) Each culture’s understanding of acting as a form of embodiment is based on indigenous paradigms of the body (including voicing), the body-mind relationship, and consciousness or awareness (...) These usually unarticulated assumptions about how a performer psychophysically activates such “presence” inform and animate the process of acting both in training and onstage.⁹⁸

The training and performances of Song of The Goat Theatre partly contain elements of other cultures,⁹⁹ but the purpose is mostly to reinforce the scenic effect and to embrace the particular culture fully. Music for each performance is originally composed, and the same applies to the drama and lyrics. For that reason, resemblances with other cultures are a bit superficial. Patrice Pavis reflects on such a phenomenon:

That intercultural theatre is, in reality, postcultural and postmodern (...) Any form is postcultural when one can no longer determine its internal function or the hierarchy of its elements, either because it no longer possesses a unifying subject or because the postmodern attitude has pronounced the elements to be undifferentiated and interchangeable.¹⁰⁰

The postmodern cultural reality has its consequences in the approach to drama and all the performing art elements. Artists are looking for hybrid stage solutions, combining various theatrical styles, world acting techniques, and cultural influences. Postdramatic

⁹⁷ As mentioned before, it is impossible for me to explain in this thesis the complexity of cultural aspect in Song of The Goat Theatre activities, such as BAM, performances, BRAVE Festival, BRAVE KIDS festival. Nonetheless, I am currently working on a complex book on BAM which I am planning to finish and publish within the next two years.

⁹⁸ Phillip B. Zarrilli (2005), *Acting (Re)Considered*, Routledge, London and New York

⁹⁹ For example, the principle of movement in the performance *Crazy God* was spinning. In *Seven Gates of Thebes*, the text was spoken in several different languages, even though I had written it in English.

¹⁰⁰ Patrice Pavis (1996), op. cit., p.7.

Theatre, which up to a certain level was a consequence of the postmodern reality in culture, abandoned fidelity to the text as the primary carrier of knowledge about the stage world reality and characters. To some extent, *Song of the Goat Theatre* fits in with the assumptions of post-dramatic theatre. Artists search for the unique language by incorporating elements of various cultural influences into the stage, layering and taking advantage of the riches of the world theatre tradition.

In the next section, I will depict the way in which the BAM and the performances of the *Song of the Goat Theatre* resonate with manifestations of the concept of ‘postdramatic theatre.’¹⁰¹ Postdramatic theatre proposes to replace mimesis (the imitation of life) with artistic creation via presence on stage. In this understanding, it does not offer a mimetic representation of the world; instead, it only refers to reality. This feature is close to the vision behind *Song of The Goat Theatre* productions. In the work of the theatre, two seemingly contradictory theatrical principles, a postdramatic approach and fidelity to source texts, are connected. It is of course a moot point as to whether these two writing functions can be combined. I suggest they can. The dramas I write for the *Song of The Goat* are based on the main plot of the original plays and comment on the original works from a contemporary perspective. When I quote original texts, I never make changes. As mentioned earlier, the *Song of the Goat Theatre* does not fully implement the assumptions of postdramatic theatre but only refers to some of its aspects. Similarly, when I mention ‘source material’, I have the main philosophical content in mind. I write more about this in Chapter IV, section 2.2 of this thesis.

2. A scenic poem – A Postdramatic perspective.

‘La pièce du théâtre doit être avant tout un poème.’

(The play has to be above all a poem.)

Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, Routledge, New York 2006.

Any attempt to capture the paradigm of postdramatic theatre seems complicated and somewhat ambiguous. Professor Andrzej Wirth introduced the term in 1987,¹⁰² wanting to explain new forms of theatre such as sound collages, spoken opera and elements of dance and movement, as being in the domain of performance. He focused on this moment

¹⁰¹ Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), op.cit.

¹⁰² Andrzej Wirth (1987) *Realität auf dem Theatre als ästhetische Utopie oder: Wandlungen des Theatres im Umfeld der Medien*, In GieBener Universitätsblätter, Berlin.

in the history of theatre, in which the dramatic conventions were deconstructed by breaking the relationship between the text and the performance. Although he did not explain the term entirely, his theories and articles on it ushered in a new theoretical quest.

Following on from Wirth's insights and his own theatrical experience, Hans-Thies Lehmann outlined the detailed assumptions making up this phenomenon in *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006).¹⁰³ His book contains descriptions of many features of innovative representations found in twentieth century theatre. It provides insight into both the aesthetic and the philosophical aspects. He states that:

The 'style' or rather the palette of stylistic traits of postdramatic theatre demonstrates the following characteristic traits: parataxis, simultaneity, plan with the density of signs, musicalization, visual dramaturgy, physicality, irruption of the real...language, voice, text (...) The de-hierarchization of theatrical means is a universal principle of postdramatic theatre.¹⁰⁴

In Lehmann's view, the main features of the new theatre is a break from the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis* and the primary role of the text in a performance and, at the same time, the establishment of equality between various means of artistic expression. Using this basic assumption, Lehmann has described each element of a stage event very precisely. I will refer only to those elements which relate to the work of the Song of the Goat Theatre. These include the absence of synthesis, parataxis, musicalisation and synaesthesia. In the following passage, I will only briefly discuss the relationship between the scenic text and the source material, as well as the physical aspects and training that support performances, as separate chapters have been devoted to both of these issues.

a. A dialectics of aesthetics and the ethical order. Growing tension.

In this section, I will refer to the concept of dialectics, as put forward by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*,¹⁰⁵ where the author defines it as the struggle and unity of opposites. For Hegel, the most satisfying work of art was achieved in Sophocles' *Antigone*. In a certain respect, this drama is 'the ideal

¹⁰³ Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), op.cit.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem. p. 86.

¹⁰⁵ *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977), trans. by A. V. Miller with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

representation of the division and reconciliation of the objective and subjective form of the ethical spirit.' Lehmann sees in Hegel's philosophy a primary understanding of artistic beauty which manifests itself in the 'multi-layered reconciliation of opposites, especially of beauty and ethical order.'¹⁰⁶

Bral builds tension in his performances by giving up dialectical synthesis. The thesis might involve the aesthetic harmony of choral singing, while the antithesis could be delivered by the fall of ethical homogeneity¹⁰⁷ within the characters. But while the process of synthesis of both aspects can never occur fully from this incoherence of aesthetic and ethical order, an experience of catharsis¹⁰⁸ might be aroused in spectators. The retreat of synthesis is an important aspect of Bral's theatre. Lehmann explains:

Synthesis is sacrificed in order to gain, in its place, the density of intensive moments. If the partial structures nevertheless develop into something like a whole, this is no longer organized according to prescribed models of dramatic coherence or comprehensive symbolic references and does not realize the synthesis.¹⁰⁹

In Bral's work, all elements are equally important: the presence of the performers on stage, the balance of the physical actions, the polyphonic singing, the lyrics, the spoken texts and the visual aspects of the performance. However, the moral paradigm derived from Buddhist ethics is a priority in Bral's professional work. As an in-house playwright, I keep this in mind when writing new texts. In my dramaturgy, I try to see each character as a fundamentally good, struggling with ethical dilemmas, thus providing performances with a particular kind of tension. This is mainly visible on stage as a kind of disruption to the homogeneity of the aesthetics of the transmitted content and its intellectual and emotional load. Despite Bral's respect for the creative input of all his colleagues on stage, as well as for the artistic contributions of the composer, dramaturg and set and costume designers, he is the one who makes the final decisions regarding the artistic matters on stage. Sometimes he makes drastic cuts to the text or the music, or conversely, he repeats textual or musical fragments to achieve an inner balance in the structure. For Bral, the main aim of the theatre is to connect with the audience in a profound and honest way. In one of our conversations, he highlighted the importance of 'bringing forward the human

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, p. 42

¹⁰⁷ By this I mean that the ethical values that guide the presented characters are not clear-cut in the performance.

¹⁰⁸ See: ibidem, p. 43

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, p. 83.

spirit' and the need to 'open-up their hearts to awaken compassion and awareness towards others.'¹¹⁰

Bral's pursuit of trustworthy characters on stage brings with it freedom in the use of various tools of artistic expression. Lehmann describes how, 'like a poet,' the director composes fields of association between words, sounds, bodies, movements, light and objects.¹¹¹ To portray the main principles of the creative process, I will invoke and describe a scene from the *Hamlet – a Commentary* production. In the scene *Ophelia luki*¹¹², we wanted to show Ophelia's despair, her having been betrayed by her whole family and having had her feelings hurt by the man she loved, i.e., Hamlet. To portray how she might feel – imprisoned by pain, lonely and abandoned – the first two verses of the lyrics are repeated many times over in a regular rhythm that could be interpreted as a heartbeat. Bral made the decision to introduce this repetition of text and music at a rehearsal. Although the music and lyrics had been written in advance, the scene was subsequently changed to portray Ophelia's madness. Bral provided the initial idea for the scene. In the next stage, changes were inspired by the performers during the rehearsal process, regarding both words and music, but with all the final decisions made by Bral. Below is the text of the song that characterises Ophelia. In our understanding, she is a deeply wounded figure full of pain. Her suicide is a consequence of rejection, not only by Hamlet, but also by the members of her family on many occasions. In our interpretation, this repeating pattern gained additional weight and significance in performance, via the multiple repetition of lines and the recurring rhythms in the music.

¹¹⁰ G. Bral in an interview 15/02/2020.

¹¹¹ Lehman (2006), op. cit. p. 111.

¹¹² Maciej Rychły, *Hamlet – a Commentary*, premiere 2nd July 2018.

Ophelia Luki
7-syllable recitation

1

applemusic.pl

Ophelia Luki, cont.

2

applemusic.pl

Ophelia Luki, cont.

3

applemusic.pl

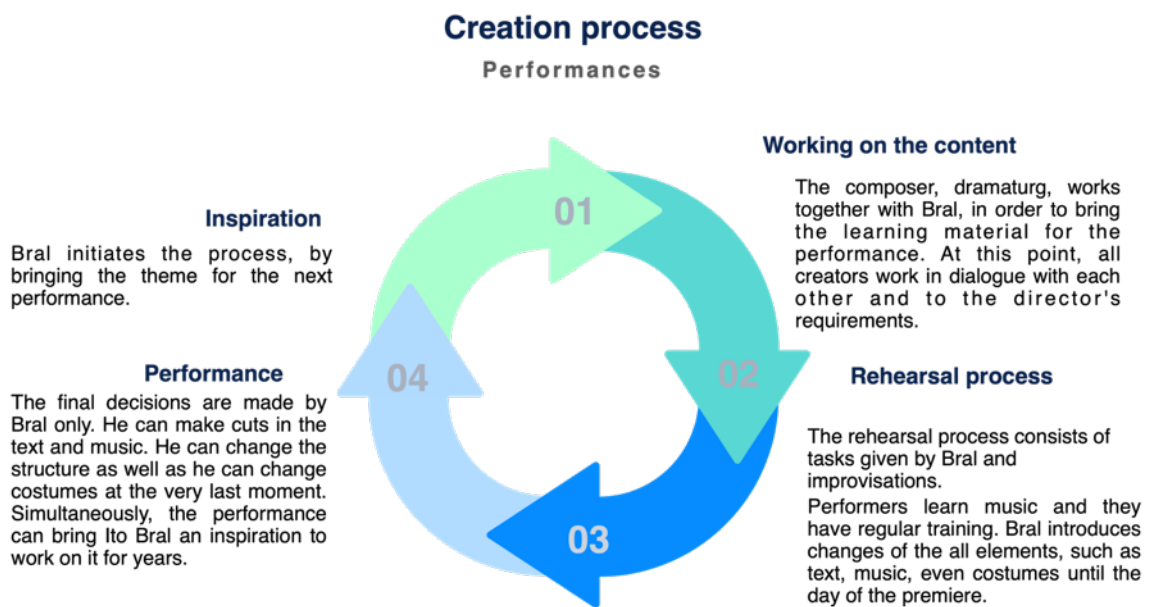
Ophelia – bow recitation¹¹³

Do you want to eat my heart (repetition)
 Hamlet it is your own heart
 I will subrogate your pain
 I'll give birth to death
 Barren loneliness
 He loved me once
 They said he had a good end
 I am the seed of death
 There will be no redemption
 I will always grieve
 I will always be here
 In absolute silence
 I'm the ventilator
 For poison amassed in this war
 The world of death stones is (repetition)
 Tied around my neck
 I peel off my skin to take breath
 The end of life is crime
 The end of touch is fist
 Intoxicated by the mouldy souls.
 My joy of sacrifice
 Your hate spurts from my hands
 The promise of pleasure
 I create a change of heart
 Have you eyes my prince?

¹¹³ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – A commentary*, premiere 2nd July 2018.

On the one hand, the music composed for this piece by Maciej Rychły reflects the impotence in Ophelia’s life. On the other hand, it shows the anger of a despairing and wounded woman who desperately wants to set herself free from her family.

As described above, the creative process represents a circle, as can be visualized in the diagram below:



The diagram above does not fully reflect the creative process. Nevertheless, as a simplified depiction of what happens between the creators and actors, it shows its continuity and collective nature.

As mentioned earlier, since the Song of the Goat Theatre was founded, it has brought to light aspects which can be categorized according to the notion of postdramatic theatre; whereby a text with a linear form is no longer placed at the centre of the production. The crucial aspect here is to strive for credibility in the feelings that can be invoked in all elements of the so-called “stage poem”. In describing Bral’s work, Lehmann’s description of Heiner Goebbels’ creating stage concerts is salient:

The actual theme, however, is the bringing together of different theatre languages (acting, making music, installation, light, poetry, singing, dancing, etc.) that have otherwise become disintegrated. (...) It is postdramatic not only through the

absence of drama but especially through the emphasized autonomy of musical, spatial and theatrical levels of creation.¹¹⁴

When it comes to the main principle of postdramatic theory, there are similarities between this type of theatre and the Song of the Goat Theatre Company's work. A specific *scenic poem*, with all its metaphors, is used for public reflection on philosophical and ethical topics. The multi-layered fabric of the performance, constructed from music in tandem with the text and the characters, forms an essay on the topic of human nature. This distinctive way that we 'think out loud'¹¹⁵ in theatre is expressed through selected themes and specific aesthetic forms, known as "oratorio drama".

b. Oratorio drama – synaesthesia as a principle of the creative process.

'If you properly tune your voices,
you will hear the fifth voice of an angel.'
(Jean-Claude Acquaviva)¹¹⁶

In 1987, the Polish professor Leszek Kolankiewicz used the term 'ethno-oratory' when referring to certain Gardzienice performances, including *Evening performance* (1977), *Sorcery* (1981) and the *Life of Archpriest Avvakum* (1983).¹¹⁷ The ethno-morpheme in this term was supposed to indicate a correlation between the performances of Gardzienice with rural communities and it remained part of the company's philosophy for many years. An oratorio is a musical composition on a sacred or semisacred subject, for solo voices, chorus and orchestra that can, but doesn't have to touch biblical topics.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibidem., p.111.

¹¹⁵ See Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), op.cit., p.111-113.

¹¹⁶ These are the words of one of the associated composers, Jean-Claude Acquaviva, on the melody of *Songs of Lear*. Grzegorz Bral always repeats them from the stage while introducing the music in the performance. Originally Acquaviva sent them via e-mail to Bral, as a comment in his own musical composition.

¹¹⁷ Leszek Kolankiewicz, „Etnooratorium-świętych obcowanie,” *Res Publica* (5), 1987

See: In a neologism, the term "oratory" was used to highlight religious themes, and thus it was considered to be full of ritual potential. At the same time, the 'ethno' element signals the connection of its meaning with the rural community.

(my own translation). Accessed 22nd May 2020.

¹¹⁸ Howard E. Smither (2000), *A History of the Oratorio, Vol4. The Oratorio in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, University of North Carolina Press, Philadelphia, p.6., We read: "Thus, it would seem that music journalists – often following the designations in published scores and printed programs – usually applied the term Oratorio to a musical setting of a long libretto on a Hebrew Christian religious subject, composed of verse, biblical prose, or both; the libretto includes narrative or dialogic passages as well as reflective ones, falls into two or three large sections, and includes parts for soloists and chorus. Journalists did, of

Today, oratorios may be semi-secular¹¹⁹ unrelated to the life of Christ, but they always oscillate thematically in terms of spiritual or ethical threads. One could venture to say that the performances of both Gardzienice and the Song of the Goat Theatre could be considered forms of secular oratory in theatre, although Bral has sought musical inspiration from rural subjects only at the beginning of the Song of the Goat Theatre and not in as direct way as Staniewski did.¹²⁰ For the former director Bral, it has been more important to search for topics representing European spirituality in general and to translate them into choral and polyphonic singing. Kalina Stefanova has described this point in the following terms:

The vertical theatre reality that the Song of the Goat Theatre creates is like a ‘tunnel’ to the invisible. They do not go about stripping life of its appearances. They simply skip this process, for they aim at entering directly into the territory of the pure spirit. And they do so with humility and humbleness of a monk. There is nothing here from the tacit haughtiness of the initiated-in-the-secrets gurus, who talk mainly to those who are “able” to understand, or from the stylized detachment of the rituals, for that matter. Song of the Goat’s theatre, so to speak, tiptoes into the territory of the spirit with special care and tenderness, with trepidation, lest they ruin its fine structure.¹²¹

In her article, Stefanova refers to two performances in particular: *Island* and *Hamlet – a Commentary*. In both performances, Bral combines poetic language with polyphony, dance-like movement and the artistic use of stage lighting. In addition to the visual and aural senses, the sense of smell is also activated in *Hamlet – a Commentary*, with live fire being used in the final scene. Synaesthesia, constantly present in Bral’s performances, allows him to achieve what Stefanova has called ‘vertical theatre reality’. With the ability to combine different theatre languages, the Song of the Goat may be seen as a theatre which penetrates collective European beliefs. A new interpretative perspective emerges

course, admit exceptions, for they occasionally applied the label Oratorium to shorter works and to some that have librettos with little or virtually no religious content”

¹¹⁹ Ibidem. In the 19th century, there was some loosening of threads and themes underwriting oratorios in concert halls. Oratorios began to resemble operas, also in terms of dramatised action.

¹²⁰ The first two performances of the Song of The Goat Theatre were based on the original rural music. The performance *Song of The Goat* (1998), was based on Greek music; *Chronicles – a lamentation*, (2001) was based on Albanian music. Unlike Gardzienice theatre, Song of The Goat Theatre never went so deeply and in such detail into the rural traditions.

¹²¹ Kalina Stefanova, ‘Theatre for sounds and souls. Or The Quest of the Polish Song of the Goat Company into the Impossible’, *Stage and Screen Reviews Magazine*, Nanjing University, Spring 2019, China (in Chinese); and *Critical Stages The IATC journal/ Revue de l’AICT*, June/Juin 2020: Issue No21, June 2020 (in English).

from the common cultural symbols and classical texts translated by Bral into a unique “oratorio drama”.

As a dramaturg for the company, I must be familiar with and respectful of the source text; or rather, the text which serves as the inspiration for a piece. However, I cannot lose sight of the broader context of each theme, as it serves as the source of new ideas during the rehearsal process. For me, it is crucial to know how the words work with all the other elements of the performance, such as the music, the rhythm, and the presence of the actors on stage. I will reflect on this in more depth in Chapter 4. Here, I will refer mainly to the main principle of interconnectedness (or interdependence), the philosophical assumptions which were discussed earlier in this chapter. Below, I focus on the principle’s pragmatic use in the creative process.

Everything has a broad meaning and concerns everything else. No emotion or its expression appears in isolation from the remaining elements of a production. All of them come into play because of the relationships between performers on stage and the stage world they bring to life. The principle of interconnectedness applies to everybody involved in a performance, such that each of the creators both give and receive impulses and inspiration at the same time. In order to come to realise what might trigger creativity in others, one must stay open and sensitive towards one’s colleagues. This state of mindfulness is captured in a phrase often used by Bral during training: ‘Listen more, listen deeper’.¹²² Here, listening means to be aware and alert with all of one’s senses, so that it becomes possible to register and react to what is happening within oneself, between the members of the ensemble and between the performance and the audience at the time of the scenic action. Referring to the principle of the BAM, to hear something on multiple levels one should open oneself up to spontaneous emotional reactions. At the same time, the effort of understanding the effects of the emotions on the body, mind and the ways in which one reacts are also valuable. Establishing a connection between every emotion, word and action leads the ensemble to resemble an orchestra, rather than a group of separate human beings.

In each theatre production, Bral works to embrace one main emotional topic and build a philosophical scenic essay¹²³ around it. When writing for subsequent productions, I must bear in mind the common perspective established by the director. At the same time, he sets individual directions for each of the creators to follow. Bral often seems to add

¹²² Bral during many workshops.

¹²³ Based on my conversation with Bral, 20th April 2020.

reflective layers by suspending the synthesis of meanings between scenic elements, such as music, character building, intensity and rhythm in scenic movement and the visual aspect of the performance. The apparent inconsistency between aesthetics and the ethical dimension frees up the interpretation, transferring the responsibility for deciphering the meaning to the audience. When writing dramaturgy, I must always remember that, for Bral, it is very important that words have not only semantic implications, but that they also carry the energy of sound, which activates the imagination as well as the performers' and audience's associations. The precepts mentioned above are closely related to the principles of musical composition. They contain the rhythm of the words used, the length of verses and their particular density of meaning. The unique use of meaning in the Song of the Goat Theatre's productions is rooted in the basic assumption that an ensemble should work like a group of musicians. As a result, each sound inspired by their interpretation, together with the dynamics and number of repetitions or inversions of previous verses, expands the semantic field. The work of the ensemble is thus like an orchestra's interpretation of classical music and its variations.

One of the most important principles used in the Song of the Goat Theatre is counterpoint and the pause. It is thanks to the appropriate distribution of the density of these two musical elements that Bral builds the emotional dynamics of a performance. The special rhythm of action and suspension, contradiction and coherence in the music and text and movement, creates tension between the actors on the stage. Bral believes that by integrating the senses, intellect, emotions and highly controlled body expressions, the performers and consequently the performance itself can direct the audience towards ethical or even spiritual considerations.¹²⁴ As a result of these assumptions, the verbal material of each performance is closer to poetry (with a particular density of meaning) than to dramatic dialogue. Even if a particular work is built on the basis of a dialogue (like *Hamlet – a Commentary* or *Warrior*), the words must maintain the appropriate rhythm and intensity of meaning, so as to allow the action to move forward. At the same time, the words should maintain coherency with the musical layer in each performance. They are meant to be like polyphonic theatre, making them more like *recitativo* than like classic dialogues between characters. One example of this is a scene from the drama *Warrior*, where the dialogue is replaced by two monologues. After an opening song, which in our interpretation represents an ancient choir, comes Hecuba the Trojan Queen's

¹²⁴ Ibidem.

monologue, which she addresses directly to Eros, the god of desire. The following passage is an enumeration of King Priam's dead children. It's spoken by his and Hecuba's already dead daughter Polyksena. Both monologues refer to Eros. He stays mute, seemingly absent between the quarrelsome Trojan and Greek nations.

EROS¹²⁵

*Desire, like the lover of lies,
grants absolution for every act of passion.
I can hear this false promise
That a lie will make you indifferent,
I am going quiet, to find the silence of conscience in myself.
You penetrate us with desire
Veil our faces with lies
Your lips pulsate around human hearts
You condense and melt in the loins
Obscure the future with promises*

Hecuba

Eros, you sweet tyrant of gods and people.
Faithful in your love for centuries.
Today you betrayed us. You're looking upon our demise with the stoicism of an immortal.
You crave new stimuli. Never satisfied. You've had all my daughters. We've sacrificed forty-eight sons to you. Was that not enough for you?
Betrayal and war are your nature, Eros.
Love turns into hatred in your heart.
The day the Gods abandoned Troy, the unsuspecting sun rose, more beautiful than ever.

Death.

Polyksena

Troilus, Hector, Agathon, Polites, Deiphobus, Antiphonus, Idomeneus, Lycaon, Esakos, Tymoetes, Polydorus, Democoon, Laodocus, Echephon, Helenus, Polydamas, Pandarus, Pammon, Hypokios, Antiphus, Hipponous, Gorgythion, Archemachus, Mylius, Kebriones, Melanippus, Mestor, Philemon, Glaucus, Astygonus, Evagoras, Atas, Doryclus, Bias, Dryops, Chersidamas, Telestas, Chromius, Democoon, Ascanius, Hyperion, Egoneos, Clonius, Deiopites, Lysithous, Polymedon, Isus, Echemmon, Paris, Dius.Iliona, Medusa, Lysimache, Aristodeme, Creusa, Polydecta, Arethusa, Polyxena, Ewandra, Medesicaste, Laodice, Cassandra.

They are dead. They were all murdered.

In a time, you watch the news, they are anonymous, unreal.

Only in the pictures, you can find some truth, powerlessness, and bewilderment.

Like the exorcisms of the twentieth-first century, they try to capture the last remnant of conscience, to stop the murder. On the photos, in the absence of an active madness and cruelty, there is the gap in time, through which you can break into the conscience and catch a glimpse of compassion.

In the victim's eye, the longing for love. Helplessness, in the eye of the torturer.

Stopping and immensity.

Polyksena's prayer

*Dear God
From my birth to my death, I do not believe
in everlasting rest
I do not believe in your love
Resurrection of the body
Redemption
Awakening of the faith
Defender of the downtrodden
You have died in me with the greatest sacrifice
And in this empty grave
I am calling Hallelujah*

¹²⁵ Alicja Bral, *Warrior*, premiere 16th November 2020, Wroclaw, Poland.

The construction of the whole scene is closer to what one might usually encounter in opera or in oratorio, rather than in drama. Because of the music, which is constantly present in the performance, we do not lose sense of the plot, even though the logic of the dialogue is broken.

All these elements bring the Song of the Goat Theatre closer to what Lehmann understands in terms of postdramatic theatre. However, even though the formal and intellectual side of Bral's work operates within a postdramatic reality, the way in which he represents his themes is closer to semi-ritualistic theatre, such as twentieth-century oratorios, or a kind of contemporary spiritual ritual. Richard Schechner reflects on this phenomenon:

So, wherever we look and no matter how far back, theatre is a mixture, a braid of entanglement of entertainment and ritual. At one moment ritual seems to be the source, at another it is entertainment. They are Gemini acrobats tumbling over one another, neither one always on top, neither one always first (...) The theatre anthropological thesis states that the actual basic polarity is not between ritual and theatre (Performance Art), but in the parameter's 'efficacy' (which is a stake in ritual) and 'entertainment' (in art).¹²⁶

Lehmann complements Schechner's statement, stating that 'theatre can [thus] strive for variation of efficacy that has little connection with the ritual procedures...and that nevertheless represents far more than entertainment.'¹²⁷ Although Lehmann seems to focus more on intellectual rather than ritual theatre, his words shed some light on the ethical assumptions present in the philosophy of the Song of the Goat Theatre. Bral places faith in the effectiveness of the semi-spiritual message of a production. He believes that it is embodied in the music, or in other words, in harmonic precision.

The unique role of music has been, from the beginning, an idiosyncratic feature of Bral's work. However unique his understanding of music might be, history provides many examples of practitioners who have understood the potential of music and its impact on the shaping of a production in a similar way. Adolphe Appia, for instance, considered music to be the only guarantor of the transcendental, thanks to which metaphysics are possible on the stage. He therefore prioritised music in a performance. In his work, *Music*

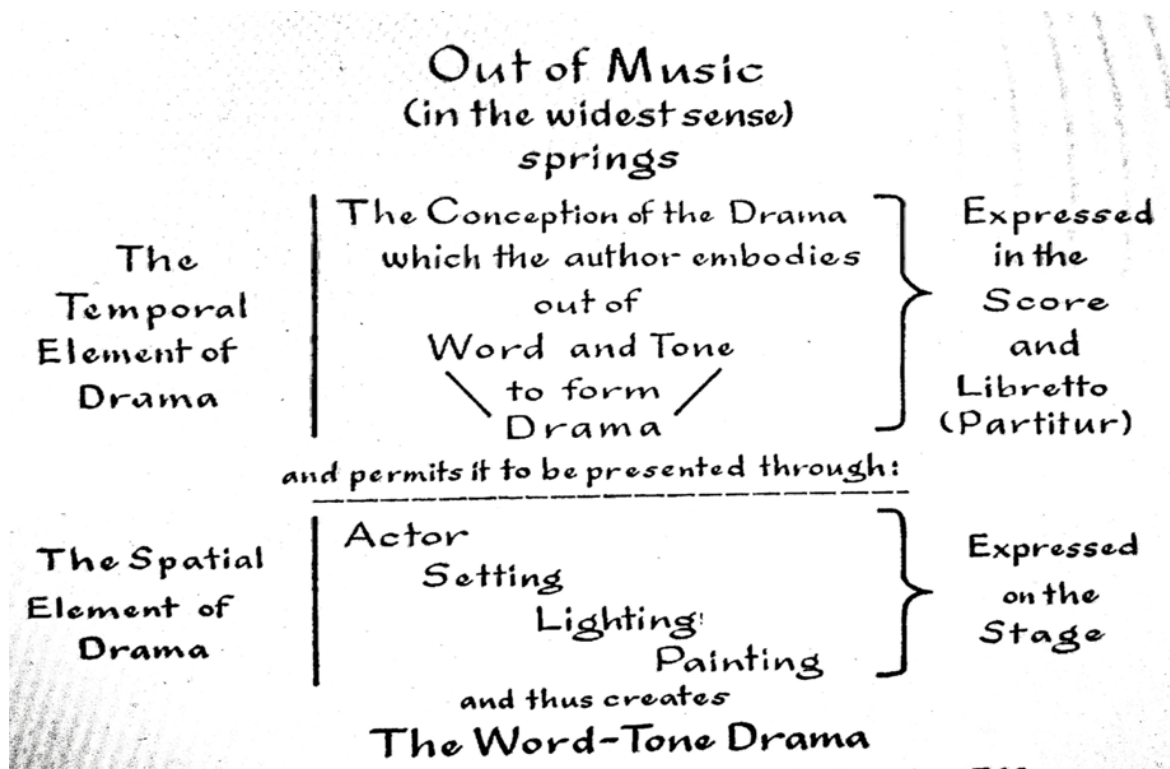
¹²⁶ Richard Schechner (1985), *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p.146.

¹²⁷ Lehmann (2006), op. cit., p.139.

and the *Art of the Theatre*, he describes in detail which values are brought to the stage through music:

By way of summing up: a dramatic idea requiring musical expression in order to be revealed must spring from the hidden world of our inner life, since this life cannot be expressed except through music, and music can express only that life. (...) This hierarchy is organically composed: music, the soul of the drama, gives life to the drama, and by its pulsations determines every motion of the organism, in proportion and sequence. If one of the links of this organic chain breaks or is missing, the expressive power of the music is cut off there and cannot reach beyond it.¹²⁸

His diagram, below, more specifically outlines all the stages of creative work as well as the hierarchy of each element inside a theatre production.



Copied from A. Appia (1962) *ibidem*.

Appia's conceptualisation has a lot in common with how Bral understands music and its role in a production. Music has always been the starting point from which every new Song of the Goat Theatre production begins. Even though inspiration might come from

¹²⁸ Adolphe Appia (1962), *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, University of Miami Press, Miami. Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2011 <https://archive.org/details/musicartoftheatr00appi/mode/2up/p.26>, Accessed 14th April 2020.

classical texts, music is the backbone of each performance; it concurrently reveals a hidden reality¹²⁹ of the performance.

Using Schopenhauer's words as a motto, Appia states that music has the power to communicate the incommunicable. By itself it 'never expresses the phenomenon, but only the essence of the phenomenon.'¹³⁰ To define his expression, the musician thus needs the poet. If dramatic action requires music for its expression, the implication is that the development of external motifs (phenomena) within the action must give way to the universal expression of their inner, purely human essence (the inner essence of the phenomenon).¹³¹ Appia understood the necessity for combining music with poetic text. Similarly, Bral always demands that the text has a poetic structure or, in the case of dialogue, that it should at least consist of metaphors. As each text and single word has its own idiosyncratic meaning, the dramaturg – as a part of the ensemble – must search for that verbal material which will bring with it the most significant meaning and which, at the same time, is built from words that expand the imaginations of the performers and other co-creators. It is only thanks to the use of metaphorical language that such material can be found.

Metaphor allows for the possibility of distance between the signifier (*signifiant*) and signified (*signifié*), while maintaining a field of mutual understanding. Barthes sees meaning as the interconnectedness of a phenomenon and the meaning to which the description refers. Barthes' concept is derived directly from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, who connects the concept (*signifié*) and its sound-image (*signifiant*) and thus gives us the possibility of fully interpreting a sign, both as a sense and as an intellectual phenomenon.¹³² Keeping these two concepts in mind gives me, as a dramaturg, the opportunity to neutralise and open up the semantic field, not only for individual language elements, but also for physical and musical gestures. Here, there is also room for the spectator's interpretation. As a dramaturg I must search for this language, which can – at the same time – contain both the discipline of form and a vast and open semantic field. The ideal situation would be to excite the audience's imagination and to provoke the

¹²⁹ Grzegorz Bral to students during a month-long workshop, August 2019.

¹³⁰ See David Roesner (2014), op. cit., pp. 23-25.

¹³¹ Ibidem, p.26

¹³² The French semiotician Roland Barthes used signs to explain the concept of connotation – cultural meanings attached to words – and denotation – literal or explicit meanings of words. Without Saussure's breakdown of signs into signified and signifier, however, these semioticians would not have had anything to base their concepts on. I refer here to two main publications: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Kurs językoznawstwa ogólnego*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, Polska, 1961, and Roland Barthes, *New critical essays*, translated by Richard Howard, University of California Press, 1990.

process of intellectual interpretation, as well as to stimulate its feelings and subconscious associations. The process of interpretation in the theatre is usually spontaneous for an audience and dependent on each spectator. However, Bral and the Song of the Goat Theatre work to create the best possible conditions for everyone who wishes to take an active part in the process of creating meaning.

The specific relationship between music and poetry could not bring a whole new world to the stage without the actor. In pursuit of the most consistent collective act possible,¹³³ work on a new production by the Song of the Goat Theatre requires patience, discipline and courage, so as to overcome the limitations of each individual. According to the philosophy of the Song of the Goat Theatre, this can only come through training.

In the next chapter, I will outline the training in the BAM, which was my starting point as a dramaturg. Prior to writing my first dramatic Song of the Goat Theatre text, I had participated in almost a hundred workshops led by Bral.

Chapter III. The Training –The Bral Acting Method

A Hermeneutical Approach.

1.Introduction

The Bral Acting Method has its roots in ‘coordination’.¹³⁴ I use this name for the training method developed by Bral, as it has within it the ABCs of exercises created as a part of the training offered by the Bral School of Acting. In the words of Niamh Dowling:

Coordination is not an exercise but one of the central searches and principles of the company’s work, the organic interlinking and integration of voice and movement within the individual performer as well as the linking and integration with a partner and the group. It’s a particular attitude and motivation to creative work, which nurtures the individual within the ensemble. (...) However, one should be mindful not to reduce the work of Teatr Pieśń Kozła to a list of codified exercises. (...) The exercises originated by Teatr Pieśń Kozła during their many years of research and exploration invariably undergo transformation with time. However, when they are taken away and disseminated by the members of the company, in a variety of projects around the world, these exercises may grow, develop, and transform out of all

¹³³ By this I mean collaborative work of the dramaturg, composer, actors and above all director, who holds together all the work as a cohesive art piece.

¹³⁴ The phenomenon is described in Chapter 2, Subsection1 of this thesis.

recognition, freely and creatively, but they would always be nourished by the fundamental principles of the working ethos and philosophical unity born of Teatr Pieśń Kozła.¹³⁵

With Dowling's explanation in mind, it is clear that over time and based on the general assumptions of Coordination, the individual character of each teacher/practitioner of this technique begins to emerge. Bral, who besides being the director of the Song of the Goat Theatre is also an active educator, has named his method of working with actors the Bral Acting Method. However, despite the idiosyncratic nature of this method, it remains firmly rooted in Coordination principals. As mentioned above, Coordination was partly depicted in Chapter Two and therefore here I will only refer to those aspects of it which reinforce the arguments which follow. As my practice is limited to working with Bral, below I will describe, in more depth, the character and sequences of the BAM. I will focus on the part of the training that led me to find what I call a "Self-Less Language". Inevitably, the point of view presented in the following sections is based on limited personal experience and cannot stand as an accurate description of the BAM, even if such a thing were possible.

To present the process as accurately as possible, I have situated my observations within a specific hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic method itself was created to describe the process of understanding a text. The general principle of hermeneutics refers to the idea that an understanding of the whole is determined by reference to the individual parts; and that knowledge of each individual part exists in reference to the whole. These perspectives are mutually enriching. Accordingly, in the context of my research, I conceptualise the whole as "teaching", whilst the individual parts are understood to be "practice".

The hermeneutic method is the most accurate way of summarising my experiences, which have stretched over time. The justification for using this approach can be found in another aspect of Coordination and the BAM: the everlasting process of learning and progress. In the following subsections of this chapter, I will consequently depict my own path of development, in order to show how I interlink the body, the voice and the imagination. Subsequently, I will move on to describe the idea of ensemble attunement.

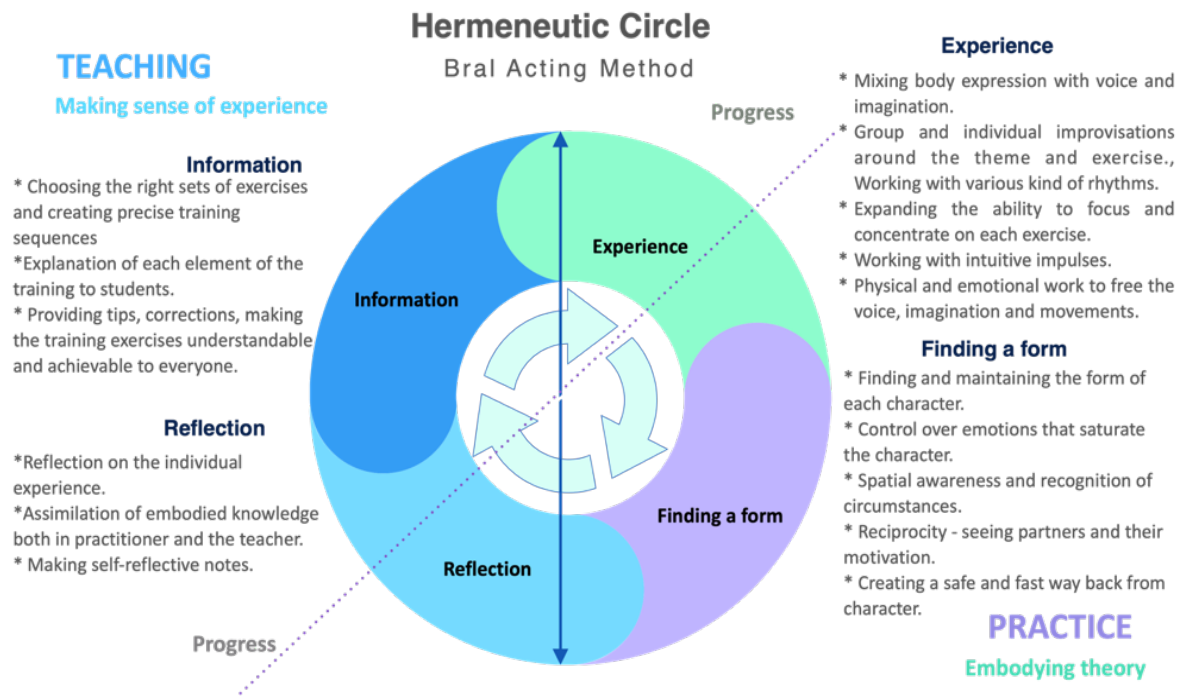
¹³⁵ Niamh Dowling, 'Teatr Pieśń Kozła and its integration into western European theatre training' in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, Vol. 2 (2), 2011, 246–247.

In Appendix 2 I have included a *Glossary of the Bral Acting Method*. To avoid generalisations, this glossary has been written from the concrete perspective of my experiences, during a month-long workshop in August 2019. Not wanting to impoverish my reflections on the subject nor to emphasise a universal aspect, I have used a retrospective approach to facilitate a description of the evolution of my experiences over the years. From my point of view, the twelve groups of exercises listed below, constitute the BAM. To make the information more accessible, I have divided them into two sections: “Teaching” and “Practice”. The descriptions are based on notes made during workshops and conversations with Bral.¹³⁶ During workshops and rehearsals, Bral often reminds us that we can never say that we have reached the peak of our possibilities as actors. One can always reach deeper into the acting craft. There are no limits to how sensitive, skilful, or creative one can be. Repeating a particular exercise, even a short time later, can take you on an entirely different journey. Self-development in this paradigm is envisioned as a spiral, where the depth of achievement is limited only by one’s courage. One needs to be willing to probe one’s emotions and memories, these being the most nourishing sources of inspiration for actors/performers.

The BAM has a decipherable basic set of exercises, which has been compiled so as to stimulate its practitioners’ development. Despite this, the techniques remain open and Bral adjusts them according to the needs of each participant. As such, there is no end to the practice possibilities and the method can be said to be living.

In the diagram below, I have presented a summary of the movements through which practitioners acquire experience and knowledge while working with Bral.

¹³⁶ My conversation with Bral, 6th May 2020.



The diagram above represents the BAM as a practice of continuous work on acting craft. At the beginning of each workshop, Bral works to understand the group and the individuals within it, thus making it possible for him to set a certain sequence of exercises which will lead them to development. He provides information clearly and with respect for the level of skill of each practitioner. Progress comes through experience and then reflection upon practice. This process of progress is potentially never ending, as the nature of each exercise is to confront one's own limitations. For me, the exercise which most significantly helped me access my potential to write for the stage was the improvisation of dialogue to the accompaniment of drum rhythms. However, each person involved has their own experience of, and path in, training, with the most important attitude being that of sustained openness and genuine compassion towards oneself and the others in the group.

In closing this part of the chapter, what follows is a graphic summary of the relationship between the assumptions of the BAM and the notion of a Self-Less Language. The column on the left is comprised of Bral's statements, whereas the one on the right contains examples of possible compositions of exercises, many of which refer to several teachings at the same time. To concentrate on the relationship between the BAM and the writing process, it was necessary to keep the description of the exercises to

the basics. In the following sections, I will discuss the impact of BAM training on the practice of the dramaturg/playwright.

The Bral Acting Method and its impact on Self-Less Language

Bral Acting Method	Self-Less Language
<p>Breathing <i>(Mindfulness/ Heartfulness)</i> <i>There is no oxygen at the top of mountains.</i></p>	<p>By introducing relaxed and deep breathing, Bral establishes a conscious connection between the internal states of the actors in the studio. Breathing awareness can relax the body and the mind. This is usually a time to reconnect with the inner self. As this almost meditative way of breathing belongs more to the Eastern rather than the Western world, I will quote Lorna Marshall regarding Yoshi Oida's practice: 'When Yoshi uses the word 'mind,' he is not referring to the brain or the intellect. There is a single Japanese word 'kokoro,' which can be translated as either "mind" or "heart"'.¹³⁷</p> <p>Oida is relevant in this regard, as from my experience this state of mindfulness/heartfulness is a condition for fully engaging in training. For a dramaturg of the Song of the Goat Theatre, this particular state is critical for the act of writing.</p>
<p>Warm-up <i>Make your body like liquid honey. Bring the flow of energy into your veins.</i></p>	<p>The relationship between the warm-up and the ability to write is not immediately obvious. Nevertheless, the activated body has a massive impact on the release of new thinking paths. During the warm-up a writer activates the relationship between the body and the imagination. (Practice chapter 2)</p>
<p>Rhythms <i>Shared aesthetic of emotions.</i></p>	<p>During training, Bral often repeats that everything has a rhythm, heartbeat, breath, movement and emotions; that this is so even in the case of the relationships between people. Rhythm makes it possible to harmonise everything.</p> <p>This knowledge is especially useful when writing for the Song of the Goat Theatre. For example, when practising different rhythms, I discovered a new dimension to the beat of words and I began to be more sensitive to the rhythms of the performers' bodies, to human interactions and to the music. The words started to take on additional meaning, which was the result of the musical potential inherent in the consonance and dissonance between various elements of the production. Thanks to an awareness of the rhythmic potential of the words, I discovered additional value, that deepened the emotional image of the characters and scenes.</p>
<p>Tuning <i>A finely tuned instrument in an orchestra</i></p>	<p>To be part of a coordinated ensemble, the ability to tune in to the group is vital. Sensitivity towards one's partners and the ability to respond to the impulses flowing from them can become a source of endless inspiration. Changes in voice timbre, intuitive body</p>

¹³⁷ Yoshi Oida and Lorna Marshall (1997), *The Invisible Actor*, Methuen, London, UK., p. 39.

	<p>movements, unexpected reactions to given words: all this can have an enriching effect on the language and utterances appearing in Song of the Goat Theatre productions. Tuning opens up another dimension of meaning. At the same time, it also helps to build a coherent performance in which the fragment is a part of the whole and in which the whole expresses each fragment at the same time. The elements become mutually supportive of each other.</p>
<p>Listening <i>Listen deeper.</i></p>	<p>Listening in BAM training means not only being sensitive to sound, but also (and perhaps above all) having the ability to listen carefully to one’s own emotions and those of one’s colleagues. This is a skill whose value cannot be overestimated in the writing process. Sensitivity to the intentions of others and to changes in their emotional states is crucial when choosing the right words for a character. Listening is crucial in the process of writing, as it allows the writer to free himself/herself from prejudices about the text and the character.</p>
<p>Impulses <i>Scenic reality.</i></p>	<p>Impulses are inseparable from mindful listening to scenic/theatrical reality. In a play, this reality – created from a web of many different impulses – is the essence from which creativity emerges. Bral’s method trains sensitivity to internal and external impulses. This sensitization triggers new and unusual connections between the imagination and the body. As a result of practical exercises, the writer brings to life the feelings that evoke the given words in his/her body. The awareness of how speech co-constitutes a given scene appears in the body through training. Written text is tested in practice, through the body and feelings. The result is a growing awareness of the text and its relationship – or contrast – with the body, impulses, and the environment. All these considerations add value to characters’ speech. Different impulses may influence the shape of previously written text. Bearing in mind that, for Bral, the performance is a living organism, the writer must get rid of attachment to once written lines and be prepared for sudden changes that must be applied.</p>
<p>Sound <i>To hear the vibration of the savage sound.</i></p>	<p>Working with sound and searching for the “savage sound” is one of the most efficient blocks of exercises that free the independence and courage of participants. For Bral, the emphasis is on ‘your own voice, without social and family masks’ [sic].¹³⁸ It is surprising how much our real voice is different from what we think it is. The sudden release from limitations opens previously unknown layers of subtle courage and artistry. As a result, it becomes easier to find words that are not subject to internally existing self-censorship.</p>

¹³⁸ My notes from rehearsal and workshop sessions, written between 2013-2020. The description is frequently used by Bral during workshops and rehearsal process.

<p>Polyphony <i>The subtle diagram of memory.</i></p>	<p>Polyphonic singing is an excellent practice for writing while keeping all the characters in mind simultaneously. In polyphony, while each voice is a separate entity, the beauty of the song emerges from the coexistence of all the voices at once. Similarly in the writing process, though the characters have their individual fates and distinct personalities and temperaments, it is only their joint existence which determines the true value of a drama.</p>
<p>Presence <i>Do not let me forget you.</i></p>	<p>Working on “stage presence” constitutes one of only a few training phases in which actors work individually. Nevertheless, the practical experience of what this “presence” might be allows the writer to choose words that enhance character construction.</p>
<p>Imagination/ Memory <i>I want the world of the theatre be more like lucid dreaming</i></p>	<p>The last three sections in the glossary of the training have the most direct relationship with work on words (10- imagination and memory, 11- working with text and 12- working on the character). Here it is important to emphasize the physical and emotional openness that is needed to enter this phase of working with Bral. This readiness can be built through the preceding stages of training (in the Glossary, they are described in the chapters: Teaching and Practice Chapters 1-9).</p> <p>It is while undertaking exercises from this section, that metaphorical thinking, which is the nucleus of Self-Less Language, begins. Practice Chapter 10, like all the other practical chapters, contains many more exercises than I have included in this section. The diversity of the exercises makes training an open form. At this point, practice proceeds into the next phase, in which typically literary ways of working appear. When the emotions evoked by spontaneous memory are released and the practitioner can give them the right form, through body awareness and knowledge of the character, metaphorical images begin to appear. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter ‘poetry [and metaphorical language] would thus seem to be about the insights of an emotional life that transcends the individual’.¹³⁹ In training, one learns how to enter this less selfish place, by combining personal memory with archetypal collective memory. The courage to create a connection between the “I’s” present situation and the “timeless” position of archetypal characters, helps open up the imagination (including its literary aspect) to myth and the universal depth of events. This is the moment when the deepest layers of creativity are released.</p>
<p>Text work <i>Make the story real.</i></p>	<p>Text work combines two aspects of stage work. One is the freedom of intuitive improvisation, which brings constant freshness to the character. The second is the discipline of the form and the text. Concurrently, the spoken text must be emotionally believable, as well as being precise and direct. The performers and the dramaturg should bear in mind all of the twelve rules of the text (Practice Chapter 11 point 5). The lines should help actors feel and believe every word. Text for the stage must make sense to the performer as well as to the viewer.</p>

¹³⁹ Eleazar Mieleitinsky (2000), *The poetics of Myth*, Routledge, London, p.78.

<p>Character <i>You have all the characters within you.</i></p>	<p>Working on the characters is, for the writer, the biggest challenge. To create a logical and expressive character, one needs to activate all the knowledge gained through training. In the case of Self-Less Language, this is the moment of the highest level of collaboration between the writer, director, the source material and all the inspiring elements in a production.</p> <p>Training allows the writer to enter each of the characters at the time of their creation, but also to free him/herself from them. Thanks to this, the creation of a drama with many characters becomes easier for the writer, not only because he/she is able to think about them, but also because of the ability to feel them, which results from the act of bringing them to life in rehearsals.</p>
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The BAM provokes a release of creativity. Acts of speech are released from the obligation to communicate and warn those who speak and those who listen. They may float freely in the space of metaphor and the mythical imagination. Nevertheless, this creative freedom is not a “one-man-show”. In the theatre, collaboration is both inevitable and needed, with artists of many crafts working together, inspiring each other and co-creating the final performance. It gives the artists the feeling of mutual support during the process of creation. The relation between creativity and emotional wellbeing is a vibrant subject of new pedagogy as well as positive psychology. It’s evident that positive and non-violent communication and relations in ensemble work has a direct impact on how creativity can appear among artists.¹⁴⁰

The relationship between the written text and all the partners involved in the creative process is described in the subsequent section.

¹⁴⁰ See: Helen Trenos (2014), *Creativity: the Actor in Performance*, The Gruyter, Warsaw-Berlin. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014), *The Systems Model of Creativity*, Springer, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014), *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology*, Springer, New York.

2. Hybrid of meanings – embodied words

During the past few years my research has consisted mainly of practice. This fact, however, has made an invaluable contribution to my theorisation of dramaturgy. The attempt to combine experience with the articulation and description of it, has led me to significant breakthroughs and discoveries. This has thus given me an utterly new insight into the various connections between BAM training, dramaturgical writing, musicality and the spoken text on stage.

Bral often emphasises that ‘the body is the voice, and the voice is the body’.¹⁴¹ At the core of BAM training lies the belief that theatre art is like a living being, in which the elements are in a relation of interdependence with each other; that they co-constitute each other. Developing the full potential of a performance demands that all the people involved develop mutual understanding and compassion for each other. Ideally, it would be best to develop them to such an extent that an uninterrupted and continuous flow of energy between the performers and the audience becomes possible. Bral calls this peculiar energy ‘the snake of the performance’.¹⁴² For it to appear on stage, all the elements must be in tune harmonically: the musical compositions, the voices, the bodies, the space and the words.

In anticipation of potential misunderstandings, I would like to emphasize that every element of a Song of the Goat Theatre production is essential and of equal importance. However, due to the strictly defined perspective of this thesis, I will use dramaturgy as the focus, with the other issues covered in terms of their relationship with language. Bral emphasises the creation of a homogeneous theatre world on stage. To encompass all of its attributes in perfect balance, he applies common training for all the artists engaged in a performance. Before being recruited to join the Song of the Goat Theatre, each of the actors involved already has an acting or a musical education, with some having stage experience as well. However, my invitation to join the creative team was different from the others’. As the person responsible for organising workshops in the Bral School of Acting, I took part in all of them as a participant. Despite my initial assumptions, the need to write was awakened within me after three years of regular training. The creative act

¹⁴¹ Bral during rehearsal on *Warrior*, 18th November 2019.

¹⁴² Bral expresses himself as a director in a semi-poetic and symbolic way. The ‘snake of the performance’ can appear from within the dense and harmonious energy and alertness of each performer on stage. For this to happen, there is also a preceding need for the music and words to be integrated with each other. My conclusions on this matter are based on watching and participating in the creative process of the theatre.

appeared spontaneously during month-long workshops in London (2015). Having read a few of my poems, Bral asked me to join the next production of the Song of the Goat Theatre as a dramaturg.¹⁴³

Until now, my research has been constructed mostly around the main theoretical paradigm of a Self-Less Language. Initially I saw it as a concept emphasising having “less” of the author, or their ego, in the dramaturgy. However, it is now clear to me that Self-Less Language grows from one’s capacity to broaden the field of perception. Instead of defining Self-Less Language by using the negative category of a “declined ego”, or a “diminishing ego”, I now consider the ego to be a key element in the enunciation of its meaning; as “essential creative fuel”. This productive power emerges from the multiple relations between the artist and the world, as well as his/her constant training in being open to emotional and creative manifestations.

In the second year of my research and as the result of an unexpected coincidence, when one of the actresses taking part in a performance had to return suddenly to Italy a week before the premiere because of her child becoming ill, Bral suggested that I join the group as an actress. Having accepted the challenge, I felt the great power of imagination triggered by memory. I could sense, through my body, the impulses provided by the music and the intensive energy emanating from my partners on stage. As a playwright, I had already experienced the strength of joint creation, but its power had consisted mainly of an intertextual dialogue and inspiration from the director and composer. However, now this power has taken on a new meaning for me, having been broadened by new understanding, flowing not only from intellectual analysis, but also from substantial bodily involvement.

Overall, the following section of the thesis aims to make two contributions. On the one hand, to highlight the uniqueness of the BAM as a general technique for working with actors. On the other hand, to present a detailed study of the impact that the BAM has on a playwright’s/dramaturg’s creative abilities.

With the advent of avant-garde theatre, mostly based on physical training, the body has taken on a significant role in the creative process. Physical activity helps to release tension, increase stamina and attain a higher level of vigour. These are some of the obvious benefits. Meyerhold, for one, conceptualised the essence of acting as training (biomechanics) and physical actions, for Stanislavski – in *An Actor Prepares* – later

¹⁴³ The first production in which I was a dramaturg was *Island* (premiere: 1st December 2016), based on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

became a way to approach the truth of a character. I have already depicted some aspects of Meyerhold's and Stanislavski's methods which correlate with Bral's approach, in Chapter 1 Section 2 of this thesis. Below, I focus on connecting Stanislavski's belief in physical training with the way in which Bral works towards breaking through each practitioner's limitations. As Stanislavski has stated:

Mind you, only physical actions, physical truths, and physical belief in them! Nothing more! (...) Did you notice any new sensations because of executing a whole sequence of physical acts without interruption? If you did, the separate moments are flowing, as they should, into larger periods and creating a continuous current of truth".¹⁴⁴

By using sequences of physical actions aimed at awakening unconscious creativity, Stanislavski aimed to lead actors toward constructing organic lines of life for their characters. Years later, Grotowski went a step further by introducing trances – as states of relief from intellectual barriers – as a way of searching for the Objective Drama.¹⁴⁵ For all three of these directors – Stanislavski, Grotowski and Meyerhold – it was vital to be able to create clear lines of communication, a truthful reality and an honest connection between oneself and the others. This ability was premised on work with the body.

Bral works with physicality in a similar way. For him it is also a tool, which if disciplined enough, can help to express a large range of sensations and feelings. Nevertheless, through a Buddhist perspective, Bral also sees the body as just one of many conditions for progress in the craft of acting; with it being necessary to integrate all of them to elicit the full potential of an actor. Whilst on the stage or during training, each person can experience a sudden openness and understanding, close to that of a metaphysical experience, but for this to happen the voice, body, imagination and spontaneity of a person need to achieve a degree of inner balance. At the same time, the group itself must achieve harmonious and organic reciprocity. For Bral, acting is simply a complex craft which can be trained and perfected and it is as a result of the collective experience of acting that one can be inspired and discover new creative abilities.

I took part in more than forty workshops with Bral between 2013-2016, but at first, I felt unsure amongst the other practitioners and for several months did not want to feel exposed in any way. I remember how uncertain I felt in performing the rhythmic

¹⁴⁴ Constantin Stanislavski (2003), *An Actor Prepares*, Routledge, New York, pp.142-143.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Richards (2006), *At work with Grotowski on physical actions*, Routledge, London, pp. 49-70.

exercises, not to mention in emitting my voice, either in spoken text or in song. However, as a result of Bral's guidance and his numerous comments, with time I was able to finally free my voice and feel confident in most of the physical exercises. Also, my ability to "listen more and deeper" gradually improved, to the extent that one day I realized that Bral had made me his workshop assistant.

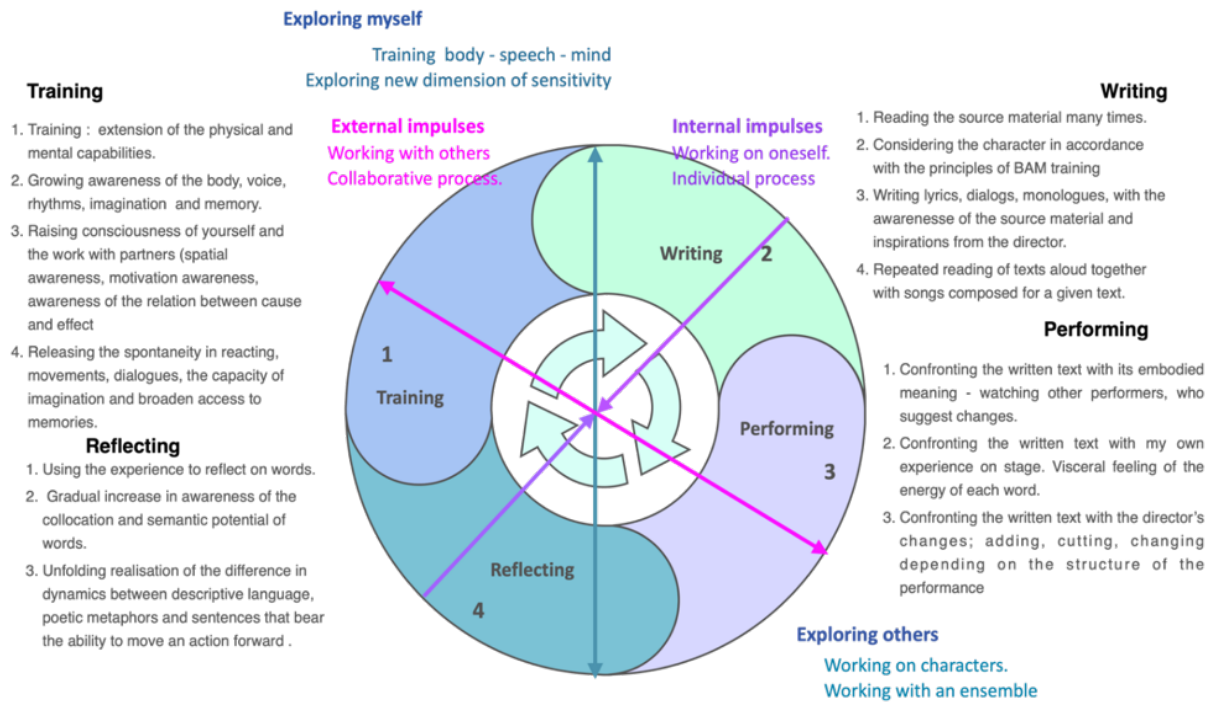
With time I developed enough courage to approach the spoken text. I felt emboldened by my excursion into the somewhat obscure, the internal realm of physical release, into togetherness, real feeling and true reaction. During a workshop in London, I began to feel confident that I had finally regained "my own voice", which was nothing other than the creative part of my existence. It was at this time that I started to write poetry again.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it took me three years to unlock the stream of poetic words again. When Bral asked me to join the next *Song of the Goat Theatre* production, I was both happy and terrified. Rather tentatively I ventured into the even more imponderable realm of premonition, searching in my imagination for the other characters.

The diagram below shows how the BAM experience enhances my creative writing. My words change in confrontation with the reality of the stage, thus enriching my reflections on writing. I have realised that each subsequent workshop has given me a chance to deepen my experience of the creative process in general. I have started to see the correlation between receiving and rendering inspiration through the text, as an endless path for self-development. Quoting Bral, 'this road never ends. If you think you have already reached the end of your search, you have just finished as an artist'.¹⁴⁷

In relation to hermeneutics – which I discussed in Chapter 3 – below it will be approached from a philosophical angle. The structure of the hermeneutic circle serves here as a picture of skills, rather than as a method; it is a practice, more than a theory. To decode the cognitive process of the BAM, I will treat hermeneutics as the art of interpreting theatrical meaning. Even if one were to define the BAM as a specific collection of exercises, it has an essentially unfixed nature which is open to individual processes of understanding and interpretation.

¹⁴⁶ I lost access to the poetic realm of my writing, as a result of complex forces, at the age of fourteen. I regained it when I was thirty-four, through BAM training.

¹⁴⁷ Bral during a month-long acting course, August 2019, Wrocław, Poland.



I was able to deepen my understanding of the individual exercises in the BAM through multiple training sessions and with various groups of participants. As I was not an actress, I did not approach them with any expectations, but rather with just an honest curiosity regarding new experiences. This started me on a journey into the unknown, which turned out to be a path to self-development and a recognition of my potential. As Edmund Husserl has stated, ‘practice comes before “theory” everywhere and in all times’.¹⁴⁸ As a phenomenologist, he focused his interests on searching for things ‘as they were.’ Nonetheless, he also realized that reality is only an appearance which one perceives. As a science, phenomenology is based on the view that the world and everything that concerns the sphere of existence can never be conclusive. Phenomena reveal themselves only partially, through the never-ending process of experience.

A possible paradox within theatre lies in the ‘phenomenological pleonasm: the need to employ the real to re-present the real.’¹⁴⁹ Whilst this may seem like a contradiction, it is grounded in logic: whilst on the one hand, rehearsals and training are not real performance situations, on the other hand the feelings and memories they trigger come from within us and are our own. Bral often stresses that one should work on personal experiences only during training, but that on stage all background should be embodied;

¹⁴⁸ See Edmund Husserl, Hua XVI:61, Husserl, E. (1973). *Ding und Raum: Vorlesungen 1907*, ed. Claesges Ulrich, Nijhoff, Den Haag.

¹⁴⁹ See Julian Olf, ‘Acting and being: Some thoughts about Metaphysics and Modern Performance Theory’, *Theatre Journal*, Vol.33, No 1 (March 1981), pp.34-45.

although at the same time one needs to remember that one is not the character. The character must be real, in terms of the truthfulness of his/her actions on the stage, rather than coming into existence through the human life of the actor.¹⁵⁰

BAM training aims at facilitating overcoming one's physical and mental limitations, which is crucial for the acting craft because it demands feeling and imagination. Actors must translate unreal and imagined situations from drama and performance, so as to embody them in a character. However, it is difficult to conceive of the life of another person and doubly so in the case of a theatrical character; to awaken within oneself feelings that can reliably contribute to building an authentic character with which viewers can sympathize. The ability to consciously enter a role is a key task in acting. Thanks to this ability, not only can actors portray characters dependably, but they can also feel sure playing many different roles. According to Husserl, even though 'this' doesn't exist, we can approach 'it' through experience, through practice. I have experienced something similar to this assumption during BAM training; an increasing capacity for broadening my perception, both in regard to myself and the world around me.

At a workshop in August 2019, at which Euripides' *Trojan Women*¹⁵¹ served as the source text, training was intensely focused on the rhythm and musicality of the spoken text. The elements described in the previous chapter also figured in the training, with physical and vocal exercises serving to perfect a specific way of speaking the text; something which Bral called "spiewo-mowa" (singing-speech). We worked a lot on the improvised scenes, as well as on the rhythm and tempo of each word. As a result, we discovered other meanings within the text and I made quite a few breakthroughs in my research during that month. Working with speech-singing was one of the most important aspects of training stimulating my writing for the stage.

As a result of the month-long BAM workshop mentioned above, I wrote a dramatic text for the Song of the Goat Theatre entitled *Warrior*¹⁵² based on *Trojan Women*. The written drama emerged before we started the rehearsal process. I realised during one of the first rehearsals in October 2019 that I would have to make some changes to the text as, until I went on stage, I had never spoken the sequences I had written. Namely, it would

¹⁵⁰ My notes from the rehearsal for the *Warrior*, 17th November 2019.

¹⁵¹ Euripides' *Trojan Women* was an inspiration for the performance *Warrior* (2019) and was the third Greek classical text used as source material for a performance by Song of The Goat Theatre. The first was *Dithyramb* (inspired by Euripides' *Bacchae* (1997)); after that Bral took Sophocles' *Antygone* and used it as an inspiration for *Seven Gates of Thebes, Anty-Gone, Ecstasy* (2018).

¹⁵² See Appendix 3 for the full text.

be necessary to make the dialogues more direct. I made many cuts and changes in my dramaturgy as a result of working with the text on stage. By eliminating unnecessary words, the text became more condensed and more suited for the action occurring on stage. The director supported this process and it was one of the most profound lessons on writing for the theatre that I had ever had. Through practice, I came to feel the differences between the kind of language which might serve the purposes of a novel or a poem and the kind which pushes forward the action in a drama on stage. As an example of the level of adjustment and correction I made to the text throughout the rehearsal process, below is the final scene of *Warrior* in its original poetic form, without abridgement. Firstly, I have included the first four pages of the transposition of the poem into song, as part of the musical score,¹⁵³ while below that is a photograph of my rehearsal notes.

Athena's Lament¹⁵⁴

I've entered quietly, bashfully.
 A grey bird flew across an empty temple.
 It flew lightly, as if nothing had happened
 and sat on the shattered altar
 from which faith and hope had evaporated.
 Sunlight fell right on my swollen hands
 confidently and boldly.
 There was no shadow or doubt in it.
 I carried out the sentence yesterday.
 Don't cry – you didn't love them anyway.
 Don't cry, you didn't love them.
 I sat on the shattered altar
 Fragrant oils and worship have evaporated from the ruins.
 I, a goddess, have come to pay homage to Hector.
 The last warrior of my just wars.
 The last one who looked death in the eye with his head held high.
 I close my eyes.
 A tear appears under my eyelid. I can see you.
 I can see you. Do I love?
 No, I'm not a mother.
 I'm not your goddess anymore.
 You're not similar – you are similar.
 Hush now. Don't cry.
 You didn't love them anyway.
 The last warrior died on this land.
 With my eyes closed I see slaughter, torture, deceptions and rapes.
 Barren soil will not feed you. Animals have been driven to slaughter.
 There was no goodbye.
 I don't even remember who left this place first.
 The grey bird rose from the ground with a plaintive call.
 I open my eyes – ruins.
 In that empty temple ... as if I had never been here.

¹⁵³ Only the first four pages of the score have been included. In its entirety it is twenty pages long.

¹⁵⁴ Alicja Bral, *Warrior*, (2019). Footage is in [Appendix 6](#).

Lament Ateny

composer Maciej Rychły
lyrics Alicja Bral

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin

Cello

A grey bird flew across an empty temple.

S

A

T

B

Vln.

Vc.

li - ghly, as

It flew li - ghly, as if no - thing had happened and sat on the shal - tered a - ter

It flew li - ghly, as if no - thing had happened and sat on the shal - tered a - ter

S

A

T

B

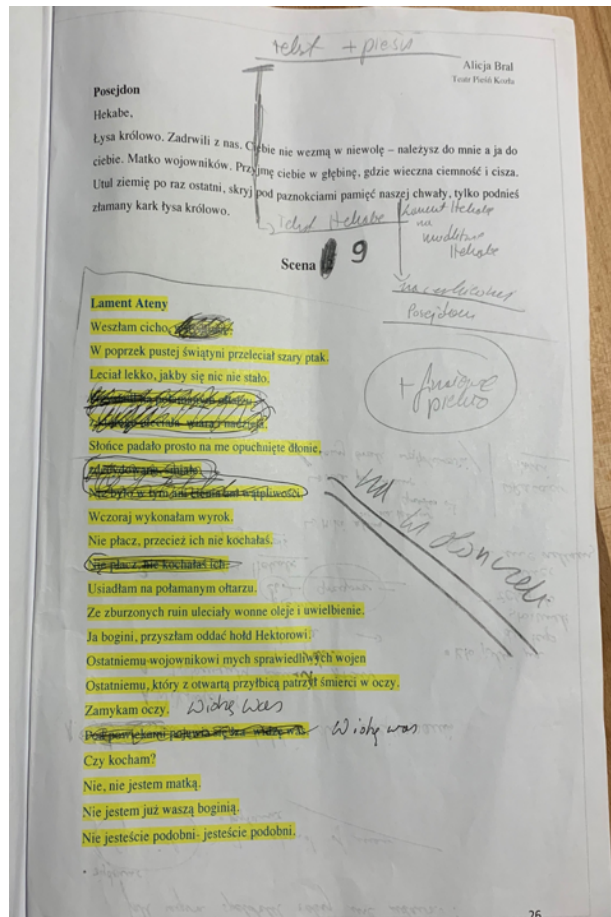
Vln.

Vc.

ba - shfu - lly. Sun - light fell right on my swo - llen hands con - fi - den - tly and bol - dly.

ba - shfu - lly. Sun - light fell right on my swo - llen hands con - fi - den - tly and bol - dly.

ba - shfully Sun - light - fell right on my swo - llen hands con - fi - den - tly and bol - dly.



The poem above, *Athena's Lament*, was written with the music in mind, to be sung as an aria at the end of the performance. The role of Athena was originally assigned to the opera singer Alessandra Donatti, but after she had to leave the ensemble, leaving me to take her place, it became obvious that the text would have to be spoken in Polish and that, moreover, I did not have the necessary vocal abilities to be able to sing the poem. These necessary changes influenced my perception of the text significantly, with certain repetitions that had been justified according to the music becoming tautologies which had to be shortened. Passages from the poem served as a sound landscape in the first dialogue between Athena and Poseidon.¹⁵⁵

The experiences described above have provided me with an utterly new insight into my writing. The process in its entirety was one of the most revealing aspects of my exploration of Self-Less Language.

¹⁵⁵ Alicja Bral, *Warrior*, (2019). Footage is in [Appendix 7](#).

Chapter IV. Self-Less Language in search of Arché

1. Words, words, words...

The essence of metaphorical language.

Spoken language, considered to be a uniquely human trait, is widely believed to be one of the essential conditions of cultural development.¹⁵⁶ At the beginning of the 21st century, the scientist Wolfgang Enard from the Planck Institute in Munich,¹⁵⁷ discovered the gene responsible for the skills of communication. Besides occurring in humans, it has also been identified among birds, seals, whales and many other species that use phonological codes among themselves. However, its unique development in humans is related to an evolutionary trait attributed to high levels of protein in the brain. Initially, the ability to communicate consisted mainly of listening and responding to all kinds of threats. It was also associated with learning to run (escaping), warning and calling people from one's tribe. With time, it developed into language. This theory of communication was considered controversial until 2001, when at last the gene identification of FOXP2 took place at the University of Oxford.¹⁵⁸

The scientific research mentioned above supports the idea that the foundation of language is beyond any specific nationality and that only the development of culture has led to speech divisions in terms of species, race and nation. While it is a truism to say that over time language has slowly lost its depth and beauty, universal historical knowledge proves that this process has resulted in the slow depravation in the complexity of meaning in language. In the first instance, humanity lost the ability to use the "spiritual" potential of speech, such as that inscribed in ritual language or magical forms of speech. Later, rhetoric broke down as a sophisticated skill, together with the loss of the collective ability to understand metaphor. Since then, truthfulness has ceased to be a moral principle, having been subsumed by the language of advertising and internet scrutiny. We have now

¹⁵⁶ See Enard W., Przeworski, M., Fisher, S. *et al.* 'Molecular evolution of *FOXP2*, a gene involved in speech and language', *Nature* 418, 869–872 (2002). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature01025>, Accessed 2nd June 2020.

¹⁵⁷ The Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Science is a formally independent non-governmental and non-profit association of German research institutes, founded in 1911 as the Kaiser Wilhelm Society and renamed the Max Planck Society in 1948, in honor of its former president, theoretical physicist Max Planck.

¹⁵⁸ Enard, Wolfgang; Przeworski, Molly; Fisher *et al.* op cit..

entered the so-called ‘post-truth era’;¹⁵⁹ a time characterised by people’s inability to trust each other. Consequently, we have lost contact with our inner truth as well. Whilst considerations of the evolution of language are beyond the scope of this thesis, the discovery of the FOXP2 gene suggests that, if a breakdown of reciprocal understanding was somehow possible in the past, it is just as feasible to suggest that a return to the root of understanding might yet occur. In the course of my research, I have found the BAM to be a way which leads to closer mutual understanding.

In the previous chapter, I briefly described the selection of exercises that constitutes the BAM. I used a hermeneutic circle model to emphasize the mutually constitutive nature of the BAM and Self-Less Language: i.e., a sustained and continuous developmental process. In the following section, from the position of a dramaturg/playwright,¹⁶⁰ I will depict the link – however ambiguous – between the emotional and mental assumptions of the BAM, physical training and certain aspects of the vocal work. Following on from this, I will provide examples to illustrate the impact of all of these aspects on the meaning of the words in a performance.

Whilst my research at the outset was constructed mostly around the theoretical assumption that Self-Less Language is based around a minimal presence of the author’s ego in dramaturgy, at a certain point I began to conceptualise this language as one in which the ego remains open and is enriched by the creativeness of others. With time, it has become evident that the existence of Self-Less Language is based on the ability to broaden one’s perception. Indeed, the full achievement of creative potential relies on a multiplication of relations between the artist and his/her colleagues. To maintain openness towards the emotional and creative manifestations of all those who are part of the creative process, one must maintain the process of self-development.

In this time of a global crisis of discourse, language has been deprived of truthfulness and axiology has no value as a paradigm in the act of speech. Michel Foucault saw this problem of ‘corrupted speech’¹⁶¹ in a similar way, explaining it elaborately via his

¹⁵⁹ This expression was first used in 1992 by Serbian-American writer Steve Tesich in *The Nation*. It relates to or denotes circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. ‘In this era of post truth politics, it’s easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire’. See also Matthew d’Ancona, (2017), *Post Truth. The new war on truth and how to fight back*, Penguin Random House, London.

¹⁶¹ See Pier Paolo Pasolini (2012) *Po ludobójstwie. Eseje o języku, polityce i kinie*. Biblioteka Kwartalnika Kronos, Warszawa, Poland.

concept of a post-Cartesian language (i.e. power-knowledge).¹⁶² According to Foucault, this kind of speech belongs to the sphere of social and political life and is separate from the language of dreams, lucid dreaming and the language of myth. It is mythical language, as constituted by the stories of individuals and universal truths, which is of interest to Bral. A close examination of tribal and rural communities shows that the language of dreams, prophecy and myth was once highly valued and gave people insight into their lives. This insight was based on a form of spontaneous memory,¹⁶³ which can be evoked when the mind provokes a specific state of consciousness in the body, often through trance-like states. During training and the creative process, Bral often says that, ‘it does not have to be logical, but it needs to make sense’.¹⁶⁴ He strives to trigger words which are opposite to the language of socio-political discourse and encourages practitioners to seek out spontaneous memories, through which they can find their true voices, uncorrupted by social masks. Through training and discipline, Bral leads practitioners to emotional freedom, often quoting Yoshi Oida – the great actor who collaborated with Peter Brook– by saying that ‘there is no freedom without discipline.’¹⁶⁵ While this statement may seem contradictory, according to BAM principles, training the body correctly results in it becoming a gate to one’s inner world, thus setting the imagination and voice completely free. This combination of discipline, physical training and freedom of expression can help artists improve their craft.¹⁶⁶ Personally, no matter the discipline, I’ve been able to broaden my interpretative spectrum in regard to art as a result of the BAM, which has stimulated my creativeness. For a writer, establishing a connection between the body, voice and partnership may seem unconventional or even unnecessary, but it is nonetheless an interesting alternative path towards fruitful work with words.

In relation to the discussion on language with which this chapter began, it is clear that the language genotype is closely connected to a primitive ability for communicating danger and fear. Later, human communication skills developed to such an extent that it became possible to easily express high order emotions and spiritual experiences, although this took time, as humanity first needed to gain a certain level of stability and a sense of

¹⁶² See Michel Foucault (1976) *Discipline and punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Penguin Classic.

¹⁶³ ‘Spontaneous memory’ or ‘the memory place’ are rooted in Tadeusz Kantor’s Theatre of Death. The phenomenon was described by Magdalena Romanska (2014), *The post-traumatic Theater of Grotowski and Kantor. History of Holocaust in Akropolis and The Dead Class*, Anthem Press.

¹⁶⁴ Bral often uses this phrase when explaining his expectations of my writing to me.

¹⁶⁵ Bral during a month-long workshop, August 2019.

¹⁶⁶ The statement from my private notes, made during a month-long workshop with Bral, August 2019.

security. Through training, Bral brings communication back to a level where people no longer feel afraid of being themselves and yet where they still value emotional truth. Bral persistently seeks out universal meanings – akin to Jung’s archetypes and symbols¹⁶⁷ – in the rhythms, sounds and physical and emotional fluctuations between people. He aims to evoke a sense of community and mutual understanding via training, as joint action opens participants up to different sensations and external impulses. This dialogue allows the artist to, step-by-step, open new doors of understanding. A gradual but deepening connection through the body, voice and freely explored expression can help to unleash the imagination, memories and associations. As a consequence, one is able to find new meanings in language. As the philosopher Hans-George Gadamer writes:

The hermeneutical conversation begins when interpreter genuinely opens himself to the text by listening to it and allowing it to assert its viewpoint. In confronting the otherness of the text [...] the readers own prejudices [...] are thrown into relief and thus comes critical self-consciousness.¹⁶⁸

Gadamer points to a certain relationship intrinsic to dialogue, as a rule of its appearance. The passage above explains how a feeling of reciprocity opens up the potential for further understanding of any phenomena. By conceptualising training/theatre as a metaphor of an unknown text, the relationship between the hermeneutic approach to text interpretation and BAM training becomes apparent. In Teaching Chapter 12, Practice Chapter 2¹⁶⁹ I described the possibility of the same text addressed to several different people resulting in different meanings. With this in mind, it is clear that when working with Bral, one needs to let go of all prejudices, as preconceptions about a given text are more likely to narrow down an interpretation rather than make it more direct. This is only one example of how Bral breaks down the mental and social mechanisms within participants so as to recover creativity.

As mentioned above, one of the main principles of the BAM is mutual reciprocity. However, the training also consists of blocks of exercises which focus on participants’ internal experiences. Quite a few of them are noteworthy, as I find them useful for writing;

¹⁶⁷ The term *archetype* means *pattern*. Jung used the concept of 12 main archetypes, which came from mythic archetypes which reside within our collective unconscious. These are: Creator/Artist; Sage; Innocent; Explorer; Rebel; Hero; Wizard; Jester; Everyman; Lover; Caregiver, Ruler. For more see: Carl Gustav Jung (1980), *Archetypes and the collective unconscious*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

¹⁶⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976), *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, David E. Linge (trans.), Berkeley, University of CA Press, pp. XIV-XXI.

¹⁶⁹ See Appendix 2.

I have described them in Teaching and Practice Chapter 10 (Imagination and Memories). As Oida has said ‘to reject dialogue as such can become easily one dimensional unless it is part of the discipline in which other means can be’.¹⁷⁰ Self-discipline is undoubtedly needed to unleash the imagination and encounter memories with openness and courage, both instantly and safely. In the case of the artist, the discipline in question includes both work on the body’s possibilities and the development of mindfulness. The logic of Bral’s training becomes clear if one recalls the Buddhist conviction that the body and mind are inseparable. Training always occurs through stages, beginning with opening up the possibilities of the body, through partnership tasks, coordination of the whole group, to voice exercises and imaginative tasks:

Creativity is an instinct all people possess, an instinct with which we are born...Recent psychological studies reveal that creativity, the ability to explore and investigate, belongs to one of the basic drives and is a drive without which man cannot exist.¹⁷¹

In my case, the BAM expanded my potential for creative writing. Because it works on many levels of perception, it evoked poetic and metaphorical language within me. Its multisensory nature evoked the synaesthetic side of my imagination, which allowed me to see the colour rhythm and tempo of words. The body and voice training led to new syntactic connections appearing in my range and the discovery of previously unknown parameters, such as the shape and sound of a phrase. As the essence of the Song of the Goat Theatre is grounded in music, dramaturgy for new productions requires a particular use of language. As such, to broaden the meaning of the words, I choose to use metaphorical language. The combination of intuitive and affective responses to stimuli, along with a rational and linear sense of separation from one’s role, is one of the key tasks in the BAM (as discussed in Teaching Chapter 12, Practice Chapter 12), with the same rules applying to writing. It is good to feel the words with all their intensity but at the same time, it is necessary to sustain logic in communication. Bral often emphasizes the need for awareness regarding what you are communicating, with whom you are communicating, who is speaking, what the relationships between the characters are, what the consequences of the words you are using might be, whether you are being understood

¹⁷⁰ Yoshi Oida in Anthony Charles H. Smith (1975), *Paper voices: The popular press and social change, 1935–1965* (co-authors: Elizabeth Immirzi and Trevor Blackwell), Chatto and Windus, London, p.59.

¹⁷¹ Peggy Thayer (2004), op. cit., p.26.

by others and whether your speech is opening up new dimensions of meaning (as discussed in Teaching Chapter 11, Practice Chapter Eleven and 12).

The example below shows what it means for Bral to use rhythmic discipline to open up the imagination, regarding the different attributes of words:

FIRST SPLASH¹⁷²

lies lie
splashed
on his corpse
unknown history
of who
man lies to
god
god is
worshipped
worshipped war
war worth
nothing
it is
disturbed
face in the mirror
mirror de-formed
de-formed with lies
who is that
face
face it
it is not you
who killed
himself
before he knew
knife is so heavy
lies lie under
the man
he was the one
who was
my brother
the murderer
under the sun
above gods
with an axe inside
it is not us
war
war is over
and over
again
we die
not know
why
we lived

¹⁷² Alicja Bral, *Anty-Gone Triptych*, part 2, (premiere: 22nd November 2018). Footage is in [Appendix 8](#).

The piece above was written for *Anty-Gone Triptych*. This production is comprised of three acts in which the first – *The Seven Gates of Thebes* – represents the brutal world of Kreon, the King of Thebes. The second act – *Anty-Gone* – depicts the fragile and tender world of Antigone, while in the third part – *Ecstasy* – we created a common space for both Kreon and Antigone. The poem above is an example of writing in which we wanted the quality of the sound to dominate the logic of the phrase. Freeing up associations and subjecting the words to a certain emotional atmosphere was possible because of the improvisational work that took place during workshops and rehearsals. While the mutual interaction of the individual elements of the performance will be described in the next part of the chapter, here I am emphasising the results of freeing myself from the limits of grammar, thus leading me towards an intuitive ability to feel the characters about whom I write, in this case, Ismena, Antigone’s younger sister, who wanted to live according to Kreon’s regulations, unlike Antigone. As such, she chose the law of man over the law of the gods. The content and shape of the lyrics were formed in a way which would portray the moral split inside her. There are no linear sentences and utterances are scattered words. The poetic irregularity of the lines reflects the emotional and moral conflict of the protagonist. Ismene was torn between being faithful to human and divine rights. She was a tragic figure because no choice could bring a positive solution.

In building subsequent theatre productions, Bral tries to create unique realities that are both personal and more widely understood at the same time. This two-pronged intention is a characteristic feature of all Song of the Goat Theatre productions. In terms of words, metaphors appear to be the most effective in this regard. Metaphors help build the scenic reality, which Bral wants to be ‘more like [...] lucid dreaming’.¹⁷³ The resultant peculiar structure manifests itself through references to mythical time, as the productions are located beyond concrete time. For a long time, Bral has sought out mythical time, searching for it in the energy of the actors’ perfectly coordinated movements and, above all, in sophisticated musical structures. Accordingly, the words must possess a level of precision akin to that of music while at the same time being free from literal meaning and linguistic restrictions.

¹⁷³ Davari Maryam, in an online interview with G. Bral, 1st September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkRCZK6LBhY>, Accessed 20th May 2020.

In a chapter devoted to mythical time, in Russian scholar Eleazar Meletinsky's analysis of the significance of myth in various cultures and philosophical currents, it is argued that mythological thinking is usually non-historical but that mythical time usually projects the past into the present.¹⁷⁴ Elsewhere, he emphasizes that myth often uses the language of poetry:

Poetry would thus seem to be about the insights of an emotional life that transcends the individual. By means of the author's literary characters or the lyrical expression of the poet's own experience, individual life becomes subsumed within a universal rhythm.¹⁷⁵

Since beginning working together, Bral has been interested in words with a strong symbolic meaning. In poetry he sees possibilities for encapsulating the world in a mythical structure, where archetypal characters emerge and experience drama beyond a specific point in time. Song of the Goat Theatre productions are built on synecdoche and metonymy,¹⁷⁶ in which the specific story turns into man's symbolic fate and vice versa. Because of this necessary structure, I must concurrently use language which is specific yet universal. Every statement I write needs to be constructed from personal and even intimate reflections, which must simultaneously express the fate of many. Below is an example of this kind of poetry, which I created for a production entitled *Island* (inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*).

MONSTER¹⁷⁷

They called me a monster
And my heart went silent
If you could hear my pain
 love
Would you come back?
My rage has turned to a whisper
 My hopes are ruined
If you could hear my breath
 Would you come back?
 I cannot dream of you
 I cannot see you
 Come back

¹⁷⁴ See Eleazar Meletinsky (2000), op.cit, pp.158-163

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem., p.79.

¹⁷⁶ The difference between synecdoche and metonymy, is that the former is a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole, or in which the whole represents a part. Metonymy, however, occurs when something is represented verbally by something else, with the two objects maintaining a relationship with each other. Both figures are useful for writing and can be part of a metaphor.

¹⁷⁷ *Island*. (premiere: 1st December 2016) Dir: G. Bral, Music: J. C. Acquaviva, Lyrics: A. Bral, Song of the Goat Theatre. Footage is in [Appendix 9](#).

I can't bear this change they made
Immersed in the depth of solitude.
Corroded reality collapsed in my soul
My hopes want to be buried under the ruins
Your eyes shut down the heavy leaden gate.
There is no dream on my site love.
I want to dream with you
Please take me there.
Hear me, love.
Your absence
Envelops me with the shadow of this prison.

When we worked on *Island*, Bral expressed his expectations for this poem thus:

Describe the loss, but no one should know if it's about Prospero, Caliban or Ariel. But they should feel it very personally, like it would be your story or the description of their own loss of love.¹⁷⁸

When I undertook the task of writing my first dramaturgy for the Song of the Goat Theatre (*Island*, premiere December 2016), I had already had three years of experience with BAM training. In terms of the hermeneutical circle of understanding, which is the constitutive part of the BAM experience, artistic progress circulates between information – experience – finding form – reflection. The body and partnership relation was a particularly valuable experience for my writing. Togetherness in the rhythmical exercises, as well as the search for different multisensory value inherent in statements, has had a great impact on my Self-Less Language. The knowledge garnered through BAM practice triggered in me an expansion of perception regarding the events and characters evoked in my writing. As an effect of frequently reading my own emotions and those of others, I gradually acquired an ability to identify emotional experiences in my body. Through a growing sensitivity toward impulses in my body, I discovered the possibility of feeling the meaning of words intuitively, rather than only through their literal, verbal aspects. The use of metaphor in the Song of the Goat Theatre serves to strengthen the synaesthetic reception of a performance.¹⁷⁹ In addition to verbal communication, the words should

¹⁷⁸ My conversation with Bral during the rehearsal process for *Island* (2016).

¹⁷⁹ I refer here to Bonaventure Balla-Ongba, (2014), *Symbolism, synesthesia and Semiotics, Multidisciplinary Approach*, Xlibris Corporation.

The author depicts the multidimensional functions of all of language forms. Regarding Synesthesia:

1 - Metaphorical synesthesia = contains an analogy, a semantic bridge and is determined by a paradigmatic axis -> function: to go beyond expression, reality and strongly improve / emphasize it -> poetic / philosophical function

2 - Catachrestic synesthesia = designed to form a lexical form by plotting a new word -> apophantic / lexicographic function

activate musical and visual sensations during a performance, both in the performers and in the audience.

Bral usually starts work on a production by presenting to the ensemble images and photographs that reflect the atmosphere he wants to achieve on stage. Visual inspiration brings with it individual associations and the memories of each participant. Iconographic communication is advantageous as it eliminates the need for excessive explanation and clears a space for innovative research during the rehearsal process. This way of initially inspiring the participants brings with it a balance between the need for common understanding and creative freedom. Even though the language of paintings and photographs is not the essence of work with words or music, Bral quite frequently asks me to “paint a psychological landscape with words”. This was the task while working on Gertrude, Hamlet’s mother. In order to envisage her emotional life, I had to first see her sorrow and fear, feel the shape of her imprisoning loneliness and smell her fear. Above all, I had to imagine the reasons for why she became so cruel and uncompromising. In a way, I had to become her best friend, so she would “cry on my shoulder”. Eliciting compassion towards Gertrude was the starting point of my research. Next, I had to find the words which would, in a short space of time, represent her suffering. The language I was using had to be as disinterested as possible, without prejudice and judgement. In a sense, I should strive for the greatest possible ‘axiological indifference’. By the vague term ‘axiologically neutral,’ I mean the conscious avoidance of moral judgments about characters in favour of hypothesising and speculating about the reasons for their choices and behaviours.

3 - Synesthesia themetonymic / synecdochical = determined by the syntagmatic axis -> function: synthesizes expression and highly refines / enhances it -> poetic / philosophical function

4 - synesthesia hypallage = based on the transition from one meaning to another -> semantic / stylistic function

5 - Polynesian / impressionistic synesthesia = synthesizes several perspectives / views magically developing in small quasi-tangible accents -> hermeneutic / artistic / psychological function

6 - Adynatonic synesthesia -> ideological function

7 - The synesthesia en style artiste -> artistic / apophantic / philosophical function.

GERTRUDE¹⁸⁰

I tried to escape, the basement of my soul, flooded with his blood.
The arrows of cruel dreams pierced my conscience.
I lie here, the whore with open legs.
I verify myself by impact.
I'm nullified by hitting the ground.
Dare my heart
beat to death my vicious mind.
I'm bombarded
Concentric raids of shared madness,
suffocated by the walls of my birth.
I writhe with no chance to escape.
I crawl under the ruins of my womb.
My will bounced off the cage in my breast.
Come back Hamlet,
fulfil me.
I'm empty.
The ruins of my body,
Columns of my identity collapsed.
No image, no form.
They ripped off my face.
Come back, Hamlet
The frantic desire to survive
Words annihilated before they reach my mouth.
Quiet bitch
I grew in logic like this city.
In me, elegy of despair,
My heart explodes.
A toast.

Gertrude is Hamlet's mother and his father's – old Hamlet's – widow, whilst also being the wife of Claudius. Her profile is ambiguous and her moral values are unclear. At the time when I was writing the poem about her (above), I was engaged in finding a cause, in her life, for all of the tragic actions occurring around her. I relied on my own imagination and vague information from Shakespeare's drama. The music for the song was composed by Jean Claude Acquaviva to the lyrics.

¹⁸⁰ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – a Commentary*, (premiere: 2nd July 2017). Footage is in [Appendix 10](#).

♩ = 92

Soprano
tried es soul

Tenor
to e cape my floo wi

Baritone
of floo ded

Bass
base ment

Bass
I o o ded

8
Soprano
ith rows dreams science

Tenor
with a of el pierced on I

Baritone
a of cru con I

Bass
his blood pierced my

Bass
the their my

15
Soprano
here e pen ri

Tenor
ic I whore legs fy

Baritone
li lie the o ve

Bass
lie here whore ith I

Bass
lie the wi I

Excerpt from the score: Acquaviva

As a composer, Acquaviva respects each word and sentence in a poem and does not introduce any changes to it. However, the process is quite different when collaborating with Maciej Rychły. As an example, below are the lyrics to a different piece, also from *Hamlet – a Commentary*.¹⁸¹

For the *Seven-Syllable Recitation*, the music was composed first and I was therefore aware of the specific rhythmic organization of the song, before the words were written. Bral's expectations regarding the level of emotion that should be present in the song were also clear to me. He wanted a song that would refer to Ophelia's character, but that would also be a modern protest song. I am not sure if we fully achieved this goal, but the intention was also the main inspiration for the lyrics. The example below shows how the rhythm and repetitions work toward highlighting the universal dimension of words. The song may refer to Hamlet in the 17th century, but also to contemporary situations in which Hamlet is seen as an archetype of psychological and moral conflict:

¹⁸¹ My understanding of the creative process for the song is based on my conversations with Bral and my own research.

Seven-syllable recitation¹⁸²

Do you want to eat my heart?
Hamlet it is your own heart
I will subrogate your pain
I'll give birth to death
Barren loneliness
He loved me once
They said he had a good end
I am the seed of death
There will be no redemption
I will always grieve
I will always be here
In absolute silence
I'm the ventilator
For poison amassed in this war
The world of death stones is
Tied around my neck
I peel of my skin to take breath
The end of life is crime
The end of touch is fist
Intoxicated by the mouldy souls
My joy of sacrifice
Your hate spurts from my hands
The promise of pleasure
I create a change of heart
Have you eyes my prince?

Ofelia Luki
7-syllable recitation

♩ = 64

S
do you want to eat my heart? Hamlet it is your own heart

T
do you want to eat my heart? Hamlet it is your own heart

3
S
Do you want to eat my heart? Hamlet it is your own heart

T
Do you want to eat my heart? Hamlet it is your own heart

5
S
I will subrogate your pain, I will give birth to death

T
I will subrogate your pain, I will give birth to death

7
S
Barren loneliness, He loved me once, They said he had a good end

T
Barren loneliness, He loved me once, They said he had a good end

10
S
I am the seed of death, There will be no redemption, I will always grieve

T
I am the seed of death, There will be no redemption, I will always grieve

13
S
I will always be here in absolute silence

T
I will always be here in absolute silence

15
S
I'm the ventilator for poison amassed in this war

T
I'm the ventilator for poison amassed in this war

17
S
I peel off my skin to breathe, The world of death stones is tied around my neck, I peel off my skin to breathe

T
I peel off my skin to breathe, The world of death stones is tied around my neck, I peel off my skin to breathe

19
S
The end of life is crime, The end of touch is fist

T
The end of life is crime, The end of touch is fist

21
S
Intoxicated by the mouldy souls, My joy of sacrifice

T
Intoxicated by the mouldy souls, My joy of sacrifice

23
S
Your hate spurts from my hands, The promise of pleasure, I create a change of heart, Have you eyes my prince?

T
Your hate spurts from my hands, The promise of pleasure, I create a change of heart, Have you eyes my prince?

Music score: M.Rychły

¹⁸² Alicja Bral, (2017), *Hamlet – a Commentary*. Footage is in [Appendix 11](#).

The music was an important element which the entire ensemble respected while working on *Hamlet – a Commentary*. Whilst creating the piece, Bral guided the actors and I in training every day and we spent a lot of time on improvisation. The process led me to be inspired by the emotions present between the actors/characters. Sometimes the exercises were not focused on the characters, but only on the spaces between them; that is, on the physical distance that formed intuitively between the performers. The task was to keep in mind which character you were and to find your place, in relation to the feelings triggered by your own imagination. Long minutes passed, seemingly without action, while the actors worked on sensing each other's presence. Sometimes the feelings involved intensified, leading to new and non-obvious relationships between the characters. As a result of my observations during one of the rehearsals, I wrote the following song, *Hamlet unborn*:

HAMLET UNBORN¹⁸³

Never born
I sought escape from my mother's womb,
sipping the name I was given like a poison
before I was conceived,
during and after death
The shell of my body was allowed to last,
so that after Hamlet's death his revenge had a place to go.
There is no room in me for both of us.
If too long, life turns into a disaster.
Running away into madness is still not far enough to be free.
To die, to fall asleep and to dream.
I need an enemy, to rescue me and to tell me: to be or not to be?
I wasn't given a life to manage it
Never born,
I must return to non-existence,
to become.

In our interpretation, the Prince of Denmark was not mad but oversensitive and lonely. Through training, I was able to awaken a feeling of compassion. My colleagues helped me to activate different points of view regarding each character and to thus create words full of empathy towards each character. However, the development of emotional ability and imagination are not the only essential elements involved in creating a production for the Song of the Goat Theatre. Another critical aspect is the musicality of each scene, since music helps to maintain the discipline and form of a production and to express those things that words cannot. It clears the way for an intuitive understanding which is beyond

¹⁸³ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – a Commentary* (2017) Footage is in [Appendix 12](#).

a specific point in time. Mioletinsky, in referring to Claude Lévi-Strauss, points out the similarities between musical structure and the composition of myth:

In Lévi-Strauss' view, myth is halfway between music and language, but the subsequent analysis more often favours a musical analogy over the linguistic one. But music, unlike language, is 'untranslatable' (music is merely a metaphor of speech) and therefore is the ideal model of an explicit artistic structure. Myth, like music, is a 'machine for destroying time.' In myth, the antinomy between the continuous and irreversible flow of time and the discrete nature of structure is transcendent and thus organizing the listener sense of time. (...) The move from language to music is partly tied to Lévi-Strauss's idea that unconscious structures emerge in both myth and music. (...) According to Lévi-Strauss, myth is simultaneously a diachronic narrative that records historical past and a synchronic means of explaining the present and even the future.¹⁸⁴

In the fragment above, Mioletinsky highlights the timelessness of the information contained in music. Thanks to an emotional load that eludes precise words, music can instantly bring forth individual associations, which have the ability to enrich one's understanding of the action onstage. This, for him, is the essence of what is in common between music and myth.

¹⁸⁴ See Mioletinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

2. Self-Less Language. Inspirations.

This trance-like state is familiar to musicians as well as playwrights; (...) the pattern emerges as the ‘inspired moment, which may sometimes be described as a kind of hallucinatory state of mind; one half of the personality emotes and dictates while the other half listens and notes.’¹⁸⁵

This subsection begins with a quote from Gordon Armstrong, in which the author tries to capture the nature of the creative process. According to Armstrong, whilst in the creative process, an artist combines two seemingly contradictory elements. One of them is artistic excitement, which sometimes appears as a trance. The other is a conscious shaping of the art form. In Song of the Goat Theatre productions, another creative force – the work of the ensemble – can be observed.

In the previous section, I demonstrated how BAM training affects the formation of Self-Less Language. This subsection will show how the creative power of the co-creators of a production influence the shape of this language. There is no doubt that the work of a playwright who is part of the Song of the Goat Theatre ensemble must consider all possible creative vectors. These include the director’s ideas about the production in combination with the music, movement and dynamics on stage.

1. An idea from the director

The first idea for a new production always comes from Bral.¹⁸⁶ It is he who creates its initial landscape and then, once the main idea for the play becomes clear, invites the playwright and composer to collaborate. By sharing his inspiration, Bral combines the resulting ephemeral associations with specific hints as to the type of words he is looking for and the musical atmosphere that is to constitute the play. In recent years, the team that has been co-creating the material for the Song of the Goat Theatre projects has consisted of two composers of polyphonic music – Maciej Rychły and Jean-Claude Acquaviva – and me as the playwright. Once the process is at an advanced stage, Bral begins to work

¹⁸⁵ Gordon Scott Armstrong (2003), *Theatre and Consciousness. The Nature of Bio-Evolutionary Complexity in the Arts*, Peter Lang, New York, p. 55.

¹⁸⁶ Bral’s various sources of inspiration are so rich as to be beyond the scope of this dissertation. Only a part of his original inspirations is revealed to the playwright and composer.

with each of us individually, but at the beginning we are only given the theme of the drama, as well as images and metaphors relating to the events and characters that are to be depicted. In the next stage, the composers are provided with comments on the tempo, rhythm, intensity and style of music that is required. When working on the words, Bral and I venture deeply into the psychological integrity of the character.

For *Island* (2016), which was my first collaboration with Bral, I made notes during the rehearsal process. I had several conversations with Bral and Rychlý and we spoke extensively on how the words should fit into the metaphorical nature of the Song of the Goat Theatre. Below, I cite some of the most important fragments of our discussions as, in a sense, they became fundamental rules governing my writing for the next few years.

1. First, read the play a hundred times.
2. Immerse yourself in the semantic field of each word and try to find original syntaxis between words, so they can open up new interpretations and broaden meaning.
3. Understand the cause and effect of each word used and each word combination.
4. Look carefully at the metaphors; they expand the field of interpretation. They cannot be just a description or conclusion.
5. When thinking about a character, remember that nobody is born evil. Be aware of the cause of their suffering and the effect that pain has had on their personality and then write about it.
6. Understand how the hero's emotionality affects your choice of words.
7. Don't be afraid of silence. That which is not said can 'speak' more than a thousand words. Learn its causes and effects.
8. Remember that you don't need to say everything. Respect the intelligence of the audience and leave something to their imagination.

I started work on *Island* with this advice in mind. The first source of inspiration which we were given, aside from *The Tempest* (Shakespeare), was Théodore Géricault's painting, *Scène de Naufrage* (Medusa's Raft), which was painted between 1818-1819.



The visual cue provided by Bral, above, came with a story. The painting depicts the tragic events of 1816, when the frigate *Medusa* ran aground near Africa with over 150 passengers onboard. According to eyewitness accounts, the officers jumped ship and left the passengers to fend for themselves. The passengers, who built a 20×7 m raft to save themselves, were rescued after thirteen days, but only fifteen of them had survived. The rest had fallen victim to the cannibalism of their companions. The captain of the *Medusa* was severely punished, but according to Parisian public opinion, the trial itself and the judgment which was passed were acts against emigration. The image of *Medusa's Raft* expresses a manifesto against injustice.

My task as a dramaturg for the *Island* was to combine several essential elements: the original drama of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the painting representing the events of 1816 and the immigration dilemma of 2016. The play had to cover these three dimensions and thus resulted in the appearance of an archetypal layer in the portraits of the characters. As such, the verbal layer of the drama shifted to metaphor and the language of myth. I was to find words beyond time and individual and personal tragedy. To portray how these sources of inspiration manifested themselves as Self-Less Language in the *Island*, I will use the opening monologue, below, which was spoken by Miranda (played by Magdalena Kumorek). The poem was written during the final week of the rehearsal process. At this point, I already had an overview of the emotional and philosophical essence of the performance. While I was writing, I had to go back with my memory through almost like

a retrospective process. This is because all the elements and the form of the play were already familiar to me, but yet I was about to write the opening scene. It was to be spoken in complete silence and in darkness, with only a spotlight on the actress.

THE KING PROSPERO¹⁸⁷

I met him in late autumn.
In the middle of despair.
The pain has stuck to my soul,
like leaves to the wet ground.
I had no idea who am I.
The world lost all reason.
Though he appeared, his soul was absent.
An aged man with a body like a cracked pine.
Only his eyes, an island amid deep loneliness.
His heart pulsated.
He survived.

Nothing bad happened. Nothing bad.

I did it for you, for you.

You can't know right now

Who you are...?

He whispered and I was drawn into his gaze.

I am Prospero, the King.

I have Ariel and Caliban at my service.

I know a man with his madness and love.

Everything is in the Books, and it serves me.

You shall not die.

The beautiful King of Life

He brought me into it. I stayed.

Prospero guarding hope

An old druid.

Wizard of the wind tied to his cell
he showed me the path to salvation.

It's not true. They did not drown.

Go, go to the other side.

Go to the other side of things.

Drunk Cannibal and the Wind of oblivion.

Can you contain it?

He got drunk - he wasn't there...

You will wake up.

Every time he met me

revealed a fragment of his reality.

He called them 'islands'.

He put on a magic cloak and sobbed.

His heart got soft, and he whispered.

Everyone must survive.

Break the pine and free Ariel

Prospero died in his cell, happy

It was a good death.

¹⁸⁷ Alicja Bral, *Island*, (2016). Footage is in [Appendix 13](#).

By means of this poem, I wanted to tear the recipient away from the one-dimensional history of the Prince of Milan. My goal was to create a space for an unsuppressed imagination which could help to elicit interpretation and open unlimited sources of associations for the audience. At the same time, I wanted to maintain a connection with the original Shakespearean text, it being important to me to respect the fact that the original text is, in our opinion, superior to any adaptation. With this in mind I wrote poems which – though totally different to Shakespeare’s – were inspired by him. In my text, references to the characters and events from *The Tempest* functioned as cultural symbols, rather than as colloquial words. *Island* was thus an intertextual digression, dealing with the question of what might happen to someone who had lost the life known to him/her.

2. Source material

Each Song of the Goat Theatre production has its own unique traits. *Island* was based on metaphor, with hidden references to Shakespeare’s original. The form resembled that of a scenic essay on rejection, betrayal and oblivion; themes which have resonated for centuries. The original play’s function in the production was that of a cultural motif, an archetype of suffering and madness, rather than a direct reference.

The relationship with the source material was different in the case of the next performance, which was inspired by Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Bral decided to read this play, which is about power and betrayal, as if it were a confession. In his interpretation, it was also a play about family secrets, silent crimes and unspeakable pain. The performance was built around the idea of a posthumous vigil at the bedside of the deceased. Similar to other Song of the Goat Theatre productions, this one was also based on music and scenes depicted through poetry. Our version of the play preserved the original chronology of events, as written by Shakespeare.

Hamlet – a Commentary is an intertextual dialogue with the original Shakespearean play. The relationship is so close that quite often it contains direct references to, or quotes from, this tragedy about the Prince of Denmark. In the written words, it was not enough just to take into consideration the co-existence of music in the performance, the perspectives of the mourners meeting over the king’s coffin, or the psychological conjunctions of the characters. Above all, each word had to be in dialogue with the main idea of Shakespeare’s text. I also had to remain compassionate towards the characters and try to see the good aspects of each character. At the same time, all the

crimes committed by the characters had to be disclosed. The aim was to try to combine a new perspective on the character's motivation and, at the same time, not to lose the characterological features from Shakespeare's text. They all became dear to me and I wanted them to speak through me. Nevertheless, I had to remain rational throughout the process of formulating the words, bearing in mind all of the vectors associated with the work. There were moments during rehearsals when the performers' sudden imaginative releases during improvised scenes led me to find words. I would not have come across on my own, for example, the line 'Father no one will touch me' with regards to Ofelia's character. This process of seeking out a Self-Less Language was creative and led me into a state of so-called "artistic ecstasy". Rollo May describes a specific state of unity which leads to states of ecstasy. In *The Courage To Create*, he writes:

The important and profound aspect of the Dionysian principle is that of *ecstasy* (...) a magnificent summit of creativity which achieved a union of *form and passion* with *order and vitality*. *Ecstasy* is the technical term for the process in which this union occurs (...) etymological sense of 'ex-stasis' – that is, literally to 'stand out from', (...) *Ecstasy* is the accurate term for the intensity of consciousness that occurs in creative act. But it is not to be thought of merely as a Bacchic 'letting go'; it involves the total person, with the subconscious and unconscious acting in unity with the conscious.¹⁸⁸

While working on *Hamlet – a Commentary* I often experienced extraordinary "creative ecstasy". The special relationship with the Shakespearian text and contemporary interpretative clues, as described above, was sometimes difficult to reconcile. However, the director's remarks made it easier to achieve coherency in the production.

There are no linear sentences and utterances are scattered words. The poetic irregularity of the lines reflects the emotional and moral conflict of the protagonist. Ismene was torn between being faithful to human and divine rights. She was a tragic figure because no choice could bring a positive solution.

Inspiration might come directly from Bral but also from the performers during their improvisations. At other times, it is stimulated by the music or specific lighting on stage; both of which can trigger new associations regarding the characters. However, I wouldn't have been able to encompass all of these elements without first having undertaken BAM training, which made trust and openness towards the impulses of my

¹⁸⁸ Rollo May (1975), *The courage to Create*, W. W. Norton, New York, pp. 48-49.

colleagues possible. It was during these workshops that I freed my own voice and built up the courage to use it on stage. Many boundaries dissolved, such that I became able to incorporate all the inspiration I had encountered into my writing. Below are Hamlet's final lines

HAMLET'S DEATH¹⁸⁹

I am dying, Horatio!
The search for truth in the theatre of life took me long.
In vain.

I've confused metaphors with lies.
Poisonous words have covered this fallen kingdom, my friend.
Betrayal is suffocating me, I'm short of breath.
Look at my body, swollen with sadness.
Hell burns in my mind.
You won't save me.

What a poor piece of work man is
To create an illusion and die for it.

We all are lunatics!

Farewell, miserable queen!
Farewell, dear viewers of this play.

Farewell, my friend – I'm dying
You must remain, to bear witness

If you loved me, save my injured name from disdain

I'll drink all the poison from the glass

I'll appease my soul.

The rest is silence
And this noble heart broke
Sleep sweet prince.

HAMLET'S DEATH

♩ = 52

Sopranos

Alto *mf*
Ho ra - tio the search truth in the

Tenors *mf*
Ho o o o ra search truth in the

Baryton *mf*
I am dy - ing Ho - ra - tio search for - truth in the

Basses *mf*
Ho ra tio search truth in the

¹⁸⁹ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – a Commentary* (2017). Footage is in [Appendix 14](#).

the - a - tre long in - vain

the - a - tre of life vain

the - a the - a - tre of life took me long in vain

the - a - tre of life vain

10

I've con - fused me - ta - phors with lies. words co - vered

con - fused — — — — — lies. words have co - vered

con - fused me - ta - phors with lies. Poet's needs have co - vered -

con - fused — — — — — lies words co - vered

this king - dom my friend. Be - trayal is

this king - dom friend. Be - trayal is

this fal - len king - dom my friend — — — — — suf - fo - cating me, I'm

this king - dom friend — — — — —

Musical score: Jean Claude Acquaviva

The lyrics above are related to Hamlet's original death scene, but at the same time they are in line with the director's ideas regarding confession and are governed by the rules of musical rhythm and metaphorical abbreviation. When I was writing the final song, I had to consolidate all the sorrow in Hamlet's life. I quoted the original text on a few occasions, with the most significant instance being that of the final line, 'sleep sweet prince'. In our interpretation, these words close the Prince of Denmark's funeral, with the scene of Hamlet dying being the final one in our production. Acquaviva's composition is based on an evocative minor scale.

As a Pole working in an international group of artists, I have to consider the existence of the original text and the translation issues. For me, English is a language I learnt in adulthood, and therefore I use it as a foreign language. When looking for a metaphor, I find it primarily in my native Polish, and then I translate it myself, trying to grasp the basic meaning. I use Polish instinctively and naturally, and when I do translations my work is devoid of poetic inspiration and is based on the laborious search for words that reflect the original meaning. The topic of translations is an extensive field of science and, as a separate one, it will be the subject of my research in the future. In my work, I focus on the relationship between BAM and SLL, i.e. the relationship of acting training to the phenomenon of creative writing. I am aware that translation is an important aspect of SLL as it is related to the meaning of the words used. Nevertheless, I am not able to fully reflect and describe this issue here.¹⁹⁰ It is not only language that may pose a challenge to me while working for Song of The Goat Theatre, but also music, as I am not able to read scores. I am not a trained musician and thus my collaboration with the Song of the Goat Theatre composers is based on intuition rather than on knowledge. In the next chapter, I look at the relationship between music and the text in more detail, by examining the history of the role of music in theatre.

¹⁹⁰ I am referring only to examples of academic positions that relate to this issue: Jiří Levý (2011) *The Art of Translation*, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* (2011), (ed) Kirsten Malmkjaer, Kevim Windle, Oxford University Press, Oxford; *The Translation Studies Reader*, (ed) Lawrence Venuti, Routledge, London and New York, 2004; Peter Fawcett (2003), *Translation and Language*, Manchester; Steven Pinker (1995), *The Language Instinct*, Harper Perenniak, New York.

3. Music

Once was a time when all speech was song, or rather when these two actions were not yet differentiated (...) Primitive languages consist of very long words, full of difficult sounds and sung rather than spoken.¹⁹¹

Hegel, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, states that the sensual and profound need for the spirit is best achieved through conceptual abstraction.¹⁹² He believed that the essence of things can be grasped by humans via an increase in self-awareness. Accordingly, understanding should be subjected to phenomenological reduction, thanks to which the mind – thus freed of preconceptions – can open itself up to the true nature of things. According to Hegel, music is one of the most useful phenomena for helping humans achieve this state. The perception of music is, by its very nature, free from prejudice and narrow interpretation. Wayne D. Bowman, Professor of Music at Canada's Brandon University emphasises this point:

The key to Hegel's view on music lies in his vexatious theory of the 'absolute idea' which does not yield graciously to paraphrase (...) The absolute idea is neither abstract or subjective. Rather it is that ultimate concrete reality towards which understanding, and experience constantly strain. (...) through a succession of stages of ever-increasing self-awareness, the mind is destined to achieve a full comprehension of the absolute unity of all that is (...) Music is an art of time, one that renounces spatiality and materiality, turning consciousness away from external appearances and attuning it to the unfettered inwardness of idealism, [music] is an invaluable instrument of self-realization.¹⁹³

Bral perceives music in similar categories. In his understanding, it can help to reveal the hidden meanings that language is not able to describe. So-called "everyday language" reduces all phenomena to a limited meaning, robbing them of their inner depth. However, it is words which drive action along, which is vital in the performing arts. Bral thus entices the composer and dramaturg to build productions on the basis of polyphony and poetic language. For him, music and metaphorical language are the only scenic forces that are able to instantly transfer a person to the hidden spiritual realm.¹⁹⁴ In *Song of the Goat*

¹⁹¹ Otto Jespersen (2018), *The Language, Ethnicity and Race Reader*, Routledge, London, pp. 20-21

¹⁹² Stephen Houlgate (2013), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Bloomsbury, London, pp.145-173.

¹⁹³ Wayne D. Bowman (1998), *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp: 95-104.

¹⁹⁴ My interview with Bral, 14th September 2019.

Theatre productions, the words are never removed from the musical aspects.¹⁹⁵ The composer is thus the most important partner for the dramaturg during the creative process. During one of our conversations, Rychły said:

The road to perfection for a musician, for a singer, is continuous improvement and daily practice. A musician cannot count on being deceived by personal charm. There is transparency in this profession, and you are either a perfect, great musician or not. The musician has to devote his whole life to practice. The more disciplined he is, the more beautiful abstract spaces he can create in his music.¹⁹⁶

Rychły's thoughts are just as meaningful for writers, poets and playwrights as they are for musicians. Like a musician, the writer must practice writing in order to achieve perfection. They both need to constantly maintain sensitivity in regard to the world around them. The achievements of writers and musicians depend on the quality of their work, rather than on their personal qualities, which are so important in other stage professions.

In his work, *Music and the Art of Theatre*, Adolphe Appia poses the question of how can the reality of our inner life be translated into music; or conversely, what is the impact of musical expression on our inner life? He answers these questions through an analysis of Wagner's work:

Wagner completed the process by uniting the poet and musician, thus solving the problem. Henceforward the poet can express the inner life of the characters and musician can surrender himself without trepidation to the expression of this life because his mode is inspired by it.¹⁹⁷

Appia helps us to understand Bral's motives, who is interested in poetry which can transmit information and action through metaphorical language. Since the company uses music in creating its productions and because there is a connection between the content of the performance and how it is expressed through the acting body, the voice and the spatial relations between the performers, the words need to be rooted in the principles of musicality. For Bral, as mentioned in Chapter II it is very important that words bring forth not only a semantic load, but that they also convey sound energy, which activates the

¹⁹⁵ The musical aspects of productions, training and the relationship of the Song of the Goat Theatre to earlier practitioners have been described in the preceding chapters. The topic of music at the Song of the Goat Theatre is very broad and would require a separate study.

¹⁹⁶ My conversation with Maciej Rychły, 17th June 2020.

¹⁹⁷ Adolphe Appia (1962), op. cit., p.14.

imaginings and associations of both the performers and the audience. These precepts are related to the rules of musical composition, containing words with particular rhythms, verse lengths and densities of meaning, as well as counterpoint and rests/pauses. The verbal material in *Song of the Goat Theatre* productions is closer to poetry than to dramatic dialogue.

In 2018, we began work on *Antigone-Triptych*, for which Bral collaborated with French choreographer Mélanie Lomoff, who was responsible for the dance in the second and third parts of the production. Undoubtedly, the presence of a female choreographer had an impact on the text as well as on the music used in the performance. By their very nature, the dance and choreography constructed by Lomoff brought with them a measure of femininity and grace to the performance.¹⁹⁸ This freed me from the need to stick strictly to the plot of *Antigone*, Sophocles' ancient myth, allowing the language used to incorporate my personal associations and reflections regarding the tragic life of this brave woman.

Anty-Gone Triptych was created as three separate performances which can also be staged together. The original idea dictated that the first part would be deeply embedded in the original text and that the vicissitudes within would be presented from Creon's perspective. The second part aims to portray the emotional world of women, through Antigone and Ismene. Part Three is a philosophical treatise on the nature of man. While working on *Anty-Gone Part II*, Bral asked the composer (Maciej Rychły) and I to create a "waltz with death". This motif, which was not taken from Sophocles' play, depicts the life of man as a trance-like dance with death. Below is the result of our collaboration:

WALTZ / SALIX¹⁹⁹

few saw pure white
a pupil of black
only in fear
a man drags his feet
as he dances
with death
he switches partners
seduces others
with life
and wears a suit

¹⁹⁸ Mélanie Lomoff has a classical ballet education. Ballet is a highly codified field in which the set of movements and manner of movement on stage is clearly assigned to each gender separately. Speaking of femininity and grace, I mean the clear tendency in Lomoff's dance and movement to use the body in relation to her education.

¹⁹⁹ A. Bral, *Anty-Gone*, (2018). Footage is in [Appendix 15](#).

bepowdered with ash
 of irrelevant matters
 he dances drunk, reckless
 he creates greyness
 blurred outlines
 man escapes
 into the arms of the dead
 he believes they exist
 in a memory which sees nothing else
 he cannot let go
 living repeatedly
 few saw pure white
 the dead disappear without fuss
 when the human is gone

Rychły's composition maintains the triple metre of a waltz. Later, as the scene develops, it grows into a polyphonic waltz, which finally returns to its initial simplicity. The musical layers were structured in a way which allowed the piece to be looped. This musical arrangement is coherent with the theme of the song, which touches upon the universal trope of transience. The arrangement of lines in the text is symmetrical, which indicates a circular structure and the potentially perpetual meaning of the text. Below is a simplified version of the score, which shows the coexistence of the various musical lines and metres used in the composition. It is also a visual representation of the similarities between the shape of the poem and the musical notation.

' - - - ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - metrum 3/4
 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - cello 4/4
 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - duet
 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - 1 - - - s opraw/tenor
 ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - ' - - - metrum 3/4

10. Salix - Walc zmarłych

słowa: Alicja Bral

muzyka: Maciej Rychły
aranżacje: Przemysław Michalak / Maciej Rychły

Colla parte (cello) $\text{♩} = \text{approx. } 150$

The score is for a cello part, indicated by 'Colla parte (cello)'. It features a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = \text{approx. } 150$. The music is in 3/8 time and begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The vocal parts are marked *mormorando*. The cello part is marked *f* (forte) at the end. The score includes parts for Soprano (Antygone), Soprano (Jokasta), Mezzo-soprano (Protagonista chóru), Alto (Ismena), Tenor (Strażnik), Tenor (Hajmon), Baritone (Tejrejasz), Baritone (Kreon), and Violoncello. The score is numbered 8 and titled '10. Salix - Walc zmarłych'.

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Excerpts from the score: M. Rychły

Self-Less Language is obviously not the only approach to musical theatre. However, for me this specific form of language emerged as an organic consequence of my BAM training and my participation in the work of the Song of the Goat Theatre. The ensemble's idiosyncratic features are based on its unique fusion of music and atypical poetry. As a conclusion to this part of the thesis, what follows is a summary of my understanding of the basic features of Self-Less Language:

1. An avoidance of literal or judgemental writing. Metaphor as the leading carrier of meaning.
2. Participation by the writer, as much as possible, in the physical training making up a production. The experience of the physicality of words as the basis of his/her understanding of the dramaturgy.
3. Music and the musicality of words as the primary characteristic of the language used.

4. Respect for, and acknowledgement of, all the performance elements and incorporation of them into the writing.
5. An attitude of openness towards the other co-creators and the assimilation of their existence into the text.
6. Openness to making changes to the text during the rehearsal process.
7. Intertextuality based on a dialogue between the text and the written cultural heritage.

Self-less Language enlivens itself through its connection to the roots of the symbolic gestures and vibrations hidden in the collective experience of polyphony. Through the harmonious integration of the body, music and appropriate language structures, Song of the Goat Theatre productions revive the memory of an organic word derived from ritual and contained in myth. The language, which by its very nature strives towards Arché,²⁰⁰ must be Self-Less, as both the language of ritual and of myth reflect collective and spiritual experiences. In contemporary times, human speech has moved away from its original transparency and unity with the truth, but it is difficult to stir the viewer's emotions with falsified language that merely feigns the truth. As a result, my work with the Song of the Goat Theatre involves a search for authenticity, which is expressed through metaphorical language. As Bral himself might say, in these times characterised by an entropy of speech,²⁰¹ only metaphor is able to create a field of shared understanding and collective experience and, as such, language should remain Self-Less.

²⁰⁰ *Arché* is a Greek word that literally means “beginning”. It is also used to describe an “origin”, “source” and “ultimate principle”. I use this term to show how Self-Less Language strives to reconnect with the original meaning of words. Arché is able to carry the energy of the things it describes. In our need to reconstruct honest communication with others, we search for unclassified language that is without hidden intentions. See: Vasilis Politis (2004), *Aristotle and the Metaphysics*, Routledge, London and New York, p.26.

²⁰¹ “Entropy” is an important term in the social psychology of Antoni Kepiński (Polish psychiatrist and philosopher). He is known as the creator of the concept of the energy-information metabolism and axiological psychiatry. Here I refer to his book *Melancholia* (1974; unpublished in English), in which he argues that entropy is the lack of a correlation between an individual's perception and a diffused picture of the truth about the world. Information overload and manipulation of the truth lead to information chaos, both between people and within individuals. As the flow in communication is interrupted, fear and a feeling of loneliness result. In extreme cases, the individual can develop depression or schizophrenia.

Chapter V Towards performance

All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors. (...)The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely. All art is quite useless.

Oscar Wilde²⁰²

1. *Eratne vere in principio verbum?*²⁰³

The ontology of characters

Philosophers over the centuries have expressed considerable ambivalence in the dispute about the concepts of being and the necessity and possibility thereof. This problem seems to be even more complicated when looking at theatrical fiction, with a number of questions immediately coming to mind: does the character already exist in a play? Perhaps it is only the potential of existence which emerges from the director's interpretation and the actor's embodiment of it on stage? Is the character a real entity or is it something more akin to Plato's "idea"? Phenomenologists assume that what "is seen exists", but this remains subjective and relative to each recipient. Solving these dilemmas is beyond the scope of this work, but similar questions arise upon closer examination of Song of the Goat Theatre productions. With reference to previous chapters of this dissertation, below I will argue that the character shaping process in the Song of the Goat Theatre is, to a large degree, a collective effort.

As I have argued before, the importance of BAM training in the Song of the Goat Theatre cannot be overlooked, as it is the foundation upon which the work of the ensemble rests. Nobody in this theatre works completely independently. In describing BAM training, I focused upon the coexistence of the practitioners' personal predispositions and their distance and separation from the characters, as well as on the unique correlation between these elements. As mentioned in the first chapter, where I described the ethos of

²⁰² Oscar Wilde (2010) *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the Preface, Mondial, New York p.1.

²⁰³ Konrad Suder Chatterjee (translation): *eratne vere in principio verbum* (Was the 'word' really at the beginning?). I refer to the biblical opening verse of the Gospel of Saint John: *in principio erat verbum* (In the beginning was the word), John 1:1, *The Bible*.

the Song of the Goat Theatre, for Bral the key aspect in creating a production is his collaborators. The artists in the Song of the Goat Theatre are characterised by a combination of professionalism and natural openness and empathy towards each other. This is vital, as the productions directed by Bral bring with them moral-philosophical ruminations on the human condition. There is, however, a discrepancy between Bral and I in terms of the belief that no man is born evil; this results from the different kinds of Buddhism we practise. At the most basic level, the core belief is that everyone has the nature of Buddha as part of their potential. In simpler terms, there is always a cause that can be a source of evil in man. This belief has obvious consequences for character-building in Bral's productions. Accordingly, the history of theatre shows that existential and eschatological considerations have been a frequent topic for numerous directors. In describing the works of Artaud, Stanislavski and Grotowski, Olf argues that:

If a man is as Appia called him, 'reality itself', then how is one to go about using a living actor in the service to represent reality as compelling as his own reality? Is it possible both 'to be' and to 'pretend to be'- not alternately but simultaneously? (...) in an attempt to resolve this modern dilemma, a number of theorists and practitioners have turned to (...) the metaphysical realm.²⁰⁴

The 'metaphysical realm' that Olf mentions in no way defines the spiritual power of these works, but it establishes the artists' scope of interest; they seek answers to the spiritual issues of humankind, often through blasphemy and provocation. In his productions, Bral combines archetypal cultural signs with contemporary issues, but even when his plays diagnose the present, their form is far removed from reportage-like theatre. I will examine the nature of Song of the Goat Theatre productions more deeply in the next subsection of this chapter, but here I would like to highlight a particular attitude towards the characters and their language, which emerges from Bral's moral principles.

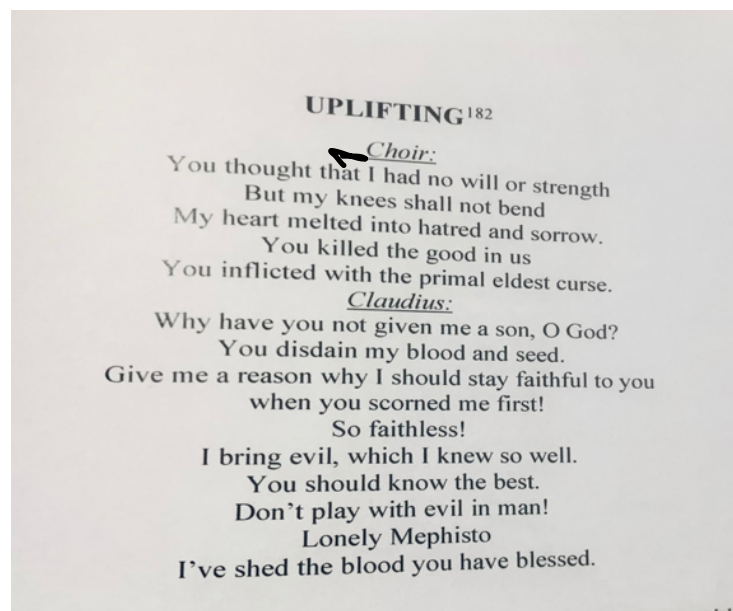
The starting point for building the verbal layer of a character lies in his conviction that "there was a time when he/she was pure and innocent". As a result of this initial attitude, a critical question emerges: what is the reason for which the character has changed? From the perspective of this question, the source text becomes the interlocutor with which there is often a dispute over the character, leading to considerations about

²⁰⁴ Julian M. Olf, 'Acting and being: Some thoughts about Metaphysics and Modern Performance Theory', *Theatre Journal*, Vol.33, No.1, 1981.p.34.

their ontology; including questions such as, who is the character, in what way does he/she exist in the dramatic world and what are his/her motives inside the plot?

When we were working on *Hamlet – a Commentary*, the character for whom it was most difficult for me to find words was Claudius. The way in which Shakespeare presented him was quite radical and left no doubt as to his axiology. I had to go beyond the text to liberate an empathic understanding of Claudius’s cruelty, but it was quite challenging not to take sides with any of the characters, but instead to maintain the position of an honest playwright. In this instance, my many years of workshop training were helpful. The BAM involves not only training in immediate leaps of perspective for viewing a problem but also stimulates the ability to listen to characters empathically. Bearing in mind my training and having read *Hamlet* many times, I was able to ask Claudius the following question: *Why did you do what you did? Show me where your pain comes from.* Moreover, I was also open to listen to his answer. He became like a close friend for a moment and I was ready to accept his version of the truth. Of course, this was merely a purely artistic and imaginary process but it revealed another possible side to the character, which was very inspiring. Our Claudius, then, is in argument with God. Below is one of his confessions:

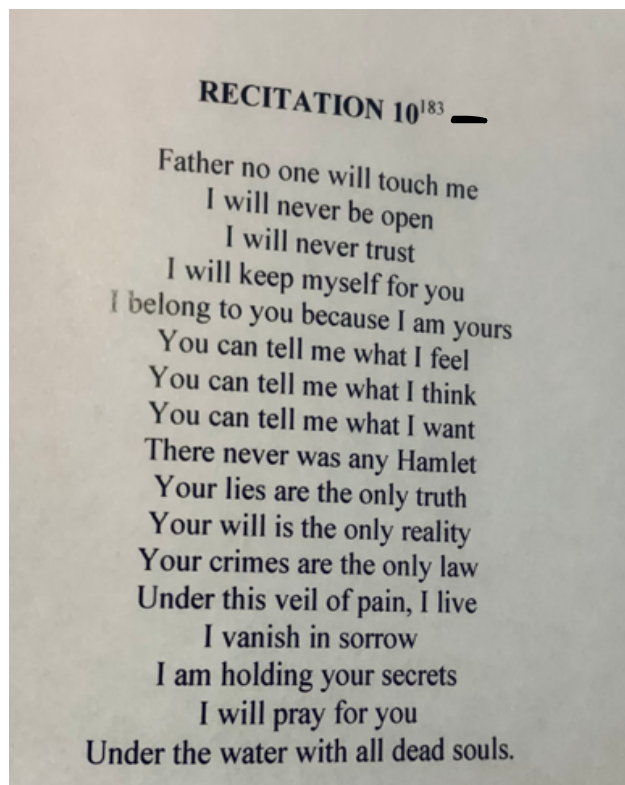
UPLIFTING²⁰⁵



²⁰⁵ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – a Commentary*, (2017). Footage is in [Appendix 16](#).

It is not an easy task for a performer to play the role of a character without noble motives and who is driven only by selfish considerations. Doing so necessitates facing the following questions: *Is it possible 'to be' and at the same time to 'pretend to be' - not alternatively but simultaneously?* The ability to play various characters is a matter of the actors' professionalism and talent, but it can be facilitated and made easier through properly conducted training and rehearsals. Whilst this thesis is not the place for deep reflection on the nature of the actor's craft, leading an actor through a homogeneous process of training and creation is of great importance. The words, being a part of a production, remain in harmony with the creative processes of the other participants. In the excerpt below, Ophelia addresses her father. Initially the text was more direct and provocative, but during rehearsals it came to the fore that the actress's understanding of Ophelia's role was somewhat different to mine. For her, it was clear that Ophelia could not simultaneously be vulgar and a hypersensitive victim in a male dominated world. Whether this alternative view reflected the nature of the character or just the character of the actress was not altogether clear, but the director and I respected her way of seeing and "being" Ophelia and the text was ultimately changed.

RECITATION 10²⁰⁶



²⁰⁶ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – a Commentary*, (2017). Footage is in [Appendix 17](#).

To sum up this part of the discussion, what follows is systematic elucidation of the character-building process which is a part of Song of the Goat Theatre productions. It has been simplified in order to draw attention to the dramaturgy and, in particular, the role of words in the process.

a. **Inspiration**

As has been described earlier, each new production starts with the director bringing his initial inspirations and ideas to the table. Below is a detailed excerpt – from an interview given by Bral during the Between 2020 Festival – about his inspiration for *Island*.

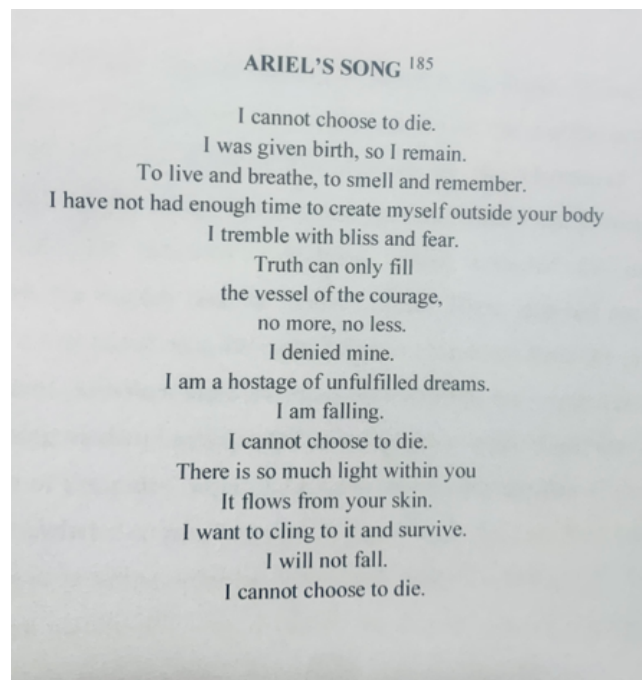
When I read and studied *The Tempest*, I experienced it very personally. I saw Prospero as an older, sick man, maybe an alcoholic, perhaps someone with advanced Alzheimer's, perhaps a patient in a psychiatric hospital. An atmosphere of loneliness struck me. (...) That's how I read Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. As a kind of sleep or madness. (...). Prospero is looking for some freedom, some salvation, using the multiplication of illusions, duplication of magic. And in our play ... Prospero does not appear! The elements are the heroes of a metaphorical story. The bodies of the dancers imitate the waves of a turbulent and dangerous ocean. (...) Thoughts move through the mind of the absent older man like paintings, only reflected in mirrors. There is no substantial reality. There is only reflection, reflection. (...) Shakespeare has been with me for a long time. It is pure poetic energy. (...) Apart from Prospero, the main culprit of all 'miracles' of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is Ariel – Wind. And he is the part of Prospero that I classify not as magic but as madness. We created a play also about the wind, i.e. an overly awake and restless mind, which is represented by songs that are emanations of air and air vibrations, and we created the movement of this air with the help of dance and dancers. (...) *Island* is, as always in the case of music, a non-linear story contained in the vibration of songs and paintings inspired by painting (...) Alicja's poetry attempts to diagnose the modern world through the prism of Shakespeare's play.²⁰⁷

In reading the fragment above, it is clear that the director has outlined the primary purpose of the production and the essential features of the characters, from the very beginning of the creative process. It is only later that each of us – the co-creators – can add specific interpretations to the topics provided or summon up new sources of inspiration. It is inspiration which determines the azimuth of the interpretation we later

²⁰⁷ Grzegorz Bral in an interview conducted by Ula Rybicka, for the festival Between / Pomiedzy, online version May 2020.

embody on stage. In trying to find the right words to portray Ariel, I was aware that in *Island* he was to be a symbol of longing, rather than a real figure. It was through this representation that I wanted to show another psychological side to Prospero, with this intent having a great impact on Ariel's language. The poems thus took on the function of philosophical reflection, rather than being words portraying a specific Shakespearean character.

ARIEL'S SONG ²⁰⁸



One can sense that *Island* is quite far removed from Shakespeare's original play, *The Tempest*. Accordingly, the Self-Less(ness) of Language lies somewhere between a reflection on philosophical issues, the original text and the director's vision. In each production, the relation to the source material or the original text is different. In *Anty-Gone* Part I, as in *Hamlet – a Commentary* and the *Warrior*, the relationship between the dramaturgy of the performance and the original drama was much more evident than in *Island* or *Anty-Gone* Parts II and III.

²⁰⁸ Alicja Bral *Island*, (2016). Footage is in [Appendix 18](#).

b. Source material

To demonstrate the extent to which the intertextual relationships between plays can shape the language of the characters in Song of the Goat Theatre productions, I will focus on *Warrior*. The beginnings of this work are rooted in a month-long workshop (2019), during which Euripides' *Trojan Women*, served as literary material for the actors' improvisations. It was not until the end of that period that I came to realise that the play would become the source text for the next Song of the Goat Theatre production. It is worth describing the process that we went through during the workshop, because its effects turned out to be a great inspiration for me for further theatrical work.

As Bral walked us through the BAM process, we began to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the ancient text and got to know the musical potential inherent in the drama, as well as building up pictures of the characters from multiple perspectives. One of the many imagination exercises involved writing down one's understanding of each character's situation, which revealed the many different connotations that the tragedy has for modern times. These inspired me greatly and I started to write a text based on a dialogue between characters from the distant past and those in the present. Although there are many references to the original play in *Warrior*, it was written using modern language and its reflections on the tragic fate of war extend far beyond those of Euripides' work. To emphasize the universality of the topic, in my writing process I included an adaptation of *Trojan Women* by Jean Paul Sartre.²⁰⁹ In this way, three levels of meaning unfolded. The result was that, though my text had strong roots in an ancient picture of events, I gained the internal freedom to express my own emotions and thoughts. As Constantin Stanislavski has argued in regard to the process of adapting to other partners:

Adaptation (...) means both the inner and outer human means that people use in adjusting themselves to one another in a variety of relationships (...) it is a vivid expression of inner feelings or thoughts...²¹⁰

In the excerpt above, Stanislavski is referring to the actor and his/her relationship with the partners on stage. For me, as a playwright, these partners were Sartre and Euripides. However, the question that arises in this process of adaptation is, how to maintain the independence of one's feelings and emotions while, at the same time, not losing a

²⁰⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre (1983), *Trojanki według Eurypidesa*, trans. Jerzy Lisowski Jerzy, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Warszawa.

²¹⁰ Constantin Stanislavski (2003), op. cit., p.224.

respectful connection with the source texts? Again, the experiences I gained during BAM workshops were helpful. The chance to interpret the original drama with Bral via various imaginative exercises, imprinted itself on my memory in such a way that my understanding of the characters remained vivid in my body and voice. Not without significance was the presence of my colleagues during the workshops, who enriched my capacity for understanding the text through their own individual interpretations. As a result of my colleagues' inspirations during the workshops, a new perspective on the emotional life of the characters appeared. Below is Hecuba's final text from *Warrior*.

HECUBA²¹¹

My eyes are seeing the sun for the last time.
This is the last time my feet touch the land on which I was born
and in which I've buried my sons – brave warriors.
I'm the reason for the crime.
I went against the will of the gods.
By saving one son I've brought death upon all my children.
Upon all children of Troy.
Through swollen lids I can see my homeland in blood.
The stench of dead bodies makes me nauseous.
I keep writhing in torrent, and I cannot die.
My heart won't break.
Ironically, I'm a mother – an executioner and a queen – a coward.
A woman who gave birth to death.
How naive of me to think you wouldn't have noticed my deception, Eros.
I did it on your behalf, double-faced god!
You were so young!
You had just been given power on Earth. Hateful you!
You've taken revenge on a mother who has to bury all her children.
She must bury herself alive.
Forgive me.

The text appears together with polyphonic singing and thus the reception of Queen Hecuba's despair is strengthened by the touching vibrations of the song. At first Bral did not want to overlap the monologue with the singing, but while working on the scene he felt that doing so would make the picture of the defended queen appear even more vulnerable.

Working with words in Song of the Goat Theatre productions necessitates both a feeling of intimacy, as well as a certain degree of objectivity. Being a part of the ensemble, my writing must include all the other forces that are present. However, whilst the kind of

²¹¹ Alicja Bral, *Warrior*, (2019). Footage is in [Appendix 19](#).

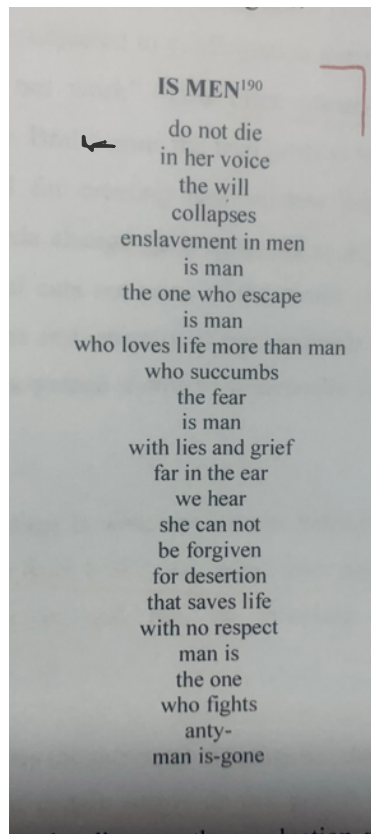
writing in which I partake in the theatre is not of an individual and independent kind, there is also room for creative freedom. This freedom is achieved not through psychological vivisection, but via a conscious entrance into the universal world of myth-like reality inhabited by archetypes.

c. Writing

The writing process is one of the few creative moments that occur when the writer is alone, although this does not mean isolation from the experience or knowledge that precede the act of transferring one's thoughts to paper. At this stage, however, the dialogue moves around within the writer. The imagination and intellect work together to find words that will add value to the co-created production. If I were to compare this stage to acting, I would call it a "verbal improvisation". Its effects might be rejected, corrected, or rejected entirely. However, if one humbly accepts the fact that the excellence of a production is more important than the writer's "self", it becomes much easier to accept criticism, which can enrich the playwright's work and improve the final result. In regard to this point, during a meeting associated with *Anty-Gone*, Bral said that, 'I want you to play with words and meanings. Give the picture of a jigsaw puzzle through wordplay'.²¹² As a result, I came up with three approaches to writing poems in this way, but the first two were rejected because I was still trapped in my familiar style of writing, the style I usually use when I write. As a writer I have to be alert and mindful, not to repeat my own patterns in writing. I finally overcame my limitations by surrendering to Bral's critical comments, which opened new possibilities not only for me but also for the music, which was then free to develop into a different mood. Below is the outcome of the new mode of writing I developed during the production of *Anty-Gone*; the song *Is-Men* is a portrayal of Ismene, the sister of Antigone.

²¹² Grzegorz Bral during a meeting with Maciej Rychły and me, Warsaw, May 2017.

IS MEN²¹³



Once a text is accepted by the director, the production moves on to the next phase, which is the rehearsal process. In the Song of the Goat Theatre the main work principles are Coordination and the avoidance of selfishness, which inevitably means I must be prepared for further changes to the text.

d. Rehearsals

The theatrical material matures and takes its final shape during the working process in the studio. At this point, the performers have mastered the basic musical pieces and the parts have been assigned to the actors. During the long hours of rehearsals, each note and word are subjected to verification in action and Bral also works on the shape of individual songs; he calls this process “directing the music”. In fact, his aim is to sculpt the music and words in such a way that they constitute a cohesive whole with the emotions and actions of the actors on stage. The action, which underpins the theatre, must be logical and consistent with the presence of the actors and their vocal and acting abilities. Other elements of the production, such as movement and the visual aspects are also subjected

²¹³ Alicja Bral, *Anty-Gone* (2018). Footage is in [Appendix 20](#).

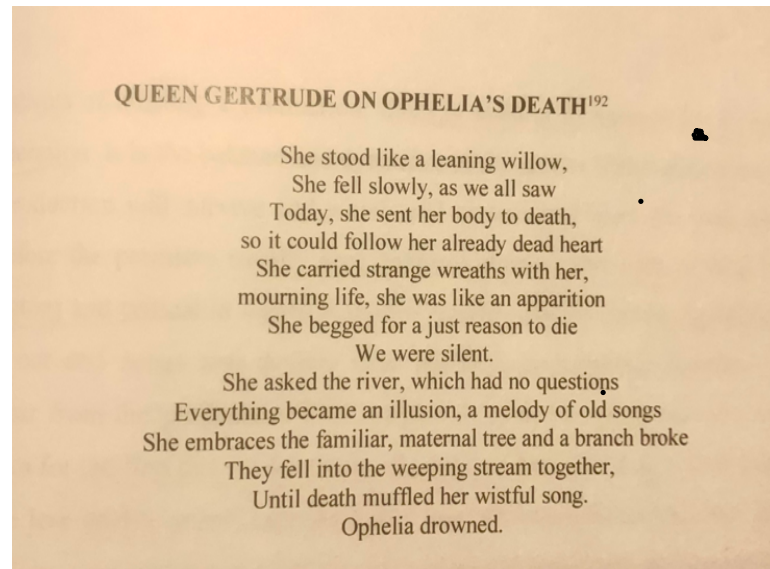
to confirmation during this stage, in terms of “what works” and “what does not work”. This often means excluding entire sections of material or deleting a role. Bral begins the trial process with a release of energy and an openness to the potential for creating new scenes. With time, the physical scenes, musical material and words change their shape so as to complement each other. It is during rehearsals that Bral cuts out parts of the music or creates repetitions within it, thus affecting the dynamics and intensity of each moment of the production. Ultimately, the actions used during a sequence should be organically referenced each to the other. In the words of Stanislavski:

(...) the truth on stage is whatever we can believe in with sincerity (...) Truth cannot be separate from belief, nor belief from truth. (...) It must inspire belief in the possibility in real life, on emotions analogous to those being experienced...²¹⁴

The passage above describes the theatrical situation to which Bral aspires. If, during the rehearsal, it turns out that certain words do not propel the action forward, they are removed from the script. If the actors are unable to master a song to the satisfaction of the director, it does not make it to the final production. The opposite of this may occur too, when the director, having been inspired by an actor’s actions, asks the dramaturg to add new text to the script. One example of this can be found in Ophelia’s drowning scene in *Hamlet – a Commentary*. Though the scene was initially intended to be represented through several sentences taken from *Hamlet*, in rehearsals two of the performers – Julien Touati and Anu Almagro – created a beautiful and profound scene (Ophelia’s “love dance” with death). As a result, Bral asked me to write a song which would accompany it, to be sung by Queen Gertrude. The music was composed by Jean-Claude Acquaviva.

²¹⁴ Constantin Stanislavski (2003), op. cit., pp.229-130.

QUEEN GERTRUDE ON OPHELIA'S DEATH²¹⁵



Gertrude had insight into Ophelia's death as, in our interpretation, she was the reason for it. In *Hamlet – a Commentary*, the queen did not want anyone to be happy, as she herself felt unhappy and deprived of love. Moreover, she was also jealous of her son. Like many others, this scene came into being as the result of an intense rehearsal period. For Bral, the process of editing is never-ending and can occur even after a production's premiere. As such, even at this point I must assume that further changes may yet be made to the text.

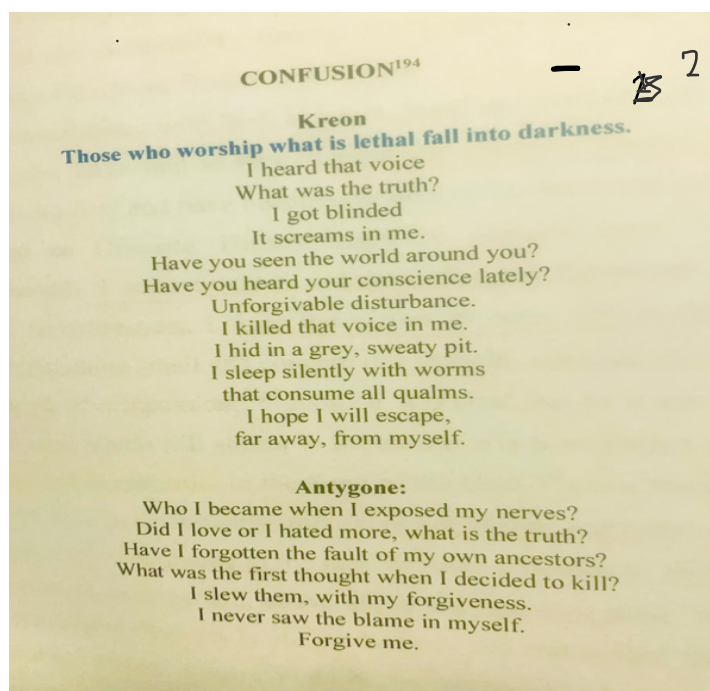
e. Directing

Bral operates in terms of a general idea of art, borrowed from the great 20th century painter Vasily Vasilyevich Kandinsky,²¹⁶ which is based on three phases: inspiration – improvisation – structure. Kandinsky was a creator and propagator of abstract art, as well as being a seeker of synaesthetic sensations within it. In this respect, there is a similarity between his creative efforts and in what we try to achieve in the Song of the Goat Theatre. In a similar manner to Kandinsky, we support the idea that art cannot be chaotic and that it is subject to aesthetic rules. We pay close attention to maintaining internal order in our work, in regard to the music, the text and the production structure. With this in mind, I work hard to reduce the number of words with insignificant meaning or those that do not

²¹⁵ Alicja Bral, *Hamlet – a Commentary* (2017). Footage is in [Appendix 21](#).

²¹⁶ Vasily Vasilyevich Kandinsky (born 16th December 1866 – died 13th December 1944) was a Russian painter and art theorist. Kandinsky is generally credited as the pioneer of abstract art. See: Moshe Barasch (1998), *Modern Theories of Art, 2 From Impressionism to Kandinsky*, New York University Press, New York.

propel the action along, but in the end, it is the director who makes the final corrections to the text, the music and the action on stage. Bral's painterly inclinations often manifest themselves in Song of the Goat Theatre productions through his love of ideal proportions. I would go so far as to say that in the final stages of creating a production, there is nothing of more value to him than this consideration. It is the balance and dynamics of the scenes which determine which parts of a production will survive and which will be removed from the final structure. The day before the premiere usually sees dramatic changes and cuts, as Bral is extremely unrelenting and critical in regard to overall quality. Scenes can be shortened, words are edited out and songs that deviate from his high performance standards irrevocably disappear from the production. This is often an extreme experience for those working with him for the first time or for those who had not had a chance to train with him. One must be less selfish or self-interested than may seem possible or at least feel possible. Below is an example of a song from which ninety-nine percent of the text was removed for a scene. CONFUSION ²¹⁷



Bral took only the first line from the poem with the reason being twofold. Firstly, it was because the composer had not yet composed full-length music for *Ecstasy*, the third part of *Anty-Gone*. Secondly, it was related to achieving a balance between the dynamics of the choreography and the length of the song.

²¹⁷ Alicja Bral, *Anty-Gone* (2018). Footage is in [Appendix 20b](#).

2 The turning point of cognition

I want the world of the theatre to be more like lucid dreaming.
I want the world of the theatre to be more like entering the dreams, hopes, desires...
I want it to express reality without literally expressing it.

Grzegorz Bral²¹⁸

In this chapter I immerse myself in the “world of the theatre” as built by Bral, by explaining his artistic goals and the direction he has set for his work. Furthermore, the chapter will constitute a conclusion to the discussion of Self-Less Language, which has made up a large part of this dissertation. Finally, I will depict the singularity of the words that makeup Song of the Goat Theatre productions.

In one of my conversations with Bral, he emphasised the words that his spiritual teacher, Akong Rinpoche, once said to him: ‘Create the Ultimate Theatre’.²¹⁹ These words have remained with Bral and have become the goal of his theatrical art, although the question of what an Ultimate Theatre might be remains open. In another conversation he explained, ‘I want to create a theatre that has the power to change something in human consciousness. I want the viewer to open new territory within himself. This can be something small and concern one thought, emotion, the realization of beauty, or the strength of compassion.’²²⁰ As such, it is clear that he is searching for a form of artistic expression which will appear to the audience as a revelation in a feeling which might be described as cathartic. In the Song of the Goat Theatre, the path to this goal is to be achieved through a constantly improving polyphonic harmony, with all the elements of its productions subordinate to the laws of music. Moreover, rhythm can be found in every movement on stage and, above all, in the language used. We strive to create a unity of coordinated elements in our productions and aim to find the answer to the question of what an Ultimate Theatre might be, by creating an organic phenomenon whose parts constitute one body. Inspired by the Platonic Triad of *truth, beauty, and goodness*, we restrict the themes of our productions to the confines of myth. It is through metaphor and open musical structures that we arouse ethical and aesthetic considerations in our

²¹⁸ Maryam Davari (2014), BBC Interview with Grzegorz Bral, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25O7ZAgUr4&t=41s> Accessed 29th May 2020.

²¹⁹ My conversation with Bral, London, 21st August 2013.

²²⁰ My conversation with Bral, Wrocław, 5th June 2020.

spectators. These spiritual qualities of the Ultimate Theatre resist a straightforward explanation, but in the words of theatre creator and theorist, Mick Gordon:

The ultimate aim of theatre is to create a corollary of our sense of transcendence. In the theatre, unlike life, the conditions, which can generate such experience, can be constructed (...) In a great theatre work, our minds experience these moments as somehow inevitable; as if they have awakened an already existent knowledge within us.²²¹

An important consideration regarding the definition of the Ultimate Theatre is that of the kind of language which would be closest to its assumptions. For Bral, it is Self-Less Language, which goes beyond everyday language and individual emotionality and which opens up possibilities for independent interpretation and personal epiphanies by each spectator. In the words of Gordon, this kind of language represents a place ‘where we sense an absolute truth, that we are each completely singular and yet at the same time completely connected by something essential.’²²² For Bral and me, the potential for discovering such a place lies in poetry. In his book, *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell writes:

That’s what poetry is for. Poetry involves a precise choice of words that will have implications and suggestions that go past the words themselves. Then you experience the radiance, the epiphany. The epiphany is the showing through of the essence.²²³

By its very nature, poetry opens up vast spaces for interpretation because it does not finalise meaning. Similarly to music, it stimulates the spectator’s imagination and intuition and, for this reason, it can stir the emotions in a more profound way than prose or dialogue. In writing about *Island*, Kalina Stefanova concludes her emotional interpretation by stating that:

Island is at once like a caress in a dream, a caress as if of an angel’s feather, and an outcry against our voluntary discarding of the spirit, i.e., of the utmost beauty and harmony we have in us. This show, I dare say, is as close as theatre could get to the pure spirit. Its crystal fragility is coupled with disarming purity.²²⁴

²²¹ Mick Gordon (2010), *Theatre and the Mind*, Oberon Books, London, pp: 57-60.

²²² Ibidem, p.60.

²²³ Joseph Campbell, Bill Morey (1991), *The Power of Myth*, The Anchor Books New York, p.181.

²²⁴ Kalina Stefanova (2020) op. cit.

While I cannot assess how accurate or universal her statement is, I can only hope that Stefanova was not alone in her interpretation.

Bral's artistic and educational activity has homogeneous and clear standards, among which the most important are being honest with everything you do on stage, openness towards other colleagues and compassion as the main source of every action. Both Bral and I believe that art can lead to transformation, by helping people to become aware of the need to be in coordination with the world. Art contains within it the possibility of creating harmony between people. As such, taking part in Song of the Goat Theatre productions is more akin to being on a path to self-improvement, rather than just completing subsequent theatrical projects. In all aspects of its work, the goal of the ensemble is to arouse empathy and goodness in ourselves and in the people around us. The Song of the Goat Theatre is obviously not isolated in pursuing this objective, with many artists working towards similar ends in their own equally valid ways. Taking part in Song of the Goat Theatre productions and using the BAM and Self-Less Language is just one of the possible ways to self-development and creation. In concluding the discussion on Self-Less Language, the words of Antonin Artaud offer insight:

And there is an idea of Chaos, an idea of Marvellous, an idea of Equilibrium; there are even one or two concerning the importance of Speech (...) The language created for the senses must from the outset be concerned with satisfying them (...) the poetry language, of poetry in space which will be resolved in precisely the domain which does not belong strictly to words (...) This is difficult and complex poetry and assumes many aspects: especially the aspect of all the means of expression utilisable on the stage, such as music, dance, plastic art, pantomime, mimicry, gesticulation, intonation, architecture, lighting and scenery.²²⁵

Ultimate theatre needs an ultimate language, with every theatre needing to find a way to express reality through verbal means. In the case of my poetry, written for the Song of the Goat Theatre, I use the medium of Self-Less Language; it represents not only itself, but also includes all aspects of the Song of the Goat Theatre's scenic reality.

²²⁵ Antonin Artaud (1958), *The Theatre and its Double*, Grove Press, New York, pp.36-39

Process description

In the following section, I will describe the process of creating a new Song of the Goat Theatre production, starting with the initial idea and main theme, through all of the creative stages, until the final shape of the performance is achieved. In the previous chapter, I described the three stages of constructing a new work: ‘inspiration, improvisation and structure’. What follows is a more detailed depiction of this approach. In the following section, I have moved away from scientific analysis to a description that resembles rehearsal notes. This approach aims to capture the living experience of working on stage as an actress. In contrast, the proceeding sections of the thesis were concerned with describing the phenomenon of Self-Less Language from the perspective of a researcher-practitioner dealing with dramaturgy. *Apocrypha* was the first performance in which I participated as an actress and participant in a three-month rehearsal process. Because of the pandemic (Covid-19), we have had only the online premiere, with the live premiere planned for summer 2021. Because of this delay, the process is not yet concluded, making reflection on it and evaluation may be problematic and conjectural. For this reason, I would like to propose this rather unconventional section as a conclusion to this thesis.

*Apocrypha*²²⁶ the newest Song of the Goat Theatre production, had its online premiere on 20th December 2020, with rehearsals taking place in Oborniki Śląskie, between 1st September and 26th November 2020. In it, I was the dramaturg and played one of the characters – Orfi Lewita – on stage. The drama describes the family life of Jesus Christ in a non-canonical way. In our interpretation, the character of Orfi was a witness and storyteller regarding the life of Issa Ha-Nocri. The life of Jesus Christ, one of the most important myths in Europe, was modified to show Issa’s life from the perspective of a family drama. We enriched our interpretation by incorporating motifs taken from *The Master and Margarita*, by Mikhail Bulgakov, and music composed by Maciej Rychły, which was inspired by the archaic songs of ancient tribes. The composer extended the scales upon which their melodies were composed, as well as their raw sound, by using sophisticated choral themes and polyphonic singing. The work combines the art of dance

²²⁶ Full record of *Apocrypha* is in [Appendix 4](#).

with singing and spoken text. In it, Bral fully satisfied the assumptions of “ultimate theatre”²²⁷, in which the actors unify physical actions with singing and the spoken word.

INSPIRATION

The idea of exploring the most essential and greatest of Christian myths, the life of Jesus Christ, was the next stage in Bral’s exploration of humanity’s beliefs. Bral has been using myth as the primary source of inspiration for his productions since 2018, starting with *Anty-Gone Triptych*, based on Sophocles’ ancient play, which was followed by *Warrior* in 2019; being a reinterpretation of Euripides’s *Trojan Women*. It was clear from the beginning of the project that the focus had to be on the non-canonical side of Jesus’s history. We thus decided to create a hypothetical story about Issa Ha-Nocri’s family life. As was the case with *Warrior*, the texts were to be written before the musical compositions and therefore my main inspiration came from the apocryphal texts and gnostic gospels of the early Christian period. Another main influence was *The Gospel of Mary*,²²⁸ a book that sheds new light on Mary, the wife of Jesus, and her contribution to the building of the Christian church in its early stages.

The text was written in the form of a drama,²²⁹ with lyrics sung over the dialogue. There are fifteen characters on stage, of whom four do not have historical equivalents in canonical writings or apocryphal texts.²³⁰ The lyrics make up a commentary; a kind of choir accompanying the text, with there being two kinds: those originally written in English and those made up from excerpts from the Coptic version of *The Gospel of Thomas*.²³¹ As mentioned above, Maciej Rychły composed music to the words after they were written, but the original order of the songs changed during rehearsals. Indeed, some of the songs were completely discarded and a new piece, entitled *Wind Blows*, was added by Bral while rehearsing. Originally, the text for this composition was based on Issa’s confession of love for Nanaya, but the music emerged independently of the text, after Rychły and I were informed that Bral wanted music for a love scene between Issa and Nanaya.

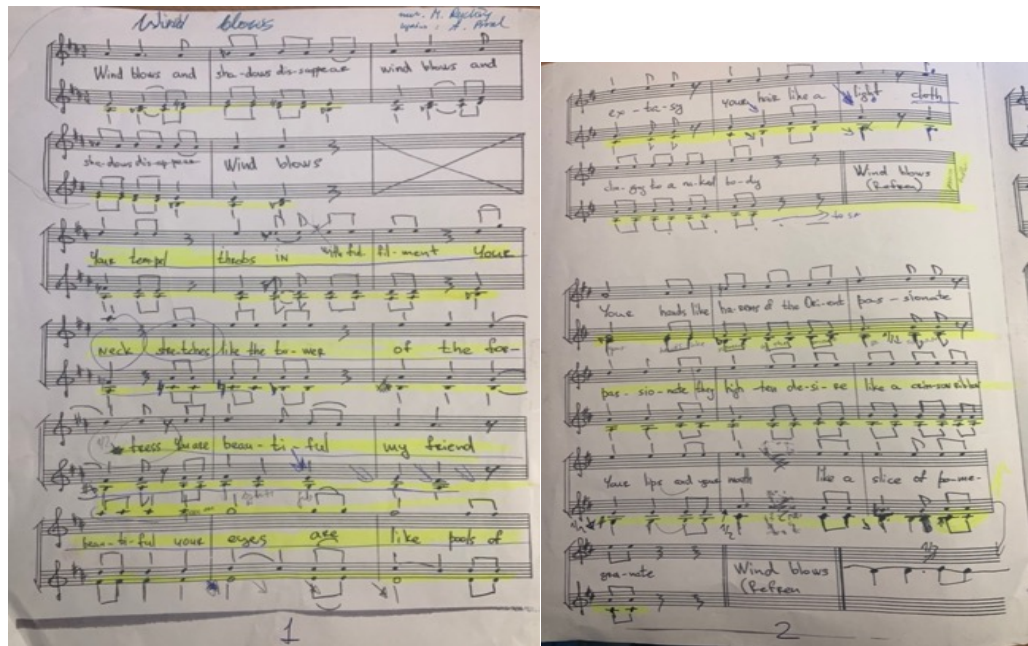
²²⁷ My conversation with Bral, 21st May 2020. The expression “ultimate theatre” was given to Bral by Akong Rinpoche, when during one of their conversations on Coordination, Rinpoche asked Bral to try to create an ultimate theatre, where every element coexists each with the other in a balanced, organic way.

²²⁸ Christopher Tuckett (2007), *The Gospel of Mary*, Oxford University Press, New York.

²²⁹ The full text is in Appendix 3.

²³⁰ For the list of characters see: <http://piesnkozla.pl/en/spektakle#413-apocrypha>

²³¹ See <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/thomas-coptic1.html>, Accessed 21st June 2020.



Musical score: M. Rychly

Volodymyr Andrushchak, who played the role of Pilate and was also our choir teacher, arranged the music, with all the songs prepared prior to our rehearsals in Oborniki Śląskie, which lasted for three months.

IMPROVISATION²³²

The three-month long period of rehearsals for *Apocrypha* was particularly intensive, with eight-hour periods in the studio, six days a week. It consisted of physical exercises in the morning and work on music, text, and improvisation in the afternoon. The physical training was directed by the choreographer Gustavo Oliveira, who also played the role of Dionysus. His tragic character, an old Greek god, represents lost religion and forgotten spirituality. While he does not speak a single word, his pain is visible through his dance. He also figures as a warning, reminding us that nothing – not even the gods – lasts forever. This point justifies our secular view of the life of Issa Ha-Nocri. The fundamental question posed in the work is in reference to the function of the institutionalization of the spiritual sphere in people’s lives. Even though the story was inspired by historical figures and contains a general plot surrounding the life and death of Jesus, it is not based on facts, with the dialogue and other events being imaginary. Apart from the dialogues, the songs

²³² Short films from the rehearsal process are in: [Appendix 22](#), [Appendix 24](#), [Appendix 25](#).

and music played an essential role in the production. Andrushchak led the ensemble and individual work with the music. Below is the score to *The Rape*:

The rape -1-

Recitativo

I know not how to write about it

I cannot sing it I cannot shout it

How does one try for murder when the victim is still a live?

How does one try for murder when the victim is still a live?

How does one try for murder when the victim is still a live?

victim is still a live

the rape -2-

2

3 a dead body chewed by

spine ripped to shreds shreds shreds

lit by the laws of darkness written

by the hangman lit by the laws

R1

the rape -3-

R2

what tears to shed what tears?

stripped naked she has been deprived of life and

death in one sentence she must stand still in

silence and shame to keep her upright her

insides have been hollowed

stuffed with words like straws meaningless

the rape -4-

3

spine solo un estirado/ into a wasteland let her

spine into a wasteland let her

scave off every and black bird

they will peck away at a new vic-

tim to narrow

I know not how to write about it

I cannot sing it I cannot shout it

- 5 -

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a song. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics for the first two staves are: "I stand ashamed of my helplessness" and "I scream in silence". The third staff begins with a circled number 5 and the lyrics: "Who will try for murder". The fourth staff has the lyrics: "dev when the victim is" and "still alive". The fifth staff is empty. At the bottom, there is a signature "Maite Tejada" and the date "late 2020".

The Rape

I know not how to write about it.
 I cannot sing it.
 I cannot shout it.
 How does one judge for murder when the
 victim is still alive?
 In a dead body, charred by sperm, ripped to
 shreds,
 Lit by the laws of darkness, written by the
 hangman.
 What tears to shed, stripped, naked,
 She has been deprived of life and death in
 one sentence.
 She must stand still in silence and shame.
 To keep her upright, her insides have been
 hollowed,
 Stuffed with words like straw, meaningless.
 Driven into a wasteland.
 Let her scare off crows and blackbirds
 They will peck away at a new victim
 tomorrow.
 I know not how to write about it.
 I cannot sing it.
 I stand ashamed of my helplessness.
 I scream in silence:
 Who will judge for murder when the victim
 is still alive?

‘The Rape’ resembles a manifesto for the rights of women, and it took on a deeper meaning for the women in the ensemble, as Poland saw a series of protests against restrictions to abortion laws in October 2020. In terms of the production, the song is about the tragic events surrounding Issa’s sisters, Sara and Salome, but the lyrics are not based on the bible or apocryphal stories. Rather, they are a fictional representation of Mary Magdalene as a woman fighting against chauvinism.

Conversely, the lyrics to *Pilate* were taken from *The Gospel of Thomas* and were sung in the Coptic language. The song’s purpose was to evoke a certain atmosphere, rather than conveying information about the action on stage on an intellectual level. It is part of a very dynamic ‘diagonal scene’, which symbolises the regime and power of Rome and involves the characters performing a synchronous dance on a table.

Pilat/ Pilate

Peje IS nau je etetNÂLanRnhsteue tętna jpo nhtN Nnounobe auw etetNÂLan ÂLlhl senaRkatakri ne Mmwtn auw etetNÂLan+ elehmosunh etetnaei re Noukakon NnetMPNA auw etetN ÂLanbwk exoun ekax nim auw NtetM mooÂLê xN Nywra euÂLâRparadeye Mmwtn petounakaaf xarwtN ouomF netÂLwne Nxhtou ericerapeue Mmo ou petnabwk gar exoun xN tetNta pro fnajwxM thutN an alla petN nhu ebol xN tetNtapro Ntof pe tnajaxM thutN

Jesus said: If you fast, they will bring sin upon you, if you pray, you will be condemned, if you give alms, you will harm your spirits, and if you go out to other provinces and receive you, eat what they lay before you, heal the sick among them. them. For it is not what goes into your mouth that pollutes you, but what comes out of your mouth is what pollutes you.

Score

Pilate

Music Maciej Rychly

23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34

35 36 37 38

1. e kah nim a lo e nte ten mo o sipe hen en ho ra eu szin e rpa ra de he e
 2. e kah nim a lo e nte ten mo o sipe hen en ho ra eu szin e rpa ra de he e
 3. e kah nim a lo e nte ten mo o sipe hen en ho ra eu szin e rpa ra de he e

1. mmo ten pe tu na ka if ha ro ten lo nef ha ro ten lo nef
 2. mmo ten pe tu na ka if ha ro ten lo nef ha ro ten lo nef
 3. mmo ten pe tu na ka if ha ro ten lo nef ha ro ten lo nef

1. mmo ten a lo e te ten szin ti e le e mo sy ne e te tna i re
 2. mmo ten a lo e te ten szin ti e le e mo sy ne e te tna i re
 3. mmo ten a lo e te ten szin ti e le e mo sy ne e te tna i re

1. en ou ka kin en ne ten pe lna a lo e te ten szin bok e hon
 2. en ou ka kin en ne ten pe lna a lo e te ten szin bok e hon
 3. en ou ka kin en ne ten pe lna a lo e te ten szin bok e hon

1. Ne tsab ne en be tou e re he ra pe le e mmol pet na bok
 2. Ne tsab ne en be tou e re he ra pe le e mmol pet na bok
 3. Ne tsab ne en be tou e re he ra pe le e mmol pet na bok

1. gar e han hen te ten ta pre ina doo be me lpen an A illa pe te mad...
 2. gar e han hen te ten ta pre ina doo be me lpen an A illa pe te mad...
 3. gar e han hen te ten ta pre ina doo be me lpen an A illa pe te mad...

Bral used a rhythmical movement sequence on a table to divide the song into two parts. The choreography involves hand movements which represent a power which enforces blind obedience to its principles. Rehearsals were challenging, due to the high level of discipline required by this piece and we often had to fight exhaustion and tiredness. Right from the beginning, rehearsals involved long hours of improvisation and structure-building.

STRUCTURE

Structurally, *Apocrypha* developed gradually, even though the overall vision was ready before the rehearsals. Bral knew how to build each scene from the start and worked closely with Oliveira on the choreography and stage movement. The process of learning the scenes was difficult, as we had to make all the changes to the scenery part of the characters' actions. Below are the notes we were given to remember the structure of the production:

APOCRYPHA - SEQUENCE - FIRST DRAFT

- Opening scene-

- Tables and chairs are set in U-shape
- Dionysos dances solo
- Pilat plays piano "Nanaya"

1. THE SUPPER

- entrance Issah, Josef, Simon, Joan, Sarah, Salome
- dialogue
- Josef and Simon to table

2. THE NEWS

ORFI whole scene

- entrance Orfi, sisters change position and have dialogue
- outburst Salome, women go to table
- last ligh Salome -> entrance all to table with Harmonium
- "Lament" by Edyta and Daniela
- "Opening choreography" (starts with mirror-move) with Harmonium, Dionysus disturbs
- end choreo -> "Shekaria - There must be darkness", women on chairs, men sitting

3. SHEKARIA'S VISION

- duet/dialogue Shekaria and Issah (brought over table by Dionysus) (+ drone?)
- Salome joins Shekaria for dialogue and "Duet" with song "I remain not you - Kefas"
- towards the end entrance Joan and Orfi

4. STORY 1. SUPPER PIETA

ORFI and Joan
ORFI ends the scene

- Dialogue Joan and Orfi with Issah on floor (+ drone?)
- Salome and Shekaria return to table, all sit
- Nanaya on table, manipulated by Dionysus
- Nanaya leaves and goes to Issah, all stand up + song "How to love you"

5. SUPPER YOU ARE GUILTY

- Dialogue Josef, Simon, Orfi, Issah, Sarah, Joan
- "You" choreography (4x per pause between speeches) (+ Harmonium?)
- stop choreo when Joan speaks last text ORFI 3 texts, she ends it started a few months earlier jealousy and pride entered Cephas's heart. On that day when a darkness rolled in from the sea and enshrouded the city so despised by the viceroys
- Issah and Nanaya on floor

6. STORY 2 CRACK IN HEART

- entrance Kefas with 'You' and dialogue with Issah
- everyone else returns to seats at table
- Q by Kefas to change
- tables in diagonal, chairs in one row in the back, not touching, two chairs at table's ends, glass of wine at Pilatus' side of table
- immediately motif of "Issah" (piano only) begins

7. KEFAS AT THE COURT OF PILATE ASTROLOGUS

- women sit stage right, men stage left
- women start 'Hair choreo' as soon as dialogue betw. Kefas and Pilate starts -> choreography + dialogue!
- dialogue continues, crossing of table by Salome with wine, Simon on floor
- women bring chairs, men too and sit
- Q Orfi's ligh -> chairs on table = 'Prison'

Cephas has returned as if nothing had happened
He stopped adoring Issa and started plotting a mutiny

- 'Prison impro' (4x8) + Kefas crossing (2x8), all go to chairs
- immediately shoot 1st part of "Pilate"
 - (+ clapping, Dionysus disturbing with drum, until BAR 20)
- 'Hands choreo' (+ audible counting and continued drum of Dionysus)
- end choreo standing up -> immediately continue "Pilate" (from BAR 21 to end + drum)
- fall off table
- continued heartbeat of drum by Dionysus for following dialogue

8. A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ISSAH AND PILATE *That is what happened in full sunlight... Everything that happened henceforth was predetermined in a cracked Cephus heart*

- Q Pilate's first lign -> all curl on floor and stay
- dialogue Pilate and Issah, Issah is 'mirroring' Pilate's movement (+ heartbeat drum)
- Dionysus takes Issah's chair, places in back
- end change to church, chairs stay on tables

9. YOSHUA AND KEFAS CHURCH *We did not know what had happened. He didn't tell us even though he had seen everything in Cephus' eyes. It was already too late.*

- church, 4 tables as rectangle, chairs on top
- all sit, women all in front row with veils
- "Simon Petros" + dialogue Kefas and Issah during song (in Edyta's solos)
- Kefas' solo of madness with voice and body

10. HA NOCRI HOUSE. THE SUPPER EVENING TRUTH

- chairs off tables, set around the 4 tables
- women sitting in the back (still with veils?), men on side
- normal dialogue of Joan, Josef, Sarah, Simon
- during dialogue 'Knocking on door', women push back chairs and stand up, leave?, prepare their hair for 'Women bells choreo'
- end dialogue, 'Lazarus' by Issah, Dionysus and Simon with song "Spear" (women are holding bells in hands throughout song)
- 'Bells choreo women' (+ Harmonium?)
- end of choreo women stay seated in the front of the stage with bells
- men stay at table?

11. A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JOSEF AND ISSAH

- all disappear to sides except for Josef, Issah, Dionysus and Pilate
- dialogue Josef, Issah
- Dionysus accompanying them (+ extra chair for him? -> replicate opening scene)
- Pilatus plays "Nanaya" on piano (Pilate stops when Issah stands up from chair)
- end dialogue Josef and Issah stand up from table, Dionysus follows them, disappears
- image 4 crosses and Joan, Nanaya, Sarah, Salome on tables + Simon, Shekaria, Pilate, Kefas holding the crosses
- improvisation of Edyta, Kaya on Harmonium, Orfi as drone
- change into 'Screens'
- Aria "Issah" by Pilate, changing is staged as own 'choreography', hold drone!
- from rectangle open 3 tables standing up with each one chair as support, chairs on sides of stage, 6 stage right (also red chair), 5 stage left
- flashing lights of 3 different moments on screens with song "Rape" (+ Harmonium?)
- women take 'Crowns' after screen moments, continue walking
- end song, women put crowns down
- women get chairs while singing last phrase, men put tables into one lign in back

12. TEMPTATION *ORFI opens and ends Angra*

- all chairs brought by women
- all sit for 'Chair choreo'
- song "Apokryph - Wisemen", split song with choreographic moments

- circle of chairs, only Edyta's chair on table
- dialogue Issah and group -> first part disturbed by Dionysus, text by all/ second part 'Men Temptation choreo', text by women/ third part 'Women Temptation choreo', text by men
- women end choreo with Issah, then push chairs to side (front half of room)

13. THE FIRST AND THE LAST LOVE SCENE

- transition to 4 tables in front
- love scene with Nanaya and Issah with song "Nanaya" (by Edyta, Kaya, Alicia, duet part)
- at end of dialogue all together sing "Nanaya" **ORFI ends love scene**
- 3 men on table, song by women "Wind blows" again Dionysos replicates the opening scene
- 'Mirror scene', as smoother transition to Hangmen
- transition tables back into one lign, all chairs on top, 3 ropes over chairs

14. HA-NOCRI HOUSE

- 3 'Hangmen', all others on chairs with masks, song "Nanaya" only piano
- + during action dialogue of Simon, Shekaria, Josef
- at end all men go for bells, others take off masks

15. RETURN

- 'Bells choreo men' with Dionysus mocking/tempting, no music
- at end bells stay scattered on floor
- Issah appears with cross bells, ends by placing on floor
- dialogue of Sarah, Joan, Issah, Nanaya + **Ostinato** (Pilate, Edyta, Kaya)
- song "Czarny - Black", cry/scream of Joan

FINE

Temptation

The notes above were written ten days before the premiere, but by the time it occurred, Bral had already made several changes. It is safe to assume that the production will undergo further changes with time, as constant structural development is part of the process of creation in the Song of the Goat Theatre. This process, which is a living thing, requires that I continue to be fluid and adaptable in my approach to writing.

CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to grasp some conclusions reflecting on Self-Less Language as a new possible way of writing texts for the theatre. My research has traced the relationship between the dramaturg and other aspects of the performance, such as the source material, the musical compositions, the physical training of the BAM, the presence of the other colleagues on stage and during training, as well as the role of the director in the whole process. I commenced my PaR to investigate how the text can arise during the process of building a performance which is based on music and physical action. I will now try to draw out some conclusions from my research.

Self-Less Language is an innovative form of working with words which is inextricably linked with the body, the voice and the imagination. As I wrote in the introduction, this method was created as a direct consequence of the Bral Acting Method, an acting technique of working on opening and expanding the imagination and creativity inherent in every person. I described the relation between BAM and SLL in Chapter III 1, as well as in Appendix 2 of my work, where I try to portray not only idiosyncratic elements in the acting method but also its impact on my writing process for the Song of The Goat Theatre. I suggest that the main rules that evolve from the research process on Self-Less Language are:

1. The writing method that results from the embodied experience during training. The writer uses physical training as part of the writing process.
2. Language based on metaphor as a leading carrier of meaning. This gives the audience the space for individual interpretation and reflection on the characters and problems presented in the performance. The written words are therefore closer to stage poetry.
3. The musicality (rhythm, accents) of the words is as important as their semantic meaning. Self-Less Language tries to be coherent with the music and physical choreography of the performance.
4. Using the method of Self-Less Language when writing for the theatre, one should respect and acknowledge all other elements of the performance and incorporate them into the used language.

5. The writer who uses the Self-Less Language method for her writing should represent an attitude of openness towards other co-creators, as the final shape of the performance is the ultimate goal for all the artists involved in the creative process.
6. The SLL writer should stay open to any changes required in the text during rehearsal.
7. The writer should strive to broaden her awareness about her own emotional and physical state and be sensitive to other contributors, source material (plot, character), music, and the spectator.
8. Intertextuality is an integral part of writing. While implementing SLL, the writer should stay in dialogue with other cultural heritage texts, and through this attitude she should be openminded about problems and characters implemented in her text.
9. Reciprocity is the main tool to activate the creative process of writing. The writer adjusts words so that they serve the performance and support all the other elements in it, such as music, movement, characters; and she takes inspiration from these to create the text.
10. SLL (similarly to BAM) is a method of writing rooted in a self-developmental attitude, which is a never-ending process and, as such, can never be complete as a system of rules.

Self-Less Language as a way of writing for theatre derives from the experience of a performance situation. The writer stimulates her imagination through a vivid experience of training, the music that she hears, and an aesthetic impression stimulated by the scenography created in front of her eyes. The interaction between a writer's artistic potential and other creators significantly influences how the drama's language and plot are created. The other authors practice technically a similar method of writing for the theatre.

The SLL method's originality consists of deliberately opening the text up for any changes that may appear. These changes may arise under the influence of time and susceptibility to changes in the performance itself. This approach to the performance as an ever-evolving phenomenon is a characteristic feature of Song of the Goat Theatre productions: eg the sudden absence of an actor and, consequently, the character, caused by random everyday events (As a non-institutional theatre, SoTGT rarely has a double

cast for performances); cultural limitations (SoTGT often presents its performances in various cultural contexts, e.g. in China, where there is still censorship of the content presented). SLL is more like an element of the co-created art of performance. Even though it can exist as a separate piece of art, it was developed in a manner of reciprocity between all elements and co-creators.

Theatre is based on embodied experiences. The actors as well as the audience are involved with all their senses to effectively transmit and receive meanings hidden in verbal and non-verbal messages. This principle works both ways, as the ‘magic’ of the theatre lies in the living meeting between the actor and the spectator. Researchers who reflect on the so-called ‘post-Grotowskian theatre’ often focus on the physical aspect of actor training and search for the main medium of meanings in its non-verbal sphere. My thesis has tried to shed light on words and their meaning as an equal tool to communicate with an audience. The practice of SLL and BAM is might appear to be full of oppositions: like trying to combine the individualism of the leader and interconnectedness of all the co-creators; the emphasis on the experience of a ‘self’ during the creative process and at the same time the attempt of a group of artists to work in an area of ‘self-less’ or, in other words, through the common universal senses and meanings. Moreover, the method of researching through practice has certain limitations. One of these is the inability to describe the embodied experience in academic language. These seemingly contradictory assumptions in the BAM method combine into a whole, and instead of excluding each other, they strengthen their meanings. This issue is so broad that a separate section of the book about BAM will be devoted to it.²³³

The research I’ve done for the past few years gives an example of the empirically experienced process of being a dramaturg and an actress in Song of The Goat Theatre. My work is a cognitive description from the perspective of a practitioner and at the same time tries to fill the gap in my attempt to reflect on this process. I try to capture and describe the relationship between the verbal and non-verbal elements in the performance: between speech and gesture; between oneself and the protagonists; between empathy towards colleagues and the audience, and remaining rooted in oneself. My research shows that the dualistic concept of the creative process is not enough. This research has traced the possibility of a holistic approach to the creative process, which in my case impacts on writing for the stage. My research has tried to indicate the sources from which both the

²³³ Currently I am working with Grzegorz Bral on a separate book, which will be dedicated exclusively to Bral Acting Method, with an anticipated publication date of 2024.

Bral Acting Method and Self-Less Language were derived. I try to consider the impact on writing of many factors, including a specific philosophical and moral attitude which results from the assumptions of Tibetan Buddhism. However, I believe that this does not mean that SLL is exclusively intended for people with similar beliefs and values.

My research was focused on the creative process from the perspective of being a member of an ensemble. Nevertheless, it's undeniable that each time I am participating in the creative process from the perspective of being a woman in a world that has been dominated for centuries by man. The gender perspective is challenging for me and not easy to grasp in a few passages. This subject, in my opinion, is so vast that it should be described during separate scientific studies on Self-Less Language. I am, however, aware of the seriousness and importance of this issue, especially in Poland, where the struggle for equal rights is still very alive in social debates. As space in this thesis is limited, I can only highlight my awareness of this issue, though have to assert my respect for all women who actively act in the battle for equality for woman in Poland.

As was mentioned above, my studies here focused primarily on capturing the phenomenon of Self-Less Language from the perspective of a practitioner. It is also the first stage of research into the Bral Acting Method, which as a phenomenon will be described in more detail in a separate research paper.

The relationship between BAM and SLL is the starting point for further research into using language in ensemble work. I know I could not portray this phenomenon in detail as it is an ever-evolving process, and my research was time-limited. The three-year PaR investigation has resulted in a limited set of theoretical principles that can be rolled out also into other areas such as: language and gender; language in the aspect of multicultural groups; language as a phenomenon of positive pedagogy; language as non-verbal codification on stage; and finally, the individualism of the author and what is universal in language. My further research will address how Self-Less Language can be adapted to different social and cultural contexts. This research has traced the possibility of a holistic approach to the creative process, which in my case affects writing for the theatre. This perspective highlights how different theories of representation in performing arts and activities in theatre can blend and open a new possible way of training and creating. I have tried to summarise this research process, whereas Self-Less Language as a phenomenon and a way of approaching the language stays open and always possible.

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