

TOWARDS A POOR THERAPEUTIC THEATRE

SOROOSH KARIMI

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By: Soroosh Karimi

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Research Advisor:

Simon Driver, MA, RDT, LTA Lecture

Department Chair:

Guyline Vaillancourt, Ph.D. MTA.

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A POOR THERAPEUTIC THEATRE

SOROOSH KARIMI

This research paper summarizes the personal process of dramatic ritual and its healing effects within the creation of therapeutic theatre while exploring the research question: “How can dramatic rituals deepen the healing effects of therapeutic theatre, and how do performers benefit from ritual in a therapeutic theatre context?”. This paper includes the researcher’s reflections of the autoethnographic method, as explored through ethnographer Richard Schechner's (2011) three steps of *naturalism, perception and exploration*. This paper goes on to examine how dramatic rituals in therapeutic theatre benefit the self and communities through their inherent structure, safety and healing effects. Throughout the playmaking process the researcher examined rituals by performing them individually; understanding their effects, deepening his connections with his performers/actors, and gaining insight into the relationship between drama therapy and dramatic ritual.

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Introduction

In this section, I will go over ritual and its influence on modern theater and how, subsequently the therapeutic form of theatre has taken shape over the past several decades.

Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 situation, and the inability to include live audience and in person post-performance interviews I was compelled to change my research methodology (originally phenomenological inquiry) and shift the research question. Instead I chose Autoethnography and focused on my own experiences as director/facilitator within the process of creation. The performance was created and delivered using an online platform; a unique and incomparable experience without physical connection or the presence of an audience.

Theatre is about establishing relationships: first between characters and actors, and second between actors and audience. This creates an environment where everyone is moving a unique story forward with courage, empathy and harmony (Schechner,1988). In therapeutic theatre this environment is for the audience to define and process relationships (Grainger, 2013). This process is the main quality of therapeutic theatre and its main difference with theatre performance. This audience participation supports the quintessential elements of therapeutic theatre: cooperation, reflection and expression. Therapeutic theatre permits personal value, self-discovery, and vulnerability (Grainger, 2013). Therapeutic theatre may not be a treatment, but it can encourage its audience to face their problems, seek treatment or support, and build a sense of resiliency. Therapeutic theatre has been used to support many populations including groups with mental and developmental disorders, to enhance the expression of emotion, champion creativity and give voice to desire.

Drama is secular, while rituals are religious (Schechner,1995). Integration of these two antithetical lands (similar in nature but with different aims) could make an introspective and engaging environment for therapeutic application, and was addressed by Polish theatre artist Jerzy Grotowski (1968) when he questioned “what is the alter? What is the stage?” (p.112). In therapeutic theatre, the dramatic ritual with its healing and engaging power could be used to encourage the audience to be involved. This involvement could be physical, narrative or simply cerebral. Drama therapists use and adapt dramatic ritual in their practice (clinical and community-based) to create an environment that encourages the participants to be actively engaged with their personal development. As drama therapist Renee Emunah (2015) states

Some degree of healing takes place simply from being attentively and empathically listened to and witnessed, but, I would offer that a 'second degree' and perhaps more substantive healing takes place when one does not stop with the telling and hearing, but rather tackles the material from the inside out, or in some cases, from the outside in (p. 74).

Many theatre pioneers have incorporated ritual into their performances in order to involve the audience. This began with Antonin Artaud and the ritual performance of King Ubu in 1907 which was included to provoke its audience towards the sentimentalism in theatre performances and art gallery's exhibitions (Roose-Evans, 1996). This inclusion of ritual in theatre later shaped the Dadaism movement with artists such as Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) and Marcel Duchamp (1887- 1968) who started in Cabaret Voltaire at Zurich and later developed to other major influential artistic European cities such as Paris and Munich (Dachy & Taylor, 1990). Later, Grotowski continued the Artaud method to both create performance and train his actors and audience in his Theatre of Laboratory. The outcome of his work is now known as the paratheatrical method (Zarrilli & Barba, 1988).

To start the journey of creating the performance, and to understand the ritual's effects and to disclose it as a paper for readers, I decided that Autoethnography would be the best fit, as it would allow me to benefit from the effects of ritual in the process of creating a therapeutic performance because Autoethnography combines the characteristics of autobiography and ethnography, it makes it possible to *dig* into the subject of ritual and personal reflections. One limitation of this inquiry, however, is the ambiguity of the process, since every autobiographer or ethnographer will adapt the method to meet their needs. To make it clearer and more executive I followed the three steps introduced by Richard Schechner (2011) in *Between Theatre and Anthropology* which are: *Naturalism, Understanding/Perception and Exploration*. These tenets have served as a powerful and clear guideline in exploring the effects of ritual, from Mithraism in 4000BC to the more recent adoption of dramatic ritual in therapeutic practice.

Literature Review

This section begins by covering the Zurvanism ritual; the first systematic use of ritual for healing. I then go on to describe how theater performances have been changed through encounters with rituals. Finally, I will introduce the correlation of dramatic ritual and drama therapy and how drama therapists have adapted rituals to enhance the healing effects of their therapeutic work.

Healing rituals have been defined as ancient shamanic ceremonies (Martin, 2004). These ceremonies can in fact be dated back to early Siberia where the first shamans lived. However, the world's first systematic healing rituals date back to Mithraism which were fundamental to practicing and worshipping (Clauss & Gordon, 2017). Mithraism created a pathway through different ceremonies in which followers could enhance their spiritual level in seven sequential spiritual positions. By devoting oneself to the Mithraic modus followers could reach the *Entry Stage* (the highest level attainable by any seeker).

The main ritual in Mithraism was based on *sacrificing and worshipping* but the reason for practicing these rites was to seek freedom and safety in maintaining peace and wisdom. Mithraic rituals have two different mechanisms for the practitioner; First by supporting its practitioner in growing or maintaining their position in their societal hierarchy, and secondly by providing them with the feelings of safety and intuition (Martin, 2004). This rising in the hierarchy and wisdom through rituals supported constructing the liminal space subsequently preparing practitioners to be transcended (Michaels, 2016). It could be argued that the aforementioned is the aim of any ritual; however, in Mithraism the aim of the transformation is rooted in a religious point of view and mysticism.

Grimes (2014) believed that the ancient Mithraic ritual later flourished in two different religion's rituals as well as Zoroastrian and Buddhism respectively. The rituals in Zoroastrian ceremonies were shaped as dramatic ritual and used as both a religious practice and healing method. The practitioners of Zoroastrian ceremonies were helping themselves become free from the temporal mundane and becoming enriched through mysticism. For the first time, the term purification has been coined by Zoroastrian's rituals (Stausberg & Vevaina, 2015).

Zoroastrian rituals were practiced all over the Pars Plateau in 1000 BC. Their aim was to worship the goddess of Zurvan. Zurvan was the goddess who was living when the world was empty of everything. She had two twin sons: Ahura Mazda (the symbol of clarity and purity) and

Ahriman (the devil, the symbol of impurity). In Zoroastrian school of thought time was considered the source of everything. Thus, many Zoroastrian rituals were in two forms and in contrast to one another, much like day and night, or good and evil. (Huff, 2004). The purpose of practicing these rituals was to avoid being accepted by Ahriman and to reach Ahura's land and be purified.

Zoroastrian rituals have three main parts. The first is the physical purification which is an ablution by washing the body in the holy water. The second is a ritual called *Yasna*, the sacrifice of the *Haoma*; the ceremony of drinking the holly liquor. The last is dancing among the fire; a gift to be accepted by the goddess Zurvan (Shaked, 2004).

Zurvan's seven-stages of purification have been practiced for more than 1000 years and the elements of its dramatic rituals can be seen in the story of the Conference of the Birds which is well-known as story of *Simorgh*. Attar Neyshabouri (1145-1221) explained the seven stages of rituals identifying the highest stage as *attendance* (Campos, Blikstein & Azhar, 2017). In *Simorgh*, he used the metaphor of birds instead of humans or followers and the valley instead of the stages. Neyshabouri showed how every stage could help to enrich and propel practitioners towards *attendance* and meet Zurvan (Shaked, 2004). The seven stages were composed as:

1. *The Valley of the quest*. where the way will begin by putting aside all dogma, belief, and unbelief.
2. *The Valley of love*, where the reason will be abandoned for love's sake.
3. *The Valley of knowledge*, where every knowledge should be put aside for the sake of purity.
4. *The Valley of detachment*, a place where all the desire and attachments to life will be given up through the dance of fire.
5. *The Valley of unity*, where the unity will be explored through harmony, multiplicity, and eternity in dancing.
6. *The Valley of wonderment*, where the person will find himself out of attachment and empty.

7. *The Valley of poverty* where the self will disappear into the universe and becoming timeless, existing in both past and future.

One important Zoroastrian ritual that flourished in Buddhism and then in many southeastern Asian countries was called the *Ritual of Death*. Though it has also been called *Dying Consciously*, highlighting the seven stages as a journey of death. It has also been referred to as the ceremony for others to leave the dead body (Shaked, 2004). In this ritual, the participants carried the dead body out of the city and left it upon the Dakhme (the tower of silence); to be eaten by the birds which were symbolically considered the liberation of the soul.

The rituals in theatre and performance

Through the lens of performance study, theatre and ritual are both performances. However, the aim of each one is fundamentally different. Ritual is mostly known as the enactment of beliefs while the theatre is more for pleasure (Schechner, 1995). In ritual, audience engagement is crucial; even if invited to observe audiences are considered participants. It is the nature of ritual to provoke the audience emotionally and engage them in a process. Considering this, it could be argued that rituals rarely have observers (Mitchell, 1990). This high level of engagement ultimately leads the audience towards self-expression through physical movement and/or movement in psyche. Though sometimes subtle, each participant will be engaged, producing the potential for existential change even upon the first encounter (Grainger, 1997). The combination of theatre and ritual could be considered an invitation for the audience to the moment of change where they will be engaged by witnessing, embodying, and ultimately participating in the ritual.

The first systemic use of rituals and the creation of performance-based ritual dates back to Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) when he traveled to Southeast Asia and was confronted with the influential ritual performed by Balinese natives. Artaud was moved by the power of their performance which was the celebration of death, observed as dancing and chanting around the fire from sundown to sunup (Rose-Evance, 1996). Artaud included the elements and concepts of the Balinese death rites in his performances by adding more movement, masks, and chanting, and called his new style *Theatre of Poetry* (Artaud, 1958). Later Artaud was approached by

French writer Alfred Jary, and together they brought their performances out of regular theatre salons (traditional proscenium) which were more occupied by sentimental performances of the bourgeoisies (Artaud, 1958). In 1905, Jary and Artaud's cooperation also resulted in the first use of the *black box* in a theatre performance while presenting Ubo Rio (King Ubo). The black box is defined as a simple and open space consisting four walls all painted in black. Its design gives flexibility and simplicity, enhancing the audience's focus of the actors. By using the black box for their performances, Jary and Artaud minimized the audience's distance from the actors in the hope of maximizing audience engagement (Finter & Griffin 1997).

In 1967 Grotowski was influenced by Artaud and started the theatre of laboratories. This was not only to create performances but to start a movement which was later called the paratheatrical method. By including the ritual component Grotowski gave liberation to his actors and audiences by engaging them both within the performance. He believed that his theatre needed to train its audience as well as its actors. Grotowski states: "now that the rapid evolution of civilization has destroyed the tradition world, we must return to the theatre and its ancient origins" (1968, p78). Grotowski argued that the component of ritual is virtually the same as performance, but the difference and importance is conscious participation. Additionally, Grotowski included techniques of Yoga and other physical exercises. He emphasized that by learning about the body and its sensation the actors could enhance their awareness; an effective key for participating in rituals. The ritual components for Grotowski were movement, repeated action, symbolic celebration, significant words, communal actions and participation (Lendra, 1991).

Grotowski brought a fundamental question to his actors which was psychologically and existentially important. The question was: "who am I" (Grotowski, 1968, p.67). To understand the question and its answer Grotowski believed in practicing rituals. Grotowski based his dramatic ritual on ancient eastern rites and came up with what would later be known as the *Grotowski forest question* or the *ritual of Mountain* (discussed in detail in Implementation section). "What remains? What lives? We were not there; the forest was there. We will not be here; the forest will be here" (Barba & Zarrilli, 1988, p. 102).

Grotowski believed that in answering this question, rituals could enhance one's awareness towards the understanding of existence; the roots of the human being are laid down in

the concept of rites. Grotowski's use of ritual was not a theatrical movement, but it was a significant step towards the psychological understanding of self (Johnson, 2012).

Drama Therapist David Read Johnson (2012) indicated that Grotowski created a psychological approach through the rituals within his work:

His approach first work with our experience of our own bodies, our somatic presence; and then it explores the authentic encounter between people, either the spectator and the actors and finally, it opens itself to the higher dimension, the spirituality of existence (p. 2).

Dedicating the self to performing was not an aim for Grotowski. For Grotowski, acting was a tool, and the theatre a way of life (Wolford & Schechner, 2001). Grotowski believed that the actor was a *priest* who created dramatic prayer and at the same time led the audience towards the experience. Grotowski added a psychological engagement between actor and spectator through the notion of performance. He believed that the purpose of theatre was to expand our personal boundaries, fill the cultural gaps, and bring us towards perfection, this supported through encounters with ritual (Johnson, 2012).

Ritual Theatre, Performance and Drama Therapy

Theatre performance is considered an activity that is separate from the everyday realities of life, but it nevertheless has a vital function in recreating and supporting reality. Performance is where the conscious and unconscious are connected, the human emotional process is formed, and preparation for the cognitive process is provided (Jones, 2005). What's more, the theatre gives confidence, frees the imagination, and harmonizes physical and mental actions (Johnson, 2009). Barba (1988) indicates that performance's instinct is to transform; by encountering the images from outside and by creating the thoughts internally.

Artaud saw the theatre as the plague; forcing the audience to look at themselves as they are, removing their masks and revealing their lies, lowliness, hypocrisies and its suffocating silence. The theatre forces people to be aware of their hidden or dormant power (Artaud, 1958). One of the keys in the power of the rituals is the opportunity to express while simultaneously embodying conflicting emotions.

Because of the inherent similarities in dramatic reality and ritual drama therapist Susana Pendzik (2006) compares drama therapy to a modern form of shamanism. By creating and entering ritual we can evoke and free the imagination. Ritual is similar to the idea of dramatic reality, which is imagination manifested, or as Pendzik mentions “it is an *as if* made real, an island of imagination that becomes apparent in the midst of actual life” (p. 272). In other words, rituals can make the liminal space for both actor and audience.; Drama therapist Stephen Snow (2009) believes that this prepares all participants mentally and/or physically in a non-process oriented and therapeutic atmosphere to explore themselves: facing/embodying negative emotions, “acting out”, and experiencing resiliency. It often has greater impact on its participants than process centric mood of drama therapy. This non-process-oriented therapy which is involved with dramatic rituals will be closer to be determined as shamanic healing which has been performed by the shamanic practitioners for millennia (Snow, 2009).

Dramatic rituals evoke the audience's emotions and engage them with the performance process. Witnessing engages the audience and is in fact a fundamental core process in drama therapy; actuating the main aim of therapeutic theatre. Aristotle (384-322 BC) described theatre as the agent of catharsis; purifying the negative emotion for its actors by engaging its audience through witnessing (Bailey, 2009). Components of ritual also play an important role in eliminating the *fourth wall*; the barrier between actors and spectators (Roose-Evans, 1996).

Methodology

The primary research question that I explored in this research is ‘How dramatic rituals can deepen the healing effects of therapeutic theatre, and how performers can benefit from the rituals in therapeutic theatre context?’ The subsidiary question is: How can ritual within a creative process support the facilitation of therapeutic theatre?

In order to delve more deeply into my research, I needed to create a performance based on rituals and use self-reflection to understand my personal experience, as well as the effects on my role as director and drama therapist. As mentioned, I concluded that Autoethnographic inquiry would be a strong methodology as it includes self-reflection and reflexive investigation.

In addition, it allows the researcher to study ritual as a lived experience; deepening ones understanding of its implications in a therapeutic theatre setting.

Autoethnographic inquiry was developed by Walter Goldschmidt (1977) an anthropologist who developed the philosophy of Autoethnography to test perception of self as a subjective experience. He was influenced by Husserl, Descartes, and Hegel. He introduced *Authenticity in observing the phenomenon* aligning with his understanding of experience as a form of perception. With this overview, Goldschmidt (1977) specified that the self is not only a passive observer of experience; rather, is purposely involved and consciously processing the perception of experience through the involvement of imagination, feeling, and emotion.

Heidegger (1889-1976) looked at phenomenological thought from an existential perspective. He claimed that human existence should be taken into consideration in the phenomenological inquiry (Leidlmaier, 2019). He called this type of existential perspective *being in the world*. This means that every phenomenon is experienced through human awareness. Crowell and Dreyfus (1993) described Heidegger's 'being in the world' as the "Understanding of others in the world and the association of the ontological status of others with our own Dasein (being there) is, in itself, a form of Being."(p.212) Rowe (2017) indicates that in self-reflective research, every human observation and feeling should be considered as an essence of being. My understanding of his thought is that every perception of each phenomenon refers to the self-understanding of being and awareness which can be heard through self-reflection and self-report.

This method can help the researcher unfold the relationship between witnessing and participating in rituals to see its healing effect on its participant. I created a performance based on rituals, and throughout observed my personal lived experience in the creation of the ritual's step and recorded my responses through journaling each step. In this process each person will experience the ritual and performance as an individual with their own awareness. Hence, I am looking at ritual as an affective phenomenon. This affective phenomenon was included in my performance rehearsals to see how it could facilitate the therapeutic benefit within drama therapy's core processes in order to create a therapeutic performance.

There are three principles of methodology that provide a specific logic for the features of the autoethnographic method. These principals are critical of quantitative research that fails to examine the true nature of human social behaviour, because few methods rely on the study of an

artificial environment or the study of what people say without them doing it. The quantitative method is criticized because it relies on statistical and defined analysis, transforming social phenomena into a mechanical product (Linn, Adams & Ellis, 2016). The three principles are as follows:

Naturalism: Naturalism is one of the methodological domains that seeks to address what naturally occurs in the realm of human behaviour. First-hand data are usually important in this area. In naturalism, the researchers do not have much confidence in what people do in artificial environments. Folklorists do their research in natural environments that exist independently of the research process. These environments are not specifically set for the purpose of research but have a self-regulatory process from a socio-cultural point of view, and the researcher seeks to discover cultural realities from within. Here, the researcher tries to minimize their effects on the behaviour of the people being studied. The goal being to increase the likelihood that what is discovered in the study environment can be extended to other similar environments. Finally, the concept of naturalism implies that social events and processes must be explained in terms of their relationships according to the context in which they occur (Schechner,2011).

Understanding and Perception: The basic premise of this principle is that human actions are different from the behaviour of physical subjects. This difference is even seen in the behaviour of other animals. In fact, actions in human societies do not involve the simplicity of fixed responses or even the learned responses of stimuli. Rather, there are interpretations of the actions against it and the structures to which the answers are given. The construction of actions is always seen as a stimulus in human societies. This view sometimes rejects the concept of causality in the social world and insists on the characteristic of the free construction of human behaviours and actions and institutions (Beard, Sawyer & Hofmann, 2012). This principle upholds the belief that causal relationships found in the social world, differ from the mechanical causality that exists in physical phenomena. From this point of view, if we can effectively explain human existence, we must gain an understanding of the cultural perspectives on which they are based. It is essential that when we are studying a society, that we recognize society is alien to us, accepting that there are more enigmas than we can see or hear. The more unfamiliar an environment the more risk of misunderstanding increases. There was a perception that we cannot assume we already know the views of others, not even in our own society, because certain groups and individuals hold distinct views. This is especially true in complex societies. Ethnic,

occupational, and small informal groups are developing distinct ways of perceiving the world. Ethnographers believe that it is necessary to learn the culture of a study group in order to produce more definitions for the behaviour of its members. This is the reason for participatory observation in ethnographic methods (Shechner, 2011).

Exploration: Another feature of ethnographic thinking is the concept of research, which is based on discovery and analogy. Ethnography does not limit itself to testing the obvious hypothesis. There is a view that if one considers a phenomenon with a set of assumptions, the researcher fails to discover the true nature of that phenomenon. Therefore, everything must conduct to explore self-assumption through the experience of any aspects of phenomena which are subjected to research (Shechner, 2011).

Implementation

The first step was recruitment. To create this performance/research, I needed to have four participants serving as actors and collaborators in the creation process. The plan was to communicate with Concordia University's Department of Theatre and ask them to provide the project students whom had an interest in research and performance. Because of COVID-19 and a decision to bring rehearsal and performance through an online platform, I adapted the aforementioned recruitment process and engaged two actors from Iran and two actors from Montreal. Each actor was informed that their contributions would not be included in the data collection, that their participation was voluntary, and they could terminate the process at any time. It was also made clear that the process was not a form a therapy.

The second step was to start the rehearsal. The rehearsals were mostly one on one however, we did arrange to have the three ensemble rehearsals of three hours each.

The group ritual was shaped to help the actors develop and understanding the core process of their character. This process of ritual replaced much of the conventional dynamics between director and actor (character analysis, script breakdowns, line readings) and allowed more time to be allocated to project facilitation.

The final step was holding the ritual individually and journaling my process. Here I performed Grotowski's THE MOUNTAIN (or via negative) which he designed from eastern

influence and was used as part of his paratheatrical method (Slowiak & Cuesta, 2010; Wolford & Scheckner, 2001). My repertoire of THE MOUNTAIN included three steps:

1. the Mountain, climbing Mont-Royal at night.
2. The Night Vigil, meditating over the night at the mountain with the morning puja (the chants of celebrating the morning)
3. The way, which was a walking ritual in 48 hours for 121 km between Montreal and Mont-Tremblant

In each step, I investigated Phil Jones' (2007) core processes of drama therapy in my implementation of ritual, the core processes are: dramatic projection, empathy and distancing, role-playing and personification, witnessing, embodiment, playing, life-drama connection and transformation. For the sake of this paper I have investigated four core processes which are more similar to the essence of dramatic rituals which are: witnessing, dramatic projection, embodiment and life drama connection and finally transformation.

Jones' (2007) indicates that the core processes describe how drama and theatre forms are therapeutic. When even one element or a combination of them are present, drama therapy is accrued. I personally believe that the core processes are allied with ritual components, thus, I investigated them during my implementation of rituals to understand the correlation and effectiveness of ritual and drama therapy. In the creation process of therapeutic performance, the theatre/drama therapy must be transformative and therapeutic for performers.

Witnessing: Jones (2007) indicates that "witnessing is the act of being an audience to others or to oneself" (p.101). This is the first encounter between the self and the outside world. In my process of ritual, witnessing started from observing nature, people, and their acts and slowly went to my inner world in self-observation.

Be a witness not a judge, focus on myself not others. Listen to your heart, not to the crowd (Rumi, 2006).

Dramatic projection: Yalom (1985) describes projection as a way of dealing with undesirable emotion and an unconscious process of "projecting some of one's attributes onto another, towards whom one subsequently feels an uncanny attraction/repulsion" (p.117). It is an act of placing ourselves or our feeling into other people. This is present in everyday life.

However, in my process of ritual, it became more present in walking alone on the mountain and on the road between two mountains.

Ideas of right and wrong operate in us until we die, love does not have those limits (Rumi, 2006).

Embodiment; Life-drama connection: ritual can play a role to make the connection between ordinary life and dramatic life. In fact, the act of ritual is dramatizing the body and it leads the mind towards imagination and embodiment without judgment.

I will find the meaning in every joy and sorrow. In that silence, I will hear the voice of spirit, and freed. From this world I will see another world, where the end is another beginning (Rumi, 2006).

Transformation: the ritual was a conscious transformation from the first step. It was a moment of being aware of myself, free of the difficulties of everyday life, to be unified with nature and spirit.

You have to keep breaking your heart until it opens (Rumi, 2006).

Reflections on findings and discussion

Performance

The subject of the performance was based on style of ancient Japanese story called Kwaidan. In the Japanese anthology, Kwaidans are the stories of ghosts. The ghosts represent the human unconscious and desire (Hearn, Lewis, & Fujita, 2006). The Kwaidan was written by Torahiko Kōri (1922) and has been adapted for the scene by the researcher (Appendix A). The original story called KNAVA, OGETSU MONOGATARI, means the magic of bull's hour. The story is about betrayal and death. In fact, the Japanese Kwaidans are fictional stories that invite the reader into their imaginary world, similar to the use of dramatic reality. Here, the readers or audience may be confronted with real issues or circumstances that they may have already

experienced. The performance could be an opportunity for the audience to re-observe their issues or (through dramatic engagement) relieve their experience with the help of actors to support the catharsis or provide resilience.

To respect the audience's rights and adhering to social distancing measures the methodology was changed and in consequence the opportunity to perform for a live audience was lost.

In relation to actors

One of the important experiences in creating the performance was working from a distance through an online platform. In dramatherapy, distance is always considered; aesthetic and emotional. Historically, my performance experience has normalized my experience of intensive change within theatre and therapy, putting the notion of distance in contrast with the nature of theatre (without boundaries and distance). In my experience, theatre aims to confront the audience with their problems, leading them towards a catharsis. As Artaud (1958) indicates “the theatre of cruelty with the elimination of the aesthetic distance will expose its audience to the danger of life rather than protect them” (p. 92).

My vision of drama therapy aims to use its roots in theatre to diminish the aesthetic distance between the clients and their creative process, permitting them to face their realities. What has been most surprising is how effective this process has been over a relatively short period. Rehearsing through online platforms has provided a safety and distance for both actors and director. This safety has changed my vision as a director, identifying now more greatly with the role of facilitator. This shift in perception of my own role aligns with a growing sense of safety and security within the performers. They became more open to sharing their challenges and experiences within the process; feelings of judgment subsided, and friendships blossomed.

I believe that the change in the relationship between actor and director was important in constructing a theatre ensemble. Rather than guiding the actors I let them each explore their character and express themselves in any way they wished. I tried to be present, discussing difficulties instead of discussing the problems, and always referring to my own personal rituals in order to understand the challenges of the performers. Thus, every actor's challenges became a ceremony to understand and explore, transmitting the data (my findings) back to the actors.

The use of Rasa theory to understand the emotion

Rasa is an ancient Indian theory of life that is rooted in Hinduism and Buddhism. Rasa in old Sanskrit means flavor or essences. Bharat who wrote the *Pandavas* and *Kauravas* which was the main idea of the epic *Mahabharata*, was the first person to introduce the Indian Rasa theory as tools for Sanskrit dancers, actors, and poets. The idea of Rasa theory in the Indian perspective is an attempt to understand emotions and their effects (Ramaprasad, 2013). In Sanskrit's view, emotions are not separate from the Indian philosophical point of view and are seen as a modification of desire and attachment. As it is in Buddhism philosophy desire and ignorance are the root of suffering. What's more Buddhists believe that the ego (AHAMAKARA) and its exploration of the outside world triggers emotions. Desire and attachment are the initiators of suffering. So, the individuals in exploration of the outside world are confronted with desire and attachment resulting in feelings of imperfection, and subsequently feelings of suffering. Suffering is due to ignorance about one's Avidia (true self) in the transition to explore the outside world (Rammaprasad, 2013).

Rasa aims to understand emotions as one simultaneously processes the outside world. Rasa theory helps the individual to create an awareness of each emotion. The pathway of Rasa is the pattern for self-transformation through Natayashtra (Embodiment). The aim is to understand the principle of living as an experiment. Emotional experience and emotional expression are fundamental to this approach. Individuals discover that emotions are reflections of actions and thoughts and these reflections subsequently influence social interaction.

Ramaprasad (2013) mentions that all emotions in Sanskrit spring from desire. Desire is caused by a sense of imperfection. The stronger the desire, the stronger the emotional experiences. The ancient Indian philosopher and traditional, spiritual thinker as such Aurobindo (1872-1950) believed that when the desire, regardless of how it is been generated, will not be achieved it will trigger Karuda (anger), Asuya (jealousy) and Dukha (sadness). Those emotions will result in suffering. If desire has been achieved and fulfilled, it will result in Sukha (happiness) and enjoyment. However, one will naturally encounter greed which leads to Higudhi (arrogance), Dahg (envy) and Bhayanaka (fear) or the fear of losing. The result is again to face suffering. Ramaprasad sees emotions as a virtue but allowing them to interfere with judgment is

considered as weakness. Thus, desire is responsible for all mental agitation and sorrow (Paranjpe, 2009).

The Rasa became our group's only ritual for opening the rehearsal and the actor's individual method of exploring themselves and the character's emotions.

Via Negativa

Via negativa is defined as a way of describing something by exploring what it is not. Grotowski, however, saw it as a passageway, and crossing it makes it possible to reach enlightenment and an awareness of what we already are, without anything artificial. He called that the pure act.

we are dealing with the phenomenon of the present, there is no being ahead of oneself, or behind oneself. One is where one is. There is only the first step, but this is the first step towards what one really is... in the theatrical language we may describe this by saying that action is literal not symbolic, there is no division between actor and spectator, space is also literal and not symbolic (Grotowski, 1968, p. 102).

Grotowski (1968) also believed that via negativa was the essence of many rituals. In dramatic rituals people may experience the darkest point of their mind since the dramatic ritual can bring the participant to the deepest part of the mind from which emotions spring. When these emotions disappear, the true self will be revealed, as though observing a light at the end of a tunnel (Zarrilli & Barba, 1988).

My personal journey in ritual started by climbing Mount Royal at 10 p.m. The first step was dramatizing the body by consciously putting the body in a new circumstance, a new situation that is out of its regularity. Walking alone brought up many thoughts as often happens in walking meditation, such as, "Why am I doing this while everyone in this city is preparing to sleep?" Suddenly, the cliché behavior was seen, to avoid the feeling of the fear. In response I simply tried to witness without judgment towards the outside or inside stimulus. Witnessing then expanded to the outside, the way, the trees, the smell of the grass, and the wet soil. I started role-playing with everything, characterizing the trees and stones which helped to feel safer and to

reduce self-judgment. In two hours, I arrived at the highest place on Mount Royal. It was time to find a place for the night vigil. Near a huge old tree, I found a great place for my ceremony. I sat down by the tree and started the long meditation of *Puja*. Witnessing was present throughout the time. My thought was, “I am witnessing myself; nature is witnessing me.” As Jones (2007) indicates, witnessing is the act of being an audience to others or to oneself. The process of puja was helpful to get into the ritual. Puja is the procedure of developing a deep and sweet intimacy with deity or adoration. In the Sanskrit language the “Pu” means purifying and “Ja” means birth. Generally, the puja will guide the practitioner towards a deeper understanding of ritual with creating the balance between self-awareness, observation and action; by offering and chanting towards the universe. It's the embodiment and the live experience of oneness (Chinnaiyan, 2019). The sunshine was the sheer joy, a mesmerizing moment of transformation from darkness to enlightening awareness. Now, it was time to start walking the long distance between Montreal and Mont Tremblant. The rules were simple: stop wherever you want, don't talk, and sleep wherever you want. After walking more than ten kilometers the only thing that my body could feel was fatigue and my mind started playing with memories and remembering any difficulties of my life, as well as its sweet moments. To me, it was a life-drama connection. The mind will remember many of life's circumstances and will combine it with the dramatized body which feels tiredness, giving motivation to continue and explore the self. It took about fifty hours for me to arrive in Mont Tremblant. In between, I remembered and struggled with lots of memories from the past, many of them grievous, and I tried to only observe them and feel the pure emotion created by them. I cried, I ran, I suffered, I felt joy, but when I arrived at the destination, I felt lightness with mental and physical purification. I felt the pain of transformation.

Final Reflection

Aristotle unified theatre and catharsis. Nowadays however, theatre serves as pleasure to a greater extent, and transformation or catharsis has turned out to be less significant. Despite the fact that many people value pleasure in theatre, I must choose transformation as a paramount experience. Yet Schechner (1995) indicates, “all performance has some degree of efficacy, they are trying to do something. All performances entertain, they give pleasure, they pass time. we deeply peruse pleasure. All rituals have some pleasurable side to them” (p.55).

Drama therapy is growing as an independent field by adopting techniques from drama and psychotherapy. Therapeutic performance has become one of drama therapy's powerful tools in helping practitioners transform, empower, and guide client's towards expression and feelings of resiliency.

Drama therapists as such Snow and D'Amico (2003), Mitchel (1990) and many others are practicing this approach with their clients in mental health settings, and they have made great steps towards establishing this approach through their research and practice. Therapeutic theatre, with its power and encountering through dramatic rituals, can involve people in the dramatic process and guide them to transformation by allowing them to feel pure emotions. They may find out some of the issues that they had never found significant and encourage them to seek help.

The process of ritual in this research had two thoughtful effects on me and as a result has fundamentally changed my vision as director/drama therapist. The first was in relation to the actors and it changed my view as a director of performance to the role of facilitator. A facilitator is present to actors to ease their journey toward exploration and being involved with the characters. As a director, I personally considered myself a tough and inflexible director whose priority is aesthetics and the artistic vision. However, my practice in ritual and its influences on the team has eased my rigid idea. I didn't involve the team of actors in the Mountain ritual to respect ethical considerations, but we learned that for every difficulty in the group we could create a ritual which helped us to have a mutual understanding of the problem and resolve it as a team.

The second and important effect of the ritual was to prepare me as a researcher/director for the creation process. Initially, I was not psychologically ready to start the process. Again, ritual changed my life view. It guided me to explore again that everything is uncertain and unstable; even sorrow, grief or happiness. Moreover, since performance creation is an intuitive act it was quite important to be psychologically ready for it, and practicing the ritual helped me to be ready for the process.

The journey of this research brought up another important question in my mind, which is about the role of director and actors in therapeutic theatre. I am confident that the director/drama therapist and performers can benefit from dramatic rituals to be purified before encountering their clients or audience. This is similar to other modalities like mindfulness that the therapist should experience as clients before starting to practice it, in order to be enlightened and learn how to be a container for the emotional eruptions of others.

By the end of this research, I am about to finish my journey as a student of drama therapy with a huge question on the top of my head: "WHO AM I?" This is not confusion or any identity crisis, rather, it is a holy and pure guide for the future. It is to understand myself not as a person or drama therapist but as an existence, surrounded and influenced by emotions, conflicts, pain, joy; to strike a balance, and to be more efficient for clients.

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Appendix

The final script written by Torahiko Kōri (1922) re-written and adapted by researcher and used as the foundation for the performance

Kanava, the magic of bull hour

The " Kanava" play is based on a superstitious story of "Oshinoki maeeri" or the magic of "Bull hour", which in the ancient Japan was two hours after midnight. Or, the spell of a woman who wished the death of her unfaithful lover. Every midnight, after washing and purifying herself, she dresses in a white attire, and wears Kanava on her head (Kanava is an iron tiara with three sticks which on top of each a candle is burning) and goes to temple and for a whole hour beat up on a straw doll which symbolizes her unfaithful lover. This doll sits on a large tree as the temples in Shinto are built in forests. She repeats her spell every night and finally on the 21st night, her spell works. And the unfaithful lover faces his death.

Location- a temple similar to temples in Miugeen, in the heart of Miyako mountain.

Ladies and Gentlemen! In a land where it's sun sets, it is possible that I too can find and recognize what you find and recognize. Like the mystery of people who live in faraway island, the way they speak, they pray, and their extraordinary personality, and habits, may sometimes remind you of a doll in a puppet show; Small dolls that dance in front of you, and shout. Here you see a poet from the land of sunshine. He wants to show you what he has created with his hands. His creations are small. Their chins and feet are tied to a string. They express their hurts, love and disappointments. Without shame or fear. Up, down, left, right.....and each in a, direction unique to her and in her own individualistic style. This show is a strange show. But what is wrong with it is that women do like strange shows more intensely as if a calm breeze

from a colorful fan touches their face. As a Norwegian Poet says, women fall in love with a cage as long as it is made of gold wires. By the way, it is not to my benefit to lose my female audience, because if I do, the secrets of Kanava will not be transferred to their hearts and they will not be able to mesmerize their men, and about this....

About this, men are always ready for it, take a walk in its labyrinth, and make us familiar with things unfamiliar to us, and interestingly, they too, like the strange creatures, dance with the string and on command of their owners jump into the depth of your soul.

(Sound of bell - The light becomes gradually dim).

Do you hear it? The sound of bell! Now the stage belongs to them - I talked too much and I must leave in a hurry; please let me, with my last words, wish that the strings of our show connect with your strings and create movements in you. Remember that it is possible, that in one moment, we may all complain about our sorrows and infatuations. Therefore, don't let them be strangers to you. Breathe! (He breathes). A breath that would remind you of us. As you may be afraid of your own shadow and simultaneously laugh louder, remember this short play; and of course, forget it quickly too!

(The light dims. It shows the terrace facing the temple)

First scene

Saint

Even though the moon is calm, it looks like a woman in mourning, whose untidy hair has covered half of her face. It shines! It flickers so that the clouds lightly, but roaringly and boisterously roll on top of each other and on the moon and move forward, which they do! This is a sign: the storm will soon pass. The rattling of leaves in the distance. I don't know how many times I lit the lantern. (A deep breath). It has been years since we had a storm like this. Rattling of leaves! A few branches of the old pine and some the young pine tree's broke off one after another.

It is true! I think it's time, in a nick of time, that night-magician, the magician of night will show up. And she in her last night of tricks, and surely inclined to end her tricks which would be the end of Kanava - (a long and deep breath). She is happy! Because she has been able to synchronize her curse with two winds and send it to the face of moon. I better go before this woman's devilish scream and howl reaches me and sticks to my ears. Rattling sound of leaves. I hope tonight will stay lit! (The light dims, a man enters)

Second scene

Man

A man is murmuring. They are still awake! It seems they are still awake! (A sad sigh!). Hey, hey, I wish I could see the great saint, the kind saint. I see! I do need, need, need his help. Do I? May be this one difficulty of my life can be solved in his saintly hands! Will it? I am free like a leaf on a winding mountain road. Without any guide or knowledge. Just relying on lightening that breaks through the darkness of a stormy night. Tired, hungry, and fallow; I feel the entire warmth of the years of my life has been wasted.

Has been destroyed. The only pulse of my life that has been struck by fear and doom, has been damaged, and is stricken; and is fading away like the foot steps in the distance. And in this darker-than- tar night, I don't see any other gloominess. You see? It seems that the darkness of the night is rolling in the jet, and the dusk has sunken. People are shivering of cold, and die in cold, and defenselessly cannot resist. This is a truth that cannot be denied. Can it?

Saint

You are destined to die! Your lucky star has waned. Death awaits you, you young pine tree. Your life and your adulterous behavior is headed for destruction. You seeked a second wife, while your first wife all along nurtured children in her womb who were nothing other than hatred and permanent curse on you.

Now, those children have taken away from her all the pleasant memories you had with her all these years. Those lucky stars that have gone into a black hole because of a woman's curse, will only return to the skies because of another woman's love, and because your second wife's soul is devoid of unconditional love, your lives will resemble a shadow on the water that for no reason will shake hopelessly. You hear? You hear the voice? Death is knocking at your door.

Man

This is cruelty! Saint look at the skies. You see the math's between the stars? I know you can change the future and destiny of the stars. These maths are my destiny and I know you indeed can organize them with your prayers! You don't believe how sorry I am about my past! My foolish

past. It seems all the good I have done in my life has been nullified. I thought this too, like my other deeds was right; but I think I lost something here, and that is my integrity. Somebody said there is nothing in life besides lying and having a good time. Hah... And how foolish that was.

Look! Every joint in my body hurts and my whole body is full of agonizing shadows that have surrounded my life. Saint, help me with your heavenly powers! Now that I am near death, I feel how much I love life. Set me free. I beg you. I am sure these curses are not from her, but from the gods!

Saint

What is destined will take place! The worst force on earth is the fiery revenge of a woman whose powers are derived from love and hellish jealousy. This superiority in a curse has evolved very simply. A curse that even gods do not have the power to fight back. Pray. Pray that perhaps life will never return to you.

Man

For a month, I have been collecting plants from the ground, to make a medicine that would put me to sleep soundly. But as soon as I sleep, I dream of my ex-wife who puts her hateful curse to work, and this continues until I start crying; I speak, but my throat blares out words in a raucous harsh whimper. Then I panicky wake up from the blare. I imagine my noise has reached the distant far. But no. It is a quiet cry. Tonight, I dreamed again of my first wife, that same magician, my magician wife, shouted, 21st day! And continued: the curse has worked, and you will never feel the warmth of life. And then with a hammer, she, pounded a nail on my chest that it's pain spread to my flesh and bones. I jumped, and I shouted out of fear and consternation. But I saw my second wife calmly sleeping next to me. It seemed that nothing had happened. I shook her forcefully to awake her. But she was calm and without any movements. It seemed that her soul had left her body. Her chest would move up and down with deep breath. Her eyes, her eyes that had never been opened before then. I gazed at her with anger until her sleeping body twisted and twisted until it turned into a scary monster. With my head spinning, I left and began walking alone in the storm. I remembered something. I thought of you. Remembering you the great saint. Passing through the slippery roads covered with algae under a horrible rain, and black twister winds, now I am here. Next to you. Without even once looking back. I have heard many people in the last hours of their lives. They have come to this temple to find a good life, to undo the spell, and refute the magic, and have left full handedly. Miracle! Do a miracle for me and save me from this spell.

Saint

Don't torture yourself with these useless thoughts. You are here tonight. This is not important.

But what brought you here? Have you Thought about it? You know what? A hidden power. So that you can earn life again. Look. Here. Look at here. Do you know it? Not yet. But soon you will be buried here. This mountain always called you. But your soul was not strong enough to hear it. You came here blindly, and you can't get back your life, the one thing that like a treasure. left your head. Look. These clouds that are coming up from the bottom of the valley, block your eyes, and you can no longer see the colors and shapes of the world. The moon's mirror will wipe out the sweat from your face and will wait to reflect your corps in itself. The leaves of this old pine tree will tie their curse net around your neck, and their roots will dance, and shake with the wind every night so that they can hear the fiery curses dedicated to you. It is difficult to make sense of it. But it is the truth. Now the 21t night has arrived. Your ex-wife will come to this temple tonight, and will drag you and herself to the mouth of death.

Scene 3

Saint

But this cypress tree. Nail. Nail. Nail. The stem of this tree is full of nail holes that your wife viciously bangs the doll on every night. And now it curses the soul of your second wife. That tall cypress that has nail holes all over its body and is worn out because of you. It's stem and roots have been watered with sorrow, and now it looks the same as the black curse to you. Night, this night. Tonight, the curse will take place. They have taken off your life's attire and hers too last night and the night before till both of you breathe your last breath and your bare body stays or turns over in his very location on dirt and grass of this very mountain. O.K. Now enter! Enter the temple where wholly horns are ready and this time you must call on your soul. Maybe I can help you right there. May be. Do not allow your soul too to vanish in sorrow as the fire of your life is put off. Follow me! (you hear the sound of woman's wooden shoes on flat stones). Listen! The steps of death are nearing.

Scene 4

Woman

Breath. Breath. Wind. Wind. Rain. Rain. Thunder. Fire. Fire. Burn. They should burn. It is not. It is not dead. Will not die. These flames whose sparks have been fed by my continuous hostility and hatred. It is not a breath. It is a sigh. And even more, it is the howling of a hungry wolf in snow. It is not rain; it is flood which destroys and takes away with itself; not to wash but to drown. It is not wind, it is storm. It burns so much that may leave me breathless. And

together with flood, destroy the grounds, and with its thunder start a fire that will burn the mountain that is drowning in water. But again, I won't give up and won't give up, and will move forward. The Kanava's Flames have faced many winds and rains and did not extinct. I am the queen as of tonight. The queen of all curses. An indestructible magician. I gave away my body to ooji River. My whole body tingled and shivered in the cold water that night. I stood naked in the water and all its fish. Ashamed. I gave myself, my body, my soul, and my whole being to the curse and I never forgot the "bull time". Every night I turned around this winding mountain road to come up, the trees were asleep. my guide was the heat of Kanava and my long hair that saved me from fear and darkness. And now, 20 nights have passed, and it is the 21st night and I took my revenge and I will continue my revenge to end this torturous night so that my body and that man who was once my husband are destroyed. This is the time. I will attack with full force. You woman! Will come back in the proud attire of life; victorious; without the mud and sediments of swamp making your body dirty. Now your heart will have a whole in it. Your dispensable body will be covered with blood. Drowned in blood. Your pregnant body will be uglier than the frogs in the Ooji River. Despicable. Like a snake head that young boys kick with stone and stick and smash under their feet. You have come to me looking like this, but I slept next to you a thousand springs and autumns, and what was conceived in me was not a child. It was jealousy. Now I will crush this child, your child in my womb, like a seashell. Your eyes are still moving? Same eyes that are gazing at me with bewilder like ripe grapes. I will strike you with full force, but not now. I have not taken my revenge yet. I am talking to you. Do you hear?

When your bones hurt to the core with ache and pain, even if you think about revenge, it will not cure it. This pain, this dirty pain won't be cured even with revenge. My cheeks, my lips, the sweetness of my cheeks, was even sweeter than the astringent taste of a cracked- open pomegranate. I deserved such sweetness. I wished you were not so sweet. Alas! what hatred you laid on my lips with your rosy cheeks. Burn. These cheeks like lazy worms have sat on her feverish, trembling cheeks. What is this? His bloody body vanishes like a smoke, but from my eyes fall bloody sorrowful burning tears, still. Move. No! You can't move. Your bones are melting in the smelly, swamp of your blood. And your fearful soul will never find a place or embracing arms to hide itself. Nail! Nails! Hey nail, I pound on you. Wasn't it you, that with its rusty teeth, crushed a woman's life, me, that her whole being was filled with hatred? Now their

heads, mine and his, are mashed, and nothing remains. This is the end. End of my eternal curse. Laugh. Laugh. Louder. Louder yet. It is funny. Your body is funny. Your bloody body that no longer has eyes, is very funny. Laugh, you know how to laugh well. Now it's your turn. Your unfaithful blood, you who crushed me, must be shed and with such cruelty and destruction.

Saint

It's dirty! Everything is dirty! Shine. Hey night, tonight everywhere must remain lit. The moving shadows on running water, can't take the eternal and deadly curse of a revengeful and grieving woman whose untidy hair has covered half of her face.

It shines! It flickers so that the clouds lightly, but roaringly and boisterously roll on top of each other and

move forward, which they do! End!