

Ten Thousand Idiot



Nirav Christophe

Poetics, writing process and pedagogy of **WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE** based on Bakhtin's polyphony

Ten Thousand Idiots

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(...)

As if the ten thousand idiots
Who so long ruled
And lived
Inside

Have all packed their bags
And skipped town
Or
Died.

Hafiz

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Foreword

Society is
changing rapidly,
they say.

In his book *Liquid times, living in an age of uncertainty* from 2007, the sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman calls it “fluid modernity”.

This concept resonates with that of the French philosopher Julia Kristeva, the fluid subject. I recognise myself in that image in which, as humans, we are neither a fixed entity nor one with cuts and splices, but a continual “subject in progress”. Evidently, I am a child of the postmodern times:¹

“Postmodernist thinking emphasizes ‘the subject’ as fluid and multiple rather than fixed and singular.”

For artists, that fluidity is further enhanced by the fact that they are starting to adopt more and more roles in society and their work practices are becoming increasingly diffuse and interdisciplinary. For professional art education, it has become unclear what profession these hybrid artists are being trained for.

All those changes, all those technological innovations, all those artistic evolutions, all those crossover developments demand of the artist... well, what, actually?

If a theatre writer, for example, is fluid and hybrid, then what do their skills have to be? Flexibility: yes, being able to shift rapidly: yes, but between what? This requires concepts and metaphors related to agility and dynamism.

¹ Hunt & Sampson 2006:16

Here, I primarily use Mikhail Bakhtin's polyphony-related ideas and concepts. Banished to a small Russian town in the first half of the twentieth century, he thinks and writes about the "activity" of the polyphonic writer.² Associated with his ideas is a human image that is also polyphonic and always in progress. Or, as Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson write in their book on Bakhtin:³

"The very concept of 'my' is multiple."

The subject of this book is writing for theatre, but it is secretly a case study for research into how, in this day and age, we can deal with the creative process and how professional art education should be structured for hybrid artists these days. I hope my approach can help describe the creative process in a time in which media, disciplines and domains are no longer delineated.

Writing about writing is a tricky business. I have deliberately not opted for a seductive, spectacular, virtuoso style. Apart from the issue of whether I would be capable of it, it is actually because of the concept of polyphony that I want to speak in between as many other voices as possible. Please, therefore, read every note in this book as a word of thanks and every quote as an ode.

I would like to thank HKU University of the Arts Utrecht which, for decades, has given me the opportunity to write, teach and research on the basis of the adage featured on many a teabag:

“to learn: read;
to know: write;
to master: teach”

Living for decades in between the voices of students, teachers, professors, researchers and colleagues provided a continual stream of ideas and inspiration. Special thanks to Désirée Majoor, executive board of HKU, for her hart-warming trust.

Also, a big thanks to the Schuurman Schimmel-van Outeren Stichting, which helped make this research possible with a doctoral subsidy.

Thanks to Samuel Beckett who enlightened me on the fact that the unsayable is a voice in itself, audible and writable. Thanks to Thomas Bernhard who showed me that every monologue, every soliloquy, is polyphonic.

Thanks to Osho Rajneesh who, in giving me the name Nirav in 1988, allowed me to hear the voice of silence.

Thanks to Daniela Moosmann who taught me that writing, life, love and art are co-creation at every level.

² Morson & Emerson 1990:233

³ Morson & Emerson 1990:71

Introduction

"Total craftsmanship and total wonder"⁴

It is May 2012. Five writers are sitting with their laptops at the bus station just below Utrecht's Central Station. They are describing what they see and mixing their observations with their own associations and fascinations. Chance passers-by, sometimes waiting for the bus, become part of the story, which is projected on big screens, one for each writer.

Mariano Pensotti, the Argentinian director of this theatrical intervention *Sometimes I think I can see you*, refers to the writers here as living surveillance cameras. This project, which is part of the series of shows *Ciudades Paralela / Parallel Cities*, developed by the German theatre collective Rimini Protokoll, was produced in collaboration with students and graduates from the Writing for Performance course at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, young theatre writers.⁵

The public sees the texts the moment they are created. Writing does not precede the performance; it takes place in the presence of the audience. The text fragments consist of a mixture of genres and styles, sometimes dialogues, sometimes stories, sometimes brief reflections and silly associations. Occasionally, the observer is addressed directly through the text. The texts disappear after the performance and will not be re-used for the next staging, let alone be printed or published.

Can you still call these plays or theatre texts? What are the criteria with which the texts for such a project should comply? Does one text work 'better' than another and, if so, why? Which skills do writers need to function in this project? And if this is a project within the curriculum for a course on writing for performance, then what do students learn from it?

Another example.

"In the piece *End*, a man in a mobile ticket booth reads out reports on disasters: bombings, Hiroshima, a village that disappeared." So begins a review of the 2008 show *End*, by the Belgian theatre maker Kris Verdonck.⁶ The extensive disaster text is neither illustrated by images nor interpreted by the actor, but it undeniably has its own place within minimal performance:

“He (Verdonck, NC) presents not a story with dramatic suspense, but images without any clear beginning or end and in a repetitive rhythm, with slight shifts: minimal performance.”⁷

How does the theatre text function within such a mechanical structure without story or dramatic suspense and how did the text come about? For *End*, the text was generated and selected by a number of people at once. Director Kris Verdonck, dramatist Marianne Van Kerkhoven and students Frans Hendricx, Najade Pringels and Lore Jacobs collected three hundred pages of text from the internet. These were then abbreviated and rewritten in groups of various combinations. Sometimes by the director, dramatist, actor, production leader and dramaturgy student, sometimes just by the duo of Kris Verdonck and Marianne Van Kerkhoven (in an early phase of the making process) and sometimes just by Marianne Van Kerkhoven and the actor Johan Leysen (in the later phases of the making process).⁸ In that sense, clearly, the text had multiple authors and the authors changed over the course of the writing and rewriting process. It can equally be argued that this performance text has no author at all.

There is no author, but there is a text; there is no personal voice of the author, but there is a specific tone to the linguistic utterance. If there was no writer, then how can the text have been written? Is there such a thing as a collective playwriting process?

This again raises the question of whether a text built from existing fragments, produced in co-creation, can still be called a play. And, if so, which characteristics should such a text possess and can its writer be trained in a professional arts course?

The theatre text has changed

The role of the text in contemporary theatre has changed dramatically. In what Lehmann described as ‘postdramatic theatre’ in his pioneering book

⁴ Sloterdijk 2011:307

⁵ Festival aan de Werf 17 to 26 May 2012

⁶ Wilfred Takken, “*Asregen in eindtijdfantasie op Brussels Kunstenfestival*” [Ash rain in end times fantasy at Brussels Art Festival], in: NRC 16 May 2008

⁷ Wilfred Takken, “*Asregen in eindtijdfantasie op Brussels Kunstenfestival*” [Ash rain in end times fantasy at Brussels Art Festival], in: NRC 16 May 2008

⁸ For an extensive report on the making process, see: Marianne Van Kerkhoven & Anoek Nuyens, *Listen to the bloody machine; creating Kris Verdonck’s End*, Utrecht / Amsterdam, 2012

of the same title, the text no longer reigns supreme in the theatre performance; it is just one of the many disciplines involved. The development of a story or a character is no longer dominant in dramaturgy – in fact, there is sometimes little vestige of a story or character.⁹ Instead, the text is seen as a poetic montage. The text does not disappear, but it is given an entirely different place, treatment and meaning.

If, however, the theatre has, indeed, become a meeting point for various disciplines, where media and the text can no longer claim the title of principal element or decisive force, then

“that must inevitably result in new literary-dramatic paradigms, in other ways of writing for theatre and, in any event, the quest for a different kind of autonomy for the text”,¹⁰

as Vrambout writes in 2003.

The new type of text that has emerged in the theatre in recent years has already been extensively researched and analysed by theatre scholars, dramaturgs, theatre critics and playwrights. Recent examples include Hans-Thies Lehmann, Marianne Van Kerkhoven, Gerda Poschmann, Theresia Birkenhauer, Erwin Jans, Stefan Tigges and Karin Nissen-Rizvani.¹¹ New literary-dramatic paradigms and associated dramaturgy are being reflected upon and yet, in describing and analysing texts in postdramatic theatre, writers are still lost for words. Erwin Jans’ question,

“Is there is such a thing as a postdramatic text, (...), and which characteristics must a text possess to be postdramatic?”¹²

has elicited hardly anything by way of an answer.

First and foremost this is because, when research is carried out into a postdramatic writing practice, in most cases the description focuses on staging practice, on how text is treated in postdramatic theatre and far less on the structure of the text itself, let alone writing strategies and writing processes. The second reason is that, due to the changing function of the text, it has suddenly become completely unclear as to just exactly what text in the theatre actually is. Is theatre text a text category, a literary genre, or is it an umbrella term?

We see theoreticians attempting, first of all, to make a distinction between texts for traditional dramatic theatre and those for postdramatic theatre. In her 1997 book *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext* [The No-Longer Dramatic Theatre Text], Gerda Poschmann distinguishes between ‘*Dramentext*’ and ‘*Theatertext*’. In English, we use the terms ‘play’ and ‘theatre text’. We know exactly what a play is and how to analyse it, but a theatre text?

According to Poschmann, what is characteristic about theatre text is its ‘plurimediality’:¹³ the text has both a theatrical and a literary component: it is a text that is supportive to and conditional for staging and, at the same time, it is an autonomous literary work

This is reflected in Anglo-Saxon discourse, in which the theatre text includes both performance and poetry, although it does not even exclusively consider text for postdramatic theatre.¹⁴

The term text in a theatre performance has been considerably stretched over the past twenty years. Backed up by Schechner’s trichotomy, almost the entire performance is now described as text.¹⁵ Schechner distinguishes between three types of text in the theatre:¹⁶ the *linguistic text* (all the directly linguistic material), the *staging text* (everything with any semiotic value, all the dramatic signs) and the *performance text* (all facets of performance, including the location of the artistic process or the place of the performance in the social field). In dramatic theatre, the linguistic text is dominant; in postdramatic theatre the language is becoming independent.¹⁷

⁹ See Storr 2009, Blattès 2007 and Wunderlich 2001

¹⁰ Ivan Vrambout, ‘*de banaan die zegt dat ze een appel is*’ [The Banana That Says It’s an Apple] in *Etcetera* volume. 21, no 88, Sept. 2003

¹¹ See Hans Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* Frankfurt am Main 1999 [Postdramatic Theatre, London and New York 2006]; Marianne Van Kerkhoven, various articles in: *Theaterschrift No.1*, Kaaithheater Brussels 1991; Gerda Poschmann, *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext. Aktuelle Bühnenstücke und ihre Analyse*; (Theatron Band 22) Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen 1997; Theresia Birkenhauer *Schauplatz der Sprache - das Theater als Ort der Literatur*, Vorwerk 8, Berlin 2005, and also Bayerdörfer 2007, Jans 2009, Tigges 2008, Nissen-Rizvani 2011, Freeman 2007, Worthen 2005 & 2010, and Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011

¹² Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011: 56

¹³ Poschmann 1997:42

¹⁴ Worthen 2010

¹⁵ Which Lehmann uses, too, also see Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:33

¹⁶ And with him also Lehmann 2006:85 and Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:206

¹⁷ See Poschmann 1997

Strikingly, the concepts of ‘staging text’ – ‘the entire performance seen as text’ as Fischer-Lichte puts it – and ‘performance text’ have received most attention and the expansion of the concept of ‘text’ means there has been hardly any study of the ‘linguistic text’.¹⁸

When Hans-Thies Lehmann talks about the theatre author Sarah Kane, for example, giving his inspiring description of postdramatic theatre, he initially seems to be talking about linguistic text, but he ultimately refers in far more detail to the staging text:

‘In this case, theatre is not a theatre of protagonists, but a theatre of voices: half dialogues, prose-lyric passages, monologues, quasi-scientific lectures on psychiatry, parts written as poems, as it were, and, in two places, pure numerical sequences (– language as mathematical language, so actually only symbol writing and no voice –) show that, here, the quest for a possible language has led to the limit of language, meaning and representation’.¹⁹

Or are we meant to take the description seriously and is it the structural characteristics of postdramatic text that are being defined here? One interesting question in this is that posed by the theatre scholar and critic Stefan Tigges:²⁰ is it the changing postdramatic texts that have led to new performance strategies, or does the new performance practice demand new postdramatic writing strategies? Both theory and practice appear to be based on the latter.

These days, there is an air of silent despair within the art of playwriting. Everyone appears to be scared of having to give the answer Heiner Goebbels gave when asked which qualities and types of theatre text could contribute to contemporary performance practice:

“None at all. Instead, quite different types of text: prose, poems, diaries.”²¹

Consequently, theoreticians and pedagogues are afraid of burning their fingers and, under the guise of “anything goes” – in other words, any text is suitable for postdramatic theatre – they feel there is something useful to be said about a play but not about a theatre text. Let us assume, though, that the suitability of the types of text to which Goebbels refers as functioning as theatre text is no coincidence but can be found in the characteristics of those texts. Martin Crimp’s stage texts appear to lend themselves beautifully to

musical theatre, even though that is not what they are written for. Samuel Beckett's prose is suitable for movement theatre, even though that is not the intention. The existing sociological and philosophical texts the German director René Pollesch uses in his performances prove to work perfectly in the theatre.

If we can establish the suitability of those texts on the basis of *text characteristics*, then we can also train and reproduce the writing of such texts. This goes far further than tips, institutions and rules of thumb; these appear to be entirely new writing strategies.

Dramaturg Erwin Jans writes about texts in today's changing theatre practice:

"Interpretations are kept as open and ambiguous as possible. The notions of character, story, (psychological) development come under heavy pressure or are entirely dismissed (...). A new dramaturgy will gradually emerge within these lines, in close conjunction with theatre practice."²²

The question is just what exactly contemporary theatre text is. For many years already, the rules for the only real big playwriting award in the lowlands, (*Taalunie Toneelschrijfprijs*) [the Dutch Language Union's Playwright's Prize], have stated that the award must go to an original Dutch-language theatre text. Evidently, it is quite clear what that means:

¹⁸ In the third part of her *Semiotik des Theaters* [Theatre Semiotics], Fischer-Lichte refers to 'Die Aufführung als Text' [The performance as text].

¹⁹ Lehmann 2004:28, 'Just a word on a page and there is the drama; Anmerkungen zum Text im postdramatischen Theater', in: *Text+Kritik; Theater fürs 21. Jahrhundert* 2004 XI, p. 28; "Theater ist hier nicht Theater von Protagonisten, sondern ein Theater der Stimmen: Halbdialoge, prosalyrische Passagen, Monologe, quasi-wissenschaftliche Reden aus dem Bereich der Psychiatrie, förmlich als Gedichte geschriebene Stellen und, an zwei Stellen, reine Zahlenfolgen – Sprache als mathematische Sprache und also eigentlich nur Symbolschrift, nicht Stimme – zeigen an, dass hier die Suche nach einer möglichen Sprache an die Grenze von Sprache, Sinn und Darstellung geführt hat."

²⁰ Tigges 2008:12

²¹ From: Stefan Tigges (ed.) *Leibhaftig schreiben, Welten phantasieren*, Berlin 2009, p. 57; "Gar keine. Stattdessen eher ganz andere Textsorten: Prosa, Gedichte, Tagebücher"

²² Jans, Erwin, 'Tussen dialoog en monoloog. De heruitvinding van de toneelliteratuur in Vlaanderen' [Between Dialogue and Monologue. Reinventing playwriting in Flanders] (2), in: *Etcetera* no. 118, 2009, p.38

"The following are excluded: translations, adaptations, cabaret texts and musicals, musical theatre, puppet shows and libretti".

While Dutch theatres are swarming with book adaptations and, in 2014, Tom Lanoye's 1999 adaptation of Shakespeare's plays, *Ten oorlog*, was voted the most impressive Dutch play, here adaptations are not considered to be original theatrical works. With an existing source as the basis, the originality of those texts can be disputed, but why do libretti and scripts for puppet plays not qualify as original theatrical works? Are they not sufficiently mature, not autonomous enough? Are they not, in the eyes of the organisation and the jury, actually real theatre texts; are they too much of a half-product, or are they insufficiently original?

If the theatre text is a genre, then what are its characteristics; if it is an umbrella concept, then what does it cover and what not? This demand for the nature and being of the theatre text is, ultimately, a demand for a *poetics*. We need the poetics of the linguistic theatre text to establish what exactly the writing process for these texts entails and, consequently, how this theatre writing process can be encouraged, developed or learnt.

The tremendous attention devoted to postdramatic theatre has resulted in serious neglect of the development of the linguistic theatre text:

"(...), that advanced, well-founded approaches to a theory for texts in the theatre were neglected and are, by consequence, practically non-existent".²³

In her introduction to the book *Dramenpoetik 2007; Einblicke in die Herstellung des Theatertextes* [Drama Poetics 2007; insight into the production of theatre texts],²⁴ Birgit Haas gives an interesting reason.

While the last few years have been typified by increased attention to playwrights and a kind of hype of new plays, an '*Uraufführungswahn*', or 'first performance fever', texts consequently quickly fade into oblivion.²⁵ As the place and function of the theatre text has changed, the author often feels like a spare part in theatre and theatre research.

Moreover, in German theatre studies, the performance and, even more so, the theatre text have long since ceased to be the central object of research. Little theory has, therefore, been developed in that area, as Christopher Balme also notes in his book, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*:

"...they (German theatre studies, NC) first of all presented few of their own research results on the theatre text."²⁶

This need for the theorisation of contemporary theatre text is formulated on the basis of various discourses.²⁷ Hans-Thies Lehmann, who admits in his *Postdramatic Theatre* there is little discussion and analysis of the phenomenon of text, says,

"The special theatre situation in which many hear communal speech, a situation in which each word divides and multiplies itself because it is addressed at least doubly, demands, rather, a complex theory of the text in theatre (still to be compiled), an accurate study of the text word in the actual theatre process."²⁸

Lehmann correctly states that such theory cannot be developed by simply highlighting 'association room' in the text, the 'desire of the text' (Roland Barthes) or its rawness (Antonin Artaud), or by making an immanent analysis of the text structure. For him, such analysis negates the language in the theatre situation, the language as something intersubjective.

In my view, a poetics of the linguistic theatre text should therefore describe both the theatrical and the literary characteristics. Theoretically, that poetics should contain both the function of the text as a communicative speech act and the immanent analysis of the text structure or, as I said earlier, both the performance and poetry aspects of the text.²⁹

²³ Tigges, Stefan, *Dramatische Transformationen; Zu gegenwärtigen Schreib- und Aufführungsstrategien im deutschsprachigen Theater*, Bielefeld 2008, p. 9;

" (...), dass avancierte fundierte Ansätze einer Theorie des Textes im Theater vernachlässigt werden und damit praktisch ausbleiben."

²⁴ Haas (Hg.) 2009:16/17

²⁵ Haas (Hg.) 2009:16

²⁶ Balme 2003; "...legte sie (die deutschsprachige Theaterwissenschaft, NC) zunächst zum Theatertext wenige eigene Forschungsergebnisse vor."

²⁷ See, for example, Karin Nissen-Rizvani 2011, Haas (Hg.) 2009 and Erwin Jans in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011: 53-69

²⁸ Lehmann 2004:27-28; "Die besondere Theatersituation, in der viele gemeinsam Sprechen hören, eine Situation, in der jedes Wort sich teilt und vervielfacht, weil es mindestens doppelt adressiert ist verlangt viel mehr eine komplexe (noch auszuarbeitende) Theorie des Textes im Theater, eine exakte Erforschung des Text-Worts im wirklichen Theaterprozess."

²⁹ Worthen 2010

It is also a challenge to encapsulate the enormous arsenal of styles, languages, genres and voices in contemporary theatre text in a poetics that enables rethinking of this text type.³⁰

The necessity of this research is not infrequently reflected in the way the concepts have so far been described from a negative perspective. What is generally highlighted is where contemporary theatre text has broken out and the rules with which it *no longer* complies:

“In any event, or whichever way you look at it, there is work to be done when it comes to the proper technical naming of the treatment of text. How are ‘text theatre’ and text in the theatre structured when the text is not shaped by means of dramatic dramaturgy? If the text does not, by definition, coincide with the drama and its attributes (plot, sense of purpose, characters, actions, passage of time...) in what could a broader interpretation of text exist, and with which tools could we name it?”³¹

The research of linguistic theatre text has three complicating factors causing resistance in both theatrical practice and theatre research.

First and foremost is the importance of realising that the demand for contemporary theatre text is directly linked to the demand for changing *authorship*.³² Postdramatic theatre has a far more active audience position. Not only is the audience no longer excluded by a closed representation, it is now also interactively involved in performances, so both aesthetics and meaning are no longer determined solely by the makers. The audience provides material, including text material (as in the example *Sometimes I Think I Can See You*, which I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction), they decide for how long they watch a performance and from which angle, they make choices that directly influence the course of the story. Within this active audience position, the question of who can claim authorship of the performance and, therefore, also the linguistic theatre text becomes more pertinent.

If, moreover, several makers create the theatre text from a collage of partly existing texts (as in my example of Kris Verdonck’s *END*), who is then the author?

In Anglo-Saxon discourse, postdramatic theatre is, as a result, frequently seen as a direct threat to the playwright and the play. In England, for instance, theatre writer and critic Michelene Wandor is fulminating against

this development, claiming that postdramatic theatre heralds the end of the theatre text as literary art and that playwrights will lose their autonomy and, therefore, their authorship and artisthood.³³

The Flemish theatre scholar Luk Van den Dries says that playwrights are being marginalised because their texts are no longer the epicentre from which the performance is constructed.³⁴

In theatre scholar Birgit Haas' 2007 attempt to describe a '*Dramenpoetik*', a poetics of contemporary theatre text, she was struck by the extent to which the audience position and authorship are interconnected. She comments that, over the past few years, the position of the author has been studied everywhere but, alas, such study has been practically non-existent when it comes to theatre. Haas' questions about the theatre author, the theatre text, how they come about and their importance are met with mistrust and dis-interest from theatre writers. In the changing function of the theatre text, theatre writers not infrequently feel their position is being threatened.

A second, related, complication in researching contemporary theatre text concerns the *loss of unity*. Just as resistance can be engendered in an audience when it fails to discover or construe any unity in what it sees or hears in the theatre, so can theatre writers and researchers be ill at ease when it is no longer possible to base text analyses on underlying unity. One of the merits of poststructuralism was the unmasking of the unity of the text as an illusion.

"The unity of the text is an appearance; the illusion of unity is the result of conventions. It was not by chance that Brecht preferred the term 'piece writer', as the author produces 'piecework'."³⁵

³⁰ In this context, also see Lehmann 2004:27; "*Angesichts der vielfältigen Spielarten von 'postdramatischem Theater' drängt sich vielen die Fragen auf, in welcher Weise das enorme (beinahe grenzenlose) Potential von Sprache, Rede, Poesie, Rhetorik, die tausend Spiele zwischen Sinn und Stimme, Stimmen und Sinnen zur Geltung kommen können in einem Theater, das die Königsrolle des Textes in der Hierarchie der Theatermittel abgeschafft hat.*"

³¹ Swyzen & Vanhoutte, *Het statuut van de tekst in het postdramatische theater*, 2011: 15

³² Also see Tigges 2008:12

³³ See Michelene Wandor, *The Art of Writing Drama; Theory and Practice*, Methuen Drama, London 2008A

³⁴ In: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:125

³⁵ Lehmann 2004:26-28; "Die Einheit der Texte ist Schein, die Illusion davon Produkt der Konvention. Brecht bevorzugte nicht umsonst den Namen 'Stückeschreiber', weil der Autor Stück-Werke hervorbringt."

The third complication is one that, notably, emphasises the necessity of research into contemporary theatre text. In recent years, a third category of texts seems to have been developing after or in addition to dramatic plays and postdramatic theatre texts, which carries facets of the former two. It is probably still too early to speak of a new trend, but it seems clear that this third category is common in contemporary theatre, corresponds with a developing worldview and dramaturgy and should be included in the description and analysis of theatre text.

Looking at texts for theatre, we can see that postdramatic texts are no longer simply 'fragmentation phenomena';³⁶ contemporary theatre writers still want to tell stories, while preserving postdramatic achievements. In their texts, in addition to the dedramatising processes, *at the same time* we are seeing redramatising strategies being implemented.³⁷ This suggests that there is a third area to be described, in which the text is now seen neither as a fictional construction (dramatic), nor simply as fragmented text landscape (postdramatic):³⁸

"On the other hand, the question arises of whether the theatrical use of language material can be understood as a consistent detachment from the dramatic or whether (partially) dramatic strategies are again being evoked, albeit in a fragmented form."³⁹

Many contemporary theatre writers refer to that same third area. The Flamish author Tom Lanoye, for example, says,

"I am a post-Heiner Müllerian. In other words: I believe in drama. If we were to condemn drama per se as old hat, then I would be terribly heartbroken. (...) So yes: I am looking for new ways of writing drama."⁴⁰

He expresses how he endeavours to write dramatic texts with the achievements of postdramatic theatre. Lanoye has also written theatre texts without characters, for example, such as the much-acclaimed *De Jossen; Val en revival der samenhorigheid* [The Joshes; the Fall and Revival of Solidarity] (2004), which can be performed either as a monologue or by a group of twenty people.

This third category of text must be given a clear place in the poetics of linguistic theatre texts, as these texts generate meaning in a new way. After the 'I own the meaning' of the dramatic play and the 'no one owns the meaning' of the postdramatic theatre text, the texts from the third

category, ‘we own the meaning’, appear to refer to collective speaking.⁴¹ Not to a fragmented, apolitical void, not to the dramatic story as a meta-physical solution, but rather to a continuous dynamic movement between these poles.

A vague hint of this third area can be detected in a number of domains, not only in philosophy, but also in brain research and in technological developments. It is recognisable in, for example, the tension between fragmentation and unity, which is precisely where our contemporary society, with its very diversity, has to formulate an answer. The philosopher Fred Evans inspiringly refers to this in his book *The Multivoiced Body; Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity*.⁴²

“We require, in other words, a notion of unity that affirms the very heterogeneity that would appear to solve it.”

In discussing a book on text in postdramatic theatre, theatre scholar Klaas Tindemans points out how important it is, for the description of theatre texts, for new worldviews to also be described.⁴³ With the aid of the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *polyphony*, Evans describes such a new worldview, in which unity and fragmentation are brought together.

To describe the changing theatre text properly, I will construct a poetics of linguistic theatre text based on that same Bakhtinian concept of polyphony.

³⁶ Tigges 2008:11; ‘Zersplitterungsphänomene’ [Fragmentation Phenomena]

³⁷ The terms come from Tigges 2008:24

³⁸ Term is used by, for example, Lehmann 2006, based on Gertrude Stein. Also discussed extensively in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011.

³⁹ Tigges 2008:25; “Andererseits stellt sich auch die Frage, ob die theatrale Nutzung von Sprachmaterial als eine konsequente Loslösung vom Dramatischen zu verstehen ist oder ob hier nicht auch wieder – wenn auch nur in fragmentarischer Form – (teil-)dramatische Strategien aufgerufen werden.”

⁴⁰ Playwright Tom Lanoye in: Johan Reyniers, ‘Tom Lanoye: ‘I believe in drama’’, interview, in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.29

⁴¹ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011: 14

⁴² Evans 2008

⁴³ Klaas Tindemans in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.66/67

This concept facilitates the description and interrelation of various essential characteristics of theatre text. Here, I focus on aspects such as

- the multiple axes (text between characters and text between the stage and the audience)
- the multiple text types (theatrical text and literary text, performance and poetry)
- the multiple styles and text genres (prose, poetry, non-fiction texts, etc.)
- the multiple theatre disciplines (within a text)
- the multiple references within a text (intertextuality)
- the dramatising and dedramatising strategies in a text (unity and fragmentation)

Bakhtin's concept of polyphony has been used twice before to describe and analyse theatre texts. These works, *Speaking in Tongues; Languages at Play in the Theatre* by Marvin Carlson⁴⁴ and *New Playwriting Strategies; A Language Based Approach to Playwriting* by Paul Castagno,⁴⁵ certainly provide a usable framework for studying theatre text, but in their use of the concept of polyphony they restrict themselves to polylingualism (languages and dialects, Carlson) and text styles (Castagno).

The theatre writing process has changed

Looking at contemporary theatre writing practice, with John Freeman we see two important aspects:

- the relationship of the new theatre text to what, in theatre studies, has come to be called postdramatic theatre and postdramatic dramaturgy
- the increasing interweave of writing with other theatre disciplines, of playwright with theatre maker.⁴⁶

That interlinking of writing with other disciplines has also drastically changed the writing process for the theatre writer. The ways of creating that 'broader' interpretation of theatre text have clearly become less autonomous.

"The writing process is becoming embedded in an explicit dialectic between author and theatre maker, between literary inspiration and theatrical practice, between writing desk and stage. In many cases, the author is actively involved in the rehearsal process and this can generate fruitful feedback to the writing desk."⁴⁷

The author's writing process is increasingly taking place in direct collaboration and interchange with other theatre disciplines. In her book *De toneelschrijver als theatermaker* [The Playwright as Theatre Maker], the dramaturg Daniela Moosmann⁴⁸ shows how the writing process of playwrights such as René Pollesch, Gerardjan Rijnders, Rob de Graaf, Oscar van Woensel, Adelheid Roosen and Arne Sierens is no longer an autonomous process leading to a finished script that precedes the making process of the other disciplines. A growing number of theatre authors are even developing their own texts in a combined director/writer role. The recent book *Autorenregie* [Author Direction], by Karin Nissen-Rizvani, describes and studies the texts and working methods of these artists.⁴⁹ Changing performance practice has evident consequences for the way theatre writers produce their texts.⁵⁰ This change in writing process is related to a changing concept of authorship. Stefan Tigges links this to the concept of polyphony, as well.

"Also interesting in this context is the momentum of authorship, which can be questioned, can be charged polyphonically until the original text is barely recognisable in the form of 'writing traces' (Heiner Goebbels), or – as is more often the case – until authors (Christoph Schlingensief, Falk Richter, René Pollesch, Fritz Kater / Armin Petras) themselves have become performers of their own 'works', created in collective, albeit intimate, work processes. For obvious reasons, they only let these texts out of their hands for further staging under specific conditions".⁵¹

⁴⁴ Carlson 2009

⁴⁵ Castagno 2001

⁴⁶ Freeman 2007

⁴⁷ Jans, Erwin, 'Tussen dialoog en monoloog. De heruitvinding van de toneelliteratuur in Vlaanderen' [Between Dialogue and Monologue. Reinventing playwriting in Flanders] (2), in: Etcetera no. 118, 2009, p.38

⁴⁸ Moosmann 2007

⁴⁹ Nissen-Rizvani 2011

⁵⁰ At the symposium 'Szenisches Schreiben' on 4 July 2009 at the Berlin Universe to the Arts, theatre writer Eugen Ruge also said, "What affects staging practices also affects writer's practice" ("Was die Aufführungspraxis berührt, berührt auch die Praxis der Schriftsteller.")

⁵¹ Tigges 2008:12; "Interessant ist in diesem Kontext auch das Moment der Autorschaft, das sowohl in Frage gestellt wird, vielstimmig aufgeladen werden kann, bis der ursprüngliche Text in Form von "Schreibspuren" (Heiner Goebbels) nur noch diffizil identifizierbar ist oder – wie es wiederholt der Fall ist – dass Autoren (Christoph Schlingensief, Falk Richter, René Pollesch Fritz Kater / Armin Petras) selbst zu Performern ihrer eigenen, in einem kollektiven, jedoch intimen Arbeitsprozess entstehenden "Werke" werden und diese aus erklärlichen Motiven für Nachspiele nur bedingt aus der Hand lassen."

Tigges adds the example of the theatre group Rimini Protokoll, which applies “open authorship”, with the texts being developed together with people who are not from the domain of the arts, but specialists in the area of the performance’s theme, referred to as ‘Alltagsspezialisten’ [everyday specialists].⁵²

In 2007, the theatre text *Das Kapital* [The Capital], which was created this way, was awarded the Mühlheimer Theaterpreis, causing an uproar. It was unthinkable that a work created in such a way in co-creation with a lot of people, including a number of ‘theatre laypersons’, should be awarded a playwriting award.

Changing theatre texts have provided theatre writers with another methodology, another writing process. New sub-genres are emerging (texts for movement theatre, texts for new media, texts for music theatre, texts for interactive stories, etc.), new contexts and new methodologies are being developed in which not only the theatre text but also the writing process is becoming hybrid.

In the first chapter, I describe Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony; in the second, with the aid of that concept, I develop a poetics for theatre text and, in Chapter III, I make a link between that poetics and the *writing process* for theatre text.

The writing process consists of a number of patterns, ways of working, which we refer to as writing strategies. Various voices are used and deployed. The dynamics of and movement between the voices comprise the core of any writing strategy and, consequently, the writing process. Such a description of the writing process can be used for a productive writing strategy.

For describing and analysing theatre writing processes, first of all I use findings from creativity theories and brain research, which show that thinking and creating processes are characterised by patterns of polyphony.⁵³

I then also implement a writing process model, which I borrow from the domain of linguistics and cognitive psychology.⁵⁴ This model was developed by two American cognitive psychologists, Linda Flower and John Hayes. In their research, which is aimed not at literary writing but at non-fiction writing, they were the first to observe that the phases of a writing process are intertwined and therefore recursive. The model includes both phases and ingredients.

The usefulness of this model for describing the theatre writing process lies, in my view, in its dynamics. The model provides insight into the method and dynamics with which the writer continually switches between ingredients and phases.

This enables us to translate the polyphony from the poetics of the theatre text into the movement between the multiple voices in the writing process. The various voices in the author's writing process can thereby be revealed and made concrete.

This leads to a theatre writing process model that can be used to describe and analyse writing process for all kinds of theatre text. Such a model-based description of so hybrid and dynamic an artistic process is new within creativity theory.

The pedagogy of theatre writing has changed

In the German theatre magazine *Theater der Zeit*,⁵⁵ Wihstutz discusses Tigges' book on contemporary writing and performing strategies in German-language theatre, *Dramatische Transformationen* [Dramatic Transformations]. This collection also includes texts from the three-year Szenisches Schreiben [Scenic Writing] bachelor course at the Berlin University of the Arts. Wihstutz describes a familiar paradox in art pedagogy: theatre and theatre studies have already become highly postdramatic, but the course and the students' texts are still classically dramatic. When you read their texts, feels Wihstutz, then you might hope that they regularly attend performances of René Pollesch.

⁵² Tigges 2008:12

⁵³ See, for example, Csikszentmihalyi, M., *Creativiteit*, Amsterdam 2004 (1996), Sternberg, R.J. (ed.), *Handbook of Creativity*, Cambridge 1999, Pope, R., *Creativity*, London/New York 2005, Eagleman, D. 'The Brain is a Team of Rivals', in: Eagleman, D. *Incognito; the secret lives of the brain*, New York 2011, p. 101-151

⁵⁴ Hayes, J.R. & Flower, L.S. (1980) 'Identifying the organization of writing processes', in: L.Gregg & E.Steinberg (red.) *Cognitive processes in writing: an interdisciplinary approach* Hillsdale, New Jersey 1980, Hayes, J., *A New Framework for Understanding Cognition and Affect in Writing*, Pittsburg 1996.

⁵⁵ Benjamin Wihstutz in *Theater der Zeit*, June 2008 Heft no. 6 pag. 75

When both the contemporary theatre text and the theatre writing process are undergoing change, what does that mean for the way theatre writers are trained?

John van Duffel, the current head of that Berlin theatre writing course *Szenisches Schreiben*, was wondering in 2009 whether the expansion of the possibilities of the theatre text and the theatre writing process through postdramatic theatre is not leading to despair within art pedagogy.⁵⁶ The pedagogy of theatre writing is still shrouded in mist, it seems. That does not mean to say that lecturers and courses are just doing any old thing, but it does mean that the educational background or cohesion is often rather unclear.

Of the two recent top authorities in this area, Michael Wright and Paul Castagno, one feels that learning theatre writing is a big mystery and publications on the topic are inconsistent, while the other complains that orthodoxy rules and the teaching bears little resemblance to the developments within theatre writing itself.

"The pedagogy of playwriting may be one of the great mysteries of all arts training. In fact, many playwriting teachers and playwright practitioners have posited that playwriting cannot be taught. (...) Given that playwriting is taught, *how* is it being taught? Who teaches and what techniques do they use? Which is the best approach? There is little published on the subject of playwriting pedagogy, and what is available is inconsistent."⁵⁷

"As you are probably well aware, orthodoxy rules in the teaching and development of plays and playwrights."⁵⁸

Art education in general is a noble but precarious undertaking. How do you develop artistic talent, how do you coach the personal voice, how do you communicate an ever-developing craft? The legitimacy and quality of training artists must be continually justified and argued. This is certainly also due to a romantic view of artistry, in which creativity is primarily a question of talent and talent cannot be taught.

Moreover, within art education, literary or creative writing plays a subordinate role. There are funds for performance arts, visual arts and literature but, aside from the faculties of music, drama and visual arts, there are no language faculties at Dutch higher art education. Within higher art education and universities all over the world, literary writing courses are rare. Literary writing has always been the odd man out and we continue to

hear the question, ‘Can it really be taught?’ as in the title of a book on creative writing published back in 2007.⁵⁹

Writing for theatre has a special place within literary writing, precisely because the theatre text is not an autonomous product, but is directly related to the other theatre disciplines.

Throughout Europe, there are only a handful of multi-year bachelor playwriting courses. Strikingly, all these courses started in the early 1990s⁶⁰ and related analysis and theorisation have only come about over the past few years.⁶¹ In the United States, thirty universities are now offering two- or three-year graduate programmes for theatre writing and no two are the same.⁶²

Herrington & Brian (2006) asked theatre authors to describe how they teach theatre writing. They drew interesting conclusions and posed questions on the pedagogy of theatre writing. Their title *Playwrights Teach Playwriting* already gives the idea that, in their view, it is practising playwrights who should be teaching the discipline and not, for example, dramaturgs, theatre scholars or directors.

This may be linked to the generally accepted art pedagogy view that the artistic process should be ‘reflected’ in the course curriculum and that this can best be done by professionals themselves.

If the curriculum for a playwriting course is to mirror the writing process, so that the pedagogic process mirrors the artistic process, then such pedagogy requires a good understanding and description of the theatre writing process. This also applies to views on authorship. When the theatre

⁵⁶ Symposium *Lebhaftig schreiben – Welten phantasieren* Universität der Künste Studiengang Szenisches Schreiben 3 & 4 July 2009. Van Duffel made this observation as moderator on 4 July

⁵⁷ Wright, M., ‘Pedagogy of Playwriting; The Transmutable Classroom’, in: Flotsos & Medford 2004:83-84

⁵⁸ Castagno 2001:1

⁵⁹ Ritter & Vanderslice 2007, *Can it Really Be Taught?; Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*, Portsmouth 2007

⁶⁰ Szenisches Schreiben, Berlin University of the Arts (1990), Writing for Performance, Dartington School of the Arts (1994), Writing for Performance HKU University of the Arts Utrecht (1992), Aarhus Toneelschrijfopleiding (1995). The first master’s degree course in playwriting in England began in Birmingham in 1989

⁶¹ Wright 2005, Eick 2006, Wandor 2008B, for example

⁶² Herrington & Brian 2006:XX

writing process includes the myths of authorship, such as the author's over-identification with the text, then, inevitably, the pedagogy of theatre writing should take this into account.⁶³ Do the myths in the writing process result in myths in the pedagogic process? Is that, perhaps, why there is such resistance to prescriptive pedagogy, from a romantic fear of killing creativity?⁶⁴ The majority of books on theatre writing are also about writing a well-made play for tried and trusted traditional theatre practice. It is still so that, in nine out of ten playwriting books, you are inundated with plot, conflict, character building and climax. It makes little difference whether you are reading Agnes Platt's *Practical Hints On Playwriting* from 1920 or *The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri from 1946 or even Ger Beukenkamp's *De verborgen schrijver* [The Hidden Writer], published in 2003. However useful those books may be for playwrights, they seem to assume that theatre practice remains the same, as if good old Aristotle still determines what theatre is, how it works and how it should be written for. In books on writing, this leads to a pedagogy of platitudes and basic tips. Writing is also 'getting round to writing', but seldom rewriting, let alone collaborating in theatrical contexts.

If pedagogy for theatre writing is to reflect the writing process, then how do hybrid artists and their hybrid theatre texts fit into teaching theatre writing? If theatre text uses both dramatising and dedramatising strategies, then how can that be included in the curriculum?

In the recruitment text for the renowned Playwriting MA course at Kingston University, London, you can see the attempt to include both dramatic and postdramatic theatre writing processes in the pedagogy of the course:

"Teaching on this course includes a foundation in the traditional writing skills of characterisation, dramatic structure, dialogue and action, and also in collaborative and interdisciplinary creative approaches that go beyond solo and text-based authorship."

In Chapter IV of this book, I use the polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text (Chapter II) and the theatre writing process model for the polyphonic theatre writing process (Chapter III) as a basis for a number of ideas for polyphonic pedagogy of writing for theatre.

I also transfer the Bakhtinian concept of polyphony from the product (the theatre text) to the process (the theatre writing process) and, therefore, into

a pedagogy (the pedagogy of theatre writing). This has never before been done with Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas and concepts.

In addition, with the aid of a poetics of the theatre text, I hope to link the Anglo-Saxon and Dutch theatre studies discourse in this area, in which, in the Anglo-Saxon discourse, there is still a tension between performance and poetry, between dramatic and postdramatic text and, in the German discourse, there is little discussion of the theatre text, but a great deal about the performance, as if that is its way of protecting the text and the author.

First of all, I will construct a poetics of the linguistic theatre text with the aid of the concept of polyphony. The concept of 'theatre text' is extended and dynamised, so the importance of that poetics itself is also dynamic.

I will then fit that poetics into a polyphonic theatre-writing process model, with the aid of creativity theory and the Flower & Hayes writing-process model.

This directly links product and process. The theatre text is also seen as process and the poetics of the theatre text is, in fact, expanded with the theatre-writing process.

It is not my intention to outline an ideal typology, as that is contradictory to the writing-process model, which is, in essence, a tool for description and not prescription. An ideal typology could also lead to the familiar didactics error of constructing art pedagogy on an ideal typology of the product.

A poetics instead of an ideal model, a poetics that is dynamic and, moreover, creates the space for not only dramatic and postdramatic theatre text, but also hybrid mixed forms.

Finally, I will describe a polyphonic pedagogy of writing for theatre that reflects the polyphonic process of writing for theatre.

This book aims to do justice to the complexity of the research object and its polyphony. Writing for theatre has a different creative making process and therefore a different pedagogy (in higher art education and textbooks) from any other manner of literary writing, as theatre writing concerns the 'applied' writing of a product that does not exist until performed. Theatre writing is a complex process demanding linguistic, social, cognitive, creative, dramaturgical and problem-solving skills.

⁶³ I describe this in Christophe, N., *Writing in the Raw; the myths of writing*, Amsterdam/Utrecht 2008

⁶⁴ Herrington & Brian 2006:XIV

This book is Practice based research, as the question stems from practice and the answers must flow back into practice and be directly applicable. It can hardly, however, be viewed as artistic research. This research gives no explanation or analysis of my own artistic work (theatre texts and radio plays) but, to support my arguments, it does use descriptions of my theatre-writing process and my experiences as founder and head of the BA course *Writing for Performance* (1992-2001) at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht.

My ambition is for this book to be an example or case study to connect current art *product* development, the creative making *process* and art *pedagogy* and to unite monodisciplinary professionalism and interdisciplinary hybrid artistry in higher art education.

It is also a description of polyphony as a basis of the creative process, recalling the statement by Deborah Haynes:

"Polyphony can (...) be considered a theory of creativity in itself"⁶⁵

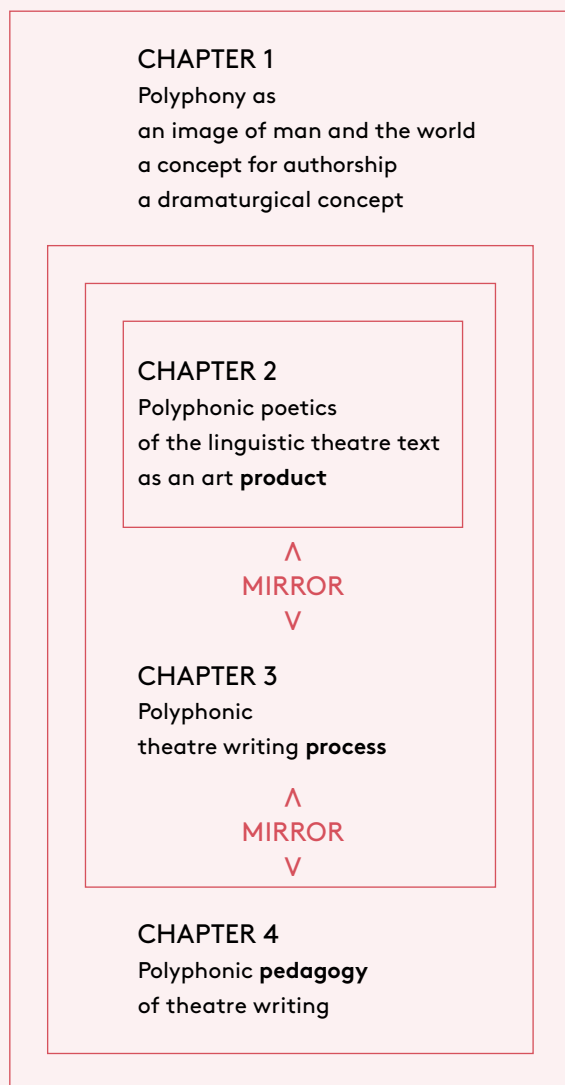
One of the major aims of a polyphonic art pedagogy is to build the bridge between reflective and creative practices, between thinking and doing, between philosophy and art.

We see this again within writing education research, for example, as a conflict between the cultural studies approach (lecturer-oriented, plenty of text analysis, a great deal of reflection and analysis) and process pedagogy (student-oriented, plenty of writing, peer response in class).⁶⁶

The polyphony of reflective and creative practices can be found in philosopher Peter Sloterdijk's image of 'practising', in which the two coincide. Polyphonic pedagogy does justice to what Peter Sloterdijk describes as the two natures of artwork: 'total craftsmanship and total wonder'.⁶⁷

DIAGRAM 1

Ten Thousand Idiots Layout

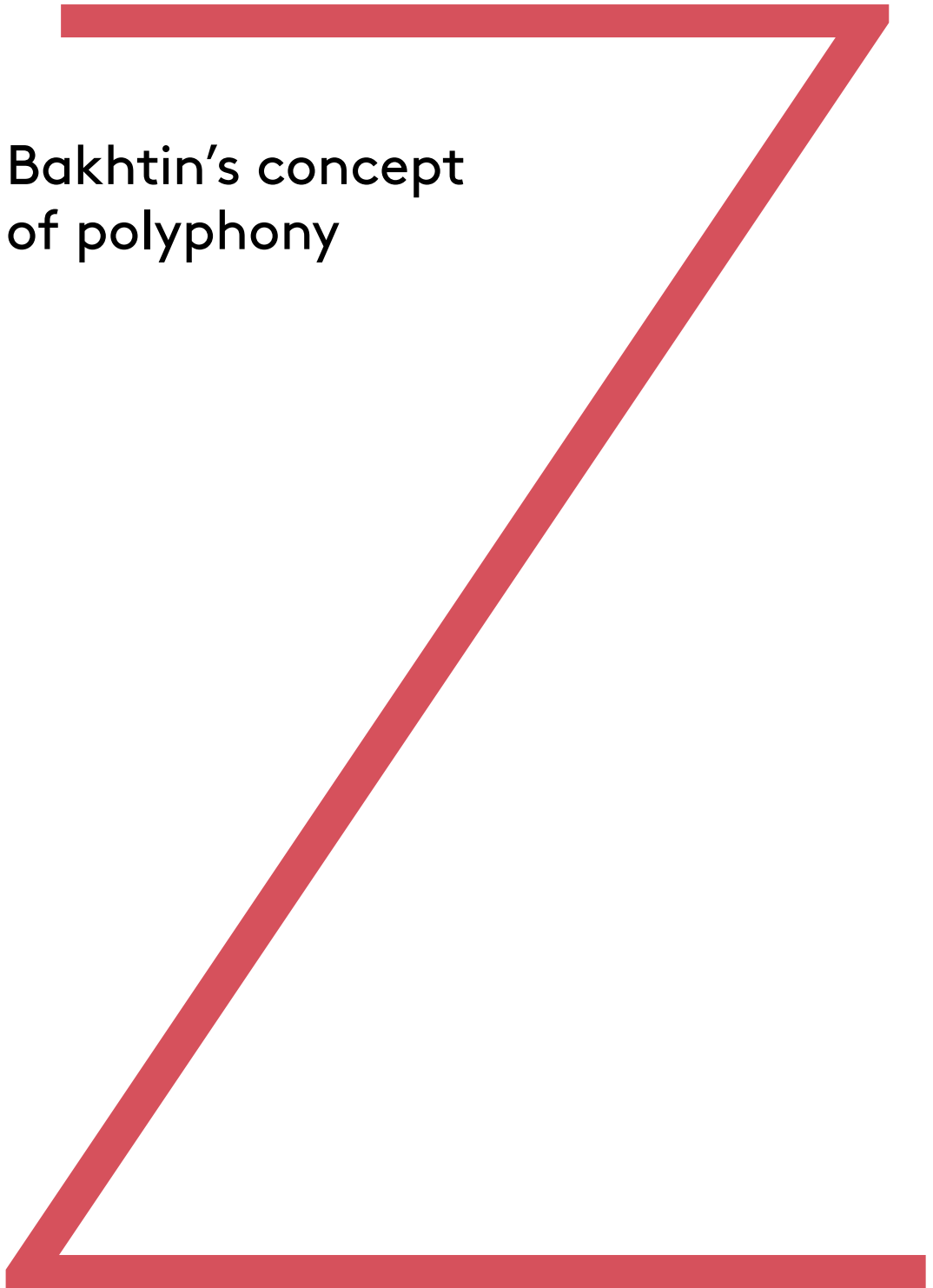


⁶⁵ Haynes, Deborah, *Bakhtin Reframed*, New York 2013, p. 144

⁶⁶ Vandermeulen, C. *Imagining a contact zone for writing process pedagogy and cultural studies*, Nebraska 1995

⁶⁷ Sloterdijk 2011:307

Bakhtin's concept
of polyphony



I.1 Voice

"I have spent my entire life as a writer trying to get rid of my own voice."

Samuel Beckett

Before we examine Bakhtin's concept of polyphony, the question first arises of what we actually mean by 'voice' in writing, particularly in writing for theatre.

His whole life long, the Russian literary scholar and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin⁶⁸ worked simultaneously on several text and there is a long list of titles for books that he started on, but never wrote or finished. One of the works that ultimately never made it is about the various ways writers have of finding their 'personal voice'.⁶⁹

As a writing teacher and former leader of the BA writing course Writing for Performance,⁷⁰ amongst the skills and competencies a graduate theatre writer is deemed to possess I often encounter the concept of 'voice'.⁷¹

Where a student's individual power of expression is concerned, one speaks of the artist's 'personal voice' or 'personal signature'. When a professional arts course includes the concept of 'personal voice' in its competencies, then there is clearly the conviction that this is something that can be taught and developed.

Developing your 'personal voice' has a permanent place in the pedagogy of writing. In Anglo-Saxon countries, there are two knowledge domains for writing instruction. *Composition Studies* explores how writing is taught in schools and *Creative Studies* examines the characteristics and pedagogy of creative writing. In both domains, the development of a writer's 'personal voice' is seen as one of the three central tools for improving crafting skills.⁷²

What are we actually talking about, though, when we speak of a (theatre) writer's 'personal voice'? Does he or she have a recognisable style, a unique theme, or perhaps an original approach?

⁶⁸ 1895-1975

⁶⁹ Todorov 1984:6

⁷⁰ 1992-2001

⁷¹ At the HKU University of the Arts Utrecht

⁷² Dawson 2005:208. The other two tools Dawson mentions are 'reading as a writer' and 'show, don't tell'

The term, 'the writer's voice,' is often used in instruction literature on writing, including that on writing for the theatre, although it is rarely defined, let alone treated as an issue.⁷³ In his *Playwriting Seminars 2.0*, for example, Richard Toscan describes voice meaninglessly broadly as, "the way playwrights put words on paper", while stressing that it is exactly this that literary agents, directors and theatre companies are looking for.⁷⁴ In the theatre, evidently, a personal voice is especially important. In screenwriting, says Toscan, the plot is even more important than the personal voice but, "in theatre, voice rules".⁷⁵

The voice as style

The use of the concept of voice originates in the classic distinction between the poetic and the dramatic: the writer chose to have the character speak (in the play) or, alternatively, the writer himself (in the poem).

Aside from the assumption that the theatre text would not include the writer's personal voice (it is one or the other), we see here that the voice refers to the writer's choice of genre or text type.⁷⁶

Voice consequently became primarily synonymous with style in writing. In the late 18th century, the intrinsic quality of a voice was referred to as 'style' and that immediately became a sign of the author's individual genius. The English poet Samuel Coleridge spoke thus of the recognisability in Shakespeare's language and how this individual, recognisable style makes it clear that, here, it is the writer speaking. This is the concept of the 'poet's voice' as style.

In writing for theatre, too, finding your 'personal voice' is often equated with developing an individual style.⁷⁷

In the Austrian playwright Thomas Bernhard's plays, all the characters speak in the same monotonous, repetitive monologues. This structure for talking is seen as Bernhard's personal voice.

We also encounter this interpretation of the concept of voice in Jennifer Young's discussion of David Mamet's play, *American Buffalo*, in which form characteristics such as rhythm, beats, meter, imitation and repetition are referred to as 'voices', which together determine the writer's individual style.⁷⁸ Here, voice is a metaphor for stylistic devices.

The idea of the voice as style propagates romantic interpretations of creativity and writership that, to this day, form the basis of creative writing

pedagogy, which is so firmly focused on finding your personal voice. Or, as Dorothea Brande writes in the standard book on creative writing:⁷⁹

“The important matter is to find your own style, your own subjects, your own rhythm, so that every element in your nature can contribute to the work of making a writer of you.”

The voice as expression

In addition, the voice is often subject to what the text has to say, to its theme or message. When Nobel Prize winner Bob Dylan, with his songs, is referred to as the voice of a generation we do not so much mean the individual technical style of his songs but, first and foremost, the content that his lyrics endeavour to convey. At the same time, in that statement, the voice of the songs is equated with the identity of Dylan himself. Voice becomes a metaphor for expression.

Many language theories support the idea that there is first an internal feeling or internal thought, which is then expressed in language. Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, for example, built his entire language theory on the notion that speaking precedes writing and that speaking has direct access to the Self, a Self that is spontaneous.

The French philosopher Roland Barthes, however, called this ‘voice of expression’ a ‘demon’, as he considered it a cultural delusion that the words on paper give expression to the thought and “the voice of the one who writes them”.⁸⁰

⁷³ Shaw 2010:4

⁷⁴ Toscan 2011 (iKindle Book)

⁷⁵ Toscan 2011 (iKindle Book)

⁷⁶ Dawson 2005:208

⁷⁷ Brande 1983 (1934):139, Dawson 2005:107

⁷⁸ Described in: Weir 2006:7

⁷⁹ Brande 1983 (1934):139

⁸⁰ Pieters 2004:10

Jacques Derrida who, like Barthes, was one of the French poststructuralists, confuted the idea of language as the expression of an internal feeling or internal thought: we act as if the language we use directly reflects our internal self, is an expression of it, but there is so much artificiality and form in language that even our speech is not entirely spontaneous and can also be seen as a form of writing.⁸¹ When we say, 'I love you,' to someone, or write the words in a love letter, then is that the expression of our feelings or are we also, at that moment, simultaneously quoting all those earlier moments when we saw how that phrase was used and spoken in films and books, in our earlier relationships and at home in our family? If we have learnt and adopted each word and its usage, then this raises the question of who is actually speaking when we speak. Who is actually writing when we write? Is it our inner self that we are expressing? Are we the Self, as Derrida put it, or are we being 'prompted' every time we open our mouth, as if we are an actor speaking someone else's lines?⁸²

It is precisely due to the focus on the hyper-individual that the idea of the voice as an expression of our inner selves is often connected with inspiration: the mysterious, magical process of a voice that comes and dictates to us. Although this concerns the expression of our inner self, many (such as Keats, Thackeray, Goethe, Dickens, Eliot and Stevenson) have described the process of inspiration as if the material comes to us from outside.

William Blake takes the biscuit here. He claimed to be nothing more than a secretary, writing down the words that were dictated to him. His poem 'Milton' was supposedly dictated to him dozens of lines at a time, although it later turned out that he revised his poems thoroughly and repeatedly.⁸³

For decades already, there has been a heated debate within *Composition Studies* and *Creative Studies* as to which of the two voices, style and expression, is the real 'personal voice' on which writing pedagogy should therefore focus. The dispute is extensively reflected in books about writing.⁸⁴ The camp that sees the voice as expression, labelled in United States as expressionist composition theorists, sees style as purely text production and not voice, at all. Expression is the substantive voice, as it determines the meaning of the text and of what that text has to say. Expression is 'meaning making'.⁸⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin was one of those who claimed that meaning does not refer to 'inner expression,' but emerges in social communication, in exchange, in discourse.

“Anything that does not respond to something seems meaningless to us; it is removed from dialogue.”⁸⁶

The voice as identity

Many attempts have been made to settle the dispute between ‘voice as style’ and ‘voice as expression’. One good example is Cathi Shaw’s research into the voice in scientific writing. In Shaw’s⁸⁷ view, the distinction between style and expression is artificial, as the voice of expression is erroneously seen as only an inner voice, referred to by the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, as inner speech, which would suggest that thought is consciously translated into text (‘text = verbal thought’).⁸⁸ Shaw feels, however, that this negates the influence of the socio-historic field in which we live on both our thoughts and our language. Her claim, quite rightly, expands the concept of expression, but ultimately fails to indicate where, consequently, we should position the writer’s ‘personal voice’.

In my opinion, it can help here if we also take the voice as metaphor itself seriously: we speak of ‘the voice of a generation,’ and not ‘the signature of a generation’. Voice is a corporeal image, which refers to speaking and, therefore, to a direct exchange in the moment. The word ‘voice’ actually evokes a living, ‘talking’ person, an *identity*. A text evokes, constructs a speaker. More than that: it installs a speaker. Passing briefly from ‘voice as style’ and ‘voice as expression’ to ‘voice as identity’ again justifies the question: Who is actually speaking here? Who is actually writing here?

⁸¹ Derrida says, ‘There is always writing in speaking’, see Hunt & Sampson 2006:31

⁸² See the wonderful article on the theatre maker, Antonin Artaud, which Derrida wrote about it in 1967: ‘La Parole Soufflée’, in: Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, London 2004 (1978), p.212-246

⁸³ See Chandler 1995:63

⁸⁴ One good example is Kate Grenville’s *The Writing Book; A Workbook for Fiction Writers*, Crows Nest 2010 (1999)

⁸⁵ Elbow 2000, Shaw 2010

⁸⁶ Bakhtin, *Speech genres* 2010:145

⁸⁷ Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. I refer to her article, ‘Writer’s Voice: The Gateway to Dialogue’, in: *SFU Educational Review*, Volume 4 (2010, p.4-12)

⁸⁸ Vygotsky 1986:225

When examining the concept of voice on the basis of the identities it installs, it is important not to confuse the voice evoked by the text with the actual physical writer of that text.

In his famous essay, *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes distinguishes three voices in a story by Honoré de Balzac: the hero/character, Balzac the person and Balzac the writer. Here, he makes a clear distinction between, on one hand, three identities evoked by the text and, on the other, the physical writer himself. In his eyes, it is wrong for a reader of a text to listen to the voice of the one who committed the words to paper.⁸⁹

This trichotomy of Barthes' from 1967 is similar, incidentally, to the division the English poet, T.S. Eliot, made earlier in the 20th century. Eliot describes who is speaking in poetry: the voice of the character, the voice of the poet speaking to the reader and the voice of the poet speaking to himself or to nobody in particular.

Let us separately examine the three identities evoked by a text.

1. The voice of the character

In writing for theatre, in particular, it is often argued that each character on stage should have a different, an individual way of speaking. That specific language use contributes to the credibility of the character, to the idea that it is constructing a cohesive, lifelike identity.

This is in direct opposition to the example I gave about Thomas Bernhard's plays, in which all characters have the same use of language and which gives the impression that both the language use and the identity of a writer are being evoked. The character is, as the playwright Oscar Wilde said,

"(...) a thing we construct to present ourselves to others".⁹⁰

Based on the 'voice as the character', particularly in the dialogue essential in dramatic theatre, it is interesting that the various character voices together again seem to evoke the voice of the writer, comparable with the statement novelist and playwright Hanif Kureishi makes in his book, *Dreaming and Scheming; reflections on writing*:⁹¹

The writer "isn't attempting to find his voice, as if there were one such thing to find, but is discovering multiple inflections and the numerous attitudes it is possible to write from without wholly identifying with any of them".

Being quick to link the ‘voice of a character’ back to that of the writer is erroneous, particularly if – in the theatre – we are wondering who the author of a character actually is: the playwright, the director, the actor or even the audience? In his recent book, *Bakhtin and Theatre*, Dick McCaw sees this question as the central aesthetic and ethical issue in contemporary theatre.⁹²

2. *The voice of the narrator*

In his book, *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, Paul Dawson illustrates how the voice in the text is, first and foremost, a narrative concept, in which an identity of a narrator of the story is evoked:

“Voice, in this formulation, has nothing to do with an authorial selfhood, but is the narrating instance which structures a literary work. The voice of a work is not that of the author, but of the narrator, and this separate from the point of view.”⁹³

Dawson draws chiefly on the work of the French literary scholar Gerard Genette, who says that most studies of language and literature suffer from a confusion of concepts such as ‘point of view’, ‘expression’ and ‘authorial selfhood’ on one hand and a narrative instance on the other, which he calls the ‘real’ voice.⁹⁴

Dawson explains how, in the light of ‘the voice as narrator,’ the earlier concepts of ‘voice as style’ and ‘voice as expression’ are coupled.

“We have, then, an oscillation between the expressivist notion of voice as the authorial guarantee of a work, evident in its style, and the narratological notion of voice as a structural element of narrative, translated in the workshop as a technical choice made by writers”.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Pieters 2004:8. This notion is also, notably, expanded upon by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his essay, *What Is a Text?*

⁹⁰ This is similar to Mikhail Bakhtin’s statement, “we present I as other”, cited in McCaw 2016:16

⁹¹ Kureishi 2003:258

⁹² McCaw 2016:32

⁹³ Dawson 2005:109

⁹⁴ Genette 1972:186

⁹⁵ Dawson 2005:109

3. *The voice of the writing*

In 2006, Wendy Bishop and David Starkey⁹⁶ describe comprehensively how, in a text, a suggestion is always created of an identity behind the characters – even behind the ‘I’ character – and also behind the narrator:

“We have the sense of a pervasive presence, a determinate intelligence and moral sensibility, who has selected, ordered, rendered, and expressed these literary materials in just this way”⁹⁷

Here, the voice becomes an entity that has consciously and systematically produced the text. We read a text and project a person onto it, one who is behind the text and has put everything together very precisely and cohesively. In that configuration, style is often seen as a conscious part of writing and expression an unconscious part.

Paul Dawson says that this voice as an autonomous subject, as the writer’s identity, still relies on a traditional humanist image of people and the world.⁹⁸ Consequently, that voice, which is presented as an identity behind the text, is directly equated with the physical, living writer. That leads, for example, to statements such as that by Tom Romeno in his writing book, *Crafting Authentic Voice*:

“(voice is) ...the writer’s presence on the page”.⁹⁹

The ‘voice of the writing’ does not, however, refer to the living writer, but to a creating identity and, therefore, rather to a *writing process*, to a moment at which choices were made, where the actions of which the Bishop & Starkey quote speaks were actually executed and took place in time.¹⁰⁰ In a short essay about writing, Coetzee calls that voice of the writing “the agent of the action”.¹⁰¹

The ‘voice of the writing’ evokes more of an action than an identity, hence my choice of the term ‘the writing’ rather than the confusing ‘writer’. Voice continually prompts the question that Jürgen Pieters described as the key question in Barthes’ work: “Who is speaking in this text?”¹⁰² When the voice evokes a writing process rather than an entity, then the question changes to, “Who is speaking in this writing process?”

In her wonderful book, *Repetition, Difference, and Knowledge in the Work of Samuel Beckett, Jaques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze*, Sarah Gendron gives

many examples in Beckett's work of stories that have no clear starting point or, as in the novel, *Molloy*, keep beginning all over again. The work presents various possible storylines side by side. This simultaneously presents multiple realities in the imagination.¹⁰³ In that plurality of possible storylines, the text also represents the writing process of an author who is hesitating and has to make a choice.

"The writer's doubts, hesitations, and changes of opinion – all an inevitable part of the writing process and yet traditionally concealed from the reader – are highlighted in the trilogy".¹⁰⁴

In her book *J. M. Coetzee: Countervoices*, Carroll Clarkson calls this voice of the writing, 'the implied author', and she, too, distinguishes between three identities evoked by the text, regarding those voices as the core of writing:

"(...) the playing off of the countervoices raised by the creation of fictional characters in relation to each other, in relation to the voice of the narrator, and ultimately, in relation to the implied author that they affirm."¹⁰⁵

The three voices that arise when you look at 'the voice as identity' – those of the character, narrator and writing – seem each, in itself, to contain and combine the 'voice of expression' and the 'voice of style'.

I nonetheless have the notion that these three voices do not incorporate all the identities evoked in a text. There are indications that there may well be a fourth identity I here call the 'voice of the impersonal writer'.

⁹⁶ Bishop & Starkey, *Keywords in Creative Writing*

⁹⁷ Bishop & Starkey 2006:152

⁹⁸ Dawson 2005:108

⁹⁹ Romeno 2004:5

¹⁰⁰ As Nobel Prize winner, JM Coetzee, writes in his thesis about that other Nobel Prize winner Samuel Beckett, "The author-narrator cannot of course be identified with the historical Beckett." See Clarkson 2013 (2009):81

¹⁰¹ J.M.Coetzee, 'A Note on Writing', quoted in Clarkson 2013 (2009):88

¹⁰² Pieters 2004:23

¹⁰³ You can also see that very clearly in, for example, the 1998 film, *Run, Lola, Run* (written and directed by Tom Tykwer), in which the same story is told three times in succession, each time in a different way

¹⁰⁴ Gendron 2008:72

¹⁰⁵ Carrol Clarkson, *J.M. Coetzee: Countervoices*, New York 2013 (2009):77

4. *Voice of the impersonal writer*

On 4 April 2006, the Dutch youth theatre company, *Het Syndikaat*, had invited Kader Abdollah to talk in Amsterdam's Rozen theater about the writer's own personal voice. To the audience's amazement, Abdollah continually waxed lyrical about the importance of the body. Amidst smothered laughter from the public, he said.

"Don't be afraid of your own voice. You have to listen to your body. That's all you need to do."

A characteristic element of the voice, when we again consider it briefly as a metaphor, is the immediacy of speech; the tone and sound that the body lends to the words. In the theatre, in particular, we are aware of the extent to which the meaning of words is determined by that tone, by that bodily processing of the language.

In *Writing, Self & Reflexivity*,¹⁰⁶ Celia Hunt and Fiona Sampson say that every text refers to that bodily component, evoking a kind of 'bodily sense of self'. In a text, we often recognise that in, for example, stuttering or stammering, in minimalism or endless repetition, in nonsense language or highly sensory images. In all the places in a text where language and meaning *appear* to be broken down, what Wesling & Slawek described as 'minimal voice' is created.¹⁰⁷

Although, as a writer, we can so often have the tragic feeling that what we write never corresponds directly with our body, that same body does continue speaking in our texts, whether we like it or not. That voice of the body, that minimal voice, appears to refer to not a person but rather an *impersonal identity*. Or, as Nicholas Royle puts it in his book about Derrida, when discussing his ideas on language and writing,

"(...) impersonal ghostliness in the voice"¹⁰⁸

Wesling & Slawek¹⁰⁹ also refer to this as an impersonal voice.

Strikingly, it is precisely this concept of a fourth identity, evoked by a text – the 'voice of the impersonal writer' – that is reflected in recent considerations of the development in the theatre. In his book, *Postdramatic Theatre*, Hans-Thies Lehmann says that, nowadays, in the theatre, voice is viewed quite differently:

“The reality of the voice itself is thematized. It is arranged and made rhythmic according to formal musical or architectonic patterns; through repetition, electronic distortion, superimposition to the point of incomprehensibility; the voice exposed as noise, scream and so on; exhausted through mixing, separated from the figures as disembodied and misplaced voices.”¹¹⁰

Here, Lehmann describes how the staging strategies help separate the voice from the expression, from the drama of a character. These staging techniques, such as repetition, acceleration and intensifying, can also be seen as dedramatising writing techniques.¹¹¹

Lehmann shows how this different, often electronic, use of the voice on stage also changes the identity evoked by that voice: it is no longer a person that is evoked (character, a narrator or a writing subject), but an impersonal, bodily instance, which does say something and does summon significance, too:¹¹²

“(...) behind the slogans the scream of the body, behind the subjects the vocal signifiers.

It is not ‘I’ but ‘it’ that is speaking, namely through/as a complex machinized composition.”

The central philosophical question we encounter in describing the voice of the text – “Who is speaking here?” – can be found in contemporary post-dramatic theatre as a literal theatrical question, which, as a theatre maker and scriptwriter, has to be answered.¹¹³ If a text on stage no longer necessarily refers to a character, then who is speaking?

¹⁰⁶ Hunt & Sampson 2006: 28-36

¹⁰⁷ Wesling & Slawek, *Literary Voice*, Albany 1995

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Hunt & Sampson 2006:31

¹⁰⁹ Wesling & Slawek 1995: 167-168

¹¹⁰ Lehmann 2006:149

¹¹¹ I explore this further in Chapter III

¹¹² Lehmann 2006:149, the italics are mine, NC

¹¹³ See, for example, Lehmann 2006: 150, but also the article by Daniela Moosmann, ‘In mijn theater geen personages’ [No characters in my theatre], internal publication, HKU 2008

The personal voice

When, in the debate on a text's 'personal voice', we see the heated dispute between, on one hand, the 'voice as expression' and, on the other, the 'voice as style' between all four types of identity evoked by a voice, then that also seems to be related to the term 'personalness'.

'Personalness' soon brings the concept of 'authenticity' into the debate, an almost moral judgement of what is true and real. In the dictionary, an 'authentic poet' is deemed synonymous with 'original' and 'genuine', perhaps precisely because the other meaning of the word 'authentic', as in 'an authentic document,' also refers to the 'actual', 'un-falsified' document. This way, the expression in writing is seen as 'personal', 'authentic' and 'original' and the style in the writing as 'artificial' or 'contrived'.

The tendency to treat the 'personal' element of the 'personal voice' as authentic and original affects how we view the phenomenon of voice. Morley writes,

"Voice is a three-way metaphor: for writing as you speak, for writing as you speak at your best, for writing with rigor, stripping away everything"¹¹⁴

In that quote, we see how the 'personal' voice is depicted as authenticity: evidently, your personal voice only speaks when you write at your best or when most 'bare'. The stripping away suggests that only once all superfluous text has been removed do you hear the original voice.

Nonetheless, it is very much a question of whether that 'original', personal voice in the text does actually have an 'origin,' to which it gives expression. In *The Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes claims that writing always involves, "the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin".¹¹⁵ By stripping a text, rewriting it, stabilising it, in short: using the language, according to Barthes a *second voice* is automatically installed.

Barthes suggests in his article that the 'voice' of the text refers no longer to one subject but to *multiple* identities. He describes the writing process with the word 'composite,' which erodes the idea of a single writing identity.

The original English text – Barthes' text was published first in English and then in French – says something explicit about voices that has disappeared in the French text:

"(...) all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes."¹¹⁶

The personal voices

The fact that the concept of a 'personal voice' signifies so many different issues and refers to several identities highlights perhaps not so much the ambiguity of the concept but its versatility, its substantive plurality. It is not so much that there are several meanings to the concept of 'voice', but rather that there are 'several voices', as when Barthes talks about a voice consisting of several indiscernible voices. According to Hunt & Sampson, finding a voice in writing should therefore be reformulated into the plural of finding voices.¹¹⁷ Or, to quote Sarah Gendron,

"In this sense then, all written works – all ideas whatever they may be – are the product of a plurality of voices. While this is theoretically the case for all texts regardless of the author, at one time or another Derrida, Deleuze and Beckett all seem to take this literally."¹¹⁸

In his article, '*Making Voices, Identity, Poeclectics and the Contemporary British Poet*', performer and scholar, Mario Petrucci names conscious plurality of voices, 'poeclectics'.¹¹⁹ The poeclectic writer is recognisable behind

¹¹⁴ Morley 2007:143

¹¹⁵ Barthes 2004:113

¹¹⁶ The italics are mine, NC. 'The Death of the Author' was published first in English, in 1967, in the American magazine, *Aspen* no. 5-6, and in French only later, in 1968, in *Magazine Manteia*, no. 5. In French, it says, "Il sera à tout jamais impossible de le savoir, pour la bonne raison que l'écriture est destruction de toute voix, de toute origine. L'écriture, c'est ce neutre, ce composite, cet oblique où fuit notre sujet, le noir-et-blanc où vient se perdre toute identité, à commencer par celle-là même du corps qui écrit."

¹¹⁷ Hunt & Sampson 2006:36

¹¹⁸ Gendron 2008:78

¹¹⁹ Petrucci 2006:66

and through the work, but not by a personality or by a style. The author deploys all kinds of style, topic, register and form. Petrucci refers to this as a

"multiple use of voices, masks and personae"¹²⁰

Petrucci feels that mixing genres and disciplines and linguistically deploying social and geographical mobility is the core of (poeclectic) authorship. He describes 'the writer's personal voice' as far more fluid and diverse than is usual in traditional views on poetry.¹²¹

Interplay of voices

When we see the voice of a text as plural and therefore treat it as the 'voices' of the text, the 'personalness' of an author seems to lie not only in which voices sound in his texts, but also in how those voices alternate with one another, respond to one another or sound together.

The author's 'personal voice' is then actually the individual and unique interplay between voices. Sarah Gendron calls that a dialogue between the voices.

"Writing is multiple in that every text represents a dialogue between several voices"¹²²

For Mikhail Bakhtin, the voice includes both style and expression and he considered that plural voice to be an integral unit.

In 1961, using key words, Bakhtin made annotations for rewriting his own book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, from 1929, including, almost as a reminder,

"The definition of voice. This includes height, range, timbre, aesthetic category (lyric, dramatic, etc.) It also includes a person's worldview and fate. A person enters into dialogue as an integral voice".¹²³

This interpretation of the 'personal voice' as the 'interplay of voices' calls into question both the modernist image of the one autonomous artist subject – the writer with one unique voice – and the postmodern image of the individual, fragmented forces – the writer as the individual voices' play-thing. From this point of view, the 'voice of the writer' is both personal and impersonal, both unique and anonymous.

I will explore this ‘interplay of voices’ in further detail in Chapter III (on the polyphonic theatre writing process), in particular, as it is clear that, if this interplay between the voices is essential for writing, then it should also be used to describe and train the theatre writing process.

Conclusion

When, in this book, we use the concept of the ‘voice’ of both a text and a writer, then this concept is characterised by a number of features:

- It includes both ‘voice as *expression*’ and ‘voice as *style*’
- It refers to several *identities*, of which we have now named as voices: the *character*, the *narrator*, the *writing* and the *impersonal writer*.
- It is a plural concept, which unites *several voices*.
- The individuality of the voice is probably determined by the *interplay of voices*.

My description of the concept of ‘voice’ is close to the approach of philosopher Fred Evans in *The Multivoiced Body; Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity*.¹²⁴ Evans indicates how important it is that the concept of ‘voice’ does not refer to solely the text (post-modernism) or the subjects (modernism), but that the voice can be either anonymous or highly personal, and that the ‘personal voice’ can be seen as an endless interplay between voices.

The four voices I have discerned as ‘identity’ contribute to the idea of the voice not only relating to a (literary) text and aspects of that text, but also being seen as part of the writing activity, of the *writing process*.

The four voices also play a role *during* the writing and, consequently, affect the writing process and therefore writing pedagogy. How we approach the concept of voice determines the principles of the writing pedagogy we employ.

¹²⁰ Petrucci 2006:66

¹²¹ Petrucci 2006:67

¹²² Gendron 2008:74

¹²³ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):293

¹²⁴ See, for example, Evans 2008:143

When, for example, we adhere to the interpretation of 'voice as style' then that will soon lead to 'product pedagogy': pedagogy prescribes an ideal form – 'this is what a good script looks like'; 'that is the ideal structure or style for a theatre text'; or 'this is how you write a well-made play'. Pedagogy then assumes that explanation of that ideal form is enough to improve the writing products, but says nothing about how the writer should tackle that, nothing about the *writing process*.

By emphasising the 'voice as identity', a plural interpretation of the concept of 'voice' can help forge the link from text to writer, from product to process. In Chapter III, I explore in further detail the possibilities of applying the concept of the 'voice' as an 'interplay between several voices' to the writing process and, in particular, that of the theatre writer. I base this on traditions that have developed this polyphonic concept in sociology and psychology. As William Styles says, 'voice' can be seen, in a sociological sense, as role and, in a psychoanalytical sense, as *object*.

"Each of us seems to carry many voices, representing people or ideas or events that we've encountered... Some voices such as belief systems or psychological theories may transcend individuals so that the same voice speaks within many of us. Psychological, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural development can be understood as conversations among such voices."¹²⁵

In his book, *Dialog en misverstand* [Dialogue and Misunderstanding], emeritus professor of personality psychology, Hubert Hermans¹²⁶ describes how voice is an aspect of a person's mind. He does not look at the voice as part of a text. He sees the voice as a metaphor for understanding the inner emotions and quotes Plato in saying that having thoughts is actually talking to yourself and that therefore, internally, a plurality of voices can be heard. I will use the various voices he describes in Chapter III in a link to the voices in the theatre writing process.

The way in which the concept of 'personal voice' is viewed within writing also, as I mentioned, impacts writing pedagogy, precisely because it helps determine how the writer views their personal text and their personal authorship and identity. After all, if the text is an 'interplay of several voices', then who is speaking in my text and is that text then still mine? Peter Elbow, who, with his methods such as free writing and influential writing books such as *Writing Without Teachers*, is an authority on writing

pedagogy, insists on a single, individual and homogeneous ‘personal voice’. His view is that writers then recognise themselves more easily in their text:

“the underlying plasma of my prose still feels as though it is me”.¹²⁷

Conversely, in writing pedagogy, Roz Ivanic’s interpretation of the ‘personal voice’ in her book, *Writing and Identity*,¹²⁸ is far more plural and fluid; a voice that can continually vary, even within one text. Ivanic refers to that as a ‘discoursal self’, referring to the human figure or the writer figure that is evoked when we use the concept of a plural interpretation of ‘voice’. I come back to this when discussing Bakhtin’s interpretation of polyphony.¹²⁹

In the theatre, too, voice was often a metaphor for the person, for the identity. In dramatic theatre, for that reason, voice has been the author’s main tool for portraying the character. The words and the text construct the character’s psychological identity.

Polyphony in postdramatic theatre is an attempt to dismember that one-to-one voice/character relationship. As with the unity of the subject, the unity of ‘voice’ has also been affected. As Lehmann writes,

“The reality of the voice itself is becoming the theme (...) now it is about the entire body becoming the voice”.¹³⁰

All has become voice and not all voices are in our heads.

The concept that sees the ‘personal voice’ as the ‘interplay between several voices’ is, in my view, perfectly usable as a basis for theatre writing and theatre writing pedagogy, precisely because it also refers to the body and because it recognises both ‘voice as style’ and ‘voice as expression’.

¹²⁵ Willam Styles, in: Rachel Pollard, *Dialogue and Desire; Mikhail Bakhtin and the Linguistic Turn in Psychotherapy* 2008, Kindle Book 653/4341

¹²⁶ Hermans 2006:61-77

¹²⁷ Elbow 1994:29

¹²⁸ Roz Ivanic, *Writing and Identity; The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*, Lancaster 1998

¹²⁹ Chapter I.2

¹³⁰ Lehmann 2004B:58; “Die wirklichkeit der Stimme wird selbst zum Thema. (...) ... so geht es jetzt um das ‘Stimme-Werden’ des ganzen Körpers”

Moreover, it eases the tension between, on one hand, the modernist interpretation of the one, unique voice and, on the other, the postmodernist interpretation of the anonymous, fragmented voices. All writers actually uses the 'interplay between several voices' in their own, unique way.¹³¹ The question does, naturally, remain as to just how many voices there are and how they are in discussion with one another.¹³²

In the etymological dictionary, it says that the word *author* (creator, writer) comes from the old French (*autor*) and from the Latin (*auctor*: promoter, producer, father, progenitor; builder, founder; trustworthy writer, authority; historian; performer, doer; responsible person, teacher) but it also, it seems, stems from the agent noun *auctus* "one who causes to grow," the past participle of *augere*, "to increase". As soon as an author writes, he or she increases.

Fred Evans goes even further, in saying that,

"The interplay among voices is the basis of our creativity and freedom."¹³³

The personal voice, in a text or in a writer, is always in dialogue. The 'interplay of several voices' is a continual conversation.

1.2 Bakhtin's 'polyphony'

"Why do we actually have two eyes instead of one?"¹³⁴

Mikhail Bakhtin

He is hailed as "one of the giants of 20th century social and cultural theory."¹³⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas are striking in their tremendous scope and applicability. His writings have influenced research into many different fields,¹³⁶ such as linguistics, management, communication, advertising,¹³⁷ literary criticism, film and television,¹³⁸ rhetoric, theatre and performance,¹³⁹ media, visual arts, education, ethnography, ethics, politicology, psychology, philosophy, sociology, religion, law, urban studies, gender studies and writing didactics.¹⁴⁰

His thinking is often considered vague, unfinished or inconsistent.¹⁴¹ This is because he continually rewrote and annotated many of his texts and was wont to engender rather than elaborate upon theories.

Bakhtin's terminology seems ambiguous and incomplete, because his concepts developed and changed over the course of decades, but that also appears to have been a substantive choice: he consistently stresses that there is, ultimately, no such thing as a 'last word' and therefore no fixed meaning or definition of a concept.¹⁴²

¹³¹ Or 'intersection', as Fred Evans calls it, see: Evans 2008:82

¹³² Also see Evans 2008:83 onwards

¹³³ Evans 2008:60

¹³⁴ The opening sentence of a lecture Mikhail Bakhtin once gave to Russian labourers about the argument for a view with a number of perspectives

¹³⁵ By Mason Aronowitz, in: Halasek 1999:2

¹³⁶ See, for example, Haynes 2013:2 and Halasek 1999:2

¹³⁷ Gulnara Karimova, *Bakhtin and Interactivity*, Palo Alto, 2012

¹³⁸ For example: Martin Flanagan, *Bakhtin and the Movies*, Palgrave MacMillan 2009

¹³⁹ Such as Dick McCaw, *Bakhtin and Theatre*, Oxon 2016

¹⁴⁰ Such as writing poetry and detective novels

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Hirschkop 1997, referred to in Pollard 2008:280/4341 (Kindle Book)

¹⁴² Also, for example, see Morris (ed.) 1994:245

Throughout his life, Bakhtin fought against the idea of unity, of one single definite meaning, of one undivided, uniform subject. From a philosophical point of view, in this he attempted to distance himself from the philosopher Hegel's system thinking. According to Bakhtin, meaning does not emerge from a Hegelian synthesis; it can only be a *provisional* process. We can never know anything absolutely, as all meaning comes about in relation to and in dialogue with others. How often do we notice that it is when talking to others that we realise what we actually think or feel about a specific subject? Meaning-forming is not a fixed phenomenon, but a continuous, unending, dynamic process.

"Consequently, any meaning is always the result of a communicative and dynamic process, which is aimed at the other, assimilates the other and therefore modulates further".¹⁴³

Mikhail Bakhtin was part of a group of scholars, the so-called Bakhtin Circle, which regularly discussed all kinds of subjects amongst themselves in the early twentieth century. The central idea was that language is essentially a product, formed by a process of *social interaction*.¹⁴⁴ In this, too, Bakhtin's methodology reflected his ideas: the Bakhtin Circle developed through continual exchange and discussion, through social interaction, the basic concepts regarding language as a process in which meaning develops in exchange and dialogue. Some of Bakhtin's texts were published under the name of one of the other members of the group and, although it was primarily for political reasons, that also shows a specific vision of language, voice and authorship.

In exploring writing for theatre, we continually encounter this debate on the fixity and unity of meaning.

Since the advent of postdramatic theatre, with its emphasis on interactivity and the active audience, the question as to where the meaning of the performance lies is increasingly topical. Can that meaning in a text be identified, or does it come about through the interaction of the performance with the audience? In fact: does the audience itself create meaning or part of it and, if so, is it not then actually a co-maker, a co-author?

In the book *Writing in the Raw; The myths about writing*, I showed that the impact on the idea of unity of meaning also influences the writing process.¹⁴⁵ In that postmodern interpretation,¹⁴⁶ writing is then not so much the positing of an opinion or meaning, but more a process of reaction or response

to the texts, voices and ideas of others. Here, 'reactive writing' seems more akin to speaking than writing; it resembles a continuous dialogue. Bakhtin constructs his entire world of ideas on the principle that every utterance is a reaction:

"Any utterance – the finished, written utterance not excepted – makes response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn."¹⁴⁷

For Bakhtin, the fight against the unity and fixity of meaning opens the door to thinking in the plurality of voices, *polyphony*.

"In this way, Bakhtin replaced the Hegelian ideas of synthesis as denial with the inevitable ambivalence and the closed system with open dialogue and the plurality of voices".¹⁴⁸

Evans, too, indicates how the concepts of unity of meaning, unity of subject and unity of 'voice' are interconnected. He refers to the achievements of the French philosopher Derrida in unmasking the idea of monophony, a single voice (primarily reflected in Husserl's concept of pure voice).¹⁴⁹

Polyphony is one of Bakhtin's most intriguing concepts. He admitted that it was this term that elicited the most misunderstandings and protests.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Ervedosa 2008:107; "Demzufolge ist jegliche Meinung immer das Resultat eines kommunikativen und dynamischen Prozesses, der auf den anderen gerichtet ist und die Reaktion des anderen aufnimmt und dadurch weiter moduliert."

That Bakhtin, from the beginning, fought philosophically against unity, unity of meaning and unity of the subject, is also reflected in the first chapter of Michael Holquist's *Dialogism*, Holquist 2002 (1990):1-14

¹⁴⁴ See White & Peters 2011:247

¹⁴⁵ Christophe 2008

¹⁴⁶ Also see: Nirav Christophe, 'Schreiben als Reaktion; ein postmoderner Blick auf das Schreiben und die Pädagogik des Schreibens', in: Josef Haslinger und Hans-Ulrich Treichel, *Schreiben lernen – Schreiben lehren*, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 207-224

¹⁴⁷ This statement comes from *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973:72), published under the name of Valentin Voloshinov, but nowadays generally attributed to Bakhtin

¹⁴⁸ Ervedosa 2008:18; "Bakhtin ersetzte so die hegelianischen Ideen der Synthese als Verneinung durch die unaufhebbare Ambivalenz und das geschlossene System durch den offenen Dialog und die Vielfalt der Stimmen."

¹⁴⁹ Evans 2008:123

¹⁵⁰ Morson & Emerson 1990:231

This is, naturally, primarily because he, himself, never exactly defined the concept and regularly used the term inconsistently.¹⁵¹

Bakhtin gives the most information on polyphony in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.¹⁵² The book itself exhibits many of the characteristics of the concepts Bakhtin uses. The text is what Bakhtin would call unfinished, in the sense that it has a continuous history of rewriting and is therefore unfinished.

Bakhtin's book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* was published in 1929. In that year, at the age of 35, he was arrested for his contribution to an underground church. In the thirty years that followed, he lived and worked in small Russian towns, in exile, one might say. When, in the late 1950s, young university students discovered that the author was still alive, at their request Bakhtin produced a new, revised version, which was published in 1963 under the title *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. This was done on the basis of notes, which were also published at the end of the new edition. The book is therefore a revised version, with Bakhtin's revision notes added. With Bakhtin, texts and manuscripts were never finished, but perpetually in progress.¹⁵³

The fact that Bakhtin speaks of poetics in the title is also not insignificant. A poetics endeavours to describe the form of a genre or text type, but in Bakhtin's use of the word it comes closer to how those forms function and, in that sense, the book provides important information on Dostoevsky's working methods. In this, Bakhtin's book is comparable with Aristotle's *Poetica*, whose precise description of the characteristics and forms of tragedy, precisely in the relationship with its impact and effect, becomes usable for writers and theatre makers as inspiration and a guideline for methodology.¹⁵⁴ This use of the word *poetics*, which, rather than referring to a theoretical definition, describes the creating process, also comes closer to the etymological source, the Greek *poietikos*, meaning 'the creative', 'the productive'. I will use the concept of poetics in this way in my description of the polyphonic theatre text (Chapter II).

The voice of the other

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin makes the famous statement:¹⁵⁵

“The word in language is half someone else’s. (...) [I]t exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own.”

We already saw that when we, ourselves, say, “I love you”, we hear how the phrase sounded in films we have seen, how it was used in books we have read or how it issued from the mouths of our parents. When I console my girlfriend by saying, “We’ll always have Paris”, I am echoed by Humphrey Bogard in *Casablanca*. When I cry, “The cupboard is bare!” I also hear a political statement. If I respond to a suggestion with a grinning “I know nothing” then who am I citing? When I use that phrase, then who is actually speaking with me?

Language is never a neutral, individual expression of a word. For Bakhtin, language and, with it, speaking and writing, down to the smallest unit, are a social phenomenon. The same way that meaning arises from dialogue and exchange, so language is characterised by social interaction.

Nancy Welch, who studied the concept of polyphony in teaching writing, shows how Bakhtin elevates the contrast between form and content (referred to as ‘voice as style’ and ‘voice as expression’) by treating language as a social phenomenon. Welch also gives many examples of the conflict of trends in writing lessons between “teaching someone to write good texts” (‘voice as style’) and “making a writer of someone” (‘voice as expression’). Writing is not a written reflection on personal experience or the production of a finalised text but, as Welch puts it, a

“dynamic meeting of reflection and production: a complex and ongoing interplay among personal and public voices.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Morson & Emerson 1990:232

¹⁵² Only published in English in 1984, translated by Caryl Emerson.

¹⁵³ Also see Caryl Emerson’s preface to this book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics 2011 (1984)*

¹⁵⁴ Also see Wayne Booth in the introduction to *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics 2011 (1984)*

¹⁵⁵ Bakhtin 2008 (1981):293-294

¹⁵⁶ Welch 1993:494

Bakhtin says the same in his book *Discourse in the Novel*.¹⁵⁷

"Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon."

Paul Dawson, in his 2005 book *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, also shows how the solution in the conflict between style and expression lies in a sociological poetics, where the formalistic focus is abandoned for an emphasis on the social context of language. On the basis of that social context, many voices speak in a text and, according to Dawson, you can no longer answer the question, "Who is speaking here?" in the singular.¹⁵⁸

"This is the key to a reconceptualisation of the concept of voice".

Considered from the point of view of language as a social phenomenon, when discussing the concept of polyphony Bakhtin names various voices. We encountered some of them earlier, such as the voice of the 'character' (Bakhtin calls this the 'hero') and the voice of the 'writer' (Bakhtin calls this the author).

To these four voices, which we already defined in I.1, he adds one more, though: the *voice of the other*, the voice from the social field, the social context that sounds in the work. It is important for the voice of the other to be heard, too, either intentionally or unintentionally. Anton Simons, for example, refers to this in *Het groteske van de taal; Over het werk van Michail Bachtin* [The Grotesque Aspect of Language; about the work of Mikhail Bakhtin].¹⁵⁹

While 'the voice of the other' always resounds in the language we speak or write, that does not mean we are speaking on behalf of the other or giving the other a voice. It seems, rather, to be the other way around. We assimilate the voice of the other and make it part of our 'personal' voices.¹⁶⁰

In Bakhtin's view, each voice in the polyphony not only contains words and ideas, but should also be seen as a perspective of the world.¹⁶¹ Each voice bathes individually in context. In her article on teaching polyphonic writing, Marilyn Middendorf describes it quite plastically:

"Context prevails over text. All parts and parts of any texts constantly shift, slide, slither, and sluice their way toward meaning. Texts alter 'meaning' along with social, physiological, psychological, historical, socio-economical, religious, and other contexts."¹⁶²

Polyphony is a plurality of voices, in both the artistic product and the creative making process. The polyphony in the artistic product implies a polyphony in the creative making process.

Polyphony refers to both the multitude of voices and the switching between and dynamics of the various voices. How these voices interchange, the switching patterns between the voices, the dynamics and the speed of movement, which I have named the *interplay of voices*, seems to me to be the core of the writing process and, consequently, of a productive writing pedagogy.

The question of ‘who is speaking in this text?’ cannot, in Bakhtin’s view, be answered in the singular, because language itself is a social phenomenon. Literary works are polyphonic because, for example, the dialogue of the characters, the genres in the work, the professional jargons and the direct language of the writing come together in that hybrid artwork. And although you can say that the choice and alternation of the voices in the text are orchestrated by the author, language in a literary work of art is always polyphonic, as each word belongs to both the author and all kinds of other social groups and other sources and texts.

The French linguist Oswald Ducrot transformed Bakhtin’s ideas on polyphony into a theory, which devotes even more attention to the polyphony within one single utterance. Bakhtin himself made a start on this but, as it was primarily about the polyphony in literary texts as a whole for him, in his view it was the novel rather than the sentence that was polyphonic. Ducrot developed a language theory that enables perception of a dialogue between several voices in every sentence.¹⁶³ He bases this on the idea that the text possesses not informative truth, but an argumentative meaning.

¹⁵⁷ Bakhtin 2008 (1981):259

¹⁵⁸ See Dawson 2005:205-214

¹⁵⁹ Simons 1990: 12: “It’s not always up to us whether other voices penetrate our discourse”.

¹⁶⁰ Orr & Hind 2009 cite the article on Fiona Graham’s case study of community theatre, in which Graham points out the danger, when wanting to give the community a voice, of theatre makers making a really big distinction between their own ‘superior’ voice and that of the other, the community

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Caryl Emerson’s introduction to this book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics 2011 (1984)*

¹⁶² Marilyn Middendorf, in: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):207

¹⁶³ Ducrot developed this theory in his *Slovenian Lectures* in 1996 and *Le Dire et le Dit* in 1984

The meaning of a text then consists of a description of that text as a discussion between various voices, which take different standpoints.

Ducrot names three voices that we can easily translate to the domain of theatre texts: the producer of the text, the speaker and the opinion carrier. Within theatre texts you can see that as the writer, the actor and the characters.

The main character in Thomas Bernhard's 1986 theatre text *Einfach kompliziert* [Simply Complicated] is a nameless eighty-year-old actor. He is referred to as 'Er', 'He'. He is in his underpants, nailing a board to the wall against the mice. He is alone in his room. The first line is,

"HE: If anyone were to see me here
in this position"

The *character* is expressing his shame at sitting on the floor in his underpants. Nevertheless, the audience laughs immediately as we realise that, at that moment, hundreds of us are shamelessly looking at this old man who is afraid to be seen. It feels as if, with this line, the actor is playing an ironic joke on the audience. The character does not know we are there; when we laugh, we feel addressed by the *actor*. In the stage direction that the character is called 'HE', the *writing* is also speaking to the theatre makers; most stage directions in a script are intended for the director, actors and designers and not the audience. When we treat the actor in the theatre as the narrator of the story, in the first couple of lines the voices of the character, the narrator and the writing are therefore intermingled.

Ducrot says that, as a result of the polyphony of a text, it is difficult for us to determine whether it is true or not. In his study of writing processes for policy texts, linguist Niels van der Mast refers in this regard to theatre:

"After all, just as a play isn't true or untrue, a dialogue can not be judged in terms of true or untrue. (...) In Ducrot's view, therefore, this eliminates the notion of the informativeness in the utterance".¹⁶⁴

According to Bakhtin and Ducrot, every linguistic utterance is always a reaction to earlier utterances and an anticipation of future utterances. The text therefore reflects not only the voice producing the utterance, but also the voices at which it is aimed. The words take into account the perspective of the listener,¹⁶⁵ who therefore also becomes a voice speaking in the text.

That, I feel, is a bit like talking when you are on holiday abroad: when speaking a foreign language, I immediately pick up words and expressions from the person to whom I am talking, in the hope that they will understand me better. If the listener becomes a voice in the speaker's utterance – the 'voice of the other' – then that would mean the audience, for example, becomes a voice in the theatre text and therefore in the writing process.

Naturally, certainly as theatre authors, we acknowledge that, in a social context, voices are created in a text when we get a character to speak a dialect or use professional jargon. In *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin calls that 'social languages', but indicates that these are not the only voices at work in the polyphony.

We see how, with his concept of polyphony, Bakhtin has added an extra series of voices to the four we named earlier: a number of 'social voices' or 'voices of the other'. The voice of the other can, as we saw, be the audience, the co-maker, or a social group with a specific language use.

These days, polyphony is often used to describe the hybridity of texts by naming solely the various genres, stylistic devices or narrative perspectives. This is how Kees 't Hart describes the work of theatre and prose author Tom Lanoye, for example:

"A number of voices sound and many language registers are used in this novel: it is a polyphonic novel".¹⁶⁶

This use of the concept of polyphony appears to ignore or underestimate a number of voices that we see emerge in the ideas of Bakhtin and Ducrot. When you start using the concept of polyphony, it is important to distinguish and name the various voices that speak together.

The polyphonic author

With Bakhtin, the concept of polyphony in language and literature is clearly linked to a specific image of the world and people and therefore, naturally, to a notion of authorship.

¹⁶⁴ Mast 1999:50

¹⁶⁵ Also see, for example, Akkerman & Admiraal & Simons & Niessen 2006:464

¹⁶⁶ Kees 't Hart, *De kunst van het schrijven, [the art of writing]* 2007, p.117.

Bakhtin consistently saw the world as multi-voiced and multi-centred,¹⁶⁷ with each of us speaking as a choir of languages and voices. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin says,

"anyone who is not an "ideologue" respects the fact that each of us is a "we", not an "I"."¹⁶⁸

The criticism is often voiced that the concept of polyphony would mean there is no longer any author, that it would no longer be possible to identify any particular writer's perspective. Bakhtin denies that. He states categorically that writers are still able to incorporate their 'own' ideas and views into the text, and he talks continually of the *activity* of the polyphonic writer.¹⁶⁹ The act of writing and authorship are changing drastically. Polyphony means a

"radical change in the author's position"¹⁷⁰

The concept of polyphony in texts implies a polyphonic human image, which, in writing on Bakhtin, is referred to a *polyphonic self* or *dialogic self*. Both Gregory Clark¹⁷¹ and Helen Rothschild Ewald¹⁷² say that Bakhtin lays the foundation for a polyphonic interpretation of authorship.

When, for example, we see that so many voices speak in a text, particularly many *voices of the other*, that each word is a "polyphonic collision of possibilities",¹⁷³ then all writing can be seen as co-creation, as *collaborative writing*. If, as a writer, we are, as Bakhtin states, a "we" and every word is only partly our own, then that undermines the myth of autonomous, independent artistry and authorship.

Furthermore, as I wrote earlier: the identity of the writer does not precede the text, but is created by the polyphonic text, by the *interplay of voices*. I explore this polyphonic image of man and its consequences for authorship and especially for writing for theatre in further detail in Chapter III.

Polyphony is a creativity theory

We have primarily discussed how polyphony functions in a text, a literary product: a multitude of voices reacting dynamically to one another, the *interplay of voices*.

On one hand, Bakhtin claimed that every linguistic utterance was already automatically polyphonic but, on the other, he insisted that not every novel

could be called polyphonic. In Chapter II, I will underpin the supposition that every theatre text, as a *text for performance*, is essentially always polyphonic and that, therefore, the concept of polyphony is quite usable for formulating a poetics of the theatre text.

We must not forget, though, that for Bakhtin the concept of polyphony refers to not only literary products but also a creative process, to the handling of the writing itself.

In an article written between 1959 and 1961,¹⁷⁴ Bakhtin claims that every writer is a playwright in the sense that they distribute various discourses amongst strange voices, “as well as the author’s other *personae*”. Bakhtin appears to be describing how writers themselves, including the various voices that reside in them, distribute themselves amongst voices in the work as they write.

He also emphasises this in his 1963 text *Towards a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book*, in linking his concept to the creative process, to the writing process. Polyphony becomes a creation method in that description or, as Gary Morson and Carroll Emerson call it, a ‘theory of creativity’.¹⁷⁵ In her recent book *Bakhtin Reframed*, Deborah Haynes sums it up perfectly:

“Polyphony – (...) The term refers to the interaction of multiple distinct voices that do not merge. Polyphony can also be considered a theory of creativity in itself.”¹⁷⁶

In Chapter III, I will elaborate upon the concept of polyphony as a creative strategy, in my case for the purpose of the writing process for theatre texts.

¹⁶⁷ Wayne C. Booth, in the introduction to *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 2011 (1984)

¹⁶⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 2011 (1984), cited in the introduction by Wayne C. Booth 2011 (1984): XXI

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, Morson & Emerson 1990: 232-233

¹⁷⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 2011 (1984):67

¹⁷¹ Clark 1990

¹⁷² In: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998)

¹⁷³ Ede & Lunsford 1990:91

¹⁷⁴ Cited in Todorov 1984:68, McCaw 2016:29

¹⁷⁵ Morson & Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin; Creations of a Prosaics*, 1990, p.256

¹⁷⁶ Deborah J. Haynes, *Bakhtin Reframed*, New York 2013, p.144

1.3 Bakhtinian polyphony-related concepts

"(...) writing is dialogic: a matter of awakening the countervoices in oneself and embarking upon speech with them." (J.M. Coetzee)

To deploy the concept of polyphony properly, in my view it is useful to discuss a number of Bakhtinian polyphony-related concepts.

1.3.1 Dialogism

Although Bakhtin never explicitly used the term 'dialogism', it is one of the important concepts used in the debate on Bakhtin and polyphony.¹⁷⁷ Dialogism is based on the same language interpretation as polyphony. It assumes that language is a social communication,¹⁷⁸ in which meaning is created by the social context:

"Dialogism presents the case that language, consciousness, cultural production, individual and social behaviour, and aesthetic activity occur within multiple interdependent contexts."¹⁷⁹

Meaning is therefore never fixed, but is always developing and ambivalent, as we also encounter in every new performance of the same theatre text.¹⁸⁰ With every line we speak or write we are in dialogue with other utterances and voices. Bakhtin says,

"Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communications. Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account."¹⁸¹

Within this interpretation, texts are seen as *discourse*.¹⁸² Here, I use discourse in the sense of the philosopher Émile Benveniste: each utterance of written and spoken language is a collection of interpretations, values and categories.¹⁸³ Benveniste also says that each text is situated in a field of interacting texts and, consequently, closely resembles a written reproduction of a conversation, of oral language use. On the basis of that analogy with spoken language, Benveniste cites theatre texts as an example of discourse.

The concept of dialogism is closely connected with the concept of polyphony. Polyphony refers primarily to the multitude of different voices in a linguistic product or in a writing process, whereas dialogism is used for “the organized manner in which these various languages interact.”¹⁸⁴ Dialogism actually describes the movement and the dynamics between the voices, which I, after Evans, have named the *interplay of voices*.

Descriptions of what happens between the voices in that dialogic process vary substantially. Author Umberto Eco refers directly to the concept of dialogue: the voices or texts are *in conversation with one another*. In *About Literature*, he says that a number of literary critics have observed post-modern characteristics in his work, including his famous novel *The Name of the Rose*:

“These characteristics are meta-narrative, dialogism (in the Bakhtinian sense of the word, so that, (...) as I said in the Epilogue, the texts speak to one another), the doubling code, the intertextual irony.”¹⁸⁵

The multiplicity of genres means the double coding refers to the polyphony itself, while the ‘conversing with one another’ has more to do with dialogism. It is, in fact, the “social interaction that exists between all imaginable utterances”.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁷ Holquist 2002 (1990):15

¹⁷⁸ Rob Pope, in his inspiring book on creativity, writes, Pope 2002:202

¹⁷⁹ Sabatini, in Stucky & Wimmer 2002:193

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, Ervedosa 2008:111

¹⁸¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 1986: p.91

¹⁸² Hall 2005:32

¹⁸³ Described in Hall 2005:33, for example

¹⁸⁴ Halasek 1999:9

¹⁸⁵ Umberto Eco, *On Literature*, 2003 (2002):212

¹⁸⁶ Doorman & Pott 2014(2000): 387

Dialogism, the movement between the various voices – in a text and in a writer – cannot easily be concretely defined, due to its active, dynamic character. Although it might, initially, sound abstract, it can help to realise that 'dialogism in literature has three recurring characteristics: the *distinction* between the voices, the *dialogue* between the voices and the *conflict* between the voices.

The distinction between the voices

Dialogism creates, first and foremost, the distinction between the voices, in both the writing product and the writing process. When we notice that, in our writing, the voices of others also speak, then we start distinguishing between voices. We make, as Michael Holquist puts it, a direct ontological distinction between the Self and the Other.¹⁸⁷ It is an important function of dialogism to comprehend that the image of a single voice rests on a misunderstanding and that a radical distinction can be made between different voices. In literary scholar Paul de Man's view, this function is

"to sustain and think through the radical exteriority or heterogeneity of one voice with regard to any other."¹⁸⁸

The dialogue between the voices

Dialogic literature brings together an array of social voices. Bakhtin himself continually refers to the dynamic relationship between one utterance and another, between one voice and another:

"Every word gives off the scent of a profession, a genre, a party, a particular work, a particular man, a generation, an era, a day, and an hour. Every word smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived its intense social life. When a writer uses language, s/he necessarily engages or responds to past and present discourses."¹⁸⁹

Here, we immediately see the recurrence of one of the first tips for theatre writers: be concrete and detailed, as every word spoken on the stage furnishes the character with a background, psychology, physiology, and sociology.¹⁹⁰ By realising, as an author, that every word evokes a context and proceeds to enter into a dialogue with that context, in other words by exploring the dialogic principle of language, the writing process will flow far more smoothly.

When I get my character to order a full English breakfast pizza, not only does that evoke an image of his surroundings, his environment and his psychology, but the scene also becomes a reaction to that context, to people who invent, name, make, order and full English breakfast pizzas. That continual evocation and reaction is what you could call dialogism.¹⁹¹

The conflict between the voices

In my eyes, it is an enormous achievement on Bakhtin's part that he shows that the voices in a text or in a writer are not in consensus, but exist by the grace of radical contrast and conflict. That occurs in every word:¹⁹²

"The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile."

Elsewhere, Bakhtin calls it, an "internal polemic":¹⁹³ what we could refer to as 'dramatic conflict' continually arises between conflicting voices in the writer. In Chapter III, I will use this principle of two continually conflicting voices to arrive at a model for the theatre writer's process.

This concept of 'countervoices' was introduced by the writer J.M. Coetzee, who also bases his ideas on writing on Bakhtin. Coetzee feels the dialogical aspect – the dialogue and conflict between the voices – is the core of the writing process:

¹⁸⁷ Holquist 1990, also see Koschmann 1999:3

¹⁸⁸ Paul de Man p.102, quoted in Halasek 1999:17-18

¹⁸⁹ *Discourse in the novel* p.354-355, *Speech genres* p. 92-93, notes 145-147

¹⁹⁰ My comments on the typification of characters in *Writing in the Raw* 2008 (2003):71-73

¹⁹¹ Helen Rothschild Ewald clearly describes how Bakhtin's dialogism indicates the relationship between one utterance and another and how each utterance is informed by the context, see: Helen Rothschild Ewald, in: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):226

¹⁹² *Discourse in the novel*, in: Bakhtin 2008 (1981):276, quoted, for example, in Halasek 1999:6

¹⁹³ Quoted in: Clarkson 2013(2009):80

"Writing is not free expression. There is a true sense in which writing is dialogic: a matter of awakening the countervoices in oneself and embarking upon speech with them. It is some measure of a writer's seriousness whether he does evoke/invoke those countervoices in himself, that is, step down from the position of what Lacan calls 'the subject supposed to know.'"¹⁹⁴

While Bakhtin sees polyphony and dialogism primarily in literary texts and then, chiefly, in novels, Coetzee expands these concepts to the process of the writing itself, as I also do in my own use of polyphony. The many, conflicting voices are at work in the author themselves, also, especially when they are writing. As Carroll Clarkson says in her book on Coetzee:

"(...), the self becomes a site of internal dialogic interaction."¹⁹⁵

In this way, dialogism becomes an actual artistic activity. The Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva, who introduced Bakhtin's work into the West in the early seventies of the twentieth century, used the term *intertextuality* for that dialogical activity.

Since Kristeva, 'intertextuality' has often been used to detect quotes from other sources in a text or trace references to other texts but she, herself, also uses the term to refer to the influence the texts of others have on the writer's own writing process. In her 1998 essay 'Europhilie-europhobie' [Europhilia-Europhobia] in *L'Avenir d'une révolte* [The Future of a Revolution], she explains how you have to give texts that influence a writer a place "within the laboratory of the writing process itself".¹⁹⁶

And when that happens, says Kristeva, the Romantic image of the monophonic, fixed author is destabilised. It then becomes clear that there is no such thing as a clearly delineated subject:

"(...) the writer is a 'subject in progress,' a carnival, a polyphony, without the prospect of any possible reconciliation between all those conflicting movements, a ceaseless struggle".¹⁹⁷

Both dialogism and intertextuality dispel the myth that the text should have a single meaning, that there is one dominant voice in a text, that the text, as Bakhtin would say, is 'monological'. Literary scholar Ulrich Broich observes this activity primarily in postmodern authors:

"(...) the intention of postmodernist writers is often to expose dominant discourses, literary conventions and genres as bourgeois, as logocentric, as male-dominated etc. (Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, from which the postmodernist concept of intertextuality was derived, had a similar function.)"¹⁹⁸

The unmasking function of dialogism also, incidentally, recurs in *performance practice* in theatre. Staging existing texts reveals new, sometimes hidden meanings or voices within them. The question is whether that dialogism is also active in the theatre text and in theatre writing itself. I have the idea that dialogism as an artistic polyphony activity is not necessarily exclusive to postmodern texts or authors, but is an essential characteristic of theatre texts and the writing of theatre texts. I will attempt to demonstrate this in Chapters II and III.

Dialogical text and dialogical writer

Dialogism is used to indicate the conversation between not only various voices in a text, but also voices in a writer during the creative process. Both polyphony and dialogism therefore have meaning for the human image behind our idea of artistry and authorship.

Rachel Pollard calls that concept of authorship a 'dialogical self'.

"...Dialogical Self, a self that can be conceived of as different "voices" in conversation with each other, and one that is in tune with the complex and fragmentary aspects of postmodern subjectivity."¹⁹⁹

The human image behind the dialogical writer, the 'dialogical self' is comparable with Roz Ivanic's 'discoursal self,' which I described briefly in I.1. The 'discoursal self' sees the 'personal voice' as multiple and fluid, a voice that can continually vary, even within one text.

¹⁹⁴ J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p.65, quoted in Carrol Clarkson, *Countervoices*, Pallgrave MacMillan, Hampshire 2013 (2009), p.7/8

¹⁹⁵ Clarkson 2013 (2009):80

¹⁹⁶ Kristeva, in: Doorman & Pott: 2014 (2000): 387

¹⁹⁷ Kristeva, in: Doorman & Pott: 2014(2000): 387

¹⁹⁸ In: Bertens & Fokkema 1997:253

¹⁹⁹ Pollard 2008 Kindle Book 33/4341

The 'dialogical self' is halfway between the modern human image of unity, of a single voice, and the postmodern human image of total fragmentation, of many splintered voices. With its fluid, dynamic character, the continual movement between voices, the 'dialogical self' is a warmer and more contemporary alternative to the rather hopeless and anti-humanist worldview of postmodernism.²⁰⁰ Dialogism

"(...) allows for a "self" formed through social processes, which is at the same time embodied, dynamic, and creative."²⁰¹

This concept of the 'dialogical self' is used in the cognitive sciences, too, sometimes referred to as the 'polyphonic self', in order to describe the self as social without losing personal autonomy. In psychology, this concept was coined by Hubert Hermans,²⁰² whom I mentioned earlier. In his view, the self can be understood

"(...) as a dialogical self, built from a dynamic plurality of relatively autonomous 'I' positions, between which a person shifts, influenced by historical, cultural and institutional experiences and relationships."²⁰³

I will describe how this human image determines the theatre author's writing process in Chapter III, but it is important at this moment to realise that the 'dialogical self' has no central director, no dominant 'personal voice' hanging above all other voices and making decisions, no 'I' in charge. The 'dialogical self' is experienced as a multiple self, consisting of many voices, where the unity is felt in the unique alternation between the voices.

The dialogical self is partly made up of the voice of others and exists, reacts and creates by means of others. It looks, as Bakhtin describes in his inimitable style, at itself, at its own self, with the eyes of the others, and that, too, is its 'personal' view:

"To be means to be for another and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another with the eyes of another."²⁰⁴

Writing is co-creation

When writing is a continuous shifting between the voices that consist largely of the 'voices of the other', when the 'dialogical self' has a totally

open connection with the outside world, then, based on this dialogical interpretation of language, it follows that writing is never the work of a writer alone but always stems from their interaction with the world in and by means of language. In that case, the concept of polyphony and the human image of the ‘dialogical self’ support the notion that all writing is collaboration and co-creation.

The romantic image of the individual, autonomous artist is untenable when it comes to authorship.

“In short, all writing is intensely sociohistorical, and, in this sense, is by nature collaborative.”²⁰⁵

In endeavouring to summarise the concept of ‘dialogism’ from the point of view of writing and the pedagogy of writing, analogous with Kay Halasek in her book *A Pedagogy of Possibility; Bakhtinian Perspectives on Composition Studies*,²⁰⁶ I arrived at four usable core aspects:

1. The voices are in conversation with and react to one another. For Bakhtin, this *responsive* element is one of the central aspects of all discourses and verbal interaction. In *Writing in the Raw*, I already extensively explored this reactive element and, for that reason, I recommend treating writing as a speaking process.

2. Writing always takes place in co-creation, as the act of writing itself is a “cooperative sharing of texts”.²⁰⁷
That has consequences for the image of the artist, authorship and artistic expression.

²⁰⁰ Also see: Pollard 2008 Kindle Book 33/4341

²⁰¹ Gardener 1998, also see Pollard 2008 Kindle Book 33/4341

²⁰² See: Hermans 2001, Hermans & Kempen 1993

²⁰³ Hubert Hermans, in: Akkerman & Admiraal & Simons & Niessen 2006:466

²⁰⁴ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):287

²⁰⁵ Helen Rothschild Ewald, in: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):227

²⁰⁶ See Halasek 1999:4 onwards

²⁰⁷ Halasek 1999:4

3. Meaning is created by the movement between the voices and does not precede the writing. Consequently, knowledge is only garnered and created in exchange and dialogically. This Bakhtinian idea can be found in much literature within *Composition Studies Theory*. According to Bakhtin, world-views are created dialogically, so even the content of our writing and the message of our text are created during rather than prior to the act of writing. This destroys the myth that one unique 'voice of expression' exists, whereby there is first an experience on or an idea that is subsequently expressed in text.

4. Dialogism is an artistic activity and understanding it therefore leads to deeper and broader insight into the writing process. Dialogism and polyphony are thus linked to the writing process and, therefore, to Bakhtinian writing pedagogy:

"Teachers who ask students to work together composing and /or revising their work believe (on both theoretical and practical levels) that such cooperative activities will not only improve the texts under review, but also lead students to a more complete and long-term understanding of textual production."²⁰⁸

In Chapter IV, I will investigate the implications that this thinking can have on writing pedagogy for theatre authors.

With a dialogical approach, novice writers can learn to recognise and react to the ideological and dominant implications of their own and others' utterances²⁰⁹. In writing pedagogy, learning to distinguish between the various voices often translates into methods and work forms that are referred to as '*deconditioning*': the writing student unmask the idea that he possesses a single voice and single writing strategy.

Celia Hunt & Fiona Sampson call this dialogical function '*detoning*'. They point out how, for instance, 'detoning' can make the voice of the 'impersonal writer' visible, referring to this as the 'bodily felt sense of self'.

"Nevertheless the idea that finding a voice involves a 'de-toning' of the self, in the sense of distancing ourselves from fixity in language, is useful, and it also helps to make a link with Bakhtin's ideas (...). (W)hen we 'de-tone' ourselves of – or, better, distance ourselves from – rigid self-concepts or narratives of self which are part of the 'authoritative discourses' of extended consciousness, we create space of the tone of our bodily felt sense of self, or core consciousness, to 'sound', and this

enables us to reformulate authoritative discourses into our own internally persuasive word.”²¹⁰

Certainly, when we explore the writing process of the theatre author and describe possible writing didactics further on, it is important to not only name the voices that sound in the writing, but also devote attention to the dialogical process, thus: the way in which the voices react to one another and how the writer switches between those many voices.

1.3.2 Heteroglossia

In his book *The Dialogical Imagination* (and the essay featured in it, *Discourse in the Novel*, in particular) Bakhtin introduced the term heteroglossia to even more clearly describe the polyphony in a literary text and especially in a novel.

He coined this term from the Greek ‘other-speech’: various languages. Within a novel, heteroglossia can exist when the various characters are heard side by side and interspersed.

The various voices can also, however, be heard within one line or utterance by a character. If a prose text describes a woman arriving late for an appointment, for example, you can write, “She asked if she was late”. Then, you only actually hear the voice of the narrator. When you write, “Was she late?” then, in addition to the narrator (“She wondered whether she was late”), you also hear the voice of the character in the distance (“Am I late?”). A similar example can be found in Griet Op de Beeck’s recent novel *Vele hemels boven de zevende* [Many Heavens Above the Seventh]. The ‘I’ person says that his lover wants to leave: “Then she really has to go home, she’s already said so three times”.²¹¹ In the word ‘really’ we clearly hear the voice of the other speaking (“I really have to go home”).

²⁰⁸ Halasek 1999:5

²⁰⁹ Also see, for example, Halasek 1999:7

²¹⁰ Hunt & Sampson 2006:32:

²¹¹ Griet Op de Beeck, *Vele hemels boven de zevende*, Amsterdam 2016 (2013):107

Several voices sound in one sentence. For Bakhtin, that is not just a style device; it is actually in every sentence. Every utterance is full of heteroglossia:

"(...) language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different epochs of the past, between different, socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form".²¹²

Heteroglossia refers to the multitude of voices and styles,²¹³ "the multi-voiced condition of narrative discourse, (...) the natural chaotic state of languages as they exist in the world".²¹⁴

Polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia overlap considerably. Helen Rothschild Ewald of the Iowa State University, even equates heteroglossia with polyphony:²¹⁵ it indicates the individual diversity of voices within what she calls the 'dialogism':

"An individual's voice resounds, indeed can only sound, as one voice amongst many."

She also defines heteroglossia as I, myself, have described dialogism: as a dynamic, as the alteration between the voices:

"heteroglossia is the situational dynamic underpinning discourse"²¹⁶

While dialogism refers to the interplay between the voices, both polyphony and heteroglossia seem to refer to the *plurality* of voices itself. Whereas heteroglossia relates purely to the literary *product*, the text itself – for Bakhtin: the novel – the concept of polyphony can also refer to the artistic process of writing. As we already saw, the 'phon' (Greek *phone* - voice) part of polyphony refers to the instance that produces the text rather than the text itself. In their wonderful book *Mikhail Bakhtin; Creation of a Prosaics*, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson make a similar distinction: heteroglossia relates to the text and polyphony to the writer:²¹⁷

"(...), polyphony is not even roughly synonymous with heteroglossia. The latter term describes the diversity of speech styles in a language, the former has to do with the position of the author in a text".

Nonetheless, Morson and Emerson do not make the step that I would like to in this book as they, too, continue to link polyphony with the author's position in the text.

I feel it would be clarifying to reserve the term heteroglossia for texts languages, and the term polyphony for both text and artistic processes. Bakhtin's own description of heteroglossia in *Discourse in the Novel* also makes the link with the intentions of the author:

"... another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way".²¹⁸

Of course it is impossible to entirely separate the plurality of voices and styles (heteroglossia and polyphony) and the dynamic interplay between voices (dialogism). Bakhtin says that, while heteroglossia arises in a text as "double-voiced discourse", as he describes it, that is where we find the dynamic and the conflict between the voices, a conflict that affects those fixed meanings.

"languages are continually stratifying under a pressure of the centrifugal force, whose project everywhere is to challenge fixed definitions."²¹⁹

Language, a word, a style, is never neutral in Bakhtin's eyes.²²⁰ This continual diminishing of one fixed meaning of the text by a conflict between the voices is elaborated upon as an essential characteristic of language by the French poststructuralists and, in particular, the philosopher Jacques Derrida, in the concept of 'deconstruction'.

²¹² Bakhtin 2008 (1981):291

²¹³ The definition given in the Webster Dictionary is: "a diversity of voices, styles of discourse, or points of view in a literary work and especially a novel."; www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heteroglossia

²¹⁴ Halasek 1999:9

²¹⁵ In: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):226

²¹⁶ Helen Rothschild Ewald, in: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):227, also see Bakhtin, *Discourse of the Novel* 2008 (1991):288-331

²¹⁷ Morson & Emerson 1990:232

²¹⁸ Bakhtin, *Discourse of the Novel* 2008 (1981):324

²¹⁹ Bakhtin 2008(1981):433

²²⁰ Bakhtin 2008 (1981):293-294

1.3.3 Hybridisation

In addition to the concept of heteroglossia, Bakhtin often uses the currently very trendy term, *hybrid*. If texts or utterances are polyphonic or contain heteroglossia then, for him, they are 'hybrid' when they belong to one and the same speaker...

"...in which two utterances, two ways of speaking, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and evaluative horizons, are in fact mixed".²²¹

The usual definition of hybridity is actually 'a mix of two types'.²²² Nonetheless, if we examine the above quote, Bakhtin seems to group all kinds of doublings in a text under the concept of 'hybrid', which is what also often happens with the term these days.

When, for instance, the dramaturg Ivo Kuyl calls Heiner Müller's postdramatic theatre text *Beeldbeschrijving* [Explosion of a Memory / Description of a Picture] 'hybrid', he is referring primarily to the plurality of text types it includes.²²³ *Beeldbeschrijving* is used for theatre and consists of a brief prose text in which a painting is described in minute detail. No characters, no plot, no dialogue, but nonetheless a theatre text. Theatre text and prose text and pictorial description. The actors and writers who worked on *Beeldbeschrijving* in a workshop with Ivo Kuyl had the idea that the text could be anything: a poem, a handbook or newspaper article, an extract from a novel or prose text.

Nowadays, culture, works of art and artists are frequently referred to as hybrid.²²⁴ In her 2001 book *Hybridkultur* [Hybrid Culture], Yvonne Spielmann uses Bakhtin's concept of polyphony to explain that hybridity.²²⁵ The artistic professional's increasingly hybrid professional practice demonstrates not only that he or she has various practices and does a number of things side by side or at the same time, but also that the position of the artist is constantly changing, rendering their artistry polyphonic.

Theatre groups rarely take on permanent actors any longer. They prefer to find broadly-based theatre makers able to jointly create and design a performance.²²⁶ Playwrights are no longer autonomous artists who conceive their masterworks at home; they work with other makers, often on the floor, to produce texts together. They, too, are consequently becoming theatre makers and their practice is becoming hybrid.²²⁷

In *Artificial Hells; Participatory Art of Spectatorship*, Claire Bishop describes that hybridity in even more general terms: artists no longer isolate themselves from their art product, but are compilers of ‘situations’, the work of art is never finalised but is a ‘project in progress and the spectator is now more of a ‘participant’ or ‘user’.²²⁸ In her view, the artist is a hybrid because the work of art is no longer monophonic and delimited.

While higher Arts Education is aiming to train hybrid artists who, nonetheless, develop their professionalism, their craft and their own ‘persona’, the concept of polyphony could well be of service.

Nowadays, the hybrid artist in theatre and performance has a practice characterised by a large number of doublings. It is the very performative aspect that results in a number of doublings in a creating process: several disciplines (interdisciplinarity), several media (transmediality), several makers (co-creation), several realities (mixed reality).

In this book, I treat these doublings as several voices in the artistic process, within which the artist and therefore also the art student swings continually in a dynamic movement between disciplines, media, realities and makers. Hybrid artists always, consequently, find themselves in an intermediate space: interactive, interdisciplinary, intermedial, intertextual, interface.

Bakhtin often uses the more active word ‘hybridisation’, defining it as follows:

²²¹ Bakhtin, *Die Ästhetik des Wortes*, Frankfurt am Main, 1979, p.195, quoted in Spielmann 2010:104; “...in der sich in Wirklichkeit aber zwei Äusserungen, zwei Redeweisen, zwei Stile, zwei ‘Sprachen’, zwei Horizonten von Sinn und Wertung vermischen.”

²²² Hall 2005:70, for example, formulates it like this

²²³ Ivo Kuyl, ‘De invloed van scenisch verloop op poëtische teksten. Beschrijving van en reflectie op een onderzoekswerkshop van De Tijd’ [The influence of scenic progression on poetic texts. description of an reflection on a De Tijd research workshop], in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte, *Het statuut van de tekst in postdramatisch theater* 2011:140

²²⁴ Van Winkel, C., Gielen, P. & Zwaan, K., *De hybride kunstenaar; de organisatie van de artistieke praktijk in het post-industriële tijdperk*, Avans Hogeschool, Breda/Den Bosch/Tilburg 2012

²²⁵ Spielmann 2011:104

²²⁶ Sandra Kooke, ‘Nog maar 50 acteurs met vaste baan’, in *Trouw* 13 September 2016

²²⁷ See, for example, Daniela Moosmann, *De toneelschrijver als theatermaker* [The Playwright As Theatre Maker], 2007

²²⁸ Claire Bishop 2012

"What is a hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor."²²⁹

Bakhtin seems to use the concept of hybridisation roughly synonymously with polyphony and heteroglossia, but in a more active way, as if referring to a process in which the polyphony *occurs*.

"In one discourse, two semantic intentions appear, two voices."²³⁰

Here, he gives the parody as an example, whereby the parody, as it were, lends a second voice to the utterance being parodied.

As hybridisation is something that occurs then, according to Bakhtin, it can also be intentional or unintentional.

When the robber Kevin Kline in the film *A Fish Called Wanda* sees that the safe is empty, he expresses his despair by crying, "Disappointed!" The character is displaying two voices at once: the voice expressing the disappointment by crying out and the voice describing the feeling as if he is looking back on the situation in retrospect.

Naturally, the scriptwriters John Cleese and Charles Crichton do this intentionally; here, by breaking expectations, the hybridisation creates a comic effect.

Bakhtin states that polyphony is actually always present in language, even when hybridisation takes place unintentionally. He gives the example of Tolstoy's novels, which he describes as monological in comparison with the dialogical works of Dostoevsky, which he then says implicitly and intentionally contain heteroglossia and polyphony.²³¹

For our research, it is important to see hybridisation as the process whereby every linguistic utterance is broken into two or more voices. When we view the hybrid artist like this, then their hybridity consists of not so much having various different professions and activities side by side but more, as I already said, a continual switching between disciplines, media, realities and makers.

1.3.4 Unfinalizability

“Oh the riches of the uncompleted”²²⁹

When the dynamic and the conflict between the voices continually affect the one meaning of a text, when the polyphony undermines the concept of one author with a clear intention, this gradually raises the question of whether a text is ever finalised, of whether there is such a thing as a fixed, finalised artefact, which we call a theatre text, for example.

We know that, over the space of seven years, the playwright Edward Albee wrote thirteen totally different versions of his play *The Zoo Story*, but you could argue that the writing of that play has continued ever since, through the innumerable subsequent stagings: layers of meaning and interpretations are continually added, which all then belong to the text because we remember those earlier stagings when we start reading the text as a maker. The play continues evolving because the meaning is not even fixed in the language itself, the conflict and dynamic between the voices is ceaseless and that conflict continually renews the text and keeps it alive.

This concept of a text that is never finalised because of its polyphony has major consequences for how we view writing and the writing process. The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze writes in a book about literature:²³³

“Writing is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature is more about the formless or unfinalised, as Gombrowicz both expressed and practised it. Writing is a question of becoming, it is always unfinalised, always in progress, and is external to the material of any livable and lived experience. It is a process, in other words a transitional phase in life, which proceeds through both the livable and the lived. Writing is inextricably bound up with becoming, ...”

²²⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 1981:358

²³⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 2011(1984):189

²³¹ Also see Evans 2008:62-68

²³² The most famous line of poetry by the Dutch poet Leopold

²³³ Deleuze 2015 (1993):11

The way we view and analyse works of art is generally based on the assumption that the work of art is a finished product. Something that is unfinished is soon seen as imperfect.

In her recent *Mijn leven is mooier dan literatuur* [My Life Is Better Than Literature], Janna Loontjes talks about the “eternally unfinished state” of her book. A reviewer has argued that this means the author is asking for acceptance of the imperfection of her work.²³⁴

Polyphony and unfinalizability are extensions of one another. When the interplay between the many voices in a text is endless and the text is continually in contact with all kinds of other texts and voices, then not only is it impossible to pin that text down to one fixed meaning or one author, but it is also hard to delimit the text as an integral unity. Or, as Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson write in their book on Bakhtin:

“The dialogic sense of truth manifests unfinalizability by existing on the ‘threshold’ (porog) of several interacting consciousnesses, a ‘plurality’ of ‘unmerged voices’.”²³⁵

But then what exactly is unfinished and unfinalisable?

First of all, Bakhtin claims that the hero, the polyphonic character itself, is, by definition, “unfinalizable”.²³⁶ For Bakhtin, however, unfinalizability is also linked to the author’s position: characters, writers and people are never a finished unity. That was also the reason he was so strongly opposed to the theories of Marx and Freud who, in his view, thought they were able to define people.

In her book *Queer Writing*, literary scholar Anita Tomka Wieser links the author’s interpretation in Roland Barthes’s article ‘The Death of the Author’ with the Bakhtinian concept of ‘unfinalizability’.

She says that this unfinalizability applies to not only the language but also the text and the subject. We think the text is a finished unity, therefore we feel we can interpret it; we think that the subject has a delimited identity, therefore we think we are allowed to identify it as a character or a gender and feel we can say, “This is what you are like and that is how you are”.

“That polyphony, which occurs in the text, in authors and in readers, obstructs both an ‘authentic’ literature production and a definitive, original interpretation of a text”.²³⁷

Due to its polyphony, text is, by definition, unfinalised and unfinalisable and, therefore, any attempt to deduce any original meaning of a text is a pointless exercise.²³⁸ In secondary school language lessons, therefore, we should no longer be asking for *the* meaning of a text, nor should we be asking what the author intended in the text. After all, that would suggest that the meaning of the text and the author's intention are encapsulated in a text. An illustration of this is described by J.V. Wertsch and C. Toma who, in 1995, brought the language theory of the Russian literary scholar Yuri Lotman,²³⁹ who bases his work on Bakhtin's concepts, into the classroom and education. Both show that the text then has two functions in language and in language education: a monophonic, univocal function and a polyphonic function, which they refer to as dialogical. They observe that the former evokes reasonably adequate meaning, but that the second continually generates new meanings. They provide many examples to demonstrate how the open-ended nature of language and its associated unfinalised meaning is actually the source of new possibilities and new meanings.²⁴⁰

The polyphony and unfinalizability of the text appear to cause the author to disappear from the text.²⁴¹ As we saw earlier, I feel that the author does disappear from the text but remains present in the writing process. The polyphony of the text is reflected in the polyphony of the writer as *they write*.

In this, the author's intention is more the way the philosopher Michel Foucault suggests in 'What Is an Author?' in his response to Barthes. Foucault says the author himself has become more of a discursive function,

²³⁴ Simone van Saarloos, review of Janna Loontjens' *Mijn leven is mooier dan literatuur*, in: *Volkskrant* 20/4/2013

²³⁵ Morson & Emerson 1990:236

²³⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, 2011 (1984):63

²³⁷ Tomke Wieser 2012:59; "Die Vielstimmigkeit, die sich sowohl im Text als auch in den jeweiligen Autor-innen und Leser-innen abzeichnet, verhindert sowohl eine "authentische" Literaturproduktion als auch eine endgültige, ursprüngliche Interpretation eines Textes."

²³⁸ Tomke Wieser 2012:63

²³⁹ Lotman 1990 and Lotman 1994

²⁴⁰ In: Akkerman & Admiraal & Simons & Niessen, 'Considering diversity: Multivoicedness in International Academic Collaboration', 2006:463

²⁴¹ Tomke Wieser also claims this in her book

curbing the infinite number of meanings. Foucault argues that the author's polyphony is a danger to society, which actually advocates monophony in its power mechanisms: the dominant voices, as Bakhtin calls them.

The fact that polyphony and unfinalizability are so connected may be a theoretically nice idea but for the artist and, in our case, the theatre author, it does pose highly practical questions, such as: 'If a work is unfinalised, then how do I know when it is finished and I can share it with co-makers?' Or: 'If the meaning is not fixed can I then, as a writer, still say something with my text, can I nonetheless instil meaning into a text?' In their book on Bakhtin, Morson and Emerson also pose such questions and state that concepts such as unfinalizability and polyphony imply a specific description and interpretation of the creative process. They describe quite comprehensively how, for example, the novelist Dostoevsky, on whom Bakhtin built his concepts, wanted to create art about people who were, in principle, unfinalisable, were impossible to delimit and, from there, developed a creative writing method that, in itself, was never finished: as a writer, he never wanted to have the last word, precisely because he wanted to keep his characters as open as possible.²⁴²

The concept of the unfinalizability and unfinishedness of a text seems to be extra important when writing for theatre. Text is often referred to as a half-product, which is then finished off by the co-makers. And when the director and actors delete and alter text during staging, then what is the finished script for that performance?

At the same time, analysis methods for theatre texts and most instruction books on how to write for theatre are based on the assumption that the text is delimited, is finished, and contains a certain meaning that carries a specific intention of the author.

The concepts of polyphony and unfinalizability can, in my view, be helpful for improving the description, analysis and pedagogy of theatre writing.

1.3.5 Carnivalisation

During World War II, Bakhtin wrote a book on the French Renaissance writer François Rabelais.²⁴³ He wrote it as a dissertation, but only had the chance to defend it as a doctoral thesis years later. In this book, entitled *Rabelais and His World*, not published until 1965, Bakhtin introduces the concept of carnivalisation. He translates the social concept of carnival,

which we know as briefly breaking away from dominant customs and morals, into a literary process in which humour, parody, irony, and the grotesque break open the seemingly fixed meaning and dominant voice in a text.²⁴⁴

As with carnival itself, that happens with a great deal of play and by giving the body and its senses a major role. Josephine Machon uses this practice of “sensuous experience and disturbing play” in her book *(Syn)aesthetics; Redefining Visceral Performance* to describe contemporary theatre.²⁴⁵

Carnivalisation consists of artistic strategies for disturbing and eroding existing structures. Bakhtin continually stresses how that process of allowing other voices to be heard in addition to a dominant, absolute voice has a playful, cheerful character. In this, we recognise the relativating play that later also became an important element in postmodernism and post-dramatic theatre.

“carnival celebrates the shift itself, the very process of replaceability (...),
[it] proclaims the joyful relativity of everything”²⁴⁶

In her book on the Austrian playwright Thomas Bernhard, Clara Ervedosa shows how the concept of carnivalisation as a literary procedure can take many forms.²⁴⁷

At micro level, for example, it can be seen in the many ironic paradoxes Bernhard uses in his texts. When the character of Minetti, in the play of the same name, says such things as

“When we want to achieve our goal
we always have to go in the opposite direction”

²⁴² Morson & Emerson 1990:92

²⁴³ 1483-1553

²⁴⁴ See, for example:

“Carnival is the rhetoric dynamic. Carnival, which for Bakhtin is the purest form of popular culture, features the inversion of normal hierarchies and the exchange of established social roles. In discourse, it enables the writer to take a parodic or an ironic stance toward dramatic (or monologic) norms.”
Helen Rothschild Ewald, in: Farmer 2009 (1998):227

²⁴⁵ Machon 2009:38

²⁴⁶ Bakhtin 1984:125

²⁴⁷ Clara Ervedosa, “Vor den Kopf stossen”; *Das Komische als Schock im Werk Thomas Bernhards*, 2008:107-115

or

"We are continually developing
a tragedy
or a comedy
when we develop the tragedy
actually only a comedy
and vice versa"²⁴⁸

then we hear two different voices speak in the character, one of which holds the dominant standpoint, that tragedy is something grave and, in any event, not its counterpart the comedy, while the other equates the two opposites. The trick is to briefly replace the concept of tragedy with its counterpart (Bakhtin's 'replaceability') and break open our fixed ideas about it.

Bakhtin claims that the concept of carnivalisation continually evokes contrasts and then endeavours to allow them to coexist in polyphony.

"The opposites come together, look at each other, mirror each other, know and understand each other. (...) Everything in his (Dostoevsky's, NC) world resides on the boundary of its opposite. Love resides on the boundary of hate, knows and understands it and hate resides on the boundary of love and understands it likewise".²⁴⁹

In this, we actually see the core of dramatic theatre, in which the character has two contrasting feelings at the same time. Medea murders her children and, at the same time, loves them dearly. If she did not love them, then her murdering them would not be dramatic. That dramatic duplicity, similar to what, in novels, Bakhtin calls 'paroding double',²⁵⁰ is a form of polyphony that we encounter extraordinarily often in theatre texts.

We find the principle of carnivalisation not only in dramatic theatre, but also in absurd theatre and postdramatic theatre. When Halina Janaszek-Ivanickova writes about postmodernism in Poland, she links Bakhtin's ideas on literature to developments in Polish theatre:

"This new attitude towards literature was further influenced by the work of Bakhtin, whose interest in the carnivalesque aspects of literature could be linked to the nonconformism, the anarchistic spirit, and unhampered flights of imagination of the theatre of the absurd".²⁵¹

Ervedosa, incidentally, gives another interesting example of carnivalisation in literary texts, which we will encounter again when exploring theatre writing. She shows how, in his prose work and primarily in the novel *Alte Meister* [Old Masters], Thomas Bernhard makes the narrator unreliable. You are sometimes unsure whether you can believe the narrator and are even unsure of who, at that point, is telling the story. We already saw earlier that, in a text, the question, ‘Who is actually narrating?’ – and, in the theatre text, too, ‘Who is actually speaking?’ – refers to the polyphony of the text and the author.

A recent example in drama is the television series *Himmlers hersens heten Heydrich*²⁵² [Himmler’s Brain is Called Heydrich], in which two different narrative voices enter into a dialogue with both Reinhard Heydrich and his two murderers. Moreover, the writer of the book in which the series is based also acts as a character.

Carnivalisation refers to a number of creative strategies for achieving polyphony in an artistic product. This disturbing, structure-eroding concept is often named in the same breath as the concept of ‘deconstruction’²⁵³ from French philosophy or Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘Dionysian’ principle.²⁵⁴ We will see that the postdramatic playwright Heiner Müller described this principle in his writing process as the ‘*Unordnung*’, or disordering.

While we saw earlier that a voice is always divided into two conflicting voices, we often see a countervoice arise, eroding fixed structure, meaning and planning. In the writing process, for example, we see in ourselves a voice that wants to structure next to one that wants to destroy structure.

²⁴⁸ Thomas Bernhard, *Minetti; Een portret van de kunstenaar als oude man* [Minetti; a portrait of the artist as an old man], Amsterdam 1988, p.24 and p.22

²⁴⁹ Bakhtin 2011 (1984), Quoted in Ervedosa 2008:109

“Die Gegensätze kommen zusammen, schauen einander an, spiegeln einander wider, kennen und verstehen einander. (...) Alles in seiner Welt (Dostoevsky’s, NC) lebt an der Grenze zu seinem Gegenteil. Die Liebe lebt an der Grenze zum Hass, kennt und versteht ihn und der Hass lebt an der Grenze zur Liebe und versteht sie ebenfalls.”

²⁵⁰ Bakhtin 1984:127

²⁵¹ In: Bertens & Fokkema 1997:424

²⁵² VPRO 2017

²⁵³ Ervedosa 2008:114 calls ‘carnivalisation’ a cheerful, playful form of deconstruction

²⁵⁴ See, for example, Machon 2009:37-39

1.3.6 Outsideness

"I must find myself in another by finding another in myself"²⁵⁵

In the writing process, much is determined by the author's distance from the material. How often are writers recommended not to write about something that is too close or still too fresh in their mind?

In his book *Bakhtin and Theatre*, McCaw talks about how Bakhtin uses the concept of outsideness for this. According to Bakhtin, you have to be able to see yourself as another – "from outside" – to be able to tell your own story. As I do not see, let alone know, myself as another, I am unable to get my story down on paper. To be able to see myself as another, I have to create a distance.²⁵⁶

If I am standing with my nose up against a painting, then I cannot appreciate the work of art properly. You need a degree of distance to allow the piece of art to work aesthetically. The same way that a spectator must not entirely coincide with what is being displayed, otherwise it is difficult to create an aesthetic experience, so the writer also has to create a distance from themselves to be able to create.

In her book *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, Caryl Emerson describes it like this:

"An event becomes 'aesthetic', in Bakhtin's world, if there is an outside consciousness looking in on the event and, as it were, embracing it, able to bestow on the scenario a sense of the 'whole'. Such an external (and thus aesthetic) position is available to spectators watching, to readers reading, and to an author 'shaping'."²⁵⁷

In the writing process, this concept of 'outsideness', of seeing oneself as another, often translates into making something 'artificial'. You give something an artificial form in order to distance yourself from it. This making artificial is known by the term, 'ostranenie', coined by one of the founders of Russian formalism, Viktor Shklovsky.²⁵⁸ The concept of 'ostranenie', in which the word 'strange' is recognisable, describes a creative strategy of 'defamiliarisation', or, as Shklovsky so beautifully puts it:²⁵⁹

"The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, (...) "

In my book *Writing in the Raw*, I give a number of examples and practical writing techniques for using the artificiality or ostranenie as a basis for writing and, in doing so, I distinguish:²⁶⁰

- distancing yourself from involvement in the material
- distancing yourself from characters
- distancing yourself in the use of space
- distancing yourself by playing with time
- distancing yourself from the genre
- distancing yourself by means of language
- distancing yourself from your memories

That estrangement, or ‘ostranenie’, is a writing strategy for achieving the outsideness of which Bakhtin talks.

That attitude of outsideness creates a division, a polyphony in the person and the artist. Bakhtin:²⁶¹

“a person exists in the forms *I* and *another* (*thou, he or man*)”

In her book, *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*, Deborah Haynes shows how the concept of outsideness is closely connected with the polyphonic view of authorship.²⁶² Creativity, in Bakhtin’s view, is an everyday activity, which, due to its social, dialogic character, is interlinked with how we cope with the world. In this, the artist’s task is

“to find a fundamental approach to life from without, to define others in ways they cannot do for themselves”²⁶³

²⁵⁵ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):287

²⁵⁶ Cresswell & Baerveldt 2011:273 also describe ‘outsideness’ as ‘seeing oneself as the other’, and Bakhtin indicates that this is necessary for what he refers to as “dialogic penetration”, Bakhtin 1984A:59

²⁵⁷ Emerson 1997:135

²⁵⁸ Also see Dick McCaw, *Bakhtin and Theatre*, 2016:13

²⁵⁹ Shklovsky, ‘Art and technique’, quoted in McCaw, 2016:13

²⁶⁰ Christophe 2008:119-124

²⁶¹ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):293

²⁶² Haynes 1995:71-74

²⁶³ Bakhtin 1990:192

The artist who creates is, by nature, continually in the midst of that process of distancing, of looking at themselves as another, of “writing something out of their system”. That continuous process of “self-other relations” reveals itself most easily in the relationship between an author and the hero or main character of their story or play. The author is the one who acts, the hero is the one the author talks about; he is the living object of discourse. The author contains both in their consciousness.

As we already saw, the hero is actually one of the voices of the author. One way or another, both voices can be heard in a text. Bakhtin makes a striking distinction here. In his view, the content of the work of art is determined by the hero, by how the main character is portrayed, while the form of the work is determined by the author.

In this process of ‘outsideness’, in which the writer makes themselves an outsider in relation to themselves and, in doing so, actually connects themselves to the world, there appear to be two movements.

On one hand, the author takes a distance from themselves and their material and observes themselves as another. On the other hand, they embrace voices from outside as their own voices, as we already saw in Chapter I.1. The author internalises the other’s voice as one of the voices in their writing process. That could be the voice of the co-makers, the voice of the commissioning party or, for example, the voice of the audience.

Making the voice of the other one’s own requires a strategy, which I refer to with a concept from the spiritual tradition,²⁶⁴ *That Art Thou*: with regard to aspects of the outside world, the artist endeavours to think, “I am that, too”. In other words, not “I can imagine that” or “I can sympathise with that”, but actually aspiring to the feeling of, “I am that, too”. When I was commissioned to write a play about a character with multiple personality syndrome, I was only able to write it when I felt, in the fibre of my being, that part of me had MPS syndrome, too, even though I have never been diagnosed with it.²⁶⁵

That strategy of internalising external voices is therefore also a way of looking at yourself as at another because, as the writer, you create the other in yourself, therefore distancing yourself from that Self. The French playwright and philosopher Hélène Cixous has often said that, particularly in theatre, in the writing process you are always in contact with ‘the other’, that you are and must be open to voices from outside and that those voices

then constitute part of your writing process. In her view, to be open to voices from outside you need a Self that has almost ‘evaporated’. She feels the author must achieve a state of

*“démolisation”, this state of without me, of depossession of the self, that will make possible the possession of the author by the characters.”*²⁶⁶

1.3.7 Addressivity

Bakhtin considers the concept of addressivity to be the essential state of man:²⁶⁷ there is no autonomy, no individual voice; only in constant dialogue with the world can I define and complete myself. My consciousness is continually being addressed by the world and I have a responsibility to respond. This ceaseless responding by myself always has a direction; it speaks to others, it has an addressee. I am always being addressed and in everything I, myself, say there is an addressee. When I speak, I speak to someone. When I write, I address someone. Art or the creative process is radically a *communicative* process, which gains meaning in dialogue. Addressivity is the principle that every utterance, even talking to yourself, has an ‘intended audience’.

When you look at theatre and the theatre text then, on the basis of this dialogical idea, not only are the questions, ‘Who is speaking here in this text?’ and ‘Who is speaking in this writing process?’ important, but certainly also the question, ‘Who is this text addressing?’ Is the book of stage directions not aimed at the theatre makers who will be performing the script rather than the audience or the reader?

At a highly practical level, such a question arises when a student studying ‘Writing for Performance’ asks whether they are permitted to write stage directions. Naturally, such a question is directly related to who the text is actually intended for.

²⁶⁴ The term comes from the spiritual text *Upanishad*

²⁶⁵ Nirav Christophe, *Wij Bram*, by International Music Management/Stichting Grind productie 1998

²⁶⁶ Quoted in: Blyth & Sellers 2004:54

²⁶⁷ Indicated by Morris (ed.) 1994:245, for example

In the theatre, addressivity also expresses itself in the direction of the text on stage.

Globally, an actor can give a text four directions. The character addresses another character, the character speaks to himself, the character speaks to God or the world (such as in the despairing cry, "Woe is me!") or the character speaks to the audience.

In contemporary theatre, we are increasingly seeing that text has several directions at once. An actor within a fictitious story can for example, speak as a character within the representation and, at the same time, address the audience as an actor. These direction doublings occur not only in the acting style (which is then referred to as transparent), but also in the theatre text itself.

One evident place in which that direction doubling is visible and can also be used as a basis for a writing strategy is the stage monologue. In his introduction to theatre studies, Robert Leach writes that, for this reason, most monologues in the theatre are actually dialogic, in the spirit of Bakhtin. He gives Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as an example:²⁶⁸

"Vladimir is not simply speaking to himself, he is asking questions, arguing two (or more) possibilities, restlessly exclaiming and observing. He is also, of course, communicating with the audience. Indeed, such is the intensity of 'dialogic' monologue in the theatre that whole plays have been built with it, (...)"

That polyphony of monologues based on the doubling of speech direction leads, in staging, to various characters performing the monologue. This has often been the case with the postdramatic monologue 4.48 *Psychosis*, by the British playwright Sarah Kane. This theatre monologue is regularly performed by two actors and, in 2006, the Tangram Theatre Company, directed by Daniela Goldman, even used seven actresses for the piece.²⁶⁹

In the theory of postdramatic theatre, this doubling of speech direction is central. The German theatre scholar Theresia Birkenhauer calls the two directions, 'between characters' and 'from actor to audience', the two axes of the theatre and she, too, speaks of the double perspective as *the* characteristic of theatrical language.²⁷⁰

In fact, that doubling of directions or axes describes the polyphony of the theatre text: as the text addresses several directions, several voices also speak in that text, such as the voice of the author and the voice of the character.

The principle of addressivity is therefore directly linked to the concept of polyphony. Addressivity can help us distinguish between and recognise the various voices of the theatre text and, from there, those in the theatre writing process. I will therefore also use the question, ‘To whom does the theatre text speak?’ when attempting to construct a poetics of the theatre text in Chapter II.

Bakhtin himself, incidentally, regularly refers to one special voice, a specific addressee of the text, whom he calls the ‘superaddressee’. He appears to mean a kind of ideal reader, similar to the way some writers say, ‘I actually write for my mother’ or ‘I want young people from 8 to 12 years to understand it, in particular’.

Such a superaddressee is a voice that can have a great influence on the writing process. Not infrequently, when teaching writing, the voice of the writing teacher becomes the superaddressee. Writing students appear to be writing primarily for their teacher and will therefore make choices of which they hope or expect their teacher will approve. In that case, the voice of the teacher can become an inner critic, muzzling other creative voices in the writing process.²⁷¹

That way, theatre practice, for example, can also become the superaddressee, the continual inner critic. Then, when writing, we get characters to speak as we think they ought to on stage, in ‘good’ theatre.

The superaddressee need not necessarily be a critical voice stemming the creative process. It can also, as the philosopher Fred Evans so beautifully puts it, refer to exactly the opposite: an egoless voice

²⁶⁸ Leach, 2010 (2008):29

²⁶⁹ See Laurens de Vos, in: Wallace et al. 2006:120

²⁷⁰ Birkenhauer, 2005:76-84

²⁷¹ Frank Farmer describes the writing teacher as superaddressee in his book on teaching writing *Saying & Silence; Listening to Composition with Bakhtin*, 2001:5 onwards

"a reference to the multivoiced body itself, to its interplay of heterogeneous voices and its unfinalizability about truth."

While writing, we also address a voice that says we are more than an individual, far greater than our plans and ideas. With this voice, there is only the consciousness of the writing process, or the continuous reflexivity, as Celia Hunt and Fiona Sampson refer to it in their book *Writing; Self and Reflexivity*.

We see that Bakhtin's concept of the superaddressee again evokes such a typical duet of opposing voices in the writing process: the voice of the inner critic and the voice of egoless self-reflexivity. We will encounter these voices again in the description of the theatre writing process in Chapter III.

For writing and teaching writing, insight into addressivity and, specifically, into the superaddressee is useful for recognising and being able to distinguish between the voices during the writing process.

We can, of course, have such a superaddressee or ideal reader in mind when writing, but Bakhtin claims that it is a voice that we can also actually recognise and identify in a text.²⁷²

When Bakhtin describes the superaddressee as:

"an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue" (...), an absolutely just responsive understanding",²⁷³

then, more than anything, that reminds me of the chorus in Greek tragedy. They are addressed without being fellow characters in the play. As there are several of them, they have no individual interests. They do, however, represent a moral or ethical touch. Sometimes, they seem to be like God: they see all and hear all, but are not, themselves, a (mortal) party. In Sophocles' *Oedipus in Colonus*, they are referred to as the 'all-seeing kindly ones'.

We have seen how Bakhtin's terms and concepts help create, describe or clarify polyphony. *Hybridisation* is the act of breaking down the one dominant voice in instigating the doubling and reproduction of those voices. *Carnivalisation* demonstrates strategies of which this process takes place and *outsideness* and *addressivity* help us identify new voices in this process. The multiple voices thus created are referred to as *heteroglossia* when they are visible in the art product and *polyphony* if, in addition, they

are found in a making process or in an artist. *Unfinalizability* shows that each voice (and therefore each art product, artistic process or artist) is neither finalised nor static, but dynamic and fluid. Those dynamics of the endless interplay between the voices, which we refer to as *dialogism*. Dialogism and polyphony constitute the core of the creative process. All these concepts can assist us in approaching such a radically dynamic and infinite phenomenon as the creative process and, in our case, the theatre writing process.

²⁷² See, for example, Bakhtin 2008 (1981):88/89

²⁷³ Bakhtin, 2010 (1979):126

I.4 Bakhtin's 'polyphony' and the theatre

These days, Bakhtin's ideas are used strikingly often in the most varying domains, from management and leadership²⁷⁴ to psychology, personality psychology²⁷⁵ and philosophy.²⁷⁶

In the arts and pedagogy, we are regularly seeing concepts such as polyphony and dialogism crop up in debates on pedagogic models and strategies,²⁷⁷ in Creative Writing and Composition Studies²⁷⁸ and in media-specific publications, such as *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*,²⁷⁹ *Bakhtin and the Movies*²⁸⁰ and *Bakhtin and Theatre*.²⁸¹

Aside from Dick McCaw's book, Bakhtin's philosophy is rarely linked to theatre and performance. One exception is an article by Arthur Sabbatani on the pedagogy of theatre.²⁸²

Never before have Bakhtin's concepts been used to form a basis for the pedagogy of writing for theatre. His concept of polyphony has, however, been used twice earlier to describe and analyse theatre texts. These works, *Speaking in Tongues; Languages at Play in the Theatre* by Marvin Carlson²⁸³ and *New Playwriting Strategies; A Language Based Approach to Playwriting* by Paul Castagno,²⁸⁴ certainly provide a usable framework for studying theatre text, but in their use of the concept of polyphony they limit themselves to *polylingualism* and *text types*.

Carlson and Castagno's books do raise the question of what is actually being doubled in the polyphony of a theatre text, in other words: of what the various voices consist. Does the polyphony refer to various *languages and dialects* as with Carlson, to various *text types* as with Castagno, to various *genres* as Kirstin Schulz seems to claim without even mentioning Bakhtin,²⁸⁵ or to the *text directions* or *axes*, as Theresia Birkenhauer describes them? And what is then not doubled in the theatre text? Novelist David Lodge, who also wrote the wonderful instruction book *The Art of Fiction*, says, for example, that polyphony in the modern novel is expressed in a mixture of *styles* and that this is what distinguishes the novel from drama and epic.²⁸⁶ That would, therefore, mean that theatre texts do not lend themselves to a polyphony of styles, while that is clearly belied by many contemporary theatre texts.

Polyphony is often used in the theatre to indicate a mixture of *genres or styles*. This we can see with, for example, the godfather of postdramatic theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann, although he cites *polylingualism* (polylogism), to which Carlson refers.

I will deal with which voices are doubled in the theatre text and which are not in Chapter II when developing a poetics of the theatre text.

Carlson and Castagno focus chiefly on the *product*, the theatre text, and pay little attention to the theatre writing *process* while, in my view, insight into the writing process is a precondition for designing a productive writing pedagogy.

In the debate on Bakhtin's polyphony, the criticism is that the concept itself is too monological, too dominant and too didactic.²⁸⁷ That, in my eyes, is far less of a problem when we transfer the concept to the creative process and refer to it as a descriptive rather than a prescriptive making model.

The strength of the concept of polyphony also lies, I feel, in mirroring qualities: a polyphonic artistic product reflects a polyphonic image of the artist with a polyphonic making process, which can be translated into a polyphonic art pedagogy.

The question is how the concepts of polyphony can be linked to the theatre writing *process*. Dialogism, the interplay between the various voices, should particularly assist in approaching the dynamic of the artistic process.

²⁷⁴ Janssens & Steyaert 2001

²⁷⁵ Hermans 2006 and Pollard 2008

²⁷⁶ Evans 2008

²⁷⁷ As in Shields 2007

²⁷⁸ Halasek 1999, for example

²⁷⁹ J. Haynes 1995

²⁸⁰ Flanagan 2009

²⁸¹ McCaw 2016

²⁸² Arthur Sabatini, 'The Dialogics of Performance and Pedagogy', in: Stucky & Wimmer, *Teaching Performance Studies* 2002:191-202

²⁸³ Carlson 2009

²⁸⁴ Castagno 2001

²⁸⁵ Schulz 2009

²⁸⁶ David Lodge, quoted in: Pollard 2008:700/4341

²⁸⁷ Emerson 1997:133

I will do this in Chapter III, by combining dialogism with a writing model by Linda Flower & John Hayes.

Bakhtin did not like theatre. As a result of the dialogue, theatre appears to be eminently polyphonic, but in Bakhtin's view it is monological because the characters no longer have any freedom or autonomy and a character simply says what it is told to say.

In his book on Dostoevsky, Bakhtin tells how A.V. Lunachersky, who also discussed the polyphony in Dostoevsky as autonomous voices within one literary work, named Shakespeare as an example of extreme polyphony. Lunarchevsky describes Shakespeare's characters as "independent of their author". Bakhtin reacted violently to this; Shakespeare can hardly be called polyphonic because, in his view, theatre is essentially monological.

"First, drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony; drama may be multi-levelled, but it cannot contain *multiple worlds*; it permits only one, and not several, systems of measurements. (...) In essence each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero, while polyphony presumes a plurality of fully valid voices within the limits of a single work (...)." ²⁸⁸

Here, Bakhtin seems to be looking for reasons to counter the suggestion that polyphony already existed far earlier in literature – in Shakespeare, for example – as if that fact would destabilise the genre of the 'polyphonic novel' he had discovered.

At the same time, Bakhtin is demonstrating that he has only one type of theatre in mind: the realistic, conventional theatre of his era.

In those plays, there is no narrating instance through which the characters speak directly to the audience. In the study of literature, therefore, the theatre text is referred to as 'objective' ²⁸⁹ or 'absolute'. ²⁹⁰

In addition, the moment a character speaks their lines on stage, they choose one voice, making theatre essentially monological, in Bakhtin's view.

I believe there are two arguments that can be made against Bakhtin's hypothesis that theatre is monophonic and not polyphonic.

1. He says that *all* language and thoughts are essentially of a dialogical nature. ²⁹¹ That must, then, also apply to theatre texts. Bakhtin's ideas about polyphony and dialogism can be placed in a shift in the Western view of the dialogue as logical dialectic to non-dialectic dialogue, which sees its

conditions reflected in the practical and everyday aspects of dialogue, the conversation.²⁹²

2. Bakhtin was not keen on theatre, because he only knew the traditional, conventional side. Panchappa R. Waghmare writes about this:²⁹³

“The drama, for Bakhtin, is hostile to dialogism, and dramatic discourse is made up only of objectified speech utterly subordinates to an ultimate semantic authority. This is the view appropriate to naturalist drama. Instead, Brecht’s Epic Theatre and Dramas written on Brechtian mode which makes use of narrative elements are examples of non dramatic dialogism.”

In his book *Rabelais and his World*,²⁹⁴ Bakhtin says carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance.²⁹⁵

Here, Bakhtin is discussing a kind of marketplace theatre. With François Villon’s *Tragic Farce* as an example, he describes a kind of theatre without a stage,

“in the middle of life itself (...) there is no separation into participants (actors) and spectators; they all play together.”²⁹⁶

Bakhtin wants a theatre akin to carnival, which is impossible as the theatre as he knows it distinguishes between spectators and audience. On the basis of carnival, Bakhtin draws the spectator into the event, making it interactive

²⁸⁸ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):33

²⁸⁹ By Murasov 2001, Waghmare 2011, for example

²⁹⁰ Luxemburg, Bal & Westeijn 1987 (1981):212, for example

²⁹¹ See White & Peters 2011:248

²⁹² White & Peters 2011:248

²⁹³ Panchappa R. Waghmare, ‘Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogism and Intertextuality: A Perspective’, in: *Indian Streams Research Journal*, Vol.1 Issue IV, May 2011

²⁹⁴ Bakhtin, 1990:7

²⁹⁵ See, for example, Morson & Emerson 1990:92

²⁹⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* 1990:291

and the spectator and their reactions, therefore, part of it. The spectator becomes an extra voice, rendering the event polyphonic.

Bakhtin's ideal of eliminating the boundary between actors and audience foreshadows performance in postdramatic theatre, as it contributes to dismantling dramatic representation.

Or, as the Russian writer and critic Jurii Murasov puts it,²⁹⁷

"In Bakhtinian theater, the spectator is no longer a distanced observer, but becomes an actor of a dramatic situation himself."

Murasov also points out that Bakhtin despised theatre because, in his eyes, word and body were separated, while carnival eliminates the distinction between not only actor and audience but also language and body. Here, too, he anticipates performance and postdramatic theatre, in particular, in which the body is just as important a sign as language and, from the point of view of the theatre text, becomes an extra voice.

It is actually the open forms of theatre (such as Brecht, absurdism, performance, postdramatic theatre) that seem to allow polyphony and dialogue.²⁹⁸

Strikingly, in *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, Caryl Emerson gives a number of arguments aimed against Bakhtin's concepts in general and polyphony in particular, but those objections lose their strength, in my view, when related to theatre and performance.

Many have argued that Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is unclear, as it is based on verbal dialogue alone and because, according to Bakhtin himself, a linguistic utterance is monologised when spoken.²⁹⁹

"It is (sometimes) difficult to speak it aloud, for loud and living intonation excessively monologizes discourse and cannot do justice to the other person's voice present in it".³⁰⁰

I contended earlier, however, that dramatic theatre practice consists of the speaking and staging of a play doubling the voices in that utterance.

The actor reveals the subtext in speaking, for example: he says one thing, but I can see from the character that he also means something else. Theatre-making strategies aimed at turning texts into spoken utterances are all intended to add voices to and therefore dialogue a text.

There is also a great deal of resistance in the debate around Bakhtin to the fact that the hero or character is said to be a separate, autonomous voice in the text in addition to that of the author. Yuri Kariakin, for example, says that the author is, nevertheless, still the all-determining and deciding voice of the text. To reinforce his argument, he states that Dostoevsky was more of a theatre writer than a novelist, as he saw it all before him, actually adding a third voice to the double-voiced text: that of the all-determining director.³⁰¹

In theatre practice, that voice of the director can be found in theatre texts in stage directions, for example, but that is not the all-determining, deciding voice, by any means. After all, we are talking about stage directions: the writer does not take any decisions, but offers possibilities and directions, with which the co-makers can do as they please. In contemporary plays, the extra voice of the stage *directions* is emphasised, as that text is increasingly acquiring its own, often personal style. It is no longer the objective, impersonal voice that suggests the text “should be staged exactly like this”; it is more a subjective voice that makes cautious *suggestions*, such as³⁰²

“She makes no impression whatsoever. Jessica looks at her a little oddly. Then Sarah slowly and agonisingly twists Jessica’s arm into a strange angle Jessica puts up with it all, until...”

Bakhtin’s concepts appear to correspond better with theatre. His dialogism is a language philosophy that views language as radical in contact, as vernacular, as language in conversation. Julia Kristeva, insisted, in his spirit, on importance of the speaking subject as the basis of man.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Murasov 2001

²⁹⁸ This is also the conclusion drawn by Graham Pechey in his 1993 article ‘On the borders of Bakhtin’, quoted in McCaw 2016:29/30

²⁹⁹ Emerson 1997:130

³⁰⁰ Bakhtin, 2011 (1984): 198

³⁰¹ Emerson 1997:130

³⁰² Rick van den Bos, *Wij zijn grijs gebied* [We Are Grey Area], De nieuwe toneelbibliotheek 2009:24

³⁰³ White & Peters (ed.) 2011:254

"The word in language is half someone else's",³⁰⁴

says Bakhtin, indicating that language is never neutral or individual, but he also seems to be talking about language as a half-product, about... probably the theatre text.

Every utterance is a reaction, as Valentine Voloshinov wrote in the book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.³⁰⁵

"Any utterance – the finished, written utterance not excepted – makes response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn."

Voloshinov was a member of the Bakhtin Circle, a group of thinkers centred on Bakhtin. Aside from the fact that it is claimed Bakhtin himself wrote this book by Voloshinov but was unable to publish it under his own name for safety reasons, Bakhtin frequently described this 'language as a response' principle in his own work.

In their ideas, the Bakhtin Circle, and certainly Bakhtin and Voloshinov, were akin to Ludwig Wittgenstein, as the meaning of the text is anchored not in the language, but in its use, the 'meaning as use' principle.³⁰⁶ For this radical contextualism (meaning does not exist outside the context of language and its use) the theatre seems to have almost been invented as a metaphor. The theatre text gains meaning in its staging, in its use, not yet having any of its own.

When, in 1987, Fassbinder's play *Garbage, the City and Death* was about to be staged in the Netherlands, a group of people wanted to ban the performance in advance, claiming the script was anti-Semitic. In those turbulent weeks, a small minority had the refreshing idea of first allowing a performance before deciding whether the play should be banned, as the meaning of a theatre text cannot be established without staging.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin gives a detailed diagram of the types of polyphonic texts, or discourses. In his view, utterances are double voiced when they are,

"Discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse".³⁰⁷

This diagram includes a category, *active double-voiced words*, which, strikingly enough, appears to refer entirely to theatrical utterances and aspects. Here, Bakhtin describes what, as far as I am concerned, are primarily

theatrical and theatre texts, although he is seemingly only talking about prose and Dostoevsky's novels.

In that category, he defines five forms:

a. Hidden internal polemic

Here, Bakhtin is referring to what, in theatre, we call the 'inner conflict' or 'dramatic duality', whereby two contrasting voices speak simultaneously and side by side in the character.

b. Polemically coloured autobiography and confession

Characteristic of the confession is that two voices speak at once in one person: one that is still reticent and another that finally wants to come out with it. The confession then becomes theatrical and suspenseful, not because of the content of the message but because the two voices alternate. This is often also the 'delaying technique' of theatre writers: they delay the confession by switching between the two voices.

In an autobiography, the dominant question is: is the autobiographer telling the truth? Is there not also a second voice speaking here, forming, devising and concealing autobiographical material?

c. Any discourse with a sideward glance at someone else's word

With this form, Bakhtin is referring to the entire area of references and intertextuality.

When, in 1992, Gerardjan Rijnders wrote his play *Liefhebber* for Toneelgroep Amsterdam in one night, he gave the main character and the title the name of a then well-known Dutch theatre critic. The style and rhythm of the play are very similar to those of Thomas Bernhard. Bernhard's habit of regularly naming his plays after existing people – in his case actors (Minetti, Ritter, Dene, Voss) is also echoed in Rijnder's title.

In the theatre, many such references and instances of intertextuality can be observed in almost every line, not least because new adaptations are

³⁰⁴ Bakhtin 1981:293-294

³⁰⁵ Voloshinov 1973:72

³⁰⁶ White & Peters 2011:257/258

³⁰⁷ Bakhtin, 2011(1984):199, extensively described and notated in Morson & Emerson 1990:147

continually being made of existing material and old stories. There are countless versions of *Oedipus*, *Medea* and *Antigone*. In those adaptations, the earlier scripts also speak as a second voice in the text.

d. A rejoinder of a dialogue.

Here, I believe Bakhtin is referring to a rebuttal or a sharp retort that, in itself, already creates the utterance on which the response is based. In this, we recognise the theatre writing technique, referred to as 'interpretation', which is based on creating a subtext: the character says something and a second voice inside them responds to what they suspected the other meant. It is actually continually interpreting the other's subtext.

One example is Esther Gerritsen's *Is dat een kapstok?* [Is That a Hatstand?] ³⁰⁸

"Mother: are you wearing that?

Daughter: yes

Mother: oh

Daughter: is there something wrong with it?

Mother: no

did I say that?

Daughter: don't you like it?

Mother: as long as you like it

that's what matters

Daughter: do you think it looks funny?"

The daughter is not responding to the mother's first voice, which only enquires as to what the daughter is wearing; the daughter responds to what she *suspects*, that the mother's second voice is saying 'It's awful, that thing you've got on!' That interpretation of the second voice creates subtext and, therefore, drama.

e. Hidden dialogue

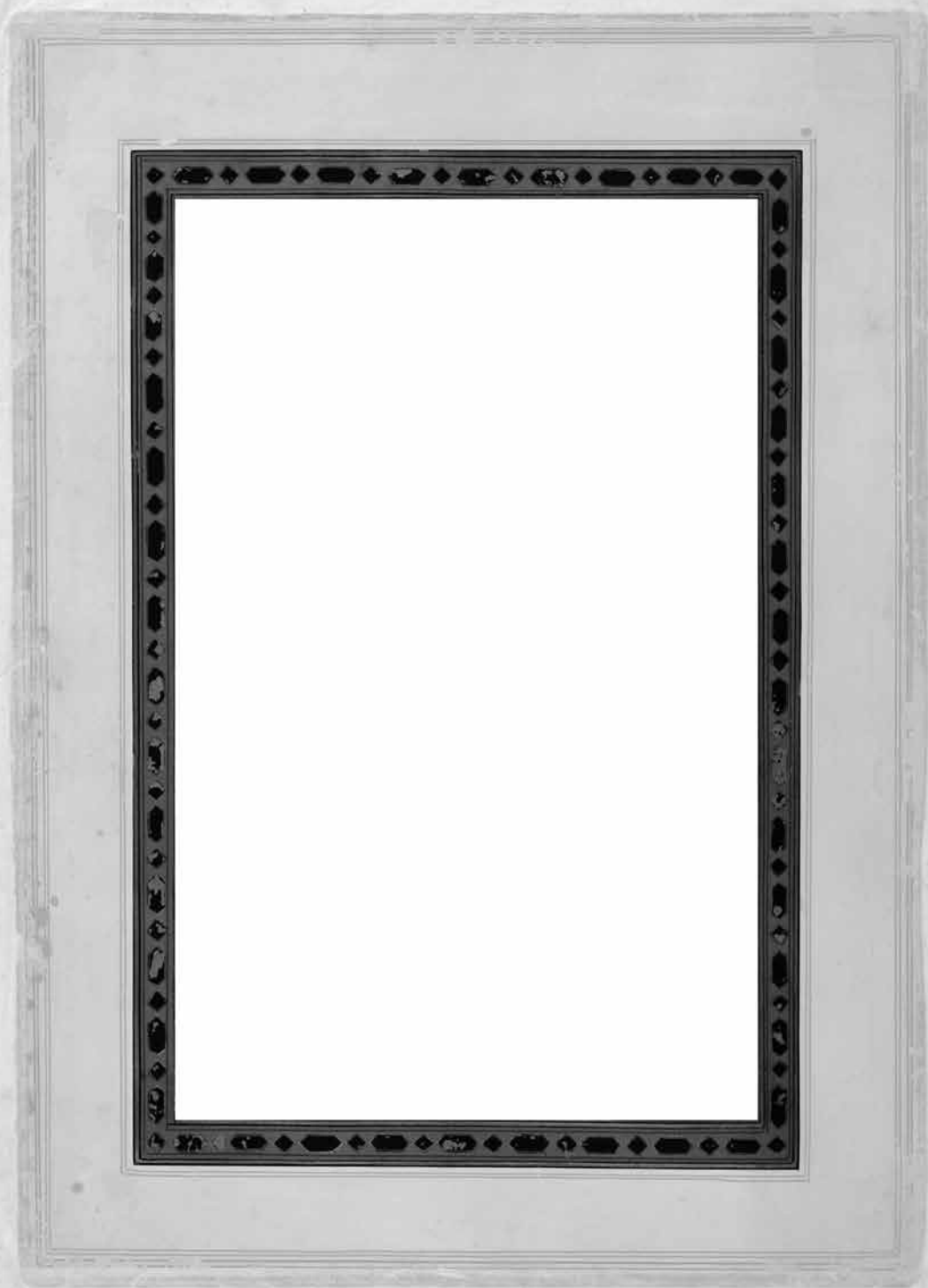
This type could refer to theatrical basis dialogue, in which the drama is created by the two characters meaning something other than what they are saying and, therefore, conducting a conversation at two levels. A couple in love are cooking. The conversation is about the ingredients and the menu while, at a lower level, there is a hidden dialogue about attraction, rejection, passion and hormones.

In my eyes, all these five forms of the category of *active double-voiced words* Bakhtin names here are directly applicable to linguistic theatre text in both a dramatic and a postdramatic context and therefore to both representational theatre and non-representational theatre.

DIAGRAM 2

		THE ARTIST'S PERSONAL VOICE
Voice	The voice as style	The voice of the character
		The voice as identity
	The voice as expression	The voice of the narrator
		The voice of the writing
		The voice of the impersonal writer
		The voice of the other
		Polyphony
		Dialogism
		Heteroglossia
		Hybridisation
		Unfinalizability
		Carnivalisation
		Outsideness
		Adressivity

A polyphonic self	
A dialogic self	
A discoursal self	
Roland Barthes, T.S. Eliot	
Mikhail Bakhtin: The hero	
Gerard Genette	
Wendy Bishop & David Starkey	
J.M.Coetzee: The agent of the action	
Carroll Clarkson: The implied author	
Celia Hunt & Fiona Sampson: bodily sense of self	
Donald Wesling & Tadeusz Slawek: minimal voice	
Nicholas Royle: impersonal ghostliness in the voice	
Mikhail Bakhtin	
Oswald Ducrot: The voice of the producer	
Oswald Ducrot: The voice of the speaker	The voice of the co-makers
Oswald Ducrot: The voice of the opinion carrier	The voice of the social field
The multiple voices in the product or process	
Fred Evans: The interplay of voices	The voice of self-reflexivity
Distinction between the voices	
Dialogue between the voices	
Conflict between the voices	
Intertextuality	The voice of other texts, of the context
The multiple voices in a product	
The origin or appearance of multiple voices	
The voice is disassembled and doubled	
	The voice of the process
The strategy for achieving polyphony	The voice of the destruction of structure
	The voice of ostranenie, artificiality
	The voice of the other
	The voice of the inner critic
	The voice of egoless reflexivity
	The voice of the two axes in theatre



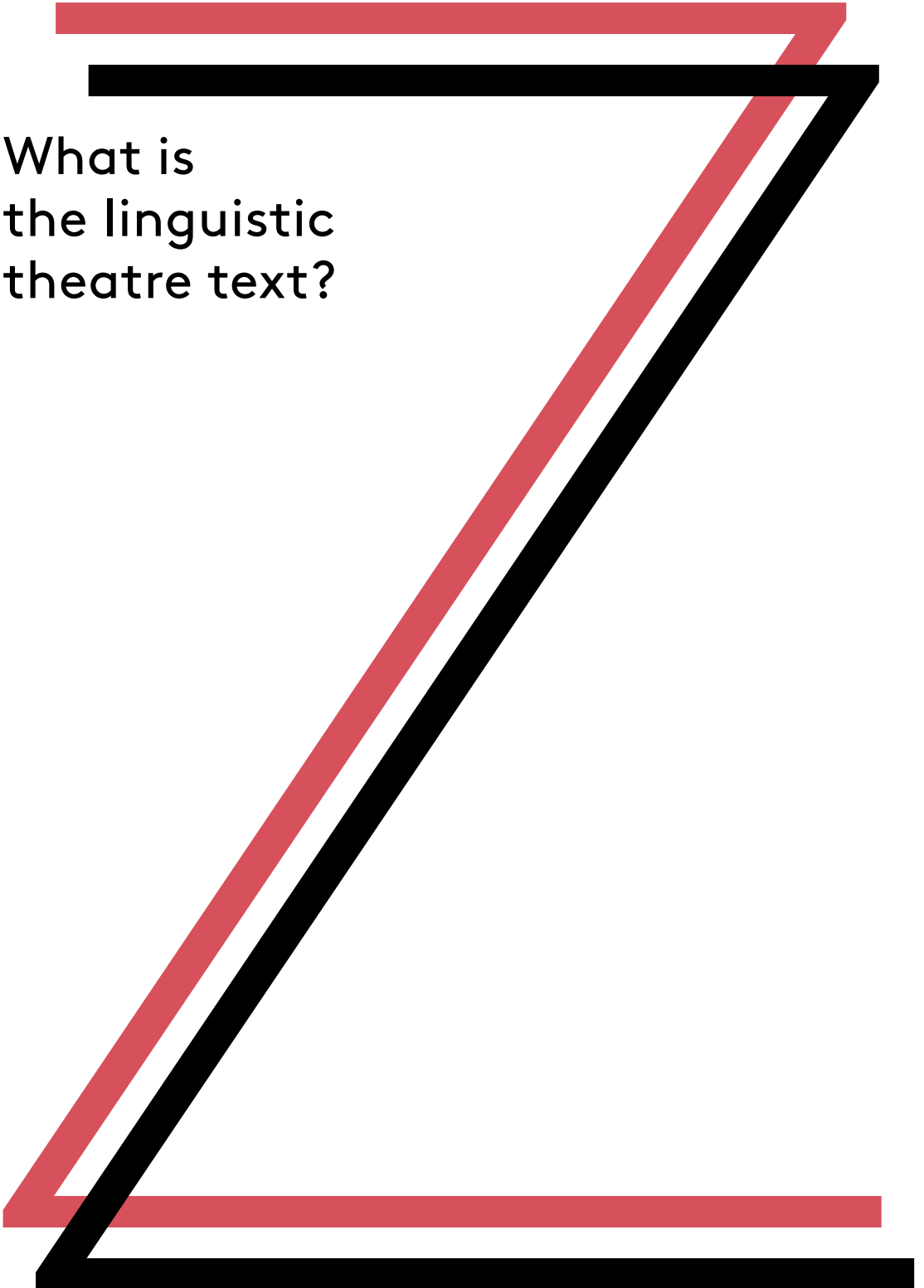
"It's the continual dialogue with my brother, which there isn't,
the dialogue with my mother, which there isn't.
It's the dialogue with my father, which there isn't.
It's the dialogue with times gone by, which there isn't,
and that are no longer, that will never be.
It's the dialogue with the big sentences, which there aren't.
It's the dialogue with nature, which there isn't,
the use of concepts, which aren't concepts,
which can't be concepts.
It's the absolute silence that ruins everything.
It's the way of treating facts that turn out to be errors.
It's the attempt to span a time that never existed.
It's the identification with things that come about through
sentences,
and you don't know anything about the things,
or about the sentences,
and you still know absolutely nothing."³⁰⁹

Thomas Bernhard

³⁰⁹ Thomas Bernhard, from: *Three days*, film by Ferry Radax 1970

This text also served as the final piece of my own 1998 play, *Wij Bram* [We, Bram]

What is
the linguistic
theatre text?



“An even bigger problem is that Roobjee’s script is entirely incomprehensible. The words twist and tumble in the craziest combinations, sometimes surprising, but too often so festooned with metaphors that it can hardly be called a theatre text. Dated experimental poetry: that’s what it boils down to. (...) A rock-solid play such as Goethe’s *Faust* can take a lot, but here the mad theatrical language itself fragments the performance.”³¹⁰

In the above review, a theatre text appears to be defined as a non-incomprehensible, not too-fragmented text with not too many metaphors and without any experimental poetry.

There are many assumptions of what a theatre text is or should be. At the same time, it is generally accepted that contemporary theatre texts are incredibly diverse³¹¹ and almost impossible to describe.

If we want to improve the pedagogy of theatre writing, then we have to be thoroughly familiar with the contemporary theatre writing process. That means we have to know what all those theatre writers are actually producing now, in other words: a description of poetics of the theatre text can help improve understanding of the writing and making process.

Moreover, the contemporary theatre text is characterised by great deal of blending and smudging of genres,³¹² fuelling a burgeoning need for tools for describing, analysing and comparing theatre texts with the aim of not only creating a clear umbrella term but also garnering more knowledge on the theatre writing process.

Strikingly, there is an almost total lack of discussion and study of contemporary theatre text in the Netherlands. The only voices as yet being heard in this debate are those of Paul Pourveur,³¹³ Stefan Hertmans,³¹⁴ David Van

³¹⁰ Kester Freriks, *Jan Declair en Koen de Sutter redder 'Faust' niet* [Jan Declair and Koen de Sutter Fail at Faust], in: *de Volkskrant* 27/9/2012

³¹¹ See, for example: Klaas Tindemans in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.66/67

³¹² See, for example, Bayersdorfer, *Neue Stücke* [New Pieces], 2014: 29-65

³¹³ Including *Het soortelijk gewicht van Sneeuwwitje* [Specific Weight of Snow White], but also his articles in the theatre studies reader, from the 1990s as well

³¹⁴ About the author and actor, in *Het putje van Miletus* [The Well of Miletus]

³¹⁵ His tirade against the well-made play

Reybrouck,³¹⁵ Erwin Jans³¹⁶ and Marianne Van Kerkhoven,³¹⁷ all Flemish, none of them Dutch. A reference to Stroman's 1973 book *De Nederlandse toneelschrijfkunst; poging tot verklaring van een gemis* [Dutch playwriting; attempt to explain a loss], is about as far as it generally goes.

One exception is Loek Zonneveld's 2009 text *Sterke stukken; kleine geschiedenis van het toneelschrijven in Nederland* [Strong Texts; a concise history of playwriting in the Netherlands].³¹⁸

Perhaps the reason for such lack of debate in the Netherlands also lies in the fact that describing and delineating the theatre text as a text genre is generally seen as problematic. Andreas Enghart, for example, admits in his description of contemporary (German) theatre,

"In contemporary theatre, the question of genre, in other words the need to distinguish between drama and an epic or lyric text, is a problem".³¹⁹

In Enghart's view, this is particularly complicated because, nowadays, all kinds of texts are used for theatre, so the question continually hangs in the air as to whether contemporary theatre still needs plays.

In this chapter, I show how a genre description of theatre text is quite possible and desirable when that poetics is founded on Bakhtin's concepts regarding the notion of polyphony.

In my eyes, a poetics of the theatre text is more than a genre description of the product. As the theatre scholar Birgit Haas, quite rightly, implies in her quest for a poetics of the theatre text, a text for theatre is so bound up with its stage production, with its possible translation into other disciplines and media, that a poetics will also need to involve *performance practice*. And precisely because of the intimate intertwining of theatre text and performance practice, in Haas' view, the way in which theatre text is produced, the methodology or *writing process*, should also constitute part of a poetics.

"The discussion on the poetics of the theatre text refers primarily to the production of 'text', but this does not mean solely the production, the writing of a script in the traditional sense; from the point of view of the authors the concept of poetics includes every form of creation that can ultimately lead to a performed 'text'. That means the concept of text as texture, of an interweaving of various meanings and contexts. Meanwhile, depending on the interpretation of the playwright, poetics is a concept either primarily for written drama or for the

audiovisual, multimedial textualisation of language components within a performative context.”³²⁰

One way of describing the theatre text product as a process is to formulate not the laws of the product but, rather, the *Formungstendenzen* [shaping trends], the strategies that occur in the writing. That means devoting more attention to writing strategies than to the intentions of the text.

Establishing the theatre text as a fixed product makes it impossible to describe its dynamics and movement. According to Norbert Otto Eke, this is also why there has been increasing focus on the writing process within the theatre in recent years.

“This explains the interest in the institutional and discursive framework for the creation of text and also in the self-interpretations and self-positioning strategies of authors within their own field”.³²¹

It is not easy to involve the writing process in the description of the theatre text. The relationship between the writing product and the writing process is problematic. Can you tell from a text how it has come into being? Does a particular methodology or writing strategy offer or even guarantee the prospect of a high-quality product? Despite the fact that we are inclined

³¹⁶ His articles in *Etcetera* on the evolution of the play

³¹⁷ Also in the early 1990s about the evolution of the play

³¹⁸ Commissioned and published by the Vereniging van Letterkundigen (now the Dutch Association of Writers and Translators)

³¹⁹ Englhart 2013:11; “Überhaupt ist die Gattungsfrage, also die Frage nach der Abgrenzung des Dramas vom epischen Text bzw. von der Lyrik, im modernen Theater ein Problem.”

³²⁰ Birgit Haas, *Dramenpoetik 2007; Einblicke in die Herstellung des Theatertextes*, 2007:22, the italics are mine, NC; “Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Begriff der Dramenpoetik zielt grundsätzlich auf die Produktion von “Text”: Nicht länger ist damit nur die Herstellung, d.h. das Verfassen eines Dramentextes im traditionellen Wortsinne gemeint. Vielmehr umgreift der Begriff der Poetik aus der Sicht der Autoren jegliche Form der Produktivität, die letztendlich zu einem ausgeführten “Text” werden kan. Letzteres verweist auf den Begriff des Textes als Textur, als Geflecht unterschiedlicher Bedeutungshorizonte und Kontexte. Poetik ist ein Begriff geworden, der je nach Auffassung der Dramatiker entweder eher für das geschriebene Drama oder für die audiovisuelle, multimediale Vertextung von Sprachpartikeln innerhalb eines performativen kontextes steht.”

³²¹ Eke 2015:9; “Das begründet das Interesse für die institutionellen und die diskursiven Rahmungen der Textentstehung und auch für die Selbstdeutungen und Selbstpositionierungsstrategien von Autoren und Autorinnen innerhalb ihres Feldes, ...”

to answer ‘no’ to both, if we are going to occupy ourselves with the writing process and writing pedagogy it is advisable to know just exactly what the object – in our case the theatre text – is.

The Bakhtinian polyphony concepts will assist us in incorporating both the writing process and performance practice into a poetics of theatre text, as they treat these aspects as voices in a text.

Arthur Sabatini³²² rightly said that, in addition to the historical and social context, a description of the theatre text should also, above all, include the concept of *authorship*. Who is the author or who are the authors of a theatre text, especially when that text comes into being in direct contact with other disciplines and media?

Bakhtin’s concepts will be useful in answering these questions as well.

“The problem of the textualization of performances requires as much clarification as that of genre. Factors need to be considered are: authorship (of utterances and texts); the historical situation of performance (the context); and how the performance is socially produced and consumed, both immediately and over time. Obviously, these factors involve signifying and communication processes.”³²³

We saw in the first chapter that every text evokes voices. In addition, it seems that a text tends to command a kind of authority, with ‘author’ and ‘authority’ sharing the same root. Theatre scholar Robert Leach therefore describes writing as “a bid for power”.³²⁴

When, however, a theatre text is so interwoven with performance practice and the writing and making process and when, in fact, the theatre text is, as we will see, polyphonic or, as Roland Barthes puts it, “a multi-dimensional space”, then that crystallises the question of whether a theatre text does actually have an author or whether we should start describing that author differently, as a “provider of starting points”, as Leach does, for example.³²⁵

In the Introduction, I quoted from the rules for the Dutch Language Union’s Playwright’s Prize:

“The following are excluded: translations, adaptations, cabaret texts and musicals, musical theatre, puppet shows and libretti.”

This award is making a statement about what does and, above all, what does not belong to contemporary theatre, therefore entirely denying how

performance practice, the theatre writing process and dramaturgy have developed over the past thirty years.

A poetics of theatre text must allow room for various *dramaturgies*. We know that, nowadays, in postdramatic theatre practice, the text no longer comprises the core. If the text is no longer at the core of theatre, then where does it lie? And where is the core of the theatre text itself? The theatre text has been dramaturgically dismantled by postdramatic theatre. It has been opened up to the spectator in experience theatre and games, for example; it has been opened up to other disciplines, such as music and movement; it has been opened up to reality in documentary theatre, for example. The theatre text no longer has any core; the core is everywhere. If that is so, however, then how can we describe the poetics of the theatre text within which postdramatic texts can find a place as well as dramatic plays?

This leaves us in a quandary. Books on theatre studies imply that, naturally, there is a difference between the classic play and theatre texts for postdramatic theatre. Hans-Thies Lehmann's iconic book *Postdramatic Theatre* describes³²⁶ how the theatre text has lost its central place in theatre. The danger here is that this concept will be pounced upon to entirely deny the singularity and autonomy of a theatre text, rendering a poetics actually impossible.

Consequently, many theatre scholars and theatre makers claim that, in postdramatic theatre, any text is possible and that those texts virtually defy analysis and description. That 'anything goes' attitude is used by the writer Michelene Wandor, amongst others, to argue that the play has been taken down a peg or two.³²⁷ Wandor fulminates against the growing power of the director – who, in her view, has become the author/authority of a performance – and against the inaccessibility and illegibility of the contemporary theatre text.

³²² Associate professor performance studies Arizona State University West

³²³ Sabatini, in: Stucky & Wimmer, *Teaching Performance Studies* 2002:196

³²⁴ Leach, 2008:19

³²⁵ Leach, 2008:19-20

³²⁶ Lehmann 1999:26-28

³²⁷ See Wandor 2006 and Wandor 2008 a&b

In Wandor's eyes, however, a theatre text is also always a half-product that only becomes finalised in the performance. In this, she is establishing a kind of shortcoming in the theatre text in relation to prose text, which, in my view, casts doubt on the theatre text's literary character.

It is no longer really possible to treat the theatre text as a fixed, closed art product. Even assuming the extreme position in this does not seem to help: you cannot choose between textuality and performativity or between text and theatre. The tension is a duplicity and the urge to choose originates in the separation of theatre studies and literary science.³²⁸

In my introduction, I already indicated that any theatre text contains both a theatrical and a literary component, which Gerda Poschmann refers to in her book *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext* [The No Longer Dramatic Theatre Text] as the plurimediality of the theatre text:³²⁹ the theatre text is supported by and conditional to staging and, at the same time, an autonomous literary work.³³⁰

A good poetics of the theatre text must, I believe, also include that *literary* and *theatrical* duplicity.

In his 2004 article with the meaningful title *Just a word on a page and there is drama; Anmerkungen zum Text im postdramatische Theater* [Notes on text in postdramatic theatre],³³¹ Lehmann actually gives a far clearer picture of the new theatre text than he does in 1999.

In that article, he describes how a play was initially seen as a finalised literary text that precedes a performance.

Over the past thirty years, a theoretical problematisation has arisen over how to view the apparent 'finalisation' of a theatre text. According to Lehmann, the concept of theatre text has become dynamic.³³²

In Lehmann's description of the contemporary theatre text, we find aspects that I already mentioned above as part of the poetics (such as the writing process) and terms that we encounter in Bakhtin's polyphony concepts (ambiguity, openness, unfinalizability):

"It is not so much the form, which seems closed; it is far more the process of how it comes about, the 'writing' with its fundamental openness, its unfinalisedness and plurality that has come to the fore: the 'Geno-text' beneath the 'Pheno-text', the rhythm of the 'semiotic' beneath the 'symbolic', the activity of weaving that precedes the woven."³³³

Lehman describes various 'text types' in contemporary theatre text, giving the possibility to approach a theatre text on the basis of polyphony. He also describes how the theatre text and the writing process are both never finalised but continue to evolve. He is, in other words, talking about the unfinalizability of the theatre text.

Lehmann also demolishes the unity of the contemporary theatre text, exposing it as a myth. When theatre texts are discussed within theatre studies, theatre practice and instruction books on playwriting, one soon encounters the assumption that a literary text is a finalised unity, in which everything is cohesive.

Lehmann shows that the postdramatic theatre text is characterised by fragmentation sooner than unity. In this, too, he opens the door to the concept of polyphony.³³⁴

In my view, it is that polyphony, together with dialogism (the interplay between the voices and the texts), that is capable of establishing the dynamic unity of the theatre text, making it easier to analyse and train.

Looking at how the theatre text has developed through the ages, we can clearly see that myths and exceptions continually occur. From a historical point of view, the idea of what a play is and should be and, in particular, when a text is not a real theatre text is in constant flux.

³²⁸ Norbert Otto Eke also arrives at this notion in his book *Das deutsche Drama im Überblick* [An Overview of German Drama], 2015:7. Eke is a professor of German literature at the University of Paderborn

³²⁹ Poschmann 1997:42

³³⁰ We also encounter that duplicity in Anglo-Saxon discourse, in which the drama text includes both performance and poetry, see Worthen 2010, for example

³³¹ Lehmann 2004

³³² "Der Textbegriff hat sich dynamisiert", Lehmann 2004:26

³³³ Lehmann 2004:26, "Weniger seine als fertig erscheinende Gestalt als der Prozess seines Werdens, das 'Schreiben' mit seiner prinzipiellen Offenheit, seiner Unabgeschlossenheit und Vieldeutigkeit ist in den Vordergrund getreten: der 'Geno-Text' unter dem 'Phäno-Text', der Rhythmus des 'Semiotischen' unter dem 'Symbolischen, die Aktivität des Webens, die dem Fertigen Gewebe vorausgeht."

The word 'genotext' comes from the French philosopher Julia Kristeva. The concept is also described in Machon 2009

³³⁴ Lehmann 2004:26-28

That was already the case in the 17th century, when French classicists demanded that plays comply with the way Aristotle had described them two thousand years earlier and, in the current era, that is actually still so if we look at the conditions for the Dutch Language Union Playwriting Prize, for example.

Historically, too, the description of theatre texts consists of describing how it should be done. I believe it is important for a poetics of the theatre text to also incorporate its *historical development*, while remaining a description.

One interesting historical description of the theatre text is given in the acclaimed Flemish series *Toneelstof* [Theatre Material] by, amongst others, Ronald Geerts.³³⁵ Geerts shows that, since the 1980s, the theatre text has clearly become less of an autonomous work of art.

He observes this in the methodology or the *writing process*, as more and more theatre texts are no longer being written by the author alone but being produced in direct collaboration with other theatre makers. This has led to makers developing texts jointly, with the immediate goal of using them for a theatre evening, without any ambition of becoming part of a literary canon. This line runs through Het Werktheater in the 1970s, through Jan Fabre in the following decade, up to the ‘texts for theatre evenings’ by the contemporary German director and writer René Pollesch.

Geerts also observes that waning autonomy in the new text types that have been emerging in the theatre since the 1980s, such as adaptations, modifications and postdramatic texts. Here, he makes a distinction between contemporisations, such as those produced by the Italian director and writer Dario Fo from the 1970s onwards, and deconstructions, such as the self-reflective performances by Maatschappij Discordia.³³⁶

In addition to the writing process and text type, Geerts also notes what he calls “remediations”: the text being transformed into other disciplines. In the 1990s, for example, we saw texts being used as an object and a visual element, as in Guy Cassiers’ performances.

Finally, Geerts also points to the tendency toward the diminishing importance of the performability of a theatre text. The so-called unplayable texts, such as Stefan Hertmans’ *Kopnaad* from 1993 and pieces by the British writer Sarah Kane easily find their place in the repertoire of theatre texts. When a text pays little attention to its performability, then it is far less at the service of the performance and therefore actually becomes more rather than less of an autonomous work of art.

In Geerts' historical description of theatre text, we come across some of the concepts I just mentioned as an essential part of a possible poetics: writing process, performance practice, autonomy, literary merits.

For me, it is an example of how it is only possible to describe theatre text on the basis of several concepts or, as Andreas Englhart and Artur Pelka say of the theatre text in the introduction to *Junge Stücke; Theatertexte junger Autorinnen und Autoren im Gegenwartstheater* [Young Pieces; theatre texts by young authors in contemporary theatre],

"It is no longer in any way possible to view this from one single theoretical perspective".³³⁷

To summarise, in this chapter I write a poetics of the theatre text relating to the following aspects:

- performance practice
- writing process
- authorship
- dramaturgy
- literary/theatrical content
- unity/finalisation
- historical context

I will approach these aspects on the basis of Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony.

In doing so, I restrict myself to what, in the introduction, I referred to as the linguistic theatre text, in other words the linguistic components of a performance. In theatre studies, the concept of 'text' is often expanded from the text of the written part of the performance to the text as the entirety of the performance signs.

³³⁵ Ronald Geerts, *De tachtigers schrijven* [The 80s Writers], in: *Documenta* volume XXVII 2009 nos 2+3 Themanummer Toneelstof III [Themed Issue Third Material III]: The Wonder Years

³³⁶ Geerts 2009:194 onwards

³³⁷ Englhart & Pelka 2014:13; "Diese lässt sich keineswegs mehr von einer theoretischen Perspektive aus einseitig in den Blick nehmen."

In addition, the poststructuralist idea of performance as a ‘multiplicity of signs’ is upheld. In my view, there is then a danger of the content and meaning of linguistic signs drowning in a general theatre semiotics, as if the end of language beckons.

Even though the text is no longer the core or the point of departure in post-dramatic theatre, that does not yet mean that it has disappeared. It remains a separate theatrical discipline with its own specific characteristics.

In attempting to describe the poetics of the theatre text, even simply looking, within the historical context, at all the names used for a theatre text and the titles of courses teaching the art of theatre writing proves highly illuminating. In her recent article ‘*Schreiben als Ereignis*’ [Writing as an Event], in addition to the concept of *theatre text* Karin Nissen-Rizvani also defines the term *staging text*. The former refers to all linguistic signs (this is how I use the term, too, when I talk about a *linguistic theatre text*), while the latter refers to all non-verbal signs in the theatre. The ‘staging text’ refers to all signs, in other words also those for acting, lighting and stage design, bundled together into an extremely broad umbrella term of ‘text’.³³⁸

The Dutch Language Union Playwriting Prize is looking for a *play*, which appears to imply a rather narrower meaning, a dramatic ‘well-made play’, which, as we saw, excludes many other forms of theatre text.

The five-yearly Belgian literary KANTL prize, on the other hand, talks of *stage texts*, a far broader umbrella term. The distinction between a play and theatre text exists in Germany, too. Gerda Poschmann, for example, uses *Dramentext* for the first and *Theatertext* for the second.³³⁹

This dichotomy of the play and the theatre text is also evident in how theatre writers and their activity are referred to. The German book *Neue Stücke* [New Plays], about new contemporary theatre texts, does not talk of playwrights but uses the broad term ‘*Textschreiber für die Bühne*’ [stage writers] and many contemporary theatre writing courses are entitled ‘Writing for Performance’, as is the case at Dartington College of Arts and HKU University of the Arts Utrecht.³⁴⁰ Other theatre writing courses adhere, in their name, to the old term, playwriting.

This distinction between play and theatre text also has direct consequences for coaching and encouraging theatre authors and in the curricula of courses on writing for theatre. Over the past few years, in the Netherlands and Germany there has been an increasing number of initiatives for encouraging theatre authors through grants, stipends, workshops and coaching projects.³⁴¹ Andreas Enghart and Artur Pelka show, however, that in Germany

(with major courses in Berlin, Leipzig and Hildesheim) the aim is still the traditional ‘play’, meaning the course is training for a limited interpretation of the profession. They point out how the two major developments in contemporary theatre, intermediality and interdisciplinarity (a merging of genres and disciplines), are not reflected in these courses while, at the same time, young theatre writers have a far broader practice and just as easily write texts for games, interactive scripts, documentary theatre and audio tours.³⁴²

For all these texts, I will use the term ‘theatre text’.

In researching a poetics for the theatre text, strikingly enough we do not artificially have to link Bakhtin’s polyphony concepts with the theatre text. Many makers and scholars already appear to be facing in the same direction.

In his 2015 overview of German theatre, Norbert Otto Eke calls contemporary theatre text “polyphonic”.³⁴³ Analogously with Lehmann, after demonstrating how a new multiplicity of forms and styles has emerged within the theatre text since the 1980s, he concludes that plays have changed into a “game of voices and words”.³⁴⁴

When examining Sarah Kane’s theatre texts as an example of postdramatic theatre, Lehmann, too, talks about a multiplicity of text types within one text and of a ‘*Theater der Stimmen*’ [theatre of voices].³⁴⁵

³³⁸ Nissen-Rizvani 2015:120

³³⁹ Poschmann 1997

³⁴⁰ David Buuck uses ‘writing for performance’ not as an umbrella term but in contrast with, on one hand, the more conventional theatre text and, on the other, performance poetry as featured in poetry slams and spoken word events; see: <http://jacket2.org/commentary/what-performance-writing>

³⁴¹ In the Netherlands, the work of *Tekstmederij*, set up by two graduates of the HKU Writing for Performance course, have been pioneering in this field

³⁴² Englhart & Pelka, introduction to *Junge Stücke* 2014:11-26

³⁴³ Eke 2015:214

³⁴⁴ Eke 2015:212

³⁴⁵ Lehmann 2004:28-28. Within this framework, incidentally, it is notable that many use Sarah Kane’s 4.48 *Psychosis* as a textbook example of a postdramatic theatre text (Lehmann 2004, Machon 2009, Storr 2009), als “Beispiel postdramatische écriture, wie man es kaum besser hätte erfinden können” (Lehmann 2004:28), while director Thibaud Delpeut approached Kane’s piece as a psychological well-made play when he staged it at Haarlem’s De Toneelschuur in 2011

A poetics of the theatre text includes both that multiplicity of forms and styles and the more traditional play, in other words: all texts that are used for theatrical performances, including texts for theatrical installations, music theatre, dance theatre and adaptations, including libretti, montage texts and well-made plays.

A prolific poetics is, in my view, descriptive and not normative or pre-scriptive. In his *Poetica*, Aristotle described what he encountered in Greek tragedy and the French classicists read that description as instructions for how it should be done.

II.1 Does the theatre text precede the performance?

“The idea that text and performance are created during the rehearsal process is being radicalised. (...) under the motto “all on one level”, they invite actors to talk about major and minor suffering, about childhood memories, through scraps of text, dialogues, monologues, photographs and images. Sierens samples and edits all this material until what remains is a text collage for five people on a couch taking turns in telling a story.” ³⁴⁶

In dramatic theatre, in which the text is the basis for the staging, the text chronologically preceded the performance: there is first a text, which is then staged. Separating text and staging in this way means we traditionally view the theatre text as a finished article. The text is complete and is presented as such to the makers.³⁴⁷

We can see that the borderline between text and performance has steadily blurred over the past few decades. Due to the altered position of the drama text within theatre and performance, not only text and performance but also writing and staging processes are no longer easy to separate in terms of time.

One striking example is how, in December 2012, the Dutch Association for Performing Arts (NAPK) and the Dutch Association for Writers and Translators compiled a revised model contract for writing a theatre text.

This contract employs the general concept of the theatre text and no longer the play. Moreover, two different schedules for deadlines and payment moments are defined: one when a theatre text is written prior to the rehearsal and making process and the other when the writing and staging process are more or less simultaneous and concurrent.

The second option was only added in this 2012 revision. Clearly, then, there is now broader acceptance of the fact that such a methodology is a major constituent of the creation of theatre texts written for professional practice.

³⁴⁶ Erwin Jans and Geert Opsomer, introduction by Arne Sierens, *Sierens & Co*, IT&FB Amsterdam 2000, p. 8-9

³⁴⁷ In his book *New performance / New writing*, John Freeman defines a number of characteristics of the classic theatre text, beginning with: “At one time it was the norm for the completed script to be delivered to the actors, designers and director before rehearsals commenced.” Freeman 2007:79

This immediately alters the position of theatre authors: if writing and staging are simultaneous they are no longer paid for the end product but for the effort, in fact the process. In this situation, the theatre author is often paid no more than a fee for the text, but is employed for a number of months in creating a performance and an associated text together with the other theatre makers.

The theatre text no longer either precedes or is separate from the staging. Nonetheless, many analysis methods for theatre texts are still based on that separation and, consequently, much of the teaching material and many pedagogical principles for theatre writers are based on theatre texts as finalised products that are entirely separate from the performance.

Many contemporary theatre authors develop their text not only before but also during rehearsals. The Flemish author Tom Lanoye talks about the writing process for his 1997 text, *Ten Oorlog*:³⁴⁸

“How many versions were there?

(sighs) A lot. I was writing easily as long as rehearsals took, eighteen months. I went on rewriting during rehearsals, too. So two years for one project, six plays, ten hours of theatre...”³⁴⁹

These days, a lot of playbooks feature the phrase: “The performed text may differ from the script in this book”, in reference to theatre makers and theatre authors continuing to work on the text after the première. Even the performance is no longer the end of the writing process; it is only part of it. In that case, one cannot really speak of text preceding performance.

One example is the Swedish writer and director Lars Noren. Per Zetterfalk of the University of Dalarna studied his writing process:³⁵⁰

“Characteristic of this project was Norén’s decision to continue elaborating on the text not only during the rehearsal period, but even during the performance period, which brought into focus the – far from unproblematic – relationship between his original vision as a creative artist and the collaborative work with the performers.”

We know that Molière and Shakespeare already wrote their theatre texts in collaboration with their co-makers and that their texts continued changing during rehearsals. Over the past fifty years, we have seen an increasing

number of writing strategies arise within the theatre whereby the theatre text is also actually developed during the rehearsals and no longer beforehand, at all.

Naturally, we are familiar with texts written on the basis of actor improvisations. This is how the Amsterdam theatre company Het Werktheater developed a collective new repertoire and many companies furnish themselves with theatre texts this way.³⁵¹

It need not be actor improvisations, though; it is also possible for disciplines other than text to form the basis for the performance, *in response* to which the theatre writer creates a text. With dramatic theatre, the text was often the starting point, but these days it can just as well be another discipline. In 1990, for example, the theatre company De Zwarte Hand / Maccus invited me to write a performance for them. They warned me, though, that the title had already been decided (*Dekken* – Decks) and the design was already finalised: a round table 8 metres in diameter, around which the audience sat and from which actors could pop up unexpectedly out of hatches. I wrote the text inspired by and in response to the stage design.

This way of working can also be seen in sub genres within theatre and performance, such as writing for movement theatre, contemporary music theatre and puppet and object theatre.³⁵² The theatre writer writes in direct dialogue with the other disciplines or, as Erwin Jans describes it in his article on contemporary theatre writing in Flanders,

³⁴⁸ In 2015, by means of a survey for the project *In Reprise*, within the framework of an anniversary conference celebrating fifty years of theatre studies in the Netherlands, this piece was voted the most performable Dutch language theatre text of all time

³⁴⁹ Playwright Tom Lanoye in: Johan Reyniers, 'Tom Lanoye: 'I believe in drama.', interview in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.27/67

³⁵⁰ See Zetterfalk's PhD thesis *Inter Esse – Det skapande subjektet, Norén och Reality* (*Inter esse – The Creative Subject, Noren and Reality*). Source: 5th International Conference of Doctoral Studies of Theatre Schools, Brno December 2-3 2011, Paper Abstracts

³⁵¹ This was the method I used to write *De wil om te treffen* [The will to struck] in 1989 at the RO Theater Rotterdam, *Springer Werktitel* [Springer Working Title] for the Holland Festival 1990 and, in 2006, for Els Inc., *Paradijs sub aarde* [Heaven Sub Earth], see Nirav Christophe, *Liedjes van verlangen; theaterteksten en hoorspelen* [Songs of Longing; theatre texts and radio plays], IT&FB Amsterdam, 2010

³⁵² For a description of those writing strategies, see: Jannemieke Caspers & Nirav Christophe (red.), *De kern is overal; Schrijven voor de theaterpraktijk van nu* [The core is everywhere; writing for contemporary theatre practice], IT&FB Amsterdam/Utrecht 2011

“The writing process is becoming embedded in an explicit dialectic between author and theatre maker, between literary inspiration and theatrical practice, between writing desk and stage. In many cases, the author is actively involved in the rehearsal process and this can generate fruitful feedback to the writing desk.”³⁵³

Playwright and dramaturg Daniela Moosmann extensively describes the writing strategies for this writing on and at the edge of the stage in her book *De toneelschrijver als theatermaker* [The Playwright As Theatre Maker].³⁵⁴ The theatre author is becoming a co-maker but still retains final responsibility for the linguistic material that is developed. A text developed in this manner need not, in any way, have less drama, cohesion or power of expression than theatre texts produced by an isolated writer prior to the rehearsal process.

Even the audience can be involved in the writing process during rehearsals. For writer/director Eric de Vroedt’s *Mighty Society* performance (2004–2012), the custom was to organise theme evenings with an audience, from which all the material for the text and the performance was extracted.

In addition to this text development during the rehearsal process, we even see performances where the text is only written during the confrontation with the audience. Rimini Protokoll’s *Parallel Cities* project, which I mentioned in the introduction, is one example. Four theatre authors at a bus station describe what they see around them and mix their observations with their own associations and fascinations. The spectators, chance passers-by, often waiting for the bus, see the texts projected on big screens at the moment of creation. In the performance, this writing on the spot also produces theatre texts with their own meaning and effect.

In interactive theatre, in which the members of the audience influence the performance and therefore become co-makers, text can even be developed by spectators during the performance. In *Call Cutta*, another Rimini Protokoll project, each spectator called someone at an Indian call centre. While the call centre assistant’s text was scripted, the participants could say what they pleased, making a unique contribution to the performance text.

In her 2015 book *Autorenregie* [Author Direction], dramaturg Karin Nissen-Rizvani studies what happens to theatre and theatre text when the writing and staging processes can no longer be separated. She does this by specifi-

cally examining German theatre authors who stage their own texts, namely Sabine Harbeke, Armin Petras & Fritz Kater, Christoph Schlingensief and René Pollesch. For a long time in the Netherlands, too, the new theatre texts were produced primarily by directors, such as Lodewijk de Boer, Gerardjan Rijnders, Ger Thijs and Koos Terpstra.³⁵⁵

Nissen-Rizvani looks at where writing and staging processes are linked in one person. She observes that, when writing and staging are no longer separate but are open processes, for the writers/directors she studied the performance is no longer an interpretation or unravelling the meaning of a fixed text, but rather the *continued writing* and *rewriting* of a text. Staging therefore becomes a writing strategy and the performance a lively way of reading the text together with the public, which Nissen-Rizvani refers to as a “*Lektüre*” (a reading). Writer/director René Pollesch talks expressly of ‘theatre evenings’ and is reluctant to make the texts used in those evenings available for staging by other directors. Reproducibility and performability of the text are, consequently, no longer as essential as they were.

From the point of the text, the performance is not a finalising staging but a writing-on discourse, in which the text is developed further in dialogue with the audience and the makers.

Nissen-Rizvani also describes how, when the text and staging are no longer separate and the writing and making processes are concurrent, this produces a completely different view of theatre text: more attention is devoted to the process of creation, the text in a permanent state of progress and change.

When the writing has no clear beginning and no clear end, then the notion of the text as a static, finalised product becomes a problem.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ Jans, Erwin, ‘Tussen dialoog en monoloog. De heruitvinding van de toneelliteratuur in Vlaanderen’ [Between Dialogue and Monologue. Reinventing playwriting in Flanders] (2), in: *Etcetera* no. 118, 2009, p.38

³⁵⁴ Moosmann 2007

³⁵⁵ See Nirav Christophe, ‘Poging tot verklaring van een explosieve groei; nederlandse toneelteksten en hun schrijvers’ [Attempt to Explain Explosive Growth; Dutch theatre texts and their writers], in: *De Theater nv*, volume 2 number 7 October 2003, p. 4-6. Loek Zonneveld feels that, in recent decades, it has been more of a rule than an exception for the writer to also produce the première of the own work in the role of director, Zonneveld 2009:21

³⁵⁶ For the impossibility of defining the beginning of the writing process, see the Chapter ‘Starting Writing’ in my book *Writing in the Raw*, Christophe 2008:25-37

When René Pollesch talks about a theatre evening for which theatre texts are needed, then what is the linguistic product of those evenings? Here, the theatre text product appears to be a brief crystallisation moment within the staging and writing process. Not the creative process as part of the product, in other words, but the product as part of the process.

The *writing process* therefore becomes an extra voice in the theatre text. That is especially evident when the theatre text no longer fixes in stone exactly what should be said and how, but gives directions and indicates possibilities.

Many theatre scholars seek language to describe that voice of the process. Leach calls it ‘providing starting points’,³⁵⁷ Freeman speaks of ‘giving directions’³⁵⁸ and Bishop & Starkey talk about ‘making suggestions’.³⁵⁹ We have to remember that we are referring not specifically to the stage directions here but to the spoken text itself.

The voice of this process is akin to what I described in Chapter I as the ‘voice of the writing’, which shares moments with the reader at which choices in the writing are made and actions carried out. The voice that does not conceal that there is an entire writing process below, behind and in the theatre text.

When the writing and making processes are concurrent and the theatre text should be seen more as a process than a product, it is important for that process character to be visible in the text, too, for it to actually constitute a specific voice in the theatre text.

This is what I feel René Pollesch is getting at when he says that if you are unaware of the writing process of the theatre text then its staging becomes problematic.³⁶⁰

This is also what Karin Nissen-Rizvani is referring to when she says the production process should be involved in the dramaturgical analysis of the theatre text.³⁶¹

The 2009 theatre text *Medea*, by Ko van den Bosch, starts with a monologue by the character Kreon, who briefly tells how the story is constructed:

“Kreon: What you are about to see this evening is not an integral performance of Euripides. It is a piece composed around his text, but it also makes use of excerpts borrowed from Seneca’s *Medea* and newly-written material based on conversations with Toon Verheugt, who conducted a study into infanticide, and a number of articles on real cases.”³⁶²

The writer's acts and choices are named explicitly in the text here. Often, this voice of the process is far more muffled.

In Magne van den Berg's *Halverwege omgedraaid* [Turned Halfway Around], it is barely possible to separate the spoken text from the stage directions. At some point in the script, it says,

"Why he says that to her like that when they have only just sat down, we don't know"³⁶³

A writer indicating that they do not know the character's motivation is an example of the 'voice the process'. Van den Berg's opting for using 'we' also makes the text a dialogue with the audience. 'We' seems to refer to writer, co-makers and audience.

Van den Berg concludes the play with

"up to here"³⁶⁴

Here, too, we hear the 'voice of the process'. When we want to pause, we say 'up to here'. Clearly, this is a point in a continuing process, something temporary, which could change at any moment. It is far less definite than "Curtain" or "The End".

Sarah Kane decides to conclude her theatre text *4.48 Psychosis* in a far more drastic way:

"The curtain rises"

³⁵⁷ Leach, 2008:19-20

³⁵⁸ Freeman 2007:79

³⁵⁹ Bishop & Starkey 2006:146

³⁶⁰ Nissen-Rizvani, in: Hochholdinger-Reiterer & Bremgartner & Kleiser & Boesch 2015:115

³⁶¹ Nissen-Rizvani 2011:18

³⁶² Ko van den Bosch, *Medea*, De Nieuwe Bibliotheek, Amsterdam 2011, p.7; Also cited in Berg & Overbeek & Christophe 2016:293

³⁶³ De Nieuwe Bibliotheek, Amsterdam 2009, p.7

³⁶⁴ De Nieuwe Bibliotheek, Amsterdam 2009, p.48

Not “Curtain”, not “The End”, not “up to here”, but “The curtain rises”. In doing this, Kane incorporates the entire preceding text, even the entire performance, into the domain of preparation. Everything in this theatre text is preparation for the real performance; everything in life is preparation; everything is process.³⁶⁵

The voice of the process in the theatre text can also, incidentally, manifest itself as *self-referentiality* in the text: at a certain level, the text is then about making theatre or writing a text. In theatre literature there are, naturally, innumerable examples of works dealing with writers, actors, directors and theatre, but with the voice of self referentiality it is the process of making this specific performance or this one theatre text, in particular, that is addressed.

The 2014 theatre performance *Gavrilo Prinzip*, by the theatre company De Warne Winkel, begins with a fifteen-minute acknowledgement of all the people who have made the evening possible, including the writers and filmmakers who inspired the material for the performance.

The word of thanks, which is not normally part of the work of art, is explicitly included here. At the same time, it shows that this art product is in contact with dozens of other people and art products, so it is no longer possible to clearly define who the makers of this material actually are.

During the thank you monologue, behind the actor a film set is being built in which the subsequent scenes will be played. That building could very well have been done before the audience entered the auditorium, but these typical actions demonstrating the process of theatre making become part of the work of art: the process is shown in the product.

In the tradition of dramatic theatre, the text preceded the staging and was therefore, hierarchically, the most important discipline. This promotes it out of theatre practice, as it were, excluding it from the dynamic of the staging. The striking thing is that, if the text precedes the staging, this automatically creates an image of an individual, autonomous author, analogous with the image Roland Barthes rebelled against in his article ‘The Death of the Author’. Barthes shows that, in the romantic image of the author, the writer always precedes his text.

That view of a performance being preceded by a text preceded, in turn, by an author, has led to a linear interpretation of writing and ‘product pedagogy’, in which you learn how to write for theatre by studying how good plays are constructed.³⁶⁶

Writing for theatre is one of the oldest forms of creative writing and writing for film, television and new media one of the newest. Nonetheless, both have the characteristic of not producing a definite product but being part of a greater creative process in which many others are involved.

When we conclude that the idea that a theatre text always precedes the performance is no longer tenable, we realise that the writing and making processes are no longer separated. This has three major consequences for a poetics of the linguistic theatre text:

- The theatre writer becomes a theatre maker and the co-maker becomes a voice in the writing process. The writer has the other disciplines and the other makers of the performance continually in mind while writing and that awareness can be traced as a voice in the theatre text itself, *the voice of the co-makers*.
- The theatre text should be seen as something that is continually and endlessly developing; it is more a process than a finalised end product. This voice of the creation can also be recognised in the text as *the voice of the process*, the voice of the writing that I mentioned earlier.
- In addition, the voice of the process can manifest itself as referring to its own medium, its own discipline or its own art product. In Chapter III on the writing process, we see this voice of *self-referentiality* that can be found in the theatre text itself, recurring as the voice of self-reflexivity.

³⁶⁵ Storr 2009: 57-61

³⁶⁶ Also see Chapter IV

11.2 Is the theatre text a half-product?

"One might at this point legitimately wonder why any writer should ever bother to sit down and write something which is inherently incomplete."³⁶⁷

In the script of Lot Vekeman's *Truckstop*, Roland Klamer, the artistic director of the theatre company Het Toneel Speelt, asks, in an interview with the writer, whether she sees theatre text as literature or as a half-product, with which directors can and may do as they please.

In her reply, Vekemans artfully circumvents the implied distinction that Klamer makes here. She indicates that the theatre text is a half-product – as you think it should be – but that it is also a literary text. Klamer is not alone in assuming the two concepts are incompatible; author Michelene Wandor is also quite adamant about this in her books on theatre writing *The Art of Writing Drama* and *The Author is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else*.³⁶⁸

There are two opposing images here: the theatre text as a half-product, serving the performance and the theatre text as an autonomous literary entity. Here, too, both images are determined by the way the theatre text relates to the performance.

What does it actually mean when writers say they have written a half-product, that what they have written is incomplete? And, perhaps even more importantly: can that incompleteness in the theatre text be identified? Playwright Sam Smiley says in his textbook *Playwriting: The structure of Action*:

"A written play, by itself, isn't a completed work of art, but an important ingredient for the creation of drama."³⁶⁹

And screenwriting guru Robert McKee says the same about screenplays:

"A literary work is finished and complete within itself. A screenplay waits for the camera."³⁷⁰

Many theatre writers imply that incompleteness by referring to the theatre text as a 'score', which only really exists when performed.³⁷¹ The German

playwright Tankred Dorst says that the director is the one who has to finish writing the play, as it were.

In dramatic theatre, there has long been a major paradox in this respect. As a theatre text preceded the performance, it was seen as a finished, complete product, although it is, *at the same time*, a half-product, which is ‘finished’ by the performance.³⁷²

The term half-product was much used to distinguish from other literary genres, therefore helping to establish a poetics of the theatre text.³⁷³ For a long time, it was a handy term for indicating that the text always requires acting, directing, scenery, costumes and lighting to be ‘finished’. The term half-product therefore eroded the classic primacy of the text in the theatre. That primacy treated staging practice as a kind of press for laying out and printing the text. As a result of that idea, debate amongst playwrights is often still about the freedom and autonomy of the author in relation to the director. Hugo Claus was already complaining about the degree to which directors fiddled with his literary texts.³⁷⁴ Samuel Beckett did not want theatre makers making any changes to his theatre texts, but if he directed one of his own texts he set about changing the script to his heart’s content.³⁷⁵

In this discussion, ‘true to the text’ is the core concept: the co-makers should be true to the theatre text. But what on earth are you being true to? To the writer’s aim (as if it is encapsulated in the text as a fixed meaning and intention)? To the literary character of the text (as if that is immutable and not, in principle, part of the staging)? In the Bakhtinian linguistic interpretation, we saw that the meaning and intention are not encapsulated in a

³⁶⁷ Wandor 2008B:18

³⁶⁸ Michelene Wandor, *The Art of Writing Drama; Theory and Practice*, London 2008 and Michelene Wandor, *The Author is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else; Creative Writing Reconceived*, New York 2008

³⁶⁹ Smiley 2005 (1971):10

³⁷⁰ McKee 1999 (1998):394

³⁷¹ Wandor 2008B:16 gives Ronald Hayman and Jean-Claude van Itallie as examples

³⁷² As we saw earlier, Freeman 2007:79 also, for that reason, cites ‘completeness’ as an important characteristic of the classic script

³⁷³ W.B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, p.4

³⁷⁴ See, for example, his hilarious article ‘Playwright’, Claus 1958

³⁷⁵ Also mentioned in Worthen

text, but emerge within the conveyance and sharing of that text, in the case of theatre: within the performance.

For Bakhtin, the struggle against the fixity of intention and meaning opened the door to thinking in a plurality of voices, in polyphony.

Wanting to defend theatre text from the director (“he’s not true to my text, he’s changing too much!”), from the co-makers (“he keeps pronouncing that word wrongly and he keeps forgetting that other line!”) and with regard to the application of the context (“the client/theatre group/subsidiser is restricting my creativity!”) is not only indicative of the author identifying strongly with their own text: it also seems to treat the theatre text as a finished, complete play with a fixed intention and meaning.

Micheline Wandor sees the incompleteness of the theatre text as one big cliché that, in her eyes, scandalously undermines the importance and status of the theatre text and theatre author.³⁷⁶

Is the theatre text incomplete, is it possibly unfinished?

The French philosopher (and playwright!) Alain Badiou frequently writes in his essays on theatre that the theatre text can, in its essence, only be incomplete.³⁷⁷

“In the text or the poem, the theatre idea is incomplete. It remains trapped in a kind of perpetuity. As long as the theatre idea stays solely in its perpetual form, though, it is *not yet itself*. Theatre is probably the only art that needs to complete a perpetuity with the ephemerality that it lacks. Theatre goes from perpetuity to time and not the reverse.”³⁷⁸

What is important here is that the staging is necessary to allow the text to be *itself* and complete. That is something quite different from a performance being an interpretation of something complete. Badiou also expressly states that directing is not interpretation in the usual sense.

“The theatrical act is a singular *completing* of the theatre idea. Every performance is a possible completion of this idea. (...) Theatre is, first and foremost, an incomplete perpetual idea in the ephemeral trial of its completion.”³⁷⁹

Badiou argues that, in theatre, there are no books or plays, just texts and text fragments for the ephemeral theatre event. Here, in my view, he is talking about a Bakhtinian unfinalizability of the theatre text.

“The structure of the theatre text, like that of the political text, is that of the not-all... (...) We can also say this as follows: there is no theatre book (if the book is the basis on which a text guarantees itself as the whole to which it belongs), whereas there are certainly books of prose, or of poetry. (...) it is not the existence of theatre texts that is the enigma but the fact that there can *only* be texts, and hence something that is of the order of the not-all, the incomplete, the suspended. Fragments for the aleatory event of theatre.”³⁸⁰

With Badiou, this fundamental incompleteness of the theatre text is akin to Bakhtin’s unfinalizability, as described in the first chapter.

We saw there that the unfinalizability of a text relates to its polyphony, as voices are continually in dialogue with each other, with other texts and with other voices and that that dialogue is, as it were, incessant. This dialogism of the interplay of voices turns the text into an artefact that is constantly changing and always in flux and, consequently, never finalised. When the theatre text is continually in contact with all kinds of other texts and voices, then it is not only impossible to pin the text to a fixed meaning or one author; it is also difficult to strictly delineate the text as a fixed entity.

This perspective of the linguistic theatre text fits in well with how theatre scholars such as Hans-Thies Lehmann³⁸¹ and Erika Fischer-Lichte³⁸² describe the structural change in the performance text in postdramatic theatre: more shared than transferred experience (in the sense of communication), more process than product and, above all, more *event* than ‘work’. In contemporary theatre, a great deal of attention is devoted to the dynamic interaction between all the participants, including the audience; a process you could call dialogical.

It seems we are unable to establish the completeness or finishedness of a text in an absolute sense, but we can if we view the theatre text from

³⁷⁶ Wandor 2008B:16 onwards

³⁷⁷ Badiou 1998:260-261

³⁷⁸ Badiou 1998:260

³⁷⁹ Ibid. 261

³⁸⁰ Badiou 2013:46

³⁸¹ In his book *Postdramatic Theatre*, especially see Lehmann 2006:82 and 85

³⁸² In *The transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* 2008

the point of view of its position in relation to the staging. In other words: maybe we can only establish whether the text is a half-product when we examine what the other half is to which that half-product relates.

In his article 'Theatrical Performance: Illustration, Translation, Fulfillment, or Supplement',³⁸³ Marvin Carlson³⁸⁴ defines four ways in which theatre text and staging can be related.

The first is that performance is an *illustration* of the text. Text is seen as an autonomous literary entity; the performance clarifies, but is not essentially necessary.

In the second, performance is a *translation* of the text. Aspects of the text are translated into other theatre disciplines, other signs. The text remains the source and basis of the performance. Ronald Geerts³⁸⁵ calls such performances 'remediations'.

In the case of the first two relationships, the staging is seen as the conveyance and presentation of the identity and meaning, which are already encapsulated in the text. In his book *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, Worthen sees this as a "Zombie-theory of theater".³⁸⁶

In a third relationship, the staging is a *fulfilment* of the theatre text. The performance is necessary to allow the text to come to life, to allow it to exist, in fact. Theatre scholar Anne Ubersfeld says the performance fills in the remaining gaps in the text, as it were.³⁸⁷ Staging is a kind of finalising art.

In the fourth relationship between theatre text and staging, the performance is a *supplement* to the theatre text. The performance neither interprets nor finalises the text; it adds something to it so that text and staging enter into dialogue with one another. The term supplement comes from Jacques Derrida, inspired by the philosopher and writer Roger Laporte. In the 'performance as supplement', a number of languages speak simultaneously. Carlson, who frequently uses Bakhtinian concepts in his work, therefore also refers to such staging as a *heteroglossic stage*.³⁸⁸

For a productive poetics of the theatre text, this fourth relationship, the staging as 'supplement', appears to be the most usable as, on one hand, it retains the text's own, autonomous character and, on the other, it equates

the text entirely with the other disciplines and sign systems, so they can be of maximum 'service' to the performance.

Derrida explains the concept of supplement as follows:

"a plurality that enriches another plurality, the climax of presence"³⁸⁹

This portrays not only the staging but also the theatre text as a multiplicity, a supplement. Here, the fundamental incompleteness and un-finalisedness of the theatre text³⁹⁰ are seen no longer as a shortcoming that needs to be rectified by the staging (in Carlson's 'fulfilling', in particular), but actually as an extra strength. When the theatre text itself is also a supplement, a multiplicity, it is then able to enter into dialogue with the performance.

The research into a poetics of the linguistic theatre text shows that, in contemporary theatre practice, the text is possibly far more autonomous, independent and sometimes literary than the well-made play. The play has traditionally been referred to as a half-product but, particularly in this post-dramatic era, the term half-product is counterproductive, as if the staging is needed to 'fulfil' the text.³⁹¹ The term half-product affects the autonomy of the text and, therefore, its literary value. Moreover, it reduces the staging and the other disciplines to a kind of finishing art.

The theatre text as a multiplicity should be seen as a double product rather than a half-product. The multiplicity of the double product is where the polyphony lies.

The unfinishedness of the theatre text need not in any way mean that the text is no longer an autonomous literary product, either. Whereas, in recent theatre, theatre texts are increasingly clearly 'unfinished' (because the writing

³⁸³ In: *Theatre Journal* 37 (March 1985), pp. 5-11

³⁸⁴ Professor of Theater and Comparative Literature, University of Michigan

³⁸⁵ Geerts 2009

³⁸⁶ Worthen 2005:8

³⁸⁷ Quoted in Geerts in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:107

³⁸⁸ Carlson 2006:1-19

³⁸⁹ Derrida 1967:208, also described in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:110

³⁹⁰ Geerts 2009:103

³⁹¹ Worthen, 2005:4

and staging processes are more and more intertwined), one way or another it appears that the texts are becoming increasingly autonomous.³⁹²

It is only possible to see the theatre text as both an autonomous entity and an incomplete half-product if we view that text as a supplement, a polyphonic multiplicity, a *double product*.

In theatre studies³⁹³ and playwriting instruction books and amongst 'Writing for Performance' students, there is a great deal of reluctance to treat the theatre text as incomplete and unfinalised. From where does that reluctance stem? Is it part and parcel of our ideas about creativity?

The tendency towards the consummate appears to be as much a cultural myth as a brain concept. In his 2009 book *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain; Love, Creativity, and the Quest for Human Happiness*, neurobiologist Semir Zeki talks about³⁹⁴ the 'synthetic brain concept'. Biological brain research indicates that the human brain always attempts to make a perfect 'finished' concept that is subsequently almost impossible to realise. That also applies to creative concepts. This tendency towards perfection leads to the idea of autonomous authorship and rejection of the incomplete, the unfinished.

In contrast with the synthetic unity concept of thinking (that suggests the finished, the complete and the perfect), however, is the ambiguity and the multiplicity of the product.³⁹⁵ Evidently, we associate unfinishedness and incompleteness with imperfection.

It is also important to realise that the construction of synthetic brain concepts takes place often subconsciously but, in any event, continuously and that those concepts themselves are also in continual flux. These ever-changing synthetic brain concepts are crucial for the decisions we make.

Based on the reality of our experiences, we create a synthetic unity concept and impose that on reality and on ourselves: as an ideal relationship or as a perfect work of art. We seem to be able to describe the object (relationship, work of art, theatre text) only as a finished, perfect object.

That can be clearly seen in Michelene Wandor's work. In her eyes, the theatre text must be complete and literary as, otherwise, it is no longer possible to clearly describe the concept of the theatre text and no longer possible to determine how to teach or train its writing, either.³⁹⁶

In my view, this automatically leads her to arrive at a product pedagogy (you learn to write for theatre by seeing how good theatre texts are constructed), which is incompatible with a contemporary poetics of the theatre text. If the theatre text is fundamentally incomplete, on the basis of unfinalizability, then it should also be seen as a process (in progress) rather than a (finished) product, in the same way as Ronald Geerts talks about theatre texts as kneadable, fluid “processes”.³⁹⁷ That way, a pedagogy for teaching writing for theatre therefore becomes a process pedagogy (you learn to write for theatre by examining the ways in which you can continually work on texts).

If we view the theatre text as not a half-product but a double product, then two voices emerge: *the voice of the genre* and *the voice of the (other) disciplines*.

Postdramatic theatre theory often talks of mixing or doubling genres.³⁹⁸ I already gave the example of Ramsey Nasr’s *Geen lied* [Not a Song], which is both poetry and a theatre monologue.

Telling in the debate on the theatre text as a half-product is how Michelene Wandor fulminates against monologues and stage directions as she feels they are not theatre text but, rather, prose. This demonstrates that she will not allow any other genres or sub genres within the theatre text. Seeing the theatre text as a double product, on the other hand, does open the text to other genres.

When we refer to the theatre text as a double product then, as a supplement, it still serves the performance by being open as text to other disciplines with neither a naive nor an arrogant viewpoint. What I mean by this is that theatre writers cannot say they need not consider other disciplines in the text.

³⁹² As is said about the work of Heiner Müller, for example

³⁹³ And not only Michelene Wandor

³⁹⁴ Semir Zeki, *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain; Love, Creativity, and the Quest for Human Happiness*, Wiley-Blackwell, London 2009

³⁹⁵ Zeki 2009:95

³⁹⁶ Michelene Wandor 2008B:24

³⁹⁷ Geerts 2009:201

³⁹⁸ See, for example, Lehmann 1999

The American theatre author Thornton Wilder³⁹⁹ stated that you should demonstrate in your text that you have a good idea of what the other disciplines can do with it.⁴⁰⁰ In his opinion, that is what makes you a real writer for theatre.

It is normal to rewrite the script to rhythm so that it can be better acted on stage. That applies to the other disciplines, too. The text is different when it is played as a recording or in an extremely small space, or projected on screen.

In contemporary theatre practice, the text serves the performance, too, but its usefulness is in opening itself *in the text* to other disciplines, for use by other disciplines, for the dialogue and the doubling with other disciplines. The other discipline that is incorporated as a voice into the choir of one's own text, incorporated into one's own writing strategy.

Just as we saw with Bakhtin that the unfinalizability of the text actually implies its polyphony, so we see with the theatre text that the presence of the voice of the other disciplines also means that the text will never 'reach completion', as it were. One example is Tom Lanoye who, incidentally, writes both prose and drama:

"A novel is something different from theatre. You keep working on drama, partly because you have actors to whom you attribute the lines, it's inevitable. They, themselves, will start playing with your text, reinterpreting it, trimming and adjusting here and there, right up to the last performance and that's how it should be, that's the charm of theatre. A novel, at some point, is irrevocably finished".⁴⁰¹

The unfinalizability of a theatre text can be emphasised in a performance by it not being at all necessary for each word of the script to actually be audible or visible.

When writing libretto for opera, the librettist is well aware that parts of the text are audible but not intelligible; we do not always capture the exact words when they are sung.

In their 2011 performance of Tennessee Williams' *Vieux Carré*, The Wooster Group gave the following explanation:

"The surtitles are an integral part of our production, so you can remain focused on the acting. The script is not always clearly visible, but we hope it helps as a support without having to be read in its entirety."⁴⁰²

In both examples, the text provides opportunities for the other disciplines to also speak in that text as a voice.

In a poetics of linguistic theatre text, it is not necessary to choose between autonomous literary text and incomplete product in the service of the performance or, as Worthen puts it, between poetry and performance. Whether a text is suitable for theatre is not determined by that choice, which Badiou describes as the distance between the theatre text and the performance. With the theatre text as an autonomous, complete text, the distance from the performance is very great and with the theatre text as an incomplete half-product that distance is very small:

“Paradox: we can thus write for theatre as much in the absolute haste of its urgency (the writer-comedians Shakespeare or Molière) as in the utmost indifference to representation (the early work of Claudel), because the decision will be made retroactively. The *distance* of a text to the theatre varies from zero to infinity, but that is not what decides whether a text is, artistically, a theatre text.”⁴⁰³

The theatre text is not a half-product, but it is, in principle, incomplete and unfinalised. The incomplete theatre text in service of the performance can quite easily also be an autonomous work of art, when we treat that text as a supplement with regard to the staging and vice versa. The combination of the theatre text as an autonomous unit and as incomplete text in service of the performance is only possible when we view that text as a supplement, a polyphonic multiplicity, a double product. Consequently, if we view the theatre text as an incomplete double product, then two voices emerge: *the voice of the genre* and *the voice of the disciplines*.

³⁹⁹ 1897-1975

⁴⁰⁰ Described in Leach 2010 (2008):24

⁴⁰¹ Quoted in: Hart 2007:107

⁴⁰² Mentioned in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:5

⁴⁰³ Badiou 2013:50

11.3 Is the theatre text literary?

“The art of playwriting may be a classic and important sub-area of literary art, but that is now beside the point. The great literary events do not take place in the theatre and the great works of this era are not dramatic works. That used not to be the case, but the artistic and intellectual dominance of the novel and poetry is unmistakable these days. (...) After the widely-contested choice of the angry Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek (Nobel Prize 2004), whose work likewise consists partly of theatre texts, although it is of a considerably less weight than Pinter’s, the Swedish Academy is again proposing a contestable candidate. This is eroding the authority the Nobel Prize for literature has built up over a century. That is a shame.”

The above editorial from the Dutch quality daily newspaper *de Volkskrant*,⁴⁰⁴ which discusses Harold Pinter’s being awarded the 2005 Nobel Prize, shows that there are doubts as to whether the theatre text is actually a literary work.

We have seen that, in the debate on whether the theatre text is actually an autonomous, finished entity or an incomplete text in service of the performance – the struggle between poetry and performance – the question of whether or not the theatre text is of a literary character crops up regularly.⁴⁰⁵ What does that mean? Is the theatre text a literary text and can it therefore be described and evaluated on literary grounds?

Theatrologist Christopher Balme explains the lack of theory concerning theatre text partly by the fact that there is so much harking-back to the views of the theoretician Max Herrmann who, in his introduction to *Forschungen zur deutschen Theatergeschichte*, fully assumed the applicability of the theatre text:

“The specific poetic aspect, however, remains fully unconsidered for us; the most artless play can be in some circumstances more important than the greatest dramatic masterpiece of world literature”.⁴⁰⁶

In 1960, the literary expert Roman Ingarden said that theatre text is only just literary.⁴⁰⁷ For him, it was on the fringe,

“ein Grenzfall des literarischen Kunstwerk” [A borderline case of literary art]⁴⁰⁸

And still, quite recently, theatre scholars pose the same question:

“Can we, where a presentation [“Vorlage”] of a theatre performance is concerned, even speak of either literary texts, or literature?”⁴⁰⁹

There seems to be an incessant struggle between those who see the theatre text’s function or applicability – as a ‘presentation’ for the performance – as its quality and others who associate the literary context of the text with aspects of the text itself, the text-immanent characteristics.

We are familiar with *The Magic Flute* because of Mozart’s brilliant music. What hardly anybody knows is that the libretto of the opera was written by Emmanuel Schikaneder. It is clear to everyone that a libretto serves the composer. Perhaps this is why the name of the librettist is often unknown and their text is not readily seen as literature.

The classic debate on whether the theatre text is literature is often used to disqualify texts of a non-traditional character - such as postdramatic texts, or those written largely to serve other disciplines - as inferior. Such a verdict is based on the aforementioned assumption that whatever is unfinalised or incomplete must also be imperfect. That a literary text is a finalised entity is seen as a given.

This struggle has major consequences for the way theatre texts are written about, discussed and analysed and, consequently, for the pedagogy of writing theatre texts.

When the theatre text is seen as primarily literary, the pedagogy often descends into the assumption that literary writing in general cannot be learnt.⁴¹⁰ At the same time, the extraordinary number of instruction books

⁴⁰⁴ *de Volkskrant* 14 October 2005, also quoted in Zonneveld 2009:3

⁴⁰⁵ Worthen

⁴⁰⁶ Max Herrmann, quoted in Balme 2003:75

⁴⁰⁷ *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, Tübingen 1960

⁴⁰⁸ Quoted in Balme 2003:77

⁴⁰⁹ Englhart 2013:11

⁴¹⁰ Paul Dawson, for example, indicates as much in *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, London/New York 2005

on writing for stage and screen, especially in relation to writing prose or poetry, is striking. This suggests that writing for theatre and film can, indeed, be learnt. It is quite possible that the applicability of a theatre text actually provides more options and handholds for the learning and transferring of its writing and this is why there are so many instruction books on the subject.

Literature is, of course, a social concept: literary is what is seen as literary by a particular group at a particular time. From that point of view, it is elucidating to examine the status the theatre text enjoys, or rather does not enjoy, within literature. Texts that only exist once they are spoken and moulded by others are hardly considered to be literature. There is a systematic lack of discussion of theatre texts in books on literary history, for example. In the Netherlands, the publication of a new play by Hugo Claus, Judith Herzberg, Thomas Verbogt or Esther Gerritsen receives little attention in the literary columns of newspapers, whereas their prose and poetry work is extensively reviewed.

When, in 1997, the Italian playwright and director Dario Fo received the Nobel Prize for literature, there was loud criticism that this was, naturally, primarily a political decision with little basis in literary criteria. Similar response followed for Harold Pinter in 2005 and, to a slightly lesser degree, Elfriede Jelinek, in 2004.

In the Netherlands, the literary status of the theatre text appears to be extra fragile as, with the exception of Vondel, we have no great playwrights in our literary canon. We have no Shakespeare or Goethe.

The low status of writing for theatre as a literary genre probably stems from its cooperative, interactive, applied character, which is so contrary to the persisting myth of the literary writer as an autonomous, individual artist. In my book *Writing in the Raw*, published in 2008, I showed how too great a belief in the myths of artistry, literature and authorship obstructs the flow of the writing process.⁴¹¹ In my view, it is far better for the quality of the texts to become aware of the crazy ideas you have in your head about what good literary writing should actually be than to embrace laws, notions and pearls of wisdom with regard to writing.

I came up with the following four myths: genius, originality, profundity and suffering. Anyone who is anything of a literary writer is entirely original, suffers for the text, has a subtle and professional attitude to work and is certainly not superficial or silly, but wise and unfathomably profound.⁴¹² Together, these myths provide the building blocks for the myth of the

autonomous, individual author (and therefore also the idea that literary writing cannot be learnt!). Within the overarching myth, you need nothing and nobody and you create within yourself. Such a picture, naturally, corresponds with the requirement that you use and pinch nothing from anyone else, but are original.

In *Writing in the Raw*, I give a number of writing strategies for shedding this image of the autonomous, individual artist.

The myths of literary writing are reflected in the requirements that literary text must fulfil: original, personal, professional and profound. That does not, of course, mean to say that a literary work should not possess these characteristics, but it is not so that these are characteristics that make up the essence of the literary content.

In *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, W.B. Worthen points out that the issue of the literary content of the theatre text is actually an issue of the material that makes up the theatre text and the performance, and their mutability:

"The action of modern drama, whether immediately and effectively stageable or apparently just "literary", arises in the conflict between the materialities and mutabilities of the stage and the page."⁴¹³

The discourse treats literary text as a finished product and its literary character as its fixed core. Printing and publishing theatre texts, which was already done in Shakespeare's time and continues up to the texts that René Pollesch uses in his theatre evenings, suggests that the literary core of the text is immutable, whichever edition, layout or font is used. Hans Thies Lehmann describes this as the

"fixierter Schreib-Spuren" [fixed writing traces]⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ By International Theatre & Film Books in collaboration with HKU University of the Arts Utrecht.

⁴¹² See Christophe 2008:11-22

⁴¹³ Worthen 2005:73

⁴¹⁴ Lehmann 2004:27

of a text. This expresses the requirement that the core (the stable aspect, that would be the literary character) of the text remains constant throughout the various stagings and use by various media.

Lehmann's astute observation is that the contemporary theatre text sooner entails dynamising. As an example, he cites the staging of electronically-generated computer poetry and I personally, am put in mind of the proliferation of poetry slams in the theatre. Texts can no longer be pinned to fixed characteristics and are often of a continually changing form. Vibrant theatre with its spoken word is eminently capable of eroding the completeness and immutability of a text, which is so often tied to a paper edition.

"Lesen und schreiben lösen sich von der Papierseite, vom Druck als dauerhaft fixierter Spur." [Reading and writing detach themselves from the paper side, from print as a perpetually fixed trace.]⁴¹⁵

Theatre actually appears to be where the fixity of the text as a finished entity with a fixed core and meaning is constantly being dismantled. As we saw in chapter I, theatre is, of itself, a practice of hybridisation in which a number of voices and meanings occur or are created. Theatre is thus described as a dialogical or deconstructing practice precisely because theatre practice demonstrates, visually and audibly, that every text has several voices that are constantly in dialogue with one another, that, in every text, innumerable other voices and texts sound. One might claim, as the French theatre historian Anne Ubersfeld so precisely puts it, *that theatre is not a literary genre but a scenic practice*.⁴¹⁶

In this interpretation of theatre practice, the text 'used' in theatre becomes almost an icon of this dynamisation. Part of the poetics of the theatre text should therefore be that the text leaves itself open to or provides opportunities for that dynamisation or hybridisation.

Does this then mean that the theatre text is not literary, though? Theatre scholar Theresia Birkenhauer provides a masterly solution for this in her 2005 book *Schauplatz der Sprache – das Theater als Ort der Literatur* [A Stage for Speech – theatre as a venue for literature]. She suggests that one might call dramatic theatre literary theatre: the play had its own finished, immutable literary character and was performed in the theatre. In contemporary postdramatic theatre practice, the theatre is a place where literature can work, where texts become literature precisely because they work theatrically. When a text works in the theatre it is literature.

When we see the theatre as a practice of hybridisation, in which a number of voices and meanings occur or are created, then the core of the theatre text that ‘works’ is a text that provides opportunities for that practice. Such a text evokes two voices, which Stefan Tigges refers to as writing practices:⁴¹⁷ *the voice of the dedramatisation* and *the voice of the redramatisation*.

“Attention – whether in writing or performing practice – applies to both all dedramatisation processes and all forms of redramatisation”⁴¹⁸

The dedramatising voice in a theatre text comprises all characteristics affecting the strict aspects of closed, dramatic representational dramaturgy. This happens when, for example, a chorus suddenly appears in a Greek tragedy, with numerous characters together delivering the same lines. This also happens in 17th-century plays, when characters suddenly speak to the audience in an aside. And that happens in innumerable strategies in current postdramatic theatre when, for example, the voice and the body are separated (as in Beckett’s *Rockaby*, where the voice of the character on stage is largely heard from tape) or the entire concept of character is open to debate.⁴¹⁹ Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmachine* is one continuous text, with no characters. Such a text incorporates a dedramatising voice.

The German music theatre maker Heiner Goebbels describes how, in the text he used in his 1996 performance *Schwarz auf Weiss* [In Black and White], “sounds” can be heard from texts by Gertrude Stein, Heiner Müller, Elias Canetti, Franz Kafka, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Edgar Allan Poe. Goebbels states that, for his way of theatre making, he needs texts that are not initially written for theatre.⁴²⁰ In his performance practice, Goebbels typically needs numerous dedramatising voices.

⁴¹⁵ Lehmann 2004:27

⁴¹⁶ Quoted in: in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:107, note 2

⁴¹⁷ Tigges, *Dramatische Transformationen; Zu gegenwärtigen Schreib- und Aufführungsstrategien im deutschsprachigen Theater* [Dramatic Transformations; on contemporary writing and performance strategies in German-language theatre], Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld 2008:9-27

⁴¹⁸ Tigges 2008:25

⁴¹⁹ See, for example, Daniela Moosmann, *In mijn theater geen personages!* [No Characters in My Theatre!], Internal publication HKU Universe of the Arts Utrecht, Utrecht 2009

⁴²⁰ This example can be found in Tigges 2008:15

In Kris Verdonck's 2008 performance *End*, which I mentioned in my introduction, the entire script is delivered by one person. The theatre text contains no dialogues and consists of all kinds of separate accounts of catastrophic, disastrous, almost apocalyptic events. This is reminiscent of messenger speeches in Greek tragedies: nothing is shown on stage; it is all narrated. In this, alone, theatre text breaks with classical dramaturgy, in which the adage, "show, don't tell" is still evident to this day in the majority of stage and screen dramaturgy. From the very beginning of the making process for *End*, it is clear that Kris Verdonck wants text in his installation. He wants to work with text on the basis of the chosen theatrical device. At the same time, the choice of working on the borderline between theatre and the visual arts also implies that, from the beginning there is a struggle to prevent a story emerging. Admitting a narrative would mean: choosing theatre. Before a single letter is committed to paper, the fight against narrative is the starting point for the writing process, making the voice of dedramatisation also part of the ultimate text.

The voice of *redramatisation* sounds particularly clearly when demonstrating the so-called duality, the core of dramatic dramaturgy. Inserting subtext into the text is a fairly simple form. The text then offers possibilities for allowing other disciplines (such as body, movement or intonation) to speak with a second voice that, together with the linguistic voice, forms a duality.

"I feel great, brilliant, fantastic!"

The exaggeration, however, makes us, as the audience, doubt and we hear a second voice from the character, saying,

"Actually, I feel really awful."

The second voice can then be demonstrated with other disciplines (play, movement, space). This creates the dramatic conflict or dramatic duality in or between the characters, enhancing the drama.

We see that the voice of the dedramatisation and the voice of the (re)-dramatisation both multiply one of the voices of the text, setting a process of hybridisation in motion. In my view, this also applies to the third voice that emerges in viewing the theatre text as literary text.

When discussing the literary content of a text – and certainly in the case of the theatre text – a poetic or specific linguistic quality of the text is often

referenced. When, for example, Luk Van den Dries talks about Heiner Müller's postdramatic theatre texts,⁴²¹

"in which the classic dramatic closedness explodes into fragments and the theatre character shatters into mask and persona",

then he is talking about typical poetic form characteristics, such as the lack of punctuation and the highly dynamic layout. This is an extremely common method amongst theatre writers. You see it in the dialogues and monologues of Gerardjan Rijnders, Judith Herzberg, Thomas Bernhard and Rob de Graaf, for example. In theatre texts, theatre authors use the layout to give the actors and director a suggestion of how the rhythm and 'breathing' of the text could be, because if you read the text with the layout you have the tendency to adopt a new approach with each new line. Interestingly, the voice of the poetic aspect or *the voice of the linguistic* aspect actually contributes to the text's theatrical power of expression, creating possibilities for other disciplines, as it were.

The fourth and last voice evoked by notions of theatre text as a literary artefact is *the voice of co-creation*.

A literary text is the work of one author. Analysis of literary texts, with the exception of post-modern text analyses, are unlikely to look for multiple voices of the author in the text. That myth of one single voice appears to be related to the romantic myth that a real artist is unique and original.

At the same time, we already saw that there has long been a continuing debate as to whether the theatre text has multiple authorship. Michelene Wandor, for example, is strictly opposed to the idea that writing for theatre should be collaborative art. In her view, that idea would immediately destroy the profession of author.⁴²² She bases this on a writing process in which everyone in the theatre 'does everything'. This might have been so in some performance projects in the 1970s but, in recent years, it has certainly not been the dominant writing practice when referring to writing as co-creation. The current image of writing for theatre as collaborative art can, as we saw,

⁴²¹ Luk Van den Dries, in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:127

⁴²² Wandor 2008B:18-20

be seen as a practice of direct cooperation with co-makers who contribute to the development of the text on the basis of their own discipline. It is even clearer, however, to treat that co-creation as an internalised voice of the co-makers/co-writers, as I will do in Chapter III on the theatre writing process.

A good example is the working method of philosopher and theatre writer Hélène Cixous. For the four theatre text made with Théâtre du Soleil between 1969 and 1975, a collective working method was applied, using improvisation and experimentation. Those pieces

“bear the words ‘création collective’ where one would usually find the name of an ‘author’. One can therefore see that, in writing for the Théâtre du Soleil, Cixous found herself in the position of being asked to take a very different approach to the work”.⁴²³

A more recent example is the American theatre and film writer Tony Kushner who, in 1993, wrote in the prologue to the renowned *Angels in America*,

“*Angels in America*, Parts One and Two, has taken five years to write, and as the work nears completion I find myself thinking a great deal about the people who left their traces in these texts. The fiction that artistic labor happens in isolation, and that artistic accomplishment is exclusively the provenance of individual talents, is politically charged and, in my case at least, repudiated by the facts. (...) over two dozen people have contributed words, ideas and structures to these plays: actors, directors, audiences, one-night stands, my former lover and many friends.”⁴²⁴

Whereas Michelene Wandor calls theatre writing as collaborative art a cliché,⁴²⁵ Kushner refers to the opposite as a myth. Discussing theatre writing, he talks about “the myth of the Individual”,⁴²⁶ also citing Bertolt Brecht:

“In the lower right-hand corner of the title page of many of Brecht’s plays you will find, in tiny print, a list of names under the heading ‘collaborators’.”⁴²⁷

Innumerable examples of theatre writers can be given that demonstrate that they do not write their texts alone. Naturally, collaboration such as Cixous and Kushner’s takes place between the co-makers of a performance. Often, however, we also actually see several writers working together on a theatrical

project, as is quite usual in the field of film and television. Soaps and television series are almost always written by groups of authors.

This way of working also occasionally occurs in the theatre.

The ongoing theatre project *De Orde van de Dag* [The Order of the Day] is produced on the spot by a changing group of Dutch theatre writers. A new generation of actors, writers and musicians gives its vision of the latest news in a show “packed with theatrical scenes, music, sketches and columns at breakneck speed”.⁴²⁸

In 2017, under the title *Met Man & Macht* [With Man and Might], Nieuw Utrechts Toneel started a number of theatre evenings with the aim of creating a number of new history dramas. They asked the theatre author Jibbe Willems to produce the theatre texts in co-creation:

“Introducing the new Shakespeare! We find him on this Tuesday afternoon sitting in a majestic auditorium in Utrecht’s town hall flanked by three assistants, who are helping him write his new masterpiece. After all, the old Shakespeare didn’t write everything all by himself, so why should Jibbe Willems have to?”⁴²⁹

From the point of view of linguistic philosophy, it can also be established that the core of a theatre text lies in the fact that it has a multiple authorship. We already saw in Chapter I that the polyphony of a text implies co-creation. When a text encompasses multiple voices and contains echoes of other texts, other writers and other makers, then we can justifiably speak of multiple authorship and, therefore, co-creation.⁴³⁰

The voice of co-creation is therefore expressed in the voice of the co-maker, the voice of co-authors, other disciplines, the commissioning party, the

⁴²³ Blyth & Sellers 2004:51

⁴²⁴ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* p.283

⁴²⁵ Wandor 2008B:18-20

⁴²⁶ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* p.283

⁴²⁷ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* p.285

⁴²⁸ Website Orde van de Dag, ordevandedag.org

⁴²⁹ Hans Smit, ‘We zijn allemáál Jibbe Willems’ [We are all Jibbe Willems], in: *Theaterkrant* 18 October 2017

⁴³⁰ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*, p.288: “The play is indebted, too, with writers I’ve never met.”

audience or, simply, the voices of other texts. In this, Kushner corresponds perfectly with Bakhtin's interpretation of polyphony:

"Marx was right: The smallest indivisible human unit is two people, not one; one is a fiction. From such nets of souls societies, the social world, human life springs. *And also plays.*"⁴³¹

The linguistic theatre text is not literary in the sense that it is a completed, autonomous entity with a fixed literary core. It is, however, literary when it opens itself to a scenic practice of hybridisation and deconstruction.

In the theatre text, we see four voices emerge that promote and support this 'opening up to scenic practice': *the voice of dedramatisation, the voice of redramatisation, the voice of the linguistic and the voice of co-creation.*

It is, in fact, in theatre texts that we see literature live at work. With its constantly changing stagings of the theatre text, staging practice shows how many voices those texts really contain and how artistic and, therefore, literary these products actually are. Where the text provides the theatre with possibilities for doubling voices and multiplying meanings, it augments its literary content.

When a text works in the theatre, it is literary.

11.4 Does the theatre text have an addressee?

When a writing for theatre student starts working on a text, lecturers generally ask them two basic questions:

The first is: how will this text be presented to an audience? As written text, as spoken text? As a radio play, as an audiobook, as a textbook, as an audio tour, as a theatre performance? This is not simply a question of which genre or subgenre is being written in; it is, above all, a question of how the audience member or reader will be confronted with the text.

The second basic question is: whom is the text addressing? This question asks more than for which target group is being written (a text for youth theatre, for example); it inquires after the direction of every line in the text. It is not so much a question of ‘who is speaking?’, which we continually encountered in Chapter I, but more a question of ‘who is being spoken to?’, a question we came across in Bakhtin’s concept of ‘addressivity’. The question is: who is the addressee of the theatre text?

In *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, W.B. Worthen states that these two questions should be part of a poetics of the theatre text. A text, and certainly a theatre text, is, amongst other things, also a means of communication and we are therefore dealing with the relationship between the art product and the reader or observer.

In Chapter I, we saw what ‘addressivity’ means: that every utterance, even talking to yourself, has an intended audience. In the theatre, this addressivity is also expressed in the direction of the text on stage.

Addressivity can help us distinguish and recognise the various voices in a theatre text and, on that basis, those of the theatre writing process.

The unique aspect of the theatre text is that the question to the addressee, the party to whom text is addressed, always has several answers. It is useful for a theatre writer to be aware of those different directions.

⁴³¹ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*, p.289, my italics, NC

First of all, when discussing addressivity in Chapter I, we saw that if a text is delivered within the representation of dramatic theatre by a character, this can already have four different directions.

The character addresses another character, the character talks to himself, the character talks to God or the world, or the character speaks to the audience. In contemporary theatre, we increasingly see text, or part of it, having several directions at the same time. The dramatic effect of many recent theatre monologues lies in the rapid switching between and doubling of these speaking directions.

This doubling of directions of speech is central in postdramatic theatre theory. The German theatre scholar Theresia Birkenhauer refers to the two directions 'between characters' and 'from actor to audience' as the two axes of theatre. The axis between characters evokes a fictional, closed story, which I here call *the voice of the representation*. The axis from actor to audience is located in the reality of the here and now, *the voice of the presence*. Birkenhauer sees the doubling of the axes as the main characteristic of theatrical language.⁴³² A doubling of directions or axes, in fact, describes the polyphony of the theatre text: as the text addresses several directions, a number of voices are also speaking in that theatre text, such as the voice of the actor and the voice of the character.

In modern-day theatre, speech directions have been added to that. Texts for puppet and object theatre are the most evident example. As, these days, not only the puppet but also the puppeteer is visible on the stage and constitutes part of the play, there is a growing realisation that, in addition to the ordinary fictitious story, a second story should always be told, as well: that of the dialogue and the conflict between puppet and puppeteer. There is therefore an extra text direction from puppet to puppeteer and vice versa.⁴³³

At the same time, the theatre text also has addressees, separate from the directions of the spoken text. When we read a theatre text in a script, that text is initially aimed at not the audience but the co-makers. That, naturally, is most evident in the stage directions.

It was the theatrologist Roman Ingarden who made the distinction between main text (spoken text) and auxiliary text (all the author's other instructions) in the linguistic theatre text.⁴³⁴ If the auxiliary text is aimed at the co-makers, then how can we evaluate it? If it constitutes part of a work of

art, then what is a ‘good’ or ‘correct’ stage direction? Are they users’ manuals, as if theatre texts can be treated like machines?⁴³⁵ Theatre writing students appear to be confused as to how they should write auxiliary texts; lecturers in writing for theatre have very different approaches. Some swear by leaving out auxiliary text, while others argue for expansive Ibsenesque stage directions.

In dramatic theatre, stage directions are, naturally, used to designate the necessary actions or events. In Thomas Bernhard’s *Elizabeth II* we read that, at a certain point in the final scene, the balcony collapses with practically all the characters on it. Good to know

At the same time, stage directions often indicate a moment at which the character can change intention or speech direction. The action specified is of little consequence, but the moment is significant for the drama.

We already saw earlier on in this chapter that the theatre author can also use the layout to suggest to the actors and director how the rhythm and ‘breathing’ of the text could be. Many playwrights write their text in short, broken sentences without punctuation.

“Where punctuation is missing, it is to indicate delivery, not to conform to the rules of grammar”,

says Sarah Kane at the beginning of her play *Blasted* as an ‘Author’s note’.⁴³⁶ That suggestion for rhythm and musicality conveyed from the writer to the co-maker by means of the auxiliary text comes clearly to the fore in the use of pauses. In his plays, Harold Pinter even gives an indication of the length of the pauses, using various terms for when no one is speaking

⁴³² Theresia Birkenhauer, *Schauplatz der Sprache – das Theater als Ort der Literatur* [A Stage for Speech – theatre as a venue for literature], 2005: 76-84

⁴³³ For a more extensive description of this, see: Babiche Ronday, ‘Een, twee, drie, vier, vijfde wand; Schrijven voor poppen- en objecttheater’ [One, Two, Three, Four, Fifth Wall; writing puppet and object theatre], in: Caspers & Christophe, 2011:121-149

⁴³⁴ Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk* [Literary Art], Tübingen 1960, quoted in, for example, Storr 2009:14 and Balme 2003:77. In 1991, Anne Übersfeld proposed the term *Didaskalien* [didascalia] (this even includes the names of the characters), but it never caught on. Also see Balme 2003:77

⁴³⁵ This is how Annette Storr treats them. See Storr 2009:77

⁴³⁶ Mentioned in: Worthen 2005:83

(silence, pause, ...). In Pinter and Beckett's time, the idea emerged of treating the script almost as a musical score. Directors in script-faithful England, in particular, racked their brains as to how to read and use them.⁴³⁷ Funnily enough, Pinter later considered he had been wrong, as everyone re-incorporated these 'silences' and 'pauses' that he intended purely musically into the traditional dramatic meaning analysis of the text, giving them a metaphysical explanation that he despised.

In postdramatic theatre, stage directions occasionally become part of the spoken text. This doubled the addressees and the axes, as it were. Text intended for the makers was suddenly delivered to the audience. Legendary in this respect is the 1989 theatre solo *Wittgenstein Incorporated*, written by Peter Verburgt. The piece is a reconstruction of three lectures given by the Australian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in Cambridge for a limited audience of colleagues and intimates before World War II. Wittgenstein paced up and down in the room, loudly philosophising – improvising – allowing others to witness it. In the show, the actor Johan Leysen speaks not only Wittgenstein's thoughts, but also all the stage directions and the odd rejoinder from Wittgenstein's audience.⁴³⁸

With this doubling of the addressees, the voice of self-referentiality speaks, too, as the piece is also about theatre-making itself.

Another way to double the addressees is to legibly project the stage directions for the audience, as was done in Luc Perceval's 1998 staging of Thomas Bernhard's *Eve of Retirement*.

Now and again, theatre text presents itself expressly as a different genre, such as prose. Members of the audience then get the idea that they are being addressed as not only part of a collective theatre audience but also as an individual reader. The work of the American author Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) is a good example of this.⁴³⁹ Her work is often used by postdramatic theatre makers, such as Heiner Goebbels, to bring about a doubling of the addressee.

The advent of the 'dramolette' as a theatre text is related to this doubling of addressees. A dramolette is a mini drama, a text lasting roughly 20 minutes. In the 1980s, Thomas Bernhard wrote a number of these mini dramas that were also, however, intended for reading and publication. Bernhard often featured as a character in them. These texts, with titles such as *Claus Peymann kauft sich eine Hose und geht mit mir essen* [Claus Peymann Buys

Himself a Pair of Pants and Joins Me for Lunch],⁴⁴⁰ were not actually intended for performance and functioned as a kind of column for quite directly saying something personal on a topical subject. This representation of himself and his colleagues as characters means the voice of self-referentiality is also speaking here.

In discussing Bakhtin's ideas in Chapter I, another specific form of addressee also emerged: the form that Bakhtin himself called the 'superaddressee' which speaks in all our texts. We saw there that the 'superaddressee' again evokes such a typical duo of two opposing voices: *the voice of the internal critic* and *the voice of self-reflexivity*.

Bakhtin describes the superaddressee as:

"an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue" (...), an absolutely just responsive understanding"⁴⁴¹

Actually, when you write, you always have a third in your head and the one for whom you are writing is yet another in addition to the one whom you are addressing in the writing.

In her book *Dialogue and Desire; Mikhail Bakhtin and the Linguistic Turn in Psychotherapy*, psychologist Rachel Pollard describes the superaddressee as follows:

"Both Lacan and Bakhtin observed that all speech presupposes the existence of a "third" who is not present. For Bakhtin this is the superaddressee, whose responsive understanding or approval we assume or hope for. For Lacan, the "third" is the Other (...) or Freud's ego ideal, part of the Symbolic Order, the hoped-for source of both narcissistic identification and recognition and in whose image we try unsuccessfully to create ourselves."⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ Worthen 2005:81

⁴³⁸ Details from the website of the Belgian theatre company Kaaaitheater

⁴³⁹ See Worthen 2005:71

⁴⁴⁰ Published in 1990. Claus Peymann was the then artistic director of the Burgtheater in Vienna, which performed many of Bernhard's plays

⁴⁴¹ Bakhtin, 2010 (1979):126

⁴⁴² Pollard 2008, Kindle Book 1023/4341

The two voices evoked by the superaddressee, the inner critic and self-reflexivity, are central in every writing process and certainly in the process of writing for theatre. They are described more extensively in Chapter III.

Indeed, the theatre text is characterised by the fact that it has multiple addressees. These can be various speech directions, or theatrical axes. The main and auxiliary texts of a theatre text also have various addressees. With theatre texts there is often a doubling of addressees. That doubling of addressees leads to polyphony in the text. The voices that emerge are *the voice of the representation, the voice of the presence, the voice of the internal critic, the voice of self-referentiality and the voice of self-reflexivity*.

II.5 Is the theatre text a text genre?

When we produce a poetics of the linguistic theatre text, we also need to see whether the various text types written over the past 2,500 years can be included. That means we need to have a picture of the theatre texts currently being written.

In the introduction, I already indicated that, after or parallel to the dramatic play and the postdramatic broader theatre text appears to be a *third category of texts* that exhibit facets of the earlier two.

It is still too soon to speak of a new trend but, in that category of text, in addition to the processes of dedramatisation we are also seeing redramatising strategies taking place.⁴⁴³

In their 2014 book on contemporary German theatre texts, *Junge Stücke* [Recent Plays], Andreas Enghart and Artur Pelka also indicate such a new text category. In their view, young theatre writers appear to be making compromises between dramatic and postdramatic dramaturgy and, in doing so, their choices are of a more practical than ideological nature.⁴⁴⁴

This third category of theatre text is characterised by its own dramaturgy and, as with every dramaturgy, it is based on a conception of man and the world. The conception of man and the world in these texts appears to correspond with contemporary concepts that were developed over the past 25 years after the heyday of postmodernism.

These days, in not only philosophy and brain research but also in technological developments, there is a tangible tension between unity and fragmentation, for which our contemporary society, in its diversity, must formulate an answer. In the theatre, we see that tension reflected in the conflict between dramatic and closed dramaturgy (unity of meaning, character

⁴⁴³ The terms come from Tigges 2008:24. He writes: "On the other hand, the question arises of whether the theatrical use of linguistic material can be understood as a consequent detachment of the dramatic or whether (partial) dramatic strategies are, nonetheless, being evoked here, albeit in a fragmented form", Tigges 2008:25

⁴⁴⁴ Enghart & Pelka 2014:21

and plot) and postdramatic and open dramaturgy (fragmentation of meaning, character and plot). In his 2008 book *The Multivoiced Body; Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity*,⁴⁴⁵ Fred Evans makes an inspiring allusion to this tension:

"We require, in other words, a notion of unity that affirms the very heterogeneity that would appear to solve it."

In his discussion of a book on text in postdramatic theatre, theatre scholar Klaas Tindemans points out how important it is to also use new world images for the description of theatre texts.⁴⁴⁶

With the aid of Bakhtin's concept of *polyphony*, Evans describes such a new world image, in which unity and fragmentation are brought together. Indeed, as a result of the duality of dramaturgies and the simultaneity of concepts such as unity and fragmentation, it seems that the third category of theatre texts can effectively be described on the basis of polyphony. From a philosophical point of view, as we already saw in Chapter I, this polyphonic world image is based on the principle of a multiple conception of man. People are no longer a neat unity (a round character as we would say in dramatic theatre), nor are they a fragmented chaos (the disappearance of the character from postdramatic theatre); they have a multitude of voices that, although cohesive, do not form a unity.

Theatre scholar Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer illustrates, in an extraordinarily lucid article,⁴⁴⁷ how the most recent (German) theatre texts are based on this radically different interpretation of person, subject and personality.

"The 'I' that had become plural has taken possession of the character on stage, as it were. The I-speaking and you-speaking parts are, consequently, interwoven in such a way that the person presents himself as multiple and sometimes as split."⁴⁴⁸

In the theatre, this quite concretely leads not, for example, to a schizophrenic character, but to a form in which one character is simultaneously portrayed by several people.

When describing *the voice of the character* in Chapter III, I will give a number of examples of how, as a writer, you could incorporate a polyphonic character into your text. Polyphony can be not only a staging strategy but also a real part of the theatre text itself, as Bayerdörfer also emphasises:

“The multiplication of characters emulating the group characters of Faust and Gretchen in Einar Schleef’s 1990 Frankfurt production of Christoph Marthaler’s Mephisto Collective in the 1993 Hamburg ‘Wurzel’-Faust has been textually integrated into the dramatis personae of contemporary theatre texts.”⁴⁴⁹

In contemporary theatre texts, this polyphonic human image produces not only different types of character but also new narrative structures.⁴⁵⁰

At the beginning of Chapter III, I will explore in greater detail how the concept of polyphony as a conception of man and the world affects creativity theories, the writing process in general (the multiple author instance) and the theatre writing process in particular.

German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk’s way of describing recent times as the third period after modernism and postmodernism⁴⁵¹ could also be useful in our attempt to describe a third category of theatre texts.

Sloterdijk links the first period to the concept of the observer. This concept assumes that the subject is an indivisible entity and that, one way or another, every person has the idea that they are the only subject that exists. Within that idea, everyone is separate from and constantly observing the world.

The second period is characterised by the concept of the creative, productive, dissipating person located in a multiplicity of internal, creative forces. For this period, Sloterdijk cites the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his concept of multiplicity and, in his book *Schuim* [Foam], the philosopher Bruno Latour, as well.

Sloterdijk, too, sees the third period as a compromise or fusion of the first two. He detailed the concept of the period in his 2009 book *Du muss dein*

⁴⁴⁵ Evans 2008

⁴⁴⁶ Klaas Tindemans in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no.127, December 2011, p.66/67

⁴⁴⁷ Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, ‘Erzähldramatik: Spieltexte jenseits der Gattungsgrenzen’, in Englhart & Pelka 2014:29-64

⁴⁴⁸ Englhart & Pelka 2014:42

⁴⁴⁹ Ibidem

⁴⁵⁰ Ibidem

⁴⁵¹ In an interview on 25 April 2017, for example

Leben ändern [You Have to Change Your Life]. This is an ode to practising, trying, eternally becoming and developing. This endless growth process is a combination of observing and creating.

When you look at this combination of observing and creating in the third category of theatre texts, then it is primarily *the voice of self-reflexivity* and *the voice of the internal critic* that come to the fore. Both voices point to reflection and observation and play a role not only during the writing process, but also in theatre texts themselves, as I showed earlier in this chapter.

Although this third category of theatre texts has not yet been clearly described, it has to be given a clear place in the poetics of the linguistic theatre text, as it is these texts that can connect dramatic and postdramatic dramaturgy and generate meaning in an entirely new manner.

After the ‘I own the meaning’ of dramatic play text (“I, as maker, decide what I want to say with my text”⁴⁵²) and the ‘no one owns the meaning’ of the postdramatic theatre text (“anyone may decide for themselves what the text means”), the texts from the third category, with their ‘we own the meaning’, appear to refer to collective speaking,⁴⁵³ rather than a fragmented apolitical void, not to the dramatic story as a metaphysical solution, but rather to a continuous dynamic movement between the two poles.

This trichotomy is from Bakhtin expert Michael Holquist,⁴⁵⁴ who sees Bakhtin’s ideas as a basis for this ‘we own the meaning’. When discussing Bakhtin’s ideas in Chapter I, we saw that meaning is not fixed in a theatre text, for example, but created by an unending dialogical process, which is further expanded in the performance of the text.

Here, incidentally, we also see the clear difference between Bakhtin’s thinking and the thinking of the French philosopher Derrida. In terms of semiotics, there’s a great similarity between them and, in particular, between Bakhtin’s ideas on hybridisation and dialogism and Derrida’s concept of deconstruction.⁴⁵⁵

In an article, Panchappa Waghmare⁴⁵⁶ says,

“Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism is sometimes used as an equivalent term to deconstruction. Derrida’s theory of free play or dissemination is deeper probing of intertextuality that dialogism emphasizes. It presupposes a sense of immediate presence, simultaneous logo-centrism and phonocentrism.”⁴⁵⁷

Waghmare also, however, shows where the differences are between Bakhtin and Derrida. With his deconstructivism, Derrida corresponds more closely with the “no one owns the meaning” and Bakhtin, with his dialogical perspective, with the “we own the meaning”. Or, as Waghmare puts it,

“The basic difference between Bakhtin and Derrida is that the former does not reject altogether the concept of an original self as the latter does”.

This distinction also has political consequences, especially when we look at contemporary theatre text. The postdramatic theatre text is still often seen as a meaningless, post-modern jumbo puzzle, which remains outside the political context.

In playwriting instruction books, that is clearly reflected in Paul Castagno’s 2001 *New Playwriting Strategies; A Language-Based Approach to Playwriting*, which, on the basis of Bakhtin’s ideas, incidentally, amounts to a wonderful description of postdramatic writing techniques, but never makes the link to meaning or power of expression. The first few years of the BA course Writing for Performance in Utrecht⁴⁵⁸ suffered from the same shortcoming. So much attention was paid to deconstructing dramatic dramaturgy and associated writing strategies that, in its pedagogy, the course failed to come up with the answer to meaning and ‘personal voice’. In the third category of texts we see – as Hans-Peter Bayersdörfer⁴⁵⁹ points out, for example – renewed attention to focus on ethics, engagement and political theatre.

We saw that these contemporary theatre texts effortlessly combine dramatic and postdramatic dramaturgy. Meanwhile, in theatre texts of the

⁴⁵² Panchappa Waghmare says: “Meaning in this sense is a product of intention willed by a sovereign or transcendent ego.”

⁴⁵³ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011: 14

⁴⁵⁴ Head of the Literature Department of the University of Yale

⁴⁵⁵ See, for example, Tim Herrick, *The philosophical affiliations of Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida: From Kant to phenomenology*, PhD Thesis University of Sheffield 2004 and Julio Peiro Sempere, *The Influence of Mikhail Bakhtin on the Formation and Development of the Yale School of Deconstruction*, Cambridge 2014.

⁴⁵⁶ Waghmare is assistant professor of English literature in Burla Mahila Mahavidyalaya

⁴⁵⁷ Waghmare 2011:3

⁴⁵⁸ Which I headed from 1992 to 2001

⁴⁵⁹ In: Enghart & Pelka 2014:40

third category, cautious characteristics can already be detected at dramaturgical and linguistic levels.

In his article, Bayersdörfer names the following five characteristics, the first three of which we already encountered in this chapter:

- The focus on ethics, engagement and political theatre.
- The doubling of the character on stage, based on the concept of polyphonic identity. There is no longer a one-to-one relationship of one character, one body and one voice. I give more examples of this in Chapter III, in which I discuss the voice of the (polyphonic) character.
- A doubling of spoken text and read text. Here, he is referring to the trend of allowing texts that are part of the theatre text but not part of the spoken words (such as stage directions) to sound in the staging. I gave examples of this in Chapter II.4. There, we saw that the stage directions have a different addressee from the spoken text, so the number of addressees of the polyphonic theatre text is then doubled.
- Focus on the documentary and use of documentary material. Here, in the text, we see an emerging doubling of fiction and reality. In her article '*Tegen het vergeten in; Schrijven voor documentair theater*' [Combating Forgetfulness; Writing for Documentary Theatre],⁴⁶⁰ theatre author Maud Lazaroms discusses writing techniques for adapting existing material into a theatre text. Here, she mentions *the voice of recollection* and *the voice of intertextuality*.
- A rediscovery of the great stories, the myths and the re-literalisation of language. One example of this is the pieces produced by the Dutch theatre company De Warme Winkel, based on the work of such writers as Rainer Maria Rilke, Thomas Bernhard and Junichiro Tanizaki. *The voice of intertextuality* sounds in these theatre texts. The texts exhibit a mixture of fiction, existing literature (by the featured writers) and texts in the here and now. The theatre texts are then a hybridisation or a deconstruction of the literary work of the featured writers but, at the same time, they also incorporate story.

A third category of theatre texts therefore appears to be emerging, in which the text is no longer seen solely as a fictive construction (dramatic), or

purely a fragmented text landscape (postdramatic).⁴⁶¹ Many contemporary theatre writers endeavour to write dramatic texts in this way, using the acquisitions of postdramatic theatre.⁴⁶²

The theatre texts by the German playwright Dea Loher, often performed in the Netherlands by RO-theater in Rotterdam, are an example. Characters do not disappear entirely; they continue to exist polyphonically, albeit no longer in a closed narration, no longer in a symbolic or metaphorical tradition, but as a reflection of that tradition and in dialogue with other images and texts.⁴⁶³

Luk Van den Dries gives Luc Perceval and Ivo Van Hove as examples of directors who produce shows in which singular soundscapes, text montages and the chopping up of texts are still at the service of a story.

“Their theatrical language remains thematically anchored.”⁴⁶⁴

We see that the third category of theatre texts is characterised by a doubling of dramaturgies, genres, text types and characters. Primarily as a result of two important developments, namely intermediality and a blurring of genres and disciplines, contemporary texts contain what Andreas Enghart and Artur Pelka refer to as ‘multiple aesthetics’.⁴⁶⁵

The voices that emerge in those doublings are *the voice of the character, the voice of self-reflexivity, the voice of the inner critic, the voice of recollection and the voice of intertextuality*.

Precisely because this third category of texts is characterised by mixing and doubling, it can serve as a basis for and example of a general poetics of the linguistic theatre text.

⁴⁶⁰ In: Caspers & Christophe 2011:149-182

⁴⁶¹ Term is used by, for example, Lehmann 2006: based on Gertrude Stein. Is also extensively discussed in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011

⁴⁶² Such as playwright Tom Lanoye, “I am a post-Heiner Müllerian. In other words: I believe in drama. If we were to condemn drama per se as old hat, then I would be terribly heartbroken. (...) So yes: I am looking for new ways of writing drama”, in: Johan Reyniers, ‘Tom Lanoye: ‘I believe in drama’’, interview, in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.29

⁴⁶³ These observations in this paragraph are by Storr, 2009:29

⁴⁶⁴ In: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:126

⁴⁶⁵ See: Enghart & Pelka 2014:12-13

11.6 Is the theatre text hybrid?

"It is extremely hybrid. Because it was commissioned as a play, I have included it in my list of theatre texts. But it is just as much a novella. It consists of a number of separate monologues and dialogues that can be snipped out. (...) I would be really disappointed if anyone staged it as it was written. You have to do something with it".⁴⁶⁶

Above, Tom Lanoye is talking about his 2005 theatre text *Fort Europa, Hooglied der versplintering* [Fort Europe, Song of Songs on Fragmentation]. He deliberately writes his theatre text as a hybrid form of several text types and genres.

The debut collection by the Dutch writer and author Ramsey Nasr, *gedichten & Geen lied* [27 Poems & Not a Song] (2000), is an extreme example. This collection gained Nasr a nomination for the C. Buddingh'-Prize for Dutch poetry. *Geen lied* [Not a Song], the monologue at the end of the collection, was awarded the Dutch Language Union Playwright's Prize and Nasr won the 2000 Mary Dresselhuys Prize for his performance of that text.

Strikingly, in these two examples, the text genre was only established by how the text was used and, evidently, not on the basis of text-immanent characteristics. Lanoye refers to his text as a play because that is what was commissioned and Nasr's monologue was only referred to as a theatre text because it was performed and it won him the playwriting prize. If Nasr's monologue had not been published, he would never have been able to compete for a poetry prize.

We can call theatre texts hybrid since they mix or unite several genres or text types. Tom Lanoye, who uses hybrid forms and genres in both his theatre texts and his prose, attributes features to each genre, though.

"I always try to mix genres, I don't need to draw any diagrams for that. So I mix, on one hand, theatrical scenes and a lot of dialogues and, on the other, descriptions and considerations. (...) I'm always looking for mixed forms, hybrid forms, I sometimes find different voices, a different style, a different rhetoric for each chapter".⁴⁶⁷

I also mentioned the example of the dramaturg Ivo Kuyl who, in categorising Heiner Müller's postdramatic theatre text *Beeldbeschrijving* [Pictorial Description] as hybrid, is primarily referring to the multiple text types it incorporates.⁴⁶⁸

In her book about Thomas Bernhard, Clara Ervedosa describes it as more of a mixture of styles:

"In this respect, use of language can play a very important role as various styles are being mixed."⁴⁶⁹

In her study of Heiner Müller, *Attentate auf die Geometrie* [Attacks on Geometry], the German writer and scholar Kristin Schulz refers to this type of text in which various text types or styles are present, '*Zwittertexte*' – translated literally: hermaphrodite or multigender texts – and she gives the example of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine* from 1977.

That hybridity appears not to be related to postdramatic theatre texts alone; it seems to be a characteristic of theatre texts in general. The mixing of text types and genres is timeless, as we can see from choruses in Greek tragedy, for example.

Schulz' '*Zwittertexte*' resemble the concept of 'double product' that I juxtaposed with regard to the old concept of half-product. The theatre text as a double product, where the text is both an autonomous text and a text for a performance, both poetry and performance, is in fact a hybrid text.

As I mentioned, the combination of the theatre text as both an autonomous entity and an incomplete text in the service of the performance is only possible when we think of the theatre text as a supplement, a polyphonic multiplicity, a double product, in which, among other things, *the voice of the text type* emerges.

⁴⁶⁶ Playwright Tom Lanoye in: Johan Reyniers, 'Tom Lanoye: 'I believe in drama'', interview, in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten*, volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.30

⁴⁶⁷ Quoted in: Hart 2007:99

⁴⁶⁸ Ivo Kuyl, '*De invloed van scenisch verloop op poëtische teksten. Beschrijving van en reflectie op een onderzoekswerkshop van De Tijd*' [The influence of scenic progression on poetic texts. description of an reflection on a De Tijd research workshop], in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:140

⁴⁶⁹ Ervedosa 2008: 112

We saw in Chapter I that Bakhtin sees more doubling in the concept of hybridity than types and genres alone. If texts are polyphonic or contain heteroglossia then, for him, they are 'hybrid' when they belong to one speaker...

"...in which, in actual fact, two utterances, two ways of speaking, two styles, two 'languages', two horizons of meaning and opinion mix".⁴⁷⁰

The usual definition of hybridity is actually 'a mix of two types'.⁴⁷¹ Nonetheless, if we examine the above quote, Bakhtin seems to group all kinds of doublings in a text under the concept of 'hybrid' and that is also what often happens with the term these days.

In his article 'Restless Hybrids', Nikos Papastergiadis⁴⁷² links the concept of hybridity with the doubling of voices in a text.

"The language of hybridity becomes a means for critique and resistance to the monological language of authority. The hybrid text always undoes the priorities and disrupts the singular order by which the dominant code categorizes the other. In Bakhtin's schema the "doubleness" of the hybrid is composed not through the integration of differences but via a series of dialogical counterpoints, each set against the other, allowing the language to be both the same and different. This clearly constitutes a turning point in the debates on hybridity."⁴⁷³

It is interesting that Papastergiades indicates how a doubling of voices occurs due to the adding of the countervoice to one voice.⁴⁷⁴ We often encounter this principle in theatre text.

When writing his 2004 text *Woord* [Word], theatre author Gerardjan Rijnders was given all kinds of facts and details on the city of Cordoba, which the text was supposed to be about, by theatre maker Rieks Swarte, who commissioned him for the project. While he was writing, however, he noticed that he wanted to contrast that with something linguistic. In a bookshop in Cordoba, he then found an old book about Moses and he continually had one of the characters speaking lines from that book. This set two text types side by side.⁴⁷⁵

The text types, styles, genres or voices doubled in a hybrid theatre text can be linked to the dramaturgy or dramaturgies of that theatre text. This is how the German critic, journalist and writer Diedrich Diederichsen distinguishes three types of language for describing René Pollesch's theatre texts.⁴⁷⁶

He calls the first type of language the “socially-necessary untruthful language of the subaltern”. What he is referring to is the various language codes, brimming with subtexts, which we have to use all day in the world as we are never able to express what we really mean. In this, I read *the voice of the representation*, the language we are accustomed to using in enclosed, dramatic dramaturgy.

The second type of language is the “meaning-gladdened language imbued with honesty-induced ecstasy”. What Diederichsen means here is the language we know from real life, confession and emotion television, the language that suggests being entirely in the here and now. I hear *the voice of the presence*, the language in which the postdramatic theatre text often directly addresses the audience.

Finally, he defines a third type of language in Pollesch’s theatre texts: the entirely strange and artificial language of academic texts. Diederichsen feels that precisely because those texts lack the pretension to be “fictional” or “genuine”, they possess the ability to become personal language on stage.

This doubling of text types from various dramaturgies also seems to be characteristic of the dramaturgy of the third category of texts, which I referred to earlier. Here, the aforementioned *voice of the linguistic* and *voice of artificiality* appear to emerge.

Since the advent of postdramatic theatre, language has ceased to be the dominant theatre discipline and, consequently, all theatre disciplines have become equal.

⁴⁷⁰ Bachtin, *Die Ästhetik des Wortes* [The Aesthetics of Words], Frankfurt am Main, 1979, p.195, quoted in Spielmann 2010:104; “...in der sich in Wirklichkeit aber zwei Äusserungen, zwei Redeweisen, zwei Stile, zwei ‘Sprachen’, zwei Horizonte von Sinn und Wertung vermischen.”

⁴⁷¹ Hall 2005:70, for example, formulates it like this

⁴⁷² Professor in the School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne

⁴⁷³ Nikos Papastergiadis, ‘Restless Hybrids’, in: Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt & Ziauddin Sardar (Hg.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, London / New York, 2002, p.170 and onwards, quoted in Spielmann 2010:105

⁴⁷⁴ I will use that principle of countervoices in Chapter III in developing a theatre writing process model

⁴⁷⁵ Rijnders’ writing process is described in Moosmann 2007:125

⁴⁷⁶ Diedrich Diederichsen ‘Maggies Agentur’ [Maggie’s Agency], in: *Prater Saga* by Rene Pollesch, Alexander Verlag Berlin, pp. 7-21

“words may be spoken live, recorded, or presented visually ... (where) text is merely one element of the work, not privileged above other elements or disciplines, and which *interrogates* the interpretative conventions and formulae of traditional forms of theater”⁴⁷⁷

We already saw that, as a result, a new relationship is being created between theatre text and staging, a “crazy relationship”, as Theresia Birkenhauer calls it.⁴⁷⁸

Many theatre theoreticians⁴⁷⁹ refer to the interpretation and staging of the theatre text, by makers as a revision process.

“Performance as reproduction of writing”⁴⁸⁰

Vice versa, the writing process is also seen as a form of staging. Naturally, equating writing and staging has major implications for the way in which authors arrive at their theatre texts, that is, for their writing process.

As I said, an increasing number of theatre writers are writing their texts in direct collaboration with the other theatre disciplines on or at the edge of the theatre floor.⁴⁸¹ The roles of director and writer are often no longer clearly separated.⁴⁸²

For a poetics of the linguistic theatre text, however, equating writing and staging also has implications for the theatre text itself, for the product.

We saw earlier⁴⁸³ that the theatre text serves the performance as it opens itself *in the text* to other disciplines, to use by other disciplines, to the dialogue and doubling with other disciplines. When we see the theatre text as hybrid, that means that other disciplines also appear in the text and are doubled in the text. In her study of Thomas Bernhard’s hybrid theatre texts, Clara Ervedosa appears to be referring to this:

“The mixture (of styles and text types, NC) can also be achieved by exceeding the boundaries of disciplines and arts.”⁴⁸⁴

When, in the theatre, we talk of disciplines, using terms such as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinary, this is generally aimed at three things:

1. theatre disciplines, such as acting, text and stage design
2. general arts disciplines that have their place within theatre, such as music, visual arts and dance

3. external disciplines from non-artistic domains, such as science and technology

A good example of a doubling of disciplines in the hybrid theatre text is music. Literary scholar Liesbeth Bloemsaat-Voerknecht studied Thomas Bernhard's texts using terms and concepts from musicology.⁴⁸⁵ In his texts, including *Der Ignorant und der Wahnsinnige* [The Ignorant and the Crazy] from 1972, she reads many musical structures, such as the technical opera structure 'polyptoton', in which the music of one voice is repeated in another.⁴⁸⁶

As the theatre text is being studied as another discipline here, using criteria from that other discipline, the voice of the other discipline becomes legible and recognisable in the text.

And when a theatre text contains the voice of other disciplines, it offers extra opportunities for a productive staging.

⁴⁷⁷ John Lennord & Mary Luckhurst, *The Drama Handbook*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, p.269

⁴⁷⁸ Birkenhauer 2008

⁴⁷⁹ Such as Birkenhauer 2005:315 ff

⁴⁸⁰ Worthen 2005:4

⁴⁸¹ In 2007, the HKU's Performative Processes Professorship published '*De toneelschrijver als theatermaker*' [The Theatre Writer as a Theatre Maker] by Daniela Moosmann about the writing process of theatre authors who create their texts on the edge of the theatre floor. Writers such as Gerardjan Rijnders, Adelheid Roosen, René Pollesch, Arne Sierens and Rob de Graaf are studied and described in this book. Also see the book *Autorenregie; Theater und Texte von Sabine Harbeke, Armin Petras/Fritz Kater, Christoph Schlingensiefel und René Pollesch* [Theatre and Text by Sabine Harbeke, Armin Petras/Fritz Kater, Christoph Schlingensiefel and René Pollesch] by Karin Nissen-Rizvani, Bielefeld 2011

⁴⁸² "Where the 20th century saw a gradual shift in power from the writer to the director, with directors assuming an increasing control over the ultimate interpretation of the text, postmodernism has heralded a reconfiguration of the once-sacrosanct split between the roles. The writer IS the director and the written IS the done.", Freeman 2007:74

⁴⁸³ In Chapter II.2

⁴⁸⁴ "Die Vermischung kann sich aber auch durch Überschreitung der Grenzen von Disziplinen und Künsten vollziehen.", Ervedosa 2008: 112

⁴⁸⁵ Liesbeth Bloemsaat-Voerknecht; *Themenkomplex mit drei Fallstudien und einem musikthematischen Register*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2006

⁴⁸⁶ In the Netherlands, Willem Capteyn conducts a similar study into forms in classical music and in (film) dramaturgy, for the purpose of writing. Capteyn is a scriptwriter and, from 1995 to 2003, was course leader for the scriptwriting course at the Dutch Film Academy

The linguistic theatre text is a hybrid artefact consisting of heteroglossia, a multi-gender 'Zwittertext'. It is hybrid because a continual process of hybridisation occurs: voices (text types, styles, genres, dramaturgies, disciplines) emerge, are created and doubled.

In the hybrid theatre text, in addition to *the voice of the text type*, *the voice of the representation*, *the voice of the presence*, *the voice of the linguistic* and *the voice of artificiality*, we also hear *the voice of the disciplines* emerge.

11.7 Does the theatre text have an author?

At HKU University of the Arts Utrecht's School of Theatre, all third-year BA students on the five courses together participate in a number of interdisciplinary projects.⁴⁸⁷ These are intensive collaborations between designers, actors, theatre writers, theatre teachers and interactive performance designers. Writing for Performance students and lecturers regularly debate whether sufficient attention is devoted to the professionalism and craftsmanship of theatre writing in such projects. Collaborating with others – fellow writers, co-makers, commissioning parties, context – soon assumes an aura of something bogus. It is not the real work, it is not the real writing. That way, for theatre writers, collaboration becomes simply a matter of making compromises; thinking about your audience becomes base commercialism; commissioning parties and subsidisers eat away at your artistic authority; commissioned art is less art than autonomous art; technology alienates us from ourselves and what we would like to say as an artist. Evidently, in such collaborative projects – which really do reflect the way things work in current theatre practice – both the artistic expression and the craftsmanship come under pressure and that, consequently, prompts immediate questions about what the theatre writer's authorship actually entails.

In Chapter I, when describing the theatre author's personal voice' (or, as I put it, 'personal voices'), we already recognised the great importance of determining who is actually the author of a theatre text. A poetics of the theatre text should create a clear image of how the authorship of such a text is constructed. Is the theatre text first and foremost an artistic expression or is it more of a test of crafting competence? And, if it is the latter, which characteristics of the text do you have to achieve to prove competence?

On one hand, there is still often a predominant image of the theatre author as an individual, autonomous artist who most notably produces something new and original. At the same time, in many instruction books and master-classes, writing is approached as a craft with many set rules and agreements

⁴⁸⁷ BA Theatre Design, BA Acting, BA Writing for Performance, BA Theatre & Education and BA Interactive Performance Design

that apply to everyone. A contrast is still implied between artistry and craftsmanship, assuming, for example that it would be impossible to find the ‘personal artistic voice’ of the craftsman.⁴⁸⁸

The sociologist Richard Sennett shows that art often evokes the personal and the new and craftsmanship the impersonal and unoriginal. A traditional skilled chair builder does not necessarily exhibit any personal expression in his work.

“This contrast still shapes our thinking: art appears to attract our attention to work that is unique or, at least, striking, while craftwork is seen as anonymous, collective and continuous work. We should mistrust this contrast, though. Originality is also a social label and originals forge singular bands with other people.”⁴⁸⁹

Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk actually puts it even more succinctly. Art likes to be special and unique, as it longs for admiration.

“What distinguishes art from craft is its decision to exhibit artistic skill in the piece of work (opus). (...) Such objects no longer countenance daily use; they leave the user bowed under the compulsion to admire that they encapsulate.”⁴⁹⁰

This corresponds with Sennett’s view that craft is about producing good work, *for the work’s sake*, rather than for garnering personal acclaim. Sennett’s discourse on craftsmanship and professionalism helps us distinguish between technique (metaphor for craftsmanship) and passion (metaphor for art).

We see the artificial separation occur primarily in our attitude towards the concept that is familiar within theatre, the *well-made play*. Many writing for performance courses measure the quality of their students in terms of skill in constructing a well-made play. When the theatre text is well constructed – literally ‘well made’ – it is also a high-quality play. The proof of skill becomes the leading artistic criterion, actually denying expressiveness and expression. As I already attested in my passage on the ‘personal voices’ of the theatre writer, the voice of style and the voice of expression (or, as referred to above, technique and passion) become artificially separated, while we saw that it is actually the multitude of voices and the interplay between those voices that determine the theatre author’s specific ‘personal voice’.

The ‘well-made play’ is cited as a theatre genre which emerged as ‘*la pièce bien faite*’ through the work of two 19th-century French playwrights, Eugène Scribe and Victorien Sardou. Scribe wrote 425 plays that have all, unfortunately, faded into obscurity. The plays are technically clear and skilled but, consequently, entirely predictable.

The well-made play became the dominant term for a good, finalised text in dramatic dramaturgy and was mercilessly criticised during the advent of postdramatic theatre. Along with John Freeman in his book *New performance / New writing*, people started wondering

“what writing for performance might mean when one is not trying to write a well-made play.”⁴⁹¹

In a wonderful lecture, the author David Van Reybrouck describes the well-made play as follows:

“They are, as the Flemish author Paul Pourveur recently put it, ‘consistent stories’, stories without internal conflict, stories that hold true, which have been devised in accordance with the rules of the art, where the characters are clear-cut and the plot development is straightforward. They are crossword puzzles, timepieces, well-made plays. Skilfully made and diligently composed, precision engineered, yes.”⁴⁹²

Van Reybrouck appears to be primarily disturbed by the lack of what I would call polyphony. In his view, there is no “internal conflict”, so no contradicting voices in the text. The characters are “clear-cut” and do not, therefore, have multiple voices. Bakhtin would, consequently, have labelled ‘well-made plays’ as monological.

Theatre writer Stefan Hertmans also provides an inspiring, poetic challenge to that monophony of the well-made play, pointing out the inherent com-

⁴⁸⁸ Sennett 2008:79

⁴⁸⁹ Sennett 2008:79

⁴⁹⁰ Sloterdijk 2011:307

⁴⁹¹ Freeman, 2007:1

⁴⁹² Delivered during De Toneelschrijfdagen 6, Het Sterke Verhaal; ‘Alles zat erin!’ [The Theatre Writing Days 6. The Strong Story; ‘It has everything in it!’], in: *Boekwerk No3 van Platform Theaterschrijvers* pp. 91-104, Uitgeverij IT&FB, Amsterdam 2008

pleteness of the language and so, in my view, also referring to polyphony: it is, in fact the theatrical that de-constructs meaning and structure (“as spoken word that kills”) and, at the same time, creates new meanings and voices (“as spoken word that gives”). In that description, we recognise the process of hybridisation, the creation and doubling of voices in the language.⁴⁹³

“It actually means that it commits as radically as possibly to the hidden laws that kidnap, brand, bind and release speaking on stage. Laws that are played down to the advantage of the well-written play, but that, when one wants to thoroughly explore the possibility of language in theatre, initially not as the written but as the spoken word that kills and, at the same time, gives, show that the medicine of language is an impossible gift to the audience. The gift that is also a poison, as Plato says of written language, becomes naked and vulnerable and yet comprehensively displayed on stage, like the *pharmakon*: scapegoat and medicine, poison and gift, eternal shortfall that is not an emptiness but a fullness, the fullness of the thinking inscribed into your own history, time and society.”

In the transition from dramatic to postdramatic dramaturgy, the view of the authorship of the theatre writer as an individual, autonomous and singular creator of a completed, new work of art came under heavy pressure.

When, in his 1977 *Hamletmaschine*, an iconic text from the dawn of post-dramatic theatre, Heiner Müller has the photograph of the author shredded in a stage direction, he is mercilessly attacking (with the voice of self-referentiality) the dominant view of authorship in theatre.

Theatre scholar Luk Van Den Dries shows⁴⁹⁴ how, in Müller’s text, the attack on the autonomy of the text goes hand-in-hand with an attack on individual authorship and he also shows that theatre maker Jan Decorte achieved just that in his 1981 staging of *Hamletmaschine* with what I would call forms of polyphony: medial pluriformity, multifocality in, for example, lighting and intertextual branching.

Literary scholar Martha Woodmansee⁴⁹⁵ says in her article 2000 ‘*Der Autor-Effekt. Zur Wiederherstellung von Kollektivität*’ [The Author Effect. On the restoration of collectivity] that the still-dominant idea of an individual, singular authorship insufficiently reflects the contemporary writing process and writing practice. She talks not specifically about theatre writing, but about writing in a broad sense.

First of all, she gives a historical overview of that concept of romantic, individual authorship.

Until 1750, the author was a craftsman amongst many others who, together, ensured that the book was made. But then, as a side product of the literary-romantic view that a writer is original and a break with his past, comes also the concept of the unique, singular, one-off creator who writes a finalised, perfect work.

The first theoretical work in which this concept is outlined is *Conjectures on Original Composition* by Edward Young from 1759 and the literary text crucial to that concept is William Wordsworth's essay *Supplementary to the Preface* from 1815. In almost every line, Wordsworth emphasises the original, the new, the never-before shown as a sign of genius in the arts.

Woodmansee quite rightly calls that a mystification of authorship.⁴⁹⁶

From the nineteenth century onwards, a dominant, romantic tradition linked the artistic process of creation to the notion of individual artistry and the idea that the highest-achievable creative level was reserved for the individual.⁴⁹⁷

Woodmansee then portrays the history of collective writing, starting with the 13th-century Franciscan St. Bonaventura. He distinguished between scriptor, compiler, commentator and auctor with, in all four cases, texts by others being used and copied, intermingled with an increasing amount of their own texts. Woodmansee also gives the example of the 18th-century history writer Samuel Johnson, who produced all his works collectively. She also refers to a 1990 study by Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede, entitled *Singular Texts / Plural Authors*,⁴⁹⁸ which demonstrates that, in many fields, authorship has become more multiple and writing more collective, even creative writing, and that the teaching of writing is lagging hopelessly behind.

⁴⁹³ Stefan Hertmans, in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:174

⁴⁹⁴ In: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:135

⁴⁹⁵ Woodmansee also, incidentally, wrote *The Genius and the Copyright*, published in 1984. She is an American professor of literary theory at the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio

⁴⁹⁶ Woodmansee 2000 (1992):301

⁴⁹⁷ See, for example, *The Mirror and the Lamp* by M.H. Abrams from 1953

⁴⁹⁸ Lunsford & Ede 1990

“What is poignant about their research, however, is a fact that, regardless of which collective trend gains the upper hand, both the theory and the practice of a writing pedagogy (composition lessons) is still based on the assumption that writing is, in essence and necessarily, singular and individual occupation.”⁴⁹⁹

With Lunsford and Ede, Woodmansee demonstrates that the humanities, art and literature are the last bastions of this dogma of the singular, individual writing process and singular authorship.⁵⁰⁰

Although this singular, individual authorship is actually no longer tenable, it is an enduring assumption, also in theatre writing.

During the era of postdramatic theatre, there emerged at the same time various images of a new authorship, which I would call multiple or collective. In the theatre, Roland Barthes’ adage “the death of the author” was initially explained as a focus on collectivity: the borders between the disciplines were blurring, texts were being created by means of a collaborative process, as was the case with theatre collectives such as *Het Werkteater* in the Netherlands. It is very much the question, however, whether there is any great difference between the disappearance of the author entity (“the death of the author”) and the concept of multiple authorship.

In his recent doctoral research into the role of the author in contemporary live performance, Jesse Schwenk argues that developments in theatre and performance mean we can no longer actually speak of the writer’s authorship. In a recent conference on authorship in the theatre he talks about,

“The problem of the idea of the author in live performance or why writing is not a useful metaphor for authorship in live performance”⁵⁰¹

Schwenk shares my view that, because theatre is more an event than a play, more of a continuous, interactive, dialogical process than a finalised product, the idea of individual authorship in the theatre is no longer tenable:

“given that the theatre performance event is less and less regarded as an art form that can contain the discourse of an individual artist...”⁵⁰²

It is that very growing interactivity in postdramatic theatre that is eroding the concept of singular authorship. The concept of an individual, autonomous writer paints the artist as God, with full control over what and how

he creates. In the interactivity, part of that control is, by definition, relinquished, as we could not, for example, know beforehand how the audience itself will respond and what influence it will have on the performance.

The English theatre writer Michelene Wandor, who considers the “death of the author” one of the most ridiculous, manipulative ideas of post-modernism and herself fiercely argues for individual authorship, denies the writer’s tendency to want to control meaning and effect in the reader and observer. In her view, it is impossible, as a writer, to control the meaning and effect of the text because a great deal of the writing process is unconscious. Here, she draws support from, amongst others, Andrew Bennett in his 2005 book *The Author*.

“Authorial control” is often seen as a basic characteristic of authorship while it is claimed that this control is impossible. Many quote Bakhtin who shows, through polyphony, that the multiple perspectives in a text are not subject to one “authorial controlling purpose”.

Wandor says that this also applies to writing for theatre:

“The text, therefore, articulates liberating and often subversive discourses beyond the author’s authority”.⁵⁰³

In my eyes, the disappearance of authorial control therefore refers not to the disappearance of the author entity but to the emergence of multiple authorship. We will see, moreover, that also where the theatre author has no control over their writing process we can, nonetheless, speak of authors’ voices in a theatre text.

In Chapter III, for example, we will encounter the voice of the body, the voice of the unsayable and the voice of destruction.

⁴⁹⁹ Woodmansee 2000 (1992):309

⁵⁰⁰ Woodmansee 2000 (1992):309

⁵⁰¹ Schwenk 2011; Paper in Conference *Authoring Theatre*, Central School for Speech and Drama London July 2011

⁵⁰² Paper in Conference *Authoring Theatre*, Central School for Speech and Drama London July 2011. Jesse Schwenk is a lecturer/researcher at the University of Glamorgan

⁵⁰³ Wandor 2008A:165

In the dominant views on the authorship of theatre texts, the voices of others in one's text are often denied or suppressed.

As I already stated in Chapter I, from the point of view of linguistic philosophy it can be established that one of the cores of the theatre text lies in the fact that its authorship is multiple. The polyphony of a text implies co-creation. When the text includes multiple voices, echoes of other texts, other writers and other makers, then we can justifiably speak of multiple authorship. That can also be seen in multiple voices within one text. Specifically in theatre text, which is an example of hybridisation and polyphony, multiple authorship is essential.

Moreover, this concept of multiple authorship fits very well with the contemporary third category of drama texts, which I described in Chapter II.5 If we again apply Michael Holquist's semiotic categorisation, which I used there, we can clarify the form of authorship.

Semiotically, in Holquist's view, the first category, the dramatic plays, appears to say, "I own the meaning". Individual authorship corresponds with that. The second category, postdramatic theatre texts, deny "authorial control" and say "No one owns the meaning". What is more, recalling the "death of the author", authorship seems to disappear.

The third category of theatre texts with, as we saw, a mixture of dramatic and postdramatic characteristics, has the adage, "We own the meaning". Multiple authorship would appear to fit with this.

When the authorship of the theatre text is multiple, external voices (co-makers, audience, commissioning party, other texts, other writers) are internalised in the writing process and recognisable as voices in the text. The fact that the theatre text is a double product, because it carries the voices of other disciplines, for example, naturally affects the position of the theatre author.

The writing process itself, which we considered in Chapter I as the voice of the writing and the voice of the impersonal writer and, in this chapter, as *the voice of self-referentiality*, can also be recognised in the text as part of the authorship.

In an international conference on authorship in the theatre, held in 2011 in the University of London's Central School for Speech and Drama, multiple authorship was often related to contemporary developments in theatre and their technological aspects, in particular:⁵⁰⁴

“Theatre and performance have long been preoccupied with the problem of authorship. (...) And what forms of authorship are being innovated via the appropriation of social networking platforms, new technology and the involvement of non-theatre participants in performance work by companies such as Blast Theory, Rimini Protokoll and The Builders Association?”

The multiple authorship of theatre texts prevents an artificial distinction between crafting skill and artistic expression, between technique and passion or, as I called it in Chapter I, the voice of style and the voice of expression. Just as the multitude of voices and interplay between those voices determine the theatre author’s “personal voice”, so can multiple authorship incorporate both craftsmanship and artistic expression.

Traditionally, the author entity in theatre writing is still, in practice, explained as a role: in this project, that person fulfils the role of the writer, just as we also have the roles of director, actor and stage designer. In this context, co-creation is still too often seen as collaboration between the various roles. When collaboration is required on the basis of fixed roles, co-creation will seldom be achieved and the collaboration will not be seen as part of the authorship, part of the craftsmanship or part of the artistic expression, either.

We cannot solve the myth of the individual artist by saying that an individual could not produce art. In the same way, we cannot solve the problem of interdisciplinary co-creation by taking refuge in a concept of collaboration between roles.

Multiple authorship of the theatre text appears to demand another, more dynamic metaphor than that of ‘role’. The author actually emerges more as a kind of ‘relationship’ between various makers, disciplines, media and texts. In the next chapter, we will see that this manifests itself in the theatre-writing process as the rapid movement between the various voices in the writing process.

Jesse Schwenk goes into more detail on this concept of the theatre author as a ‘relation’ in his research:

"The creativity of this author (the author-as-relation) is the creativity of the activity of the group; its intelligence as expressed through its relations, its organization, the experiences it offers its participants."⁵⁰⁵

However strange it may sound, multiple authorship also makes the character part of the author. This is closely related to Bakhtin's concept of outsideness.⁵⁰⁶

According to Bakhtin, creativity is an everyday activity and its social, dialogical interpretation allows it to fit in with how we deal with the world. In his view, the artist's task is to be an outsider, which Sloterdijk referred to as an observer.

"to find a fundamental approach to life from without", "to define others in ways they cannot do for themselves"⁵⁰⁷

The artist who creates, who is the process of self-other relations and also the relationship between author and hero. The author is the one who acts, the hero the one of whom the author speaks, the living object of discourse. And, importantly: the author contains both in their mind.

The author multiplies themselves into co-makers, but also therefore into characters and hero:

"We (as an artist, NC) must feel another consciousness besides our own creative or cocreative consciousness, feel its forms, its salvific power, its axiological weight and beauty. In an artistic event there are two participants: one passively real (the hero), the other active (the author/contemplator)."⁵⁰⁸

The day-to-day awareness of the theatre author splits into a creating entity and an outside, a reflectiveness, an outsider, a watcher on the hill. This daily splitting is the creative act. In the theatre-writing process, this split is reflected in the split between author and hero.

Here, in multiple authorship, is where *the voice of self-referentiality* and *the voice of the character* emerge.

The theatre text has multiple authorship. Just as the multitude of voices and interplay between the voices determine the "personal voice" of the theatre author, so can multiple authorship include both craftsmanship and artistic expression.

When the authorship of the theatre text is multiple, external voices (co-makers, audience, commissioning party, other texts, other writers) are internalised in the writing process and recognisable as voices in the text. *The voice of self-referentiality* and *the voice of the character* constitute part of multiple authorship. This way, the author of the theatre text is not so much role as a “relationship” between various makers, disciplines, media and texts.

⁵⁰⁵ Schwenk 2011; Paper in Conference *Authoring Theatre*, Central School for Speech and Drama London, July 2011

⁵⁰⁶ Here, I am basing my reasoning partly on Haynes 1995:71-74

⁵⁰⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art & Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1990:192

⁵⁰⁸ Haynes 1995:73

11.8 Is the theatre text intertextual

“But why in the midst
of utter meaninglessness
should there not also be theatre writers?”

The above quote is the final lines of *Totaal Thomas* [Totally Thomas] by the theatre company De Warme Winkel, from 2006.⁵⁰⁹ This theatre text is a reaction to the work of playwright Thomas Bernhard. The text makes literal use of the scripts of four of Bernhard’s plays. This way, the voice of Bernhard and his texts sounds throughout the text. The above quote exudes Thomas Bernhard’s layout, style and cheerful cynicism, but it is nevertheless a text by De Warme Winkel. This sounding of one text within another is referred to as intertextuality and theatre texts appear to be intertextual.

Texts are not finalised unities. In Chapter I, I already indicated several times that a text cannot have a single meaning, partly because it is, by definition, incomplete and continuously in dialogue with other texts. In all phases of his work, Bakhtin fought against that unity of meaning and the unity of the subject.⁵¹⁰

To understand the concept of intertextuality, it is important for linguistic unity to be unmasked as a myth, a delusion. Bakhtin expert Michael Holquist also emphasises the political charge.⁵¹¹

“I will argue that monolingualism has no ontological status in itself, but rather is an illusion of unity resulting from ignorance or religious credibility. The foundational principle of dialogism is that nothing exists in itself. The naïve belief of so-called ‘lost tribes’ that their language is the only one, the historical search for an adamic language that existed before Babel, various claims for the superiority of a particular ‘national language’, the Islamic belief the Koran exists only in Arabic, are all based on a prior conviction that humans are capable of an immaculate oneness.”

Holquist cites all kinds of sources and examples from various fields of knowledge, supporting the idea that the concept of unity and, in particular, the concept of linguistic unity, are founded on an illusion.⁵¹²

When the theatre text is discussed within theatre studies, theatrical practice and instruction books on playwriting, there is the ready assumption that it is a finalised unit in which everything is cohesive. Theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann also refutes the unity of the contemporary theatre text:

“The unity of the text is a semblance; its fusion the result of conventions. Brecht had good reason to prefer the term ‘piece writer’, as the author produces ‘piece-work’”.⁵¹³

The term intertextuality has been used in many ways to refer to polyphony and dialogism in texts. In the introduction to their article ‘Spaces of Polyphony’ Clara-Ubaldine Lorda and Patrick Zabalbeascoa describe a text as

“a dialogue between the text and earlier utterances”.⁵¹⁴

In theatre texts, this dialogue takes place in a number of ways. First of all, intertextuality in theatre is interpreted as literal polylingualism: in a theatre text, several languages are used side-by-side and simultaneously. Peter Brook, for example, has produced innumerable theatre performances with actors from different countries and cultures, each speaking their own language on stage.

In the 2012 production *Der kommende Aufstand nach Friedrich Schiller* [The (Coming) Insurrection according to Friedrich Schiller], by the theatre company Andcompany&co, Dutch, English, German and French were spoken simultaneously, primarily to emphasise the international and chaotic char-

⁵⁰⁹ De Warme Winkel, *Totaal Thomas*, De Nieuwe toneelbibliotheek, Amsterdam 2011

⁵¹⁰ From the first chapter of *Dialogism* by Michael Holquist, Holquist 2002 (1990):1-14

⁵¹¹ Congres Multilingual 2.0 University of Arizona 13 April 2012

⁵¹² Michael Holquist: “I will reference some of the work done across a number of fields---psychology (Paul Bloom, Daniel Kahneman), in biology (Robert Pollack), Reading Science (Stanislas Dehaene), cryptography and information theory (Claude Shannon, Alan Turing), political history (Ernest Gellner), and, of course, linguistics (Kenneth Pike, Noam Chomsky, Mark Baker), all of which demonstrates that oneness is a conceptual phantasm.”, given at: Congres Multilingual 2.0 University of Arizona 13 April 2012

⁵¹³ Lehmann 2004:26; Die Einheit der Texte ist Schein, die Illusion davon Produkt der Konvention. Brecht bevorzugte nicht umsonst den Namen ‘Stückeschreiber’, weil der Autor Stück-Werke hervorbringt.”

⁵¹⁴ Lorda & Zabalbeascoa 2012:3

acter of the revolution. This created “resonance through polylingualism”.⁵¹⁵ In his 2006 book *Speaking in Tongues; Languages at Play in the Theatre*, Marvin Carlson gives a number of examples of this polylingualism.⁵¹⁶

This phenomenon is often referred to as polyglossia by Bakhtin, and by Hans-Thies Lehmann when he talks about theatre performances. Polyglossia within the theatre text produces a mixture of various languages and text types, with clear artistic motives.

“Apart from collage and montage, the principle of polyglossia proves to be omnipresent in postdramatic theatre. Multi-lingual theatre texts dismantle the unity of national languages. In *Roman Dogs* (1991) Heiner Goebbels created a collage made up of spirituals, texts by Heiner Müller in German and by William Faulkner in English (*The Sanctuary*), and French Alexandrine verses from Corneille’s *Horace* (performed by the actress Cathérine Jaumiaux). These verses were being sung more than recited, the language perpetually tipping over from beautiful perfection into broken stuttering and noise. Theatre asserts a polyglossia on several levels, playfully showing gaps, abruptions and unsolved conflicts, even clumsiness and loss of control. Certainly the employment of several languages within the frame of one and the same performance is often due to the conditions of production: many of the most advanced creations of theatre can only be financed through international co-productions, so even for pragmatic reasons it seems obvious to bring the languages of the participating countries to prominence. But this polyglossia also has immanent artistic reasons.”⁵¹⁷

In addition to polylingualism, intertextuality in theatre is often used as a container concept for where a text quotes or refers to other texts. Two and a half thousand years ago, when Greek tragedies marked the beginning of Western theatre, it was not original stories that were being devised; these were original narrations of existing myths. Each tragedy writer their own *Oedipus*, *Medea* or *Orestes*. Each tragedian threw his own light on the matricide of Electra, for example. For Aeschylus it was the result of a fateful curse, for Sophocles the fulfilling of divine right, for Euripides the outcome of a human drama. And, whether it is William Shakespeare who, around 1600, borrowed all the stories for his history plays from ancient historical chronicles, or Bertholt Brecht who, in the twentieth century, plundered Chinese stories for his theatre texts, it looks as if, with theatre texts, it is completely normal to use what you read directly in what you write and to refer to other texts in your own.

“Works of art beget works of art”⁵¹⁸

At the end of the 19th century, William Butler Yeats used these lines to defend the English playwright Oscar Wilde when he was accused of plagiarising other literary works in his play *Salome*. It was claimed that, in writing *Salome*, Wilde had used J.C. Heywood’s poem *Herodias*, Huysmans’ novel *A Rebours* or Flaubert’s *Hérodias* as a direct source of inspiration.⁵¹⁹

In *Echo’s echo’s* [Echoes, echoes], Paul Claes talks about how Herman Meyer dedicated an entire book, *Das Zitat in der Erzählkunst* [The Quote in Narrative Art], to how novelists quote and use other texts. Claes says that both Meyer and Bakhtin considered the ‘quote as a second voice’ characteristic of the novel, but then gives a theatre text by Walter van den Broeck, *Tot Nut van ’t Algemeen*, as an example, whereby lines of poetry by Sappho are concealed in the dialogue.⁵²⁰

Although the tendency to use or quote other people’s texts in theatre texts is independent of eras and trends, we are seeing an intensification of this taking place in postdramatic theatre.

In postmodernism, the myth of originality is negated. As any image we can have of reality is determined by language, reality does not in fact exist. We can never be original and create a new world; we can only react to existing texts. Postdramatic theatre texts are, consequently, often eclectic, in other words: the writer has used what they need from other texts.

Intertextuality as using and quoting from and referring to existing texts is nowhere as common as it is in theatre texts. There are few prose works that retell or use novels such as *Don Quichotte* or *Les Misérables*, but there are dozens of versions of *Oedipus* and *King Lear* and even many different theatre versions of *Don Quichotte* and *Les Misérables*.

⁵¹⁵ Jurgen van Nieuwenhuijse, review in *Cobra.be* 15 May 2012

⁵¹⁶ See, in particular, chapter I, Carlson 2006:20–61

⁵¹⁷ Lehmann 2006:147

⁵¹⁸ Quoted by Rita Geys in her introduction to the Dutch translation of the Oscar Wilde’s *Salome*, Houtekiet, Antwerp/Baarn 1992, p.46

⁵¹⁹ Description by Rita Geys in her introduction to the Dutch translation of Oscar Wilde’s *Salome*, Houtekiet, Antwerp/Baarn 1992, p.44

⁵²⁰ Claes 2011:77

There are thousands of theatre adaptations of novels and hardly any prose adaptations of theatre texts.

This high degree of intertextuality is related to the aforementioned unfinalisability of the theatre text, which means it is in continuous contact with other texts and writers, and with the fact that the theatre text is a hybrid double product.

In her book *Dramatis Persona: (Exit.)* about the slow disappearance of the character in contemporary theatre, Heidi Wunderlich quite rightly says that intertextuality is used as a trendy concept and a container concept when it refers solely to the fact that the text is related to or refers to other texts. Then, the entire area of tragedies as adaptations of myths and any form of adaptation or retelling falls within the concept, but that then leaves little more than a parlour game for theatre scholars for discovering original or source texts in theatre texts.

In Wunderlich's view, on the other hand, intertextuality can also be used as a construction principle, actually as a way in which theatre texts can be structured and composed. That means the voice of intertextuality can then be seen as a voice functioning in the writing process.

In Chapter I, we saw that Julia Kristeva used the concept of intertextuality for the dialogical activity. Since Kristeva, 'intertextuality' has often been used to find quotes from other sources in a text or trace references to other texts but she, herself, also uses the term to refer to the influence the texts of others have on the writer's own writing process. This, too, appears to refer to intertextuality as a construction principle, as a voice in the writing process.

Wunderlich points to other secondary literature in which the voice of intertextuality is seen as a collection of polyphonic writing strategies. She adopts three from Lachmann and Shahadat:⁵²¹

1. *Participation*

The text is recalled, as it were, and incorporated into the writer's own text. The text from outside starts participating in the new text. It is important that the reader and spectator also recognise and recall that basic text in one way or another.

In the textbook *New Playwriting Strategies*, Paul Castagno demonstrates this writing technique for fitting existing, commonly-known songs into

theatre text. For the ELS Inc theatre company's 2004 show *Morgen gaat het beter* [Tomorrow Will Be Better], directed by Arie de Mol, I, as the writer, worked old Dutch songs into the theatre text.

2. Transformation

Another, existing text is incorporated, as it were, into the writer's own new text, being entirely changed and adapted. It is then not necessary for the spectator to recall or recognise the original text.

Here, Wunderlich gives the example of characters, which gain an extra layer because they resemble or refer to other characters. She calls that emphatic doubling.

This is what happened with *Het liedje van verlangen* [Song of Longing], which I wrote in 1996 for Veemtheaterproducties. The director, Mart-Jan Zegers, asked me to write a contemporary piece for the characters of the three sisters from Chekhov's play of the same name. Chekhov's characters were, therefore, the point of departure for the writing process and the three actresses already started rehearsing with the Chekhov characters while I was still writing the text. In the book *Writing in the Raw*, I included one of the three acts from that text, showing for each line which external texts and ideas I used and how I transformed them into my "own" text.⁵²²

Writing for Performance students are trained in this principle by, for example, giving the task of writing a monologue for a historical character. It is then unnecessary for the audience to already have any information on that character.

3. Tropic

This writing strategy is the most radical form of intertextuality, in which the existing text is erased and paraphrased in phases of imitation and projection. Tropic is an extremely critical way of dealing with existing text and therefore responds very directly to it.

The play *Totaal Thomas* [Totally Thomas] by the theatre company De Warme Winkel is an example of the theatre text where, in the way Thomas Bernhard's theatre work is used, all three intertextual writing strategies are recognisable.

⁵²¹ And that is primarily Lachmann & Shahadat, 'Intertextualität' 1992:679-682

⁵²² Christophe 2008:58-65

Wunderling says that a further, fourth way, is missing, which appears to be specific to postdramatic theatre. In this method, the old material, or more broadly: the existing texts, are used as whimsical association material. This is done in such a way that the two texts (the existing text and the “new” theatre text) enter into a dialogue with each other, as Kristeva already indicated, through the way in which they influence each other.⁵²³ De Warme Winkel also uses this method a lot for its theatre texts.

In my view, the ultimate theatre text is then no longer seen specifically as the target or final text. That too strongly implies the one-way traffic of a text that bears traces of other, existing texts, but not a real dialogue in which *both* texts can change in terms of content or meaning due to the confrontation.

That dialogical influence is the broad interpretation of intertextuality that Kristeva has espoused since the beginning. Kristeva found that the term was too frequently used only for referencing and quoting. She herself once also described the text as “a mosaic of quotes” and rarely diverged from that definition.

She no longer saw the interpretation in which two texts and two sign systems dialogically impact one another and the new text also becomes vulnerable and dynamic, as it were, reflected in the way in which the term was being used. In 1974, she therefore withdrew the term “intertextuality”, replacing it with “transposition”.

In emulation of Bakhtin,⁵²⁴ Kristeva’s broad interpretation of intertextuality also applied to more than just texts. Kristeva expanded it to psychoanalysis and language theories, for example, so the term remains linked to the social polyphony of which Bakhtin speaks.⁵²⁵

In Chapter I, I described how Bakhtin sees multiple voices in every word, talking of “double voiced words”. He then defines five ways in which that occurs in texts and there I show how those forms can often be found in theatre texts. Bakhtin describes one of them as follows:

“Any discourse with a sideward glance at someone else’s word.”⁵²⁶

With this form, Bakhtin is addressing the entire area of intertextuality we recognise in text characteristics such as stylisation, parody and dialogue. It is with regard to this very point that Paul Claes links intertextuality and polyphony:

“All these phenomena,” he says (Bakhtin, NC) “have one characteristic in common: the word has a double orientation – simply as a word it addresses the object of the story, as another word it addresses the speech of the other.”⁵²⁷

Words placed in another context become polyphonic. Generally speaking, Bakhtin himself distinguishes three types of heterophony. In these three forms of word doubling or heterophony we recognise three forms in the theatre:

1. *Stylisation*

Words can be simply quoted and, therefore, repeated. In theatre texts (those of Samuel Beckett, Rainald Goetz and Thomas Bernhard,⁵²⁸ for example), we often see far more repetition than in other text types. Extensive repetition in speech erodes the meaning, and the sound and rhythm create a second meaning.

This principle can most easily be understood by giving the example of a well-known exercise for actors in which, in the space, they keep repeating the same phrase to one another, such as, “The Pope is coming for tea at four”. If you keep repeating that phrase, then after a while you stop understanding the meaning of the individual words. Stylisation creates a second voice.

2. *Parody or satire*

Words can be parodied, losing their original meaning, although it can still be heard in the background. In satire, texts are spoken or written in a way that creates a new context for those texts, levelling criticism at the original context. Parody creates a second voice and meaning.

⁵²³ Wunderlich 2001:30

⁵²⁴ Tomke Wieser 2012:58-79, and also Doorman & Pott 2014 (2000)

⁵²⁵ One example of that broad interpretation of intertextuality can be found in Pollard 2008 (Kindle Book 1077/4341) in which, for instance, Eugenie Georgaca and Leiman & Stiles describe psychoanalytical concepts such as “introjection” and “projection” as forms of intertextuality

⁵²⁶ Bakhtin 2011(1984):199, extensively described and annotated in Morson & Emerson 1990:147

⁵²⁷ Claes 2011:43

⁵²⁸ Some good examples are Beckett’s *Rockaby*, Goetz’ *Colic* and Bernhard’s *Appearances Are Deceiving*

3. *Dialogue*

Bakhtin says that words can enter into a dialogue with the rest of the novel in the form of polemic or rejoinder. In the dramatic theatre text, we recognise this in the principle of the subtext: a word has a meaning but, due to the context of that word in the rest of the text, the word also means something else again.

Loudly saying “yes” three times in a row when someone asks if you are okay creates the extra meaning, “no, I’m not okay at all, but I don’t dare or can’t say so”. The subtext adds a second meaning and, therefore, a second voice.

All these intertextual text characteristics can be recognised in the theatre company Abattoir Fermé’s 2012 theatre text *A Brief History of Hell*. The group writes on its website:

“Perfect timing for our latest creation *A Brief History of Hell*, a colourful satire on contemporary visual arts. In *A Brief History of Hell* there is a lot of talking, a hell of a lot, insane chattering and unsavoury laughing about bubbles with bubbles, about galleries, about obsession, about buying and selling, about perfectionism and compulsive collecting, about sushi, about egos, about have, have, have, about being, about beauty, about sex and babies, about loneliness, about love, about paint, about photographic film and sometimes about art and life. Stef Lernous wrote the text and directs.”⁵²⁹

A Brief History of Hell is a satire on the art world and, as such, in every word, in addition to the text, delivers commentary so the text makes it clear that the chatting is pretentious rhubarb.

One example of word doubling based on intertextual text characteristics is the theatre company De Verleiders’ 2012 theatre text *De casanova’s van de vastgoedfraude* [The Casanova’s of Property Fraud], written by George van Houts.

“Excellent theatre. Because it provides clear insight into the complicated shenanigans of the slick wheeler dealers, but also because it is sometimes unadulterated cabaret, razor-sharp satire or disruptive stand-up comedy and brutally challenges the laws of the theatre. The five actors interpret a number of main characters, but occasionally also step out of their role. Then, they are actors, talking about their own mores or struggling with the material”.⁵³⁰

In addition to satire, which leads to word doubling, we can see several other doublings in this piece. The cabaret and stand-up comedy we mentioned are an extra *voice of the genre* and can, therefore, be interpreted as a genre doubling.

As the actors in this show also speak to the audience, that throws another, second light on the fictional texts. When words can enter into dialogue with the rest of the work, that clearly indicates the multiple axes in theatre. The voice of the axes can be heard and there is axis doubling at play.

Not only the theatre text but also the theatre author's writing process could be said to be intertextual. As Paul Castagno says in his instruction book *New Playwriting Strategies*, in their texts, a theatre writer always reacts to the other and to the other's texts.⁵³¹ The theatre author alters, channels and synthesises the voices that are present, their own and those of sources (existing stories or texts) to determine side-by-side placing, confrontations and combinations. In other words, the writer enters into dialogue with something.

"In order to accomplish this effectively, the new playwright must become a master strategist as well as an imaginative creator."⁵³²

Often, *the voice of self-referentiality* emerges in the intertextuality of the theatre text. The characters in *Totaal Thomas* have the first names of the actors, as is also done with pieces by Thomas Bernhard. This is, in fact, a reference to *the voice of the axes*, as the actors' first names refer to the theatrical reality in which actors address an audience.

One text being audible in another is referred to as intertextuality and theatre texts are specifically intertextual. The intertextuality of theatre texts breaks down their unity and finality. The high degree of intertextuality in theatre texts is related to their unfinalizability, which means they are in continuous contact with other texts and writers, and the fact that the theatre text is a hybrid double product.

⁵²⁹ Featured on the Abattoir Fermé website: <https://www.abattoirferme.be>

⁵³⁰ Hein Janssen, in: *de Volkskrant* 6/10/2012

⁵³¹ Castagno 2001:35

⁵³² Castagno 2001:35

Intertextuality can occur as polyglossia, literally multilingualism, and as the referencing or quoting of other, already existing texts.

In the theatre text, intertextuality can also be seen as a construction principle.

The voice of intertextuality can therefore be interpreted as a voice in the writing process.

Intertextuality can be detected in many text characteristics of the theatre text, such as participation, transformation, tropik, association, stylisation, parody, satire and dialogue.

In these characteristics we saw *the voice of self referentiality*, *the voice of the axes* and *the voice of the genre* emerge. These text characteristics all lead to doublings, making the theatre text polyphonic.

11.9 Is the theatre text polyphonic?

“Psychic polyphony”

Heiner Müller⁵³³

If the theatre text is polyphonic and, therefore, part of a poetics of the linguistic theatre text, then just exactly which voices are doubled or multiplied and how are those multiple voices then dialogically interrelated?

Back in 1960, the literary scholar Volker Klotz said that in more open drama, as he put it, language becomes more pluralist. He used the term “polyerspective”.⁵³⁴ This would appear to imply that the theatre text contains multiple styles and forms, side by side. Clearly, he was not yet referring to the doubling of the theatre axes or the addressees that we described earlier as the basis of polyphony. This is, however, done by Gerda Poschmann⁵³⁵ and Birgit Haas,⁵³⁶ for example, when they refer to the postdramatic theatre text as “multi-perspective”.

The theatre scholar Theresia Birkenhauer was the first to actually refer to theatre as polyphonic and, for her, that polyphony is the basis of the aesthetic.

“The theatre is known as a place of simultaneity of multiple voices, a space in which speaking from various perspectives is heard and seen – and it is this very polyphony that is the reason for its aesthetic, its philosophical potential.”⁵³⁷

⁵³³ “Psychic polyphony”; this is how the theatre writer Heiner Müller described his own texts, in: Heiner Müller, ‘Contexts and History’, in *German Studies Review*, vol. 22, 1994, no. 1, p.181. It is also the title of an article on theatre by Marvin Carlson in *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Fall 1986, pp. 35-47, but this contains no references to Bakhtin or Müller

⁵³⁴ Klotz 1999 (1960):165-172

⁵³⁵ Poschman 1997:296

⁵³⁶ Birgit Haas 2007:18

⁵³⁷ “Das Theater ist markiert als Ort der Gleichzeitigkeit verschiedener Stimmen, ein Raum, in dem das Sprechen aus verschiedenen Perspektiven gehört und gesehen wird – und eben diese Vielstimmigkeit begründet sein ästhetisches, sein philosophisches Potential.” Theresia Birkenhauer, ‘Ein Zögern, die Bühne in Besitz zu nehmen’ [Hesitating to Take Possession of the Stage], in: *Texte zur Spielzeit 2002-2003*, hg. vom Schauspielhaus Hamburg, Hamburg 2003, quoted in: Storr 2009:60

In their book *Het statuut van de tekst in het postdramatische theater* [The State of the Text in Postdramatic Theatre], Claire Swyzen and Kurt Vanhoutte also frequently use the term polyphonic, reserving it primarily for the performance rather than the theatre text itself.⁵³⁸

That applies to many theatre theoreticians. In 2012, under the direction of Johan Simons, the Münchner Kammerspiele performed three pieces by Sarah Kane, *Cleansed / Crave / 4.48 Psychosis*, in German. The critic Loek Zonneveld calls *Crave*, in particular, a dark polyphony, without characters,

“... a play for four voices in which there appear to no longer be any people but, rather, encyclopaedic tomes full of verbal terror, books of proverbs filled with communicative clichés. In this dark polyphony, you see and hear how skilful and motivated the all-rounders of Simons’ team are in groping for half sentences and stammered words”.⁵³⁹

Descriptions of polyphony and staging can help us determine what the polyphonic theatre text can mean.

From that point of view, Jenny Schrödl’s article ‘Stimm-Maskeraden. Zur Politik der Polyphonie’ [Voice Masquerades. On politics and polyphony] is highly informative,⁵⁴⁰ even though it is only about the physical voice as part of the theatre performance. Schrödl shows how the voice in postdramatic theatre has taken up its own autonomous place as theatre material and no longer functions solely as a medium for a character’s dramatic language. At the same time, the essential cohesion of voice and identity remain. When, in *Rockaby* or *Eh Joe*, Beckett separates character and voice, because the voice comes from the loudspeakers, this immediately poses a question of identity: who is speaking here and what exactly is the identity of the character?⁵⁴¹

“The combination of and shifting between various ways of speaking, voice patterns and quotes within the speaking itself arouses a polyphony that creates the impression of various identity characteristics and multiple personalities”.⁵⁴²

Schrödl calls this “soloistic polyphony” because the polyphony of the theatre text then only occurs within the characters. With the aid of various techniques, which we have already examined in this chapter, in the character, each voice within the polyphony represents a character trait of one person, without there being a leading or dominant voice or any question of a psychological entity.

Polyphony appears only to function as such when it is not subordinated to a unity of psychology or identity.

Here, as an example, Schrödl gives the German actress Sophie Rois,

"(...) "whose voice, likewise, demonstrates a polyphony when she moves between different acoustic parameters and registers."⁵⁴³

The actress demonstrates this chiefly in shows by René Pollesch, whose postdramatic texts evidently demand this soloistic polyphony.

Within the theatre character, polyphony therefore affects the unity of identity. So Schrödl⁵⁴⁴ is defining polyphony as a critical creative strategy for destabilising normative views on identity and subject. In her interpretation, polyphony is a practice of deconstruction, of Bakhtinian hybridisation. Polyphony then refers to another human image, to the "fluid subject," as Kristeva would call it.

"With polyphony, identity is ultimately presented not as a stable, constant and unchanging concept but, rather, a variable, a pre-existing or perhaps even emerging category (...) instead, it is the continual movement that attracts the attention".⁵⁴⁵

⁵³⁸ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:6

⁵³⁹ Loek Zonneveld, "Duistere polyfonie" [Dark Polyphony], in: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, vol. 136, no. 8 23 February 2012, p.42

⁵⁴⁰ Jenny Schrödl, in: Kreuder & Bachmann & Pfahl & Volz 2012:145-158

⁵⁴¹ Storr 2009:55 describes this "Trennung van Optischen und Akustischen" [Rupture of the Optical and the Acoustic], the separation of voice and body

⁵⁴² "Durch die Kombination und den Wechsel von diversen Sprechweisen, Stimmustern und -zitaten innerhalb eines Sprechakts wird eine Vielstimmigkeit erzeugt, die den Eindruck verschiedener Identitätsmerkmale und mehrere Persönlichkeiten evoziert.", Jenny Schrödl, in: Kreuder & Bachmann & Pfahl & Volz 2012:146

⁵⁴³ "(...) "deren Stimme ebenfalls eine Polyphonie aufweist, insofern sie sich zwischen verschiedenen akustischen Parametern und Registern bewegt.", Jenny Schrödl, in: Kreuder & Bachmann & Pfahl & Volz 2012:147

⁵⁴⁴ Jenny Schrödl, in: Kreuder & Bachmann & Pfahl & Volz 2012:149

⁵⁴⁵ "Mit der Polyphonie wird Identität schliesslich nicht als stabile und konstante, unveränderliche Grösse präsentiert, sondern als variable, im Fluss oder im Werden befindliche Kategorie (...) vielmehr tritt die fortwährende Bewegung in den Vordergrund der Aufmerksamkeit.", Jenny Schrödl, in: Kreuder & Bachmann & Pfahl & Volz 2012:152

This changing human image is also important for the theatre writing process, as I will show in the next chapter. I name this polyphonic human image after a common concept in psychology, the *dialogical self*.

"The dialogical self, far from being a static or fixed identity, is therefore a self in a process of constant movement between different positions in dialogue."⁵⁴⁶

Lehmann uses the concept of polyphony within staging, as well, and not as an aspect of the theatre text. He uses the words "polylogism" and "polyglossia", which is a variation on Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia". Here, we see the phenomenon that Lehmann and others primarily see polyphony as deconstruction and fragmentation. He uses Kristeva's term here to undermine the image of the autonomous maker, "an order centred on one logos":

"The 'polylogue' (Kristeva) of the new theatre, however, often breaks away from such an order centred on one logos. A disposition of spaces of meaning and sound-spaces develops which is open to multiple uses and which can no longer simply be ascribed to a single organizer or organon – be it an individual or a collective. Rather, it is often a matter of the authentic presence of individual performers, who appear not as mere carriers of an intention external to them – whether this derives from the text or the director."⁵⁴⁷

The dramaturg Ivo Kuyt sites the same breaking down and, in fact, the untenability of unity, when he speaks about postdramatic theatre⁵⁴⁸

"In postdramatic theatre, on the other hand, it is stressed that the actual objective is unrecognisable and it is pluriform, contradictory and paradoxical. Insofar as there is any unity and truth, these are interpreted as the product of rhetorical interventions that lead to the suppression of appearance, of the fragmentary and of the illogical. The more aware the spectator is of the material conditions of the meaning production, the more they will discover that, for example, the unity of role, actor, character, voice and body are illusionary. The unsaid and the unthought of the text, as incarnated by such things as breathing, intonation and articulation, mimic and gesture, rhythm and musicalisation are exposed".

Lehmann approaches polyphony as fragmentation rather than multiplicity, as duplication. In my view, Bakhtin's polyphony and Kristeva's intertextuality, which is based on Bakhtin, refer not to the fragmentation but to the movement between the fragments, the dialogical dynamics, in other words

montage and associations rather than isolation, selection and splintering. When we examine polyphony, also in the theatre text, we have to focus on the “poly” in polyphony.

This is also the basis for the contemporary third category of theatre texts, which I gave as an example of polyphony. In those texts we see, for instance, a doubling of dramaturgies (dramatic and postdramatic dramaturgy) and theatre axes.

Within the concept of polyphony, there is always the quest for unity. That is also the frequent criticism of postdramatic theatre texts: in their fragmentation, they form no unity and no further meaning can therefore be attributed to them. In that way, polyphony would mean relativism: as a result of plurality, it would no longer say anything. Bakhtin himself says that both relativism and dogmatism already erase the authentic dialogism by making it either unnecessary (relativism) or impossible (dogmatism).⁵⁴⁹ In my view, this tension between unity and fragmentation is also seen in, for example, higher art education, between craftsmanship and collaboration. The tendency of many courses, even writing courses, is to retreat to the pseudo-unity of craftsmanship and monodisciplinarity or to focus on the fragmentation of interdisciplinarity.

Earlier, I mentioned the philosopher Fred Evans who, in his 2008 book *The Multivoiced Body*, describes the contemporary image of man and the world in which unity and fragmentation are brought together. He does this with the aid of Bakhtin’s polyphony. In Chapter I, I refer to that human image as the *polyphonic self* or, in psychological terms, the *dialogical self*.

The dialogical self is experienced as a multiple self, consisting of many voices, where the unity is felt in the continual shifting between the voices.

When the unity of a polyphonic product, in our case the theatre text, is determined by the dialogical movement between the voices, the interplay of voices, then that unity is a dynamic principle. In their book on Bakhtin, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson call that the “unity of the process”.

⁵⁴⁶ Pollard 2008

⁵⁴⁷ Lehmann 2006:32

⁴⁴⁸ Ivo Kuyt, in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:136

⁵⁴⁹ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):69, paraphrased by me

“True unity of the work is the unity of the dynamic process, not the unity of a finished product, unity of Creative Eventness.”⁵⁵⁰

If the unity of the polyphonic theatre text is a dynamic process, then polyphony is an artistic strategy, a theory of creativity.⁵⁵¹ That way, the polyphony of the theatre text can also be recognised and trained in the theatre writing process, as I will show in Chapters III and IV.

The polyphony of the theatre text is not associated with one single specific dramaturgy; it is an essential characteristic of every theatre text.

In the polyphonic theatre text, there are doublings at many levels within one text, such as

- multiple theatre axes
- multiple text types
- multiple text styles and text genres
- multiple theatre disciplines
- multiple texts
- multiple dramaturgies
- multiple addressees
- multiple word meanings

The unity of the polyphonic theatre text is in the movement between the voices, in the creative process.

Contemporary theatre practice includes many examples of polyphonic theatre texts. When Robert Leach describes the theatre text of today, he defines characteristics that we are already saw in this chapter as aspects of polyphony:

“So a new kind of play emerges, drama as performance material. Martin Crimp calls for ‘each scenario in words – the dialogue – (to) unfold against a district world – a design – which best exposés its irony’. Crimps own plays, and others like *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane are literally no more than sequences of words, with no speakers identified. These works are teasing, *unstable, ironic and self-reflexive*. The drama is an exploration in which the audience must make the meanings”⁵⁵²

The word “unstable” refers to Bakhtin’s “unfinalizability”, “irony” we encountered in linguistic polyphony and, in this chapter, I described “self-reflexivity” as the voice of self-referentiality.

I will now give three brief examples of contemporary theatre texts that demonstrate many of the characteristics of what I refer to as the polyphonic theatre text.

Sarah Kane, *4.48 Psychosis*

In her book *Regieanweisungen* [Stage Directions], Annette Storr analyses the theatre monologue *4.48 Psychosis* from 2000 as an example of modern theatre writing and her description⁵⁵³ includes many polyphonic aspects:

- One of the continual core questions with regard to this text is: “Who is speaking here?”, because the text is no longer automatically linked to a character.⁵⁵⁴ It is this question that we also continually encountered in the theoretical description of Chapter I.
 - The fictional character has no unity and, always supposing there is a character, it is a doubling. That is also made clear by the fact that many stagings of *4.48 Psychosis* spread the text over four persons on stage or treated it as a “score for a female voice”.
 - There are many different perspectives to the text, which Storr refers to in her book as voices.
 - The text also refuses to be pinned down to one single dramaturgy.
- While, in 2011, the Dutch director Thibaud Delpeut approached the text as a well-made play, many directors and theatre scholars see the work as a school-book example of postdramatic theatre.

4.48 Psychosis is a monologue and this form, in particular, appears to easily represent or evoke polyphony. The theatre author David Van Reybrouck stresses the polyphony of the theatre monologue:

“The genre of the monologue is so precious to me because it is able, as no other, to show the polyphony of an individual. Every genuine person is a quarrelling Corsican mountain village, every person has their own internal vendetta, every body is

⁵⁵⁰ Morson & Emerson 1990:258

⁵⁵¹ Morson & Emerson 1990:257 and Haynes 2013:144

⁵⁵² Leach 2010 (2008):62; The italics are mine, NC

⁵⁵³ See Storr 2009:57-61

⁵⁵⁴ Also see, for example, how Theresia Birkenhauer takes that very question as a point of departure for analysing Heiner Müller’s texts and staging, Birkenhauer 2005:33

burdened with an ongoing blood feud of longings and ideals. In its seeming simplicity, the monologue is therefore an astoundingly rich genre.”⁵⁵⁵

The 19th-century German theatre writer and poet Friedrich Hebbel⁵⁵⁶ already said that theatre monologues are only any good if they show inner polyphony and dualism.⁵⁵⁷

At the same time, monologues are often treated not as drama but rather as prose, a kind of performed short story, as Michelene Wandor puts it.

“The monologue makes no useful contribution whatsoever to learning how to write drama.”⁵⁵⁸

Precisely because the monologue also makes the voice of narrative prose audible, it promotes the doubling of text types and therefore the polyphony in the theatre text.

The rise of the theatrical monologue in postdramatic theatre is therefore no coincidence.⁵⁵⁹ Showing the dialogical principal in one character makes it possible to show a dialogical self.

In Beckett’s theatrical monologue *Not I*, from 1973, the character (all there is to be seen on stage is a mouth) talks in the third person *about* themselves as if they were talking about someone else – Bakhtin’s outsideness. A second voice appears to be added from outside.

“The discrepancy between the one who speaks and the character on stage is a theme that haunted Beckett throughout his career. This raises the question whether his monologues can be attributed to the character who articulates them, or whether they are rather an alien text improper to this character. Such an assumption means, then, that Beckett’s monologues (...) could not strictly be called monologues, since the character actually discusses, comments on and mostly disagrees with a text coming from elsewhere. (...) Beckett seems to suggest that if a monologue is a play for only one voice, there is no such thing as a monologue.”⁵⁶⁰

Stefan Hertmans, *Kopnaad* [Head Seam]

Kopnaad from 1992 has the telling subtitle, “a text for four voices”. Characters are actually barely relevant any longer. The voice of intertextuality speaks clearly in the piece, as it is part of a trio of theatre texts in which Hertmans relates to the ideas and texts of the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. When Hertmans writes about his own theatre texts,⁵⁶¹ this is a breath of

fresh air because he speaks on the basis of the text and the writer and not primarily the staging. He describes aspects of his own pieces, which I would call polyphonic.

He says that, as a writer, he chooses theatre precisely because of the duality and what he calls the “language flow”: other voices or text types can be incorporated into the normal theatre text. In Hölderlin’s work Hertmans detects a second language that is actually foreign to its own language, a language that, in everyone, articulates the place in which they always feel excluded, *the voice of the unsayable*, which always speaks along in all our linguistic expression. Hertmans gives the second voice many names: the tragic, the schizophrenic, alienating objectivity. Here, too, we recognise Bakhtin’s outsideness.

“through the characters in *Kopnaad* (1992) flows a surging, untameable language in which imaginative, ideological, great lyric (in a no longer individualisable poetics) and disruptive psychologism appears to toll the death knell for early modernity: the discovery of an alienating objectivity”.⁵⁶²

Martin Crimp, *Alles Weitere kennen Sie aus dem Kino* [The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from The Cinema]

At the 2015 Holland Festival, there was a performance of *Alles Weitere kennen Sie aus dem Kino* staged by the British director Katie Mitchell.⁵⁶³

- The theatre text for this show was written by Martin Crimp and is an adaptation of *Phoenician Women*, a tragedy by Euripides. The text follows the fictional narration of the Greek tragedy fairly closely. That in itself makes this theatre text intertextual.

⁵⁵⁵ David Van Reybrouck, *Twee monologen* [Two Monologues], De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 2011, p.9

⁵⁵⁶ 1813-1863

⁵⁵⁷ Schütte 2002:136

⁵⁵⁸ Wandor 2008A:208

⁵⁵⁹ See Kerkhoven 2002, Jans 2009, Lehmann 1999 and 2004A

⁵⁶⁰ Laurens de Vos, in: Wallace 2006:113

⁵⁶¹ In: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:171

⁵⁶² In: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:172

⁵⁶³ Seen: Amsterdam 21 March 2015

- Moreover, it is continually pointed out in the text that a story is being told. Allowing the narration to be seen and heard (the character of Jocasta regularly says: "... says Jocasta") generates a second voice, which negates the representation, continually demonstrating that the text is also a narration. Here, the voice of self-referentiality can be heard. As the stage directions are spoken (Jocasta: "... says Jocasta"), the text is also directed at multiple addressees.

- Jocasta remains a character, but doubles herself. In her lines, we hear the voice of the woman, the voice of the story's narrator, plus a voice talking about itself from outside, as it were (analogous with Bakhtin's outsideness). The chorus of sphinxes emphasises the extra voice of the narrator in her lines. The chorus continually urges the characters to re-experience their story by telling it. The chorus prompts the characters with their "narrative voice": the chorus regularly says to Jocasta as she speaks, "... says Jocasta".

- There is a doubling of dramaturgies in the piece. Within the dramatic dramaturgy, there is an important development in the story when Creon's son dies. At the same time, within the postdramatic dramaturgy, time does not pass for Creon at all. The structure of the narration is that two types of time take place simultaneously and, with them, two dramaturgies.

II.10 Proposal for a polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text

Based on the concept of polyphony, in this chapter I have given characteristics that could constitute the building blocks for a poetics of the linguistic theatre text. In the next chapter, I will use these characteristics to describe the theatre writing process.

This poetics, as I said earlier, is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It exposes which possible voices are also speaking in the theatre text and that list of voices makes it clear what is being doubled in the polyphony, or, to put it another way, what the “poly” is in polyphony.

The idea that theatre text precedes the performance is no longer tenable. Writing and staging processes can no longer be separated. This makes *the voice of the co-maker* recognisable in the theatre text.

The theatre text is more of a process than a finalised finished product. The making or creating itself is recognisable in the text as *the voice of the process*. This voice of the process can also manifest itself as referring to the individual medium, discipline or art product, as *the voice of self-referentiality*.

The theatre text is not a half-product, but it is, in principle, incomplete and unfinalised. The incomplete theatre text in service of the performance can quite easily also be an autonomous work of art, when we treat that text as a supplement with regard to the staging and vice versa. The combination of the theatre text as an autonomous entity and as incomplete text in service of the performance is only possible when we view that text as a supplement, a polyphonic multiplicity, a double product.

If we view the theatre text as an incomplete double product, then two voices emerge: *the voice of the genre* and *the voice of the disciplines*.

The linguistic theatre text is not literary in the sense that it is a completed, autonomous entity with a fixed literary core. It is, however, literary when it opens itself to a scenic practice of hybridisation and deconstruction.

In the theatre text, we see four voices emerge that promote and support this ‘opening up to scenic practice’. *The voice of de-dramatisation, the voice of re-dramatisation, the voice of the linguistic and the voice of co-creation*.

In the theatre text, we see literature live at work. With its continual reinterpretations of the theatre text, staging practice shows how many voices those texts actually possess and how artistic and therefore literary these

products actually are. Where the text provides the theatre with possibilities for doubling voices and multiplying meanings, it augments its literary content. When a text works in the theatre, it is literary.

Indeed, the theatre text is characterised by the fact that it has multiple addressees. These can be various speech directions, or theatrical axes. The main and auxiliary texts of a theatre text also have various addressees.

With theatre texts there is often a doubling of addressees. That doubling of addressees leads to polyphony in the text. The voices that emerge are: *the voice of representation, the voice of presence, the voice of self-referentiality, the voice of the inner critic and the voice of self-reflectivity.*

The theatre text is characterised by a doubling of dramaturgies, genres, text types and characters. Primarily as a result of two important developments, namely intermediality and the exceeding of genres and disciplines, contemporary texts possess a multiple aesthetic.

The voices that emerge in those doublings are: *the voice of the character, the voice of self-referentiality, the voice of the inner critic, the voice of recollection and the voice of intertextuality.*

In contemporary theatre texts, a third category of texts appears to be developing that, by distinguishing itself by means of merging and doubling, could constitute an excellent foundation for and example of a poetics of the linguistic theatre text.

The linguistic theatre text is a hybrid artefact consisting of heteroglossia, a multi-sexual hermaphrodite text. It is hybrid because a continual process of hybridisation occurs: voices (text types, styles, genres, dramaturgies, disciplines) are arising, emerging and being doubled.

In the hybrid theatre text, in addition to *the voice of the text type, the voice of representation and the voice of presence, the voice of the linguistic and the voice of artificiality*, we are also seeing *the voice of the disciplines* emerging.

The theatre text has multiple authorship. Just as the multitude of voices and interplay between the voices determine the “personal voice” of the theatre author, so can multiple authorship include both craftsmanship and artistic expression.

When the authorship of the theatre text is multiple, external voices (co-makers, audience, commissioning party, other texts, other writers) are internalised in the writing process and recognisable as voices in the text.

The voice of self-referentiality and the voice of the character also form part of the multiple authorship.

In this way, the author of a theatre's text is not so much a role as a "relationship" between various makers, disciplines, media and texts.

One text sounding in another is referred to as intertextuality and theatre texts are specifically intertextual. The intertextuality of theatre texts breaks down their unity and finalisedness. This high degree of intertextuality is related to the aforementioned unfinalizability of the theatre text, which means it is in continuous contact with other texts and writers, and the fact that the theatre text is a hybrid double product.

Intertextuality can occur as polyglossia, literally multilingualism, and as referencing or quoting other already existing texts.

In the theatre text, intertextuality can also be seen as a construction principle. That means *the voice of intertextuality* can be seen as a voice in the writing process.

Intertextuality can be recognised in many text characteristics of the theatre text, such as participation, transformation, tropic, association, valorisation, parody, satire and dialogue.

These characteristics, saw *voice of self-referentiality*, *voice of the axes* and *the voice of the genre* emerge. These text characteristics all lead to doublings, making the theatre text polyphonic.

The polyphony of the theatre text is not associated with one single specific dramaturgy; it is an essential characteristic of every theatre text.

In that polyphony, there are doublings at many levels:

- multiple theatre axes
- multiple text types
- multiple text styles and text genres
- multiple theatre disciplines
- multiple texts
- multiple dramaturgies
- multiple addressees
- multiple word meanings

The unity of the polyphonic theatre text is in the movement between the voices, in the creative process, making polyphony a theory of creativity.

For a polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text, we need a fitting, new metaphor for describing theatre texts; a metaphor that clearly portrays the agility, dynamism and process focus of the poetics.

Texts for dramatic theatre are actually still seen as a finalised thing, an *identity*. The theatre text attempts to clarify the fate of the main character, which is already well-illustrated by the innumerable texts the name the main character as the title.

Texts for postdramatic theatre often use metaphors referring to a *space*. Perhaps *In Kolonos* [In Colonus], Claus' 1986 adaptation of Oedipus, was already an early reference to a new dramaturgy, which is why he removed the identity from the title of Sophocles' *Oedipus in Colonos*, retaining the space, the place where Oedipus dies.

Following in the footsteps of the writer Gertrude Stein, Hans-Thies Lehmann used the word "landscape" to describe the theatre text.⁵⁶⁴ He also used the word "textscape":

"A term that could capture the new variants of text should carry the connotation of the 'spacing' understood in the sense of Derrida's 'espacement': the phonetic materiality, the temporal course, the dispersion in space, the loss of teleology and self-identity. I have chosen the term 'textscape' because it designates at the same time the connection of postdramatic theatre language with the new dramaturgies of the visual and retains the reference to the landscape play."⁵⁶⁵

In the description of postdramatic theatre texts by Elfride Jelinek, you see Claire Swyzen and Kurt Vanhoutte doing likewise. They describe Jelinek's texts using the spatial term "language plains".

"Jelinek writes 'language plains', polylogical and conflicting text blocks, voices separate from individual speakers or characters"⁵⁶⁶

A metaphor would appear to apply to polyphonic theatre texts, and also to the third category of theatre texts we are seeing emerge in theatre practice, which links the images of "identity" and "space", and that is *motion*. The theatre text is not a finalised unity representing a round character, nor is it a postmodern landscape. The theatre text is a process and "motion" is well suited as a metaphor for a process.

A theatre text is a dynamic artefact, always in dialogue with other texts, writers and makers; in which meanings are never fixed, but are continually appearing and disappearing; in which many voices are in conflict with one another and are heard intermingled; in short: the theatre text is perpetually in motion and is, consequently, the epitome of dialogism.

In the next chapter, we will use this polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text to study the writing process for theatre texts. In addition, that process will be treated as unceasing movement between the various voices, which will lead to a recognisable theatre writing process model enabling any theatre writer to gain insight into their own writing process. That can accelerate and innovate writing for theatre, allowing the process to proceed more smoothly.

⁵⁶⁴ This was adopted by Nele Wynants, in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:157, for example

⁵⁶⁵ Lehmann 2006:148

⁵⁶⁶ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:207

DIAGRAM 3

VOICES IN THE TEXT	
II.1 Does the theatre text precede the performance?	The voice of the co-makers
	The voice of the process
	The voice of self-referentiality
II.2 Is the theatre text a half-product?	The voice of the genre
	The voice of the disciplines
II.3 Is the theatre text literary?	The voice of de-dramatisation
	The voice of re-dramatisation
	The voice of the linguistic
	The voice of co-creation
II.4 Does the theatre text have an addressee?	The voice of representation
	The voice of presence
	The voice of self-referentiality
	The voice of the inner critic
	The voice of self-reflexivity
II.5 Is the theatre text a text genre?	The voice of the character
	The voice of self-referentiality
	The voice of the inner critic
	The voice of recollection
	The voice of intertextuality

VOICES IN THE TEXT

II.6 Is the theatre text hybrid?	The voice of the text type
	The voice of representation
	The voice of presence
	The voice of the linguistic
	The voice of artificiality
	The voice of the discipline
II.7 Does the theatre text have an author?	
	The voice of self-referentiality
	The voice of the character
II.8 Is the theatre text intertextual?	
	The voice of the genre
	The voice of the theatre axes
	The voice of self-referentiality
	The voice of intertextuality



The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark though, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be graceful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Rumi ⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁷ Jalal ad-Din Rumi is a 13th-century Iranian poet (1207-1273), translation by Coleman Barks

An abstract graphic consisting of thick black and red lines. The lines form a series of parallel paths that create a stylized, elongated 'Z' or zigzag shape. The black lines form the outer boundaries, while a red line runs parallel to the inner black lines. The shape is composed of horizontal segments at the top and bottom, and diagonal segments connecting them. The text 'The polyphonic theatre writing process' is positioned in the upper left area of the image.

The polyphonic theatre
writing process

“Writing is the product of a multitude of voices”⁵⁶⁸

Sarah Gendron

In this chapter, we move from product to process. That is not self-evident. Is it simply possible to decide which theatre texts certain writing processes lead to and whether flexible writing processes can automatically produce high-quality theatre texts? Although every pedagogy of theatre writing is, naturally, based on that idea, there is no evident direct relationship between product and process.

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze does make that connection when, in his book *Différence et Répétition*, he states that all the asking about what makes a book a book or what makes a text a text is, ultimately, nothing other than the question: what is writing?⁵⁶⁹ The question about the product cannot, in his view, be put otherwise than through the question about the activity, the process.

Can an analysis of the product provide insight into the process or, in the case of theatre writing: must there first be a poetics of the theatre text as a product in order to have material for studying the process of writing theatre texts?

In his doctoral thesis, the linguist Niels van der Mast refers to extensive literary documentation demonstrating that, nowadays, it is acknowledged that text analysis (in other words analysis of the product) is a way of gaining insight into social and cognitive writing processes. Van der Mast bases his work on *Theories, models and methodology in writing research*, by Rijlaarsdam, Van den Berg and Couzijn 1996 where, in 13 of the 34 studies into writing processes analysis of the text is used as research method.⁵⁷⁰

If a character’s identity is polyphonic, or multivocal as Castagno terms it in *New Playwriting Strategies*, then why not the identity of a theatre writer? In the previous chapter we saw that the theatre text is polyphonic, so why does that not apply to the writing process for such a theatre text?

⁵⁶⁸ Gendron 2008:78

⁵⁶⁹ Quoted in: Gendron 2008:65

⁵⁷⁰ Mast 1999:44

It is important to study the writing process itself. When the human image changes and, with it, our view of characters, then that also has some significance for our view of the writer and the theatre maker and, therefore, for the artistic process and, yes: ultimately also the art pedagogy process.

The polyphony we have seen in a poetics of the linguistic theatre text is a reflection of a specific conception of man and the world. For Bakhtin, a world image is linked to every voice in the text. He calls that a voice-idea, a personally integral world image that cannot be abstracted from that one the voice. Every participant in a dialogical process can have several voice-ideas: every character, every reader, every audience member and, therefore, also every writer:⁵⁷¹

“Dostoevsky –to speak paradoxically- thought not in thoughts but in points of view, consciousnesses, voices”⁵⁷²

An artistic process is never neutral. Each writing process and each writing pedagogy is founded on an image of man and the world. When we examine the theatre writing process in this chapter, based on a polyphonic poetics of the theatre text, we cannot avoid also studying the instance that goes through or executes the writing process.

This chapter on the theatre writing process is constructed in a funnel shape. I will first extensively describe the polyphonic or dialogical self in the present time and culture, also because I feel that this human image is highly topical and greatly influences how people live, make art and transfer art these days.

Subsequently, I will focus on polyphony within creative processes and then look at what polyphony specifically means for the creative process of writing. To conclude, I will connect a writing process model from the theory of social and cognitive writing processes to the concept of polyphony. That then leads to a *model for the theatre writing process*. The voices in that model (made up of voices that we have largely already encountered in chapters I and II) will be described and placed within that model.

III.1 The polyphonic self

“(Question:) No I? No identity?

(Answer): None at all. But not you, either. The stable I does not exist. This was devised in Western philosophy by people such as Plato and Descartes. The stable I need not exist; we have never been a subject. The real subject is – an image from Mikhail Bakhtin, in relation to Dostoevsky – the polyphonic subject. If we are anything, it is the polyphonic subject. All feelings are mixed feelings, all thoughts mixed thoughts.”⁵⁷³

Awee Prins

When we ask, “Who is speaking here?” or, with the writing process, “who is writing here?” the enquiry after the self is essential. Who is actually writing? The brain? The body? The soul? And, if we are talking about the one behind the writing process, then are we talking about a personality, subject, and identity, a self?

In the discussion of the ‘self’, that I am using here as a container concept, various concepts come to the fore: identity (where the self has a certain continuity), subject (having your own perspective of the world) and person (possessing certain qualities or capacities, such as self-awareness).⁵⁷⁴

The self has been variously described throughout the ages. Where, for example, the church father Augustines talks about God, Plato talks about the Soul, Descartes the mind and Daniel Dennett the brain processes.⁵⁷⁵ However different they may be, it is striking that, in all these cases, the self is generally perceived as a *unit* or whole.⁵⁷⁶ That feeling of self as a unity has often been questioned over the past few decades. With his 1984 book

⁵⁷¹ See Morson & Emerson 1990:237

⁵⁷² Bakhtin 2011(1984):93

⁵⁷³ Philosopher Awee Prins in *de Volkskrant* 24 December 2016, Magazine p.81

⁵⁷⁴ I have borrowed this distinction from *Het ongrijpbare zelf* (The Elusive Self), by philosopher Jacques Bos, from 2013

⁵⁷⁵ Bos 2013:21

⁵⁷⁶ For this phenomenological approach, see the book *Selves* by Galen Strawson from 2009. Also see Bos 2013:26

Reasons and Persons, the philosopher Derek Parfit was one of the first. According to him, we are all a cohesive collection of separate, successive ‘selves’. He refers to the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume who, back in the eighteenth century, refers to the self as a “bundle of perceptions”.

In his book *The Ideas of the Self*, from 2005, the historian Jerrold Seigel divide the self into three dimensions which I already described in Chapter I as voices:

1. the bodily dimension
2. the dimension concerned with our social and cultural interaction
3. the dimension of reflectivity, the capacity to consciously think about ourselves and the world.

Siegel describes how we tend always choose one of the three, as if the others do not exist. We disregard the multidimensionality of the self, particularly as we allow the reflective dimension to prevail over the bodily and social dimensions.⁵⁷⁷

A notion of a person as a plurality is, naturally not unique. In the development of Western thinking about the self, with in the view of man as a psychophysical unit, there is always a recognisable tendency to divide the self into smaller units.

Plato already made the distinction between body and soul, which was actually refined by Christianity into a mortal body and an immortal soul. From Thomas of Aquino onwards, who sees the soul expressly as something rational, that division of the self affords place for thought. Beginning with Descartes’ “I think therefore I am” the mind and thinking become an independent and dominant part of self. Subsequently, in the Enlightenment, the entire self is reduced to the analysing ratio.

The English romantics of the nineteenth century again break away from that almost mechanical view of reason as man’s self. Where they attempt to again make room for poetry, dream, imagination and the transcendental, they are actually harking back to Plato’s original idea of the spirit.⁵⁷⁸

This includes the development of views on what it means to be a man and what it means to be an artist. From the end of the 19th century, both the self and the creative process are often described as a split between spontaneous personal action and detached reflection,

“the tension between standing apart and being fully involved: that is what makes a writer”,

says the writer Nadine Gordimer.⁵⁷⁹

In the development of psychoanalysis, this humanistic view of the self as something that is *built up of various parts* but feels like a *unity*, led to the distinction between a real and an unreal or false self.

Within this view, every form of creativity, of creating, becomes a form of self loss. The English poet T.S. Eliot called that an “escape from personality”.

Although, here, it is still seen as a unity, a doubling comes about within the person as an artist. This is, in fact, a romantic concept of the artist who, separately from his or her personality, possesses secret forces that fashion the work of art.

This image of romantic doubling, of ‘still waters run deep’, which we so often encounter in our Western culture as Jekyll and Hyde, Batman or Superman, for example, may be a *doubling* of the self, but there is still no question of the plurality or polyphony of the self.

The reason for this is that, within the romantic doubling, a distinction is made between the real self, which creates, and the unreal or false self, which evidently does not succeed in creating. This hierarchy restores the feeling of unity of the self. Margaret Atwood describes this as follows.

“Where does it come from this notion that the writing self – the self that comes to be thought of as ‘the author’ – is not the same as the one who does the living?”⁵⁸⁰

From the 1970s onwards, this humanistic image of *unity of the self*, possibly divided into parts, has been increasingly unmasked by post-structuralist language theory and postmodern philosophy.

⁵⁷⁷ Also see Bos 2013:92

⁵⁷⁸ I have borrowed this global overview of the self from Hunt & Sampson 2006

⁵⁷⁹ Atwood 2002:29

⁵⁸⁰ Atwood 2002:38

Over the past four decades, the notion of the person as a plural self has embedded itself in many a research area, such as psychology, sociology and linguistics but also, for example, in business administration. Often, within the self, these areas, including the neurosciences, arrive at a division into two types of system: emotional and rational. A struggle that is also referred to as ‘The Dual Process’.

In his recent book *Incognito*, the neuroscientist David Eagleman gives numerous indications that there are many more than two voices active in the brain and, moreover, that those voices are tenuously fighting with each other as a team of rivals:

“Just like a good drama, the human brain runs on conflict”⁵⁸¹

In Chapter I, we saw that *conflict between the voices* is one of the characteristics of Bakhtin’s polyphony and the writer Coetzee’s concept of *countervoices*.

As an example of polyphony, Eagleman cites Freud who, as far back as 1920, in addition to the ‘id’, which stood for the instinctive and the ‘ego’ that is the more realistic organising part in us, introduced a third voice, a fatally critical and moralising voice, which he called the ‘superego’. We will again also encounter *this voice of the inner critic* later on in the theatre writing process.

For our quest for the polyphonic self, Eagleman makes two important observations.

The first is that all voices tackle the problem in their very own way, separately, literally as a polyphony. This also appears to be one of the problems within artificial intelligence: the brain does not stop with one solution to a problem; it continues working on several solutions in various parts.

In creativity theories, that concept influences what was referred to as *the confluence approach*. De confluence approach is “the need for simultaneous multiple components in order for the highest levels of creativity to be achieved.”⁵⁸²

We recognise that creativity often demands various components, such as intellectual skills and crafting skills and emotional motivation and personality, but the idea of the components engaging in problem-solving independently of one another is an important new contribution from Eagleman and supports the concept of polyphony both in the self and in the creative process.

In his book *The Voices Within; The History and Science of How We Talk to Ourselves*, the psychologist and novelist Charles Fernyhough also appears to be referring to this when he says that there is a basis for polyphony in the brain, where patterns of interactivity are found between various neural networks.⁵⁸³ Brain scans of people who conduct internal dialogues show that the area responsible for internal language⁵⁸⁴ is in contact with the area in the brain that is occupied with thoughts about other people.⁵⁸⁵

Eagleman's second observation is importance of *time* for polyphony in the brain. While the rational voice often endeavours to look after the long-term interests, the emotional voice wants instant gratification.⁵⁸⁶ Part of us knows that chocolate makes us fat, while another part wants the sweetness right now, “maintenant, tout de suite, heute nog verdomme”, as in Raymond van het Groenewoud's song *Je veux l'amour*.

The internal conflict in the self is reflected in the theatre, a medium that always takes place in time, recognisable in theatrical characters in their struggle between psychological motives (“Why, in general, does this character do this?”) and direct motivation (“Why is this character doing this now?”).

This conflict of internal voices in time seems to be a reflection of the *tension in the creative process*. In the writing process, that tension expresses itself between the planning of the writing, the actual writing action of producing texts and the rereading and evaluation.

In theatre making, during rehearsals, one will cry “Let's just start doing something on the floor!”, another “We first have to know what we actually want this show to say!” and a third “Get a move on, it's only four days until first night”. A conflict of voices, which are all equally legitimate and valuable and relate to the making time.

⁵⁸¹ Eagleman 2012:107

⁵⁸² Sternberg 2006 (1999):12

⁵⁸³ Fernyhough 2017 (2016):114

⁵⁸⁴ The 'left inferior frontal gyrus'

⁵⁸⁵ The 'right hemisphere activation', near to the 'temporo-parietal junction'

⁵⁸⁶ Neuroscientist Sam McClure and Jonathan Coen, in particular, have examined this time aspect, see Eagleman 2012:116

Eagleman points out that there are more than two systems, components or voices in the brain:

"The brain is full of smaller subsystems that have overlapping domains and take care of coinciding tasks."⁵⁸⁷

As an example, he gives the functioning of memory, in which there are *several* memories of the same event. This shows that the idea of one memory is an illusion:

"As with memory, the lesson here is that the brain has evolved multiple, redundant ways of solving problems."⁵⁸⁸

In describing the theatre writing process, we use this fact as a distinction between *the voice of the individual recollection* and *the voice of the collective memory*. Moreover, you will see that theatre writers who also use the memories of their co-makers as input for the work are dealing with multiple memories in their writing process.

The self as a plurality fits perfectly into the contemporary world and culture and can therefore be useful in describing the current creative process and in developing a contemporary art pedagogy.

The Dutch philosopher Samuel IJsseling provides clear insight into the philosophical image of man and the world that lies behind polyphony. In his wonderful essay "*Het verschil*" [The Difference], published in his latest book, *De tijd, het schrift, het verschil* [Time, Writing, the Difference], IJsseling states that, in contrast with the traditional adoration of the unity, in this century we are confronted with ceaseless plurality. In addition to the fact that we speak many languages (both national languages and the languages of various fields), modern man also hears many voices, which IJsseling calls, literally, polyphony:⁵⁸⁹

"He (modern man, NC) listens to the voice of his conscience, but also to that of his personal and social interests, to the voice of his parents, even if they are long since dead, to the voices of friends, colleagues, figures of authority and scholars and, above all, to the voice of the media, the multimedia. We are inundated with information that is often contradictory and always polyvalent and polyinterpretable."⁵⁹⁰

IJsseling, whose great achievement is to have introduced postmodern thinking into the Low Countries, appears to describe the voices in such a way that they come to you from outside, but also constitute an essential part of your inner self. The voice of the conscience, for example, is an internal voice but it is, naturally, influenced by all the polyphonic information we receive from outside.

Transforming that external information into an internal voice is a process of *internalisation*, which we will frequently encounter in the theatre writing process. External factors, such as an audience, commissioning party or co-maker, become internal voices that tell us what we could or should do during the writing process.

The polyphony makes us internally fragmented, or “crumbled”, as IJsseling puts it, and in Chapter I we already saw that it is then extremely difficult, as a young writer or maker for example, to say what your “personal voice” is, your “real fascination” or your “personal signature”.

The German sociologist and cultural scholar Andreas Reckwitz sees, in this polyphony, the core of what he calls the contemporary *hybrid subject*. He beautifully describes the development of this subject and, later, also applies it in our view on creativity.

Reckwitz shows how, from the 19th century onwards, many philosophers endeavoured to undermine the autonomous subject idea (the unity of the self) – from Nietzsche and Heidegger to Wittgenstein and Dewey, culminating in French poststructuralists such as Foucault and Derrida, who made an attempt to arrive at a “Dezentrierung des Subjekts”, a decentrisation of the subject, whereby the subject is not static or fixed, but in constant flux of form.⁵⁹¹ The essence of this is what Reckwitz refers to as the *Doppeldeutigkeit*, the dual meaning, which simply means that the subject can be perceived or approached as either subject or object.

⁵⁸⁷ Eagleman 2012:126

⁵⁸⁸ Eagleman 2012:127

⁵⁸⁹ IJsseling 2015:119

⁵⁹⁰ IJsseling 2015:119

⁵⁹¹ Reckwitz 2012A (2008): 13

This concept of a plural or hybrid subject also has political implications. In 2017, the Dutch Government Science Council wrote a report in which the government was advised to focus no longer on a “national identity”, but on the fact that people “have a hybrid identity and that, correspondingly, the concept of plural identifications should be taken as the principle”.⁵⁹²

In his book *Das hybride Subjekt* [The Hybrid Subject], Reckwitz describes not only how codes and cultures are continually give us differing signals with regard to what a person actually is or should be, but also how that very hybridity makes the ‘self’ an almost performative deed: we are what we do. I am not my mind, my body my soul or any other fixed and stable self. Neither am I simply a collection of separate parts or fragments. My identity is not fixed; it is actually created by what I do and, therefore, changes with every act. Here, we recognise concepts from the philosopher Judith Butler, such as “doing gender” and “doing identity”.

When we note that the contemporary artist has changed, become *hybrid*, as is often said, than what we primarily mean is that he or she is continually working with varying media, platforms and disciplines and in ever-varying roles, from artist to researcher to entrepreneur, for example.

Reckwitz’ explanation of hybridity implies that the hybrid artist can no longer be pinned down, but is engendered by what he or she is doing at that moment. If I play the trumpet, I *am* a trumpeter and musician; if I stand on stage to do it then I *am* a theatre maker; if I do it within a trans-medial project then I *am* also immediately a trans-media storyteller.

When we examine the creative process of that hybrid artist, then this is where the quest for the identity of the artist lies. What is the hybrid artist’s creative process and, naturally, also: how should they be trained?

In Chapter I, I already said that where higher art education aims to train hybrid artists who nonetheless develop their professionalism, craftsmanship and individual “voice”, the concept of polyphony may well be of use. Nowadays, the practice of the hybrid artist in theatre and performance is characterised by a large number of doublings: several disciplines (interdisciplinarity), several media (transmediality), several makers (co-creation) and several realities (mixed reality). I see this doubling as multiple voices in the artistic process, within which the artist is continually dynamically shifting between, in this case, disciplines, media, realities and makers.

Reckwitz makes another major observation. He demonstrates that, in the extreme performative society in which we live and in the contemporary concepts of the hybrid, polyphonic self, it is no longer self-expression that is the essence, but *self-staging*. When, for example, we write a post on Facebook, that is far less an expression of what we feel or think and far more part of an entire process in which we are eager to conjure up an image of ourselves: we want to be funny, post amusing clips and show a successful, happy person. With each post, we are building and staging ourselves as a character. As Reckwitz says in his description of Judith Butler:

“The subject is his own staging”⁵⁹³

In Chapters I and II, we recognise that focus on self-staging in increased attention by the artist to the process of making, to the staging itself or, as I have put it: *to the voice of the writing, the voice of the process and the voice of self-referentiality*.

This self-staging is reminiscent of the self as a story, as a *narrative construction*. The philosopher Hannah Arendt already said:

“If you ask me who I am, I can only answer with a story”.

In his book *Kritik des Theaters* [Critique of Theatre], the dramatist Bernd Stegemann claims that, nowadays, our psychological and social identity is seen not so much as a static entity, but rather as a result of stories about ourselves.⁵⁹⁴ We know what is being said about us and have started believing that this is what we actually are.

Through stories, we are literally “attributed” with identity traits and, in the stories about ourselves and others, that is always done with language.⁵⁹⁵ Such a narrative self, in which the self is actually seen as a fictional figure, touches on the Bakhtinian concept of the author as a character, or the equating of authors and characters in the creative process.

⁵⁹² Bart van Haaster, ‘Niemand past in één hokje; Een Bildungsperspectief op burgerschap’ [No One Fits in a Single Pigeonhole; a Bildung perspective of citizenship], in: *ScienceGuide* 26 February 2018

⁵⁹³ Reckwitz 2012A (2008): 88

⁵⁹⁴ Stegemann 2014 (2013):27

⁵⁹⁵ Stegemann 2014 (2013):27

With the help of Samuel Beckett's novels, Fernyhough links this concept of the narrative self directly with the concept of polyphony:

"We spin narratives about ourselves to make sense of who we are, and those narratives make us simultaneously the author, the narrator and the protagonist of the story. We are the cacophony of our mental voices. We listen to them as well as uttering them"⁵⁹⁶

Recent research in development psychology and cognitive sciences supports the idea of a Bakhtinian plural self,⁵⁹⁷ whereby a clear link is made between a dialogical self, which exists in relation to or in response to others, and a plural or polyphonic self.

In the first chapter, I already described how Bakhtin's concepts regarding polyphony and dialogism also suggest a "polyphonic self" or, as it is known in psychology, a "dialogical self".

The Dutch professor of personality psychology Hubert Hermans was a prominent force in linking Bakhtin's ideas on the polyphonic novel to the concept of the polyphonic self, from where Hermans subsequently developed psychological theories and methodologies.

Hermans points out that it is, in fact, that *shifting* between the various parts of ourselves, between the voices, that gives the feeling of unity and individuality. The shifting between various voices, which Hermans calls "I positions", without one voice being in charge or dominant, constitutes *the dialogical aspect of the polyphonic self*:

"(...) as a dialogical self, built up of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous, 'I' positions, between which a person switches/fluctuates, influenced by historical, cultural and institutional experiences and relationships".⁵⁹⁸

In their article 'Bakhtin's realism and embodiment: Towards a revision of the dialogical self', James Creswell & Cor Baerveldt make the link between the narrative self and the dialogical self when they say the following about Hermans:

"By drawing on Bakhtin's discussion of the polyphonic novel, he argues that the self is "dialogical" in the sense that it is a narrative construction emergent in inter-subjective exchange among interdependent personae that are not marshaled by a single grand-I"⁵⁹⁹

When we take an image of man as a basis for an artistic practice and an art pedagogy, it is important to choose a self that honours not just the physical but also the social and reflective aspects of ourselves.

A polyphonic self appears to fit well with the hybrid image of man and the hybrid artistry of these times.

In a polyphonic self, a multitude of voices can be discerned that are in conflict with one another. That conflict is caused by a varying relationship of voices with time. The multiple voices are separate from one another and there is no dominant voice. Some of the voices are internalised voices from without.

In a polyphonic self, it seems to be more a question of self-staging than of self-expression, which is why so much attention is paid to the voice of the process.

A polyphonic self is not a fixed identity; it is more of a performative self (I am what I do) and a narrative self (I am a collection of stories).

In the polyphonic self, the feeling of authenticity and unity is generated by the unique, individual shifting between the voices, the dialogism.

The question now is how this concept of the polyphonic self can be recognised or used as a contemporary image of man in creative processes.

⁵⁹⁶ Fernyhough 2017(2016):97

⁵⁹⁷ See, for example, Pollard 2008, chapter 6, Kindle Book 69/4341. Sometimes, the concept is already used when people identify with several societies, groups or practices and act differently on the basis of that identification. In that case, Nobel Prize winner and economist Amartya Sen uses the term “plural identities”

⁵⁹⁸ Hubert Hermans, in: Akkerman & Admiraal & Simons & Niessen 2006:466. Also see Meijers & Hermans 2018, for example

⁵⁹⁹ Cresswell & Baerveldt 2011:264

III.2 Creativity processes and polyphony

“There is as much difference between us and ourselves
as there is between us and others”⁶⁰⁰

Michel de Montaigne

The view of a text and our tendency to seek a unity in that text appears to run parallel with our idea of artistry, with the way in which the unity and finalisation of the text corresponds with the romantic view of a single autonomous artist.

In other words: if the theatre text as a product changes, then does the way those texts are created also change? Is the theatre writing process also polyphonic and what does that entail?

“Goethe himself says that he exists of numerous people, he is a plurality and he really meant that. With him, there is no single I. That is now, naturally, a postmodern theme, but for Goethe it was an experience, not a theory”.⁶⁰¹

The concept of the polyphonic self as an image of man is frequently encountered in recent research into creative processes.⁶⁰²

Within the study of art and artistry, there is always some hesitation to study the creative process. The most common definition of creativity is currently: “the purposeful production of something new”.⁶⁰³ At the same time, there are a number of ideas about the creative process that actually attempt to avoid the aspect of “purposefulness”. The creative making process described and analysed as purposeful unmasks the romantic myth of inspiration and genius, the feeling that a work of art is mysteriously whispered to you or is blowing in the wind.⁶⁰⁴ This easily leads to the assumption that every creative making processes is unique and, moreover, so dynamic that it is impossible to set down in patterns, models, diagrams or generalisation.

Roughly speaking, there are six ways of studying the creative process.⁶⁰⁵ These approaches frequently harbour aspects of the concept of the polyphonic self.

The first way is the *mystic approach*.

This approach harks back to the views of the Greek philosopher Plato, who believed that creative thoughts were breathed into you by a muse. In this, we recognise the Japanese haiku poets, for example, whose preparation for the creative process is primarily personal. They attempt to empty themselves, like a hollow bamboo stick, through which the divine can then be heard. There are writing instruction books based specifically on that approach, such as *Seeds from a Birch Tree: Writing Haiku and the Spiritual Journey* by Clark Strand⁶⁰⁶ and *Wenn die Kraniche Ostwärts ziehen; Haiku-Meditation und Kreatives Schreiben* [When the Cranes Move Eastwards] by Else Müller.⁶⁰⁷ The British writer Rudyard Kipling,⁶⁰⁸ author of *The Jungle Book*, for example, referred to it not as God, muse or void, but as “daemon”, a demon within yourself. He says,

“When your daemon is in charge, do not think consciously, drift, wait, and obey”.⁶⁰⁹

Note that this mystic view, which seems to fit into the interpretation of the single autonomous artist, actually speaks of two creative instances: the artist themselves and, in addition or outside them, a muse or a god, which literally breathes the creative process into them. There appear to be two voices at work. That does not seem very autonomous. Moreover, as an artist, it is difficult to proudly proclaim that those wonderful texts were your work.

⁶⁰⁰ Michel de Montaigne, in: Eagleman 2012:149

⁶⁰¹ Maarten Doorman: ‘Der Mann mit ganz viele Eigenschaften; Interview met Rüdiger Safranski over levenskunstenaar Goethe’ [The Man with so Many Characteristics; Interview with Rüdiger Safranski on Goethe the life artist, in: *De Volkskrant* 6 June 2015 Sir Edmund p. 8-12, quote: p.11-12
Also see Goethe’s statement, “My work is that of a collective being and it bears Goethe’s name”, quoted in: Polet 1996 (1993):72

⁶⁰² Sternberg, Robert J. & Lubart, Todd I., ‘The Concept of Creativity: Prospects and Paradigms’, in: Sternberg (ed.) 2006(1999):3-16

⁶⁰³ See, for example, Weisberg 1993

⁶⁰⁴ Christophe 2008:11-23

⁶⁰⁵ For an overview, see: Sternberg 2006 (1999):3-16

⁶⁰⁶ Strand 1998

⁶⁰⁷ Müller 1999

⁶⁰⁸ 1865-1936

⁶⁰⁹ Quoted in: Sternberg 2006 (1999):5-16

Were they not simply whispered to you by “someone else”, or was that “someone else” actually part of you?

The second way to study the creative process is the *pragmatic approach*. That approach attempts to describe the creative process in such a way that the creative person is, consequently, able to further develop and improve the process. One well-known example of this is the Maltese psychologist Eduard de Bono, who, in his book *Six Thinking Hats*,⁶¹⁰ identified six kinds of thinking that can be donned and doffed throughout the creative process. De Bono is an example of how in this approach, too, the creative process is often seen as polyphonic.

Within the pragmatic approach, a vision has also developed that creativity is, in principle, present in everybody, but is inhibited by a series of assumptions and delusions about ourselves and our artistry. In the 1980s, Roger von Oech (in *A whack on the side of the head*⁶¹¹) and James Adams (in *Conceptual Blockbusting*⁶¹²) showed that people become more creative when they manage to recognise and refute their erroneous assumptions about creativity.

Here, too, we see that two voices are at work, as it were: that of the creative person themselves and that of their delusions or assumptions about creativity that have been talked into them by other people (family, teachers, critics, priests, press) that have been internalised into the internal voice as the *voice of myths* or the *voice of the inner critic*.

On the basis of this pragmatic approach, a number of writing instruction books have been written, also specifically for theatre writing, such as *Poetics of the Creative process; An organic practicum to playwrighting* by Femi Euba,⁶¹³ *Spaces of creation; the creative process of playwrighting* by Suzan Zeder and James Hancock,⁶¹⁴ and my own book *Writing in the Raw; the myths of writing*.⁶¹⁵

The third approach is referred to as *psychodynamic* and attempts to give a psychological explanation of the creative process, in which a distinction is made between the conscious and unconscious parts of the creative process, in particular, and also between the influence of the two halves of the brain, which I referred to earlier. The basis for this approach was laid by Graham Wallas in 1926, in his book *The Art of Thought*,⁶¹⁶ in which, for the first time, he subdivided the creative process into phases and activities that are alternately conscious and unconscious. Based on the diaries of the arithmetician Poincaré, Wallas developed his four-phase model of the

creative process, in which the first and fourth phases (preparation and verification) are conscious and the second and third (incubation and illumination) unconscious. This approach also, therefore, indicates polyphony in the creative process.

The fourth, *psychometric* approach to creativity research endeavours to make creativity measurable by getting large numbers of test subjects to carry out the same assignments on paper. This approach focuses on the *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking*, developed by the American psychologist Ellis Paul Torrance.⁶¹⁷ One of the criteria on which the tests are assessed is flexibility, described as “the number of different categories of relevant responses”.⁶¹⁸ It is this concept that seems, again, to refer to the way in which Eagleman describes the various parts of the brain tackling a problem in different ways. Incidentally, within the field of creativity research, there are doubts as to whether, for example, this flexibility criterion can actually determine the degree of creativity.⁶¹⁹

The fifth and sixth methods for creativity research, the *cognitive* and *social-personal* approaches, both study the personal, mental processes taking place when creativity is at play. Both seek variables, whereby the “social-personal” approach also includes the socio-cultural aspects in the research. The way in which, in this book, I link Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony to a cognitive writing process model fits into these last two approaches. The question of whether there is such a thing as an *artistic personality* constitutes an important part of the debate on the personal mental processes of these two approaches.

⁶¹⁰ Bono 1999 (1985)

⁶¹¹ Oech 1983

⁶¹² Adams 1986 (1974)

⁶¹³ Euba 2005

⁶¹⁴ Zeder & Hancock 2005

⁶¹⁵ Christophe 2008

⁶¹⁶ Wallas 1926

⁶¹⁷ Torrance 1974

⁶¹⁸ Sternberg 2006 (1999):7-16

⁶¹⁹ This applies to Amabile 1983, for example

Is there something specific, something peculiar about the artistic personality? Can we speak of the essential characteristics of creative people, of different traits perhaps?

The psychologist and creativity guru Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, known for the concept of *flow*, has conducted extensive research into the behavioural and personality characteristics of creative people. On the basis of innumerable interviews with excellent artists and creative scientists, he comes to the striking discovery that in artistic people, opposing thoughts and acts apparently go together:

"They have opposing extremes - they are not 'individuals' but 'pluralities'"⁶²⁰

The creative person is, for example, at once chaotic and extremely organised. They are highly goal-oriented but, at the same time, able to associate entirely without a plan or goal. In a recent interview, the rapper Ali B said:

"Creativity exists by the grace of contrasts: I am just as serious as I am funny."⁶²¹

So it seems there is no such thing as a typical creative character trait – and therefore a typical creative self – but rather the presence of opposing pairs of characteristics. This does not mean that artists are sick or schizophrenic, but perhaps that they are special.

Those opposing characteristics are reflected in the Bakhtinian concept of two continually-conflicting internal voices and in the brain researcher Eagleman's 'team of rivals'.

Both in the role of creativity in the functioning of the brain and within psychology, the concept of the polyphonic self, the *dialogical self*, comes clearly to the fore.

There are multiple voices in our brain, like multiple characters with multiple views. Our thinking is essentially social and takes place "dialogically".⁶²² In *The Voices Within*, Fernyhough recalls this dialogical thinking and defines it as a group of mental functions in the brain that are dependent on the interplay between various perspectives of reality. And it is that very interplay that forms the basis of creativity:

"dialogic thinking seems to be a useful tool for creativity"⁶²³

Children who have internal conversations score higher in creativity tests, probably because their mind remains open and mobile.⁶²⁴ That open-ended quality of creativity is scientifically difficult to comprehend but can probably be understood when viewed on the basis of the dialogical self.

“Thinking about creativity as a form of dialogical thinking helps us to understand that flexibility. Dialogue is creative.”⁶²⁵

In other fields, such as business administration, organisational behaviour and management, too, there has recently been talk of the combination of creativity and polyphony. In her research, Christina Ting Fong, assistant professor in organisational behaviour,⁶²⁶ shows that emotional ambivalence, which she describes as the simultaneous presence of opposing emotions, is necessary for creativity in individuals and groups within organisations. Her hypothesis that

“The experience of emotional ambivalence leads to an increased sensitivity to unusual associations”⁶²⁷

was confirmed in her study of one hundred test subjects.

Jan Buijs, Professor of Product Innovation and Creativity,⁶²⁸ points out that when innovation is seen as a creative process, its leaders need to be controlled schizophrenics. Here, he is referring to polyphony, where each leader simultaneously manages and leads various processes and uses various leadership styles:

“The schizophrenic behaviour of the innovation leader is most prominent in the leadership process itself. (...) This leadership demands a great tolerance of ambiguity

⁶²⁰ Csikszentmihalyi 2004 (1996):68, my italics, NC

⁶²¹ Sara Berkeljon, interview with Ali B”, in: *de Volkskrant* 27 August 2011, p.10-15, quote: p.13.

⁶²² Fernyhough 2017 (2016):98 -116

⁶²³ Fernyhough 2017 (2016):107

⁶²⁴ Fernyhough 2017 (2016):109

⁶²⁵ Fernyhough 2017 (2016):108

⁶²⁶ University of Washington Business School, Management and Organization Department

⁶²⁷ Fong 2006:1019

⁶²⁸ Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology

and paradoxes. (...) That is schizophrenia in *optima forma*: you want to be in control by letting it go!”⁶²⁹

The most explicit interpretation of the concept of the plural self in this field is the book by Maddie Janssens⁶³⁰ and Chris Steyaert,⁶³¹ *Meerstemmigheid: organiseren met verschil*⁶³² [Polyphony: organising with difference], in which they use Bakhtin’s ideas, combined with the concept of *multiplicity* of the philosophers Michel Serres, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to arrive at new forms of creative organisation and collaboration. They argue that “organising with difference” demands open visors, dialogical collaboration and political involvement.

In many creative domains, the concept of the polyphonic self is nowadays seen as plausible. The question now is how this concept relates to the specific creative action we call “writing”, or: what polyphony means in the writing process in general and in the theatre writing process in particular.

III.3 Writing processes and polyphony

“Writing, like knowledge, is multiple.”⁶³³

Sarah Gendron

While artists are already confronted with polyphony in their creative process, this seems to apply even more strongly to writers. Many writers and thinkers say that, due to its intrinsically reflective character, language itself already creates a distance from what we feel and think. For writers, always added to all the others is one more voice, which can never directly coincide with our feelings or thoughts.

The author Margaret Atwood describes it like this.

“As for the artists who are also writers, they are doubles twice times over, for the mere act of writing splits the self into two.”⁶³⁴

The philosopher Roland Barthes also speaks of two selves in the writing process.⁶³⁵ In the introduction to his book *The Reality Effect*, Jürgen Pieters describes the author with that extra voice as the individual who steps out of themselves and comes into contact with a community of others. He calls that dialogical process with a feel for drama, a soul transfer, whereas I would sooner call it a voice shifting or voice change.⁶³⁶

The French postmodern philosopher Gilles Deleuze claimed in innumerable variations that, in every text, there is always a second voice talking along, which wants to be heard.

⁶²⁹ Buijs 2007:208-209

⁶³⁰ Professor of ‘Personnel & Organisation’ research group, Department of Applied Economic Sciences, Catholic University of Leuven

⁶³¹ Professor of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research Institute Stockholm

⁶³² Janssens & Steyaert 2001

⁶³³ Gendron 2008:74

⁶³⁴ Atwood 2000:32

⁶³⁵ Barthes 1966:261

⁶³⁶ Jürgen Pieters, in Barthes 2004:11

That the writing alone adds a second voice can also be seen in the metaphor we use for the individual voice: we use the corporeal word “voice”, as if we were talking about not writing but speaking. We would like to create the illusion of a written language with the immediate, spontaneous closeness of speaking.

Language, which already distances itself from feelings and thoughts because it can never coincide with them, creates a second voice in the writing process, making that process pre-eminently polyphonic.

The philosopher and historian Frank Ankersmit describes how language always separates us from the real experience, using Nietzsche’s metaphor when he talks about

“the prisonhouse of language”.⁶³⁷

The polyphony, created because the words can never coincide with our experiences, feelings and thoughts, appears to comprise two voices: the *voice of the unsayable* and the *voice of artificiality*. Experiences, feelings and thoughts want to be expressed and shared in us and we also feel they cannot actually be said. At the same time, within us sounds the voice wanting to give linguistic form and knowing that, for every form, a certain degree of artificiality, of “inauthenticity” is required. We will encounter those voices again in the theatre writing process.

Jacques Derrida begins his text *Sauf le Nom (Post Scriptum)* [Save the Name (Post Script)] with the observation that speaking and writing demand several voices:

“Sorry, but more than one, it is always necessary to be more than one in order to speak, several voices are necessary for that...”⁶³⁸

That writing, of itself, already engenders a doubling is contended by many a thinker and writer.⁶³⁹ In her 2008 book *Repetition, Difference, and Knowledge, in the work of Samuel Beckett, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze*, Sarah Gedron gives many examples. She comes to the conclusion that

“writing is multiple in that every text represents a dialogue between several voices”⁶⁴⁰

It may well be that, because language itself leads to a doubling of voices, when writers talk about their writing process they make a division in themselves between the one who lives and the one who writes, as the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges did in his book *Borges and I* or, as the philosopher Roland Barthes wrote,

“The one who *speaks* is not the one who *writes* and the one who *writes* is not the one who *is*”⁶⁴¹

When Samuel Beckett talked about his own writing process, he always spoke of a clear voice that he heard inside. When that voice spoke to him he sat down to listen. For him, that was writing.

“He faithfully took down what the voice said – and then, he added, of course, he applied his sense of form to the product.”⁶⁴²

But if this is the voice of Beckett’s work, then who is speaking? Evidently there are a number of voices at work. And as Wilma Siccama clearly shows in her book *Het waarnemend lichaam; Zintuiglijkheid en representatie bij Beckett en Artaud* [The Observing Body; Sensory perception and representation in Beckett and Artaud], it is not a case of a romantic shadow side producing wonderful texts but, rather, a number of voices that cannot be precisely pinpointed but, ultimately, together form the voice of Beckett himself.

In *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing*, David Morley gives many examples of writers who perceive that someone else is at work in them.⁶⁴³ He describes Margaret Atwood’s writing process like this, for example:

⁶³⁷ Ankersmit 2005:4

⁶³⁸ Jacques Derrida 1995 (1993):35

⁶³⁹ Assistant Professor of French Language and Literature, Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

⁶⁴⁰ Gendron 2008:74

⁶⁴¹ Quoted in Sontag 2002:110

⁶⁴² This is what Samuel Beckett told Martin Esslin, quoted in Siccama 2000:121

⁶⁴³ David Morley 2007:148 ff

"The person and the writer are invisible to each other or they might move between selves, characters of themselves, while they are writing."⁶⁴⁴

With the Dutch novelist A.F.Th. van der Heijden, we can also refer to this typical doubling by the language itself as "*déformation professionnelle*", a tendency to look at things from the point of view of one's own profession rather than from a broader perspective.

"I think that every person is more or less a homo duplex, with the same schizophrenia in thinking and observing. Not to mention the moral dichotomy. You know the famous quote from Faust, 'Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust' [Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast!]. Undoubtedly, some suffer more from that duality than others. Perhaps, for some writers, it is *déformation professionnelle*. I believe I suffer from a rather extreme form. I don't know if it is an advantage."⁶⁴⁵

As an example, Van der Heijden, himself, cites an aphorism of the French writer Alphonse Daudet who, as a fourteen-year-old, genuinely wept over the death of his little brother but, at the same time, thought about his father's woebegone cry, "How well Papa did that; he could be on stage with that".

Writers and, incidentally, also writing students can experience this doubling as having a split personality, a "mild schizophrenia", as David Morley calls it. Samuel Beckett actually talks about the "I" and "Him" in himself:

"I write about myself with the same pencil and in the same exercise book as about him. It is no longer I, but another whose life is just beginning."⁶⁴⁶

In the article "*De noodzaak van een gespleten persoonlijkheid*" [The Necessity of a Split Personality], the Dutch writer Frank Noë says that there is a division in writing between a "wise, partly-subconscious writing part of oneself and a societal, conscious but sometimes also utterly blind part".⁶⁴⁷ This is based on a line by Stephen King in his book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*.

Polyphony in the writing process can also be used in the pedagogy of writing, as I will show in Chapter IV. The novelist and scriptwriter Hanif Kureishi, for example, encourages his writing students to seek this doubling, this second voice, in writing. He challenges them to write down

"(...) their worst self. The idea of a "second" or "shadow" I has, naturally, already been explored by such diverse authors as Poe, Dostoyevsky, Stevenson and de Maupassant.⁶⁴⁸

In instruction books on creative and literary writing, this linguistic polyphony is sometimes used nowadays. The distinction we already saw earlier between the use of the two different parts of the brain, with the left half functioning in a logical, rational and rectilinear fashion and the right half operating on the basis of a combination of visual, associative, intuitive and emotional triggers, is frequently made.⁶⁴⁹ This distinction, introduced into the writing world by Gabriele Rico, can also be found in the much-used concepts of "creative" and "critical".⁶⁵⁰

The neurobiologist Roger Sperry, who won the Nobel Prize with his split brain research, concluded that not only do the two halves of the brain function differently, but they each create their own personality with its own consciousness and own skills and peculiarities.

For our study of theatre writing processes, this is an important observation: each voice in us has the characteristics of a person with their own ideas and views; each voice in us functions as a separate author in the writing. This fits not only with what Sperry concluded above, or with what we saw with Eagleman's confluence approach, where each voice works on its own solution to the creative problem, but also with Bakhtin's own statement that each internal voice carries a personality within it.

⁶⁴⁴ Morley 2007:148

⁶⁴⁵ "If I continue writing, it is despite the pain"; written answers to questions from Arjan Peters, published in the Dutch quality daily newspaper *De Volkskrant*, 11 June 2011

⁶⁴⁶ Beckett, quoted in: Morley 2007:148. The same was also, actually, true for the writer Franz Kafka. Cixous wrote, "You may know Kafka was two people and sometimes addresses himself as "thou", as did Leonardo da Vinci", Cixous 1993:5

⁶⁴⁷ In: *Schrijven Magazine* 2013, no. 6, p.5

⁶⁴⁸ Kureishi 2003:257

⁶⁴⁹ Christophe 2008:91 ff

⁶⁵⁰ Downs & Russin 2004:91. Instruction books on writing often mirror that polyphony in the writer with that in the reader or audience. In his book on playwriting, Julian Friedman, for example, writes that you need three different voices as a writer, because you want to touch the audience in three different ways: in the gut, in the heart and in the head. Friedman 1995:36-37

In her 2009 instruction book *Poetry Writing*, Fiona Sampson writes that each voice in the writing process can be seen as a person in itself, as a writer, and not only a stylistic device or jargon.

"These manners aren't false; they simply exhibit different aspects of your personality. Each is a *persona*: the expression of some form of personality, in writing organized into a single voice."⁶⁵¹

The psychologists Hubert Hermans and Harry Kempen also explicitly refer to the voices in the dialogic self as authors:

"(...) it permits the one and the same individual to live in a multiplicity of worlds with each world having its own author telling a story relatively independent of the authors of the other worlds. Moreover, at times, the several authors may enter into dialogue with each other."⁶⁵²

Precisely because everyone has those voices in them as authors, the writer is able to "play" a polyphonic text in the reader.

"The polyphonic nature of our inner speech makes it possible for writers to 'play' their multi-voiced compositions in our minds, allowing us safely to explore the boundaries of the self."⁶⁵³

When the polyphony of the artist is again doubled in the writing, what significance does that have for writing theatre texts? Is the duality present there, too, and if so, how can we recognise or even promote it in theatre texts? How can we describe, ease and accelerate the theatre writing process on the basis of polyphony?

III.4 A polyphonic theatre writing process

“Don’t forget you’re many.”⁶⁵⁴

Hanif Kureishi

In this chapter, I give a diagrammatic, model-based representation of the theatre writing process, by using a writing process model defined by two American linguists, Linda Flower and John Hayes, which is already frequently used for describing, analysing and training creative writing processes.

In fact, by linking the Flower & Hayes model to the concept of polyphony, I am endeavouring to arrive at a new theatre writing process model, in the tradition of the “modeling of writing processes” that have been used since the 1970s to ease and speed up writing processes.

John Hayes himself describes modelling as “identifying the parts of a process” and “specifying how the parts work together”.⁶⁵⁵ I also used the two core aspects of modelling in this chapter. For me, the elements of the writing process are the voices (III.5) and I discuss the collaboration between the parts of the writing process in Chapter III.6, *Zigzagging in the theatre writing process*.

My diagrammatic representation of the theatre writing process describes a system of forces, a dynamic process of an interplay of voices; as such, it is the image of a writing activity. N.B.: there is not a self that precedes or is separate from this writing process. The author (the writing agent) lights up from the activity, the writing.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵¹ Sampson 2009:30

⁶⁵² Quoted in: Renedo 2010:12.9

⁶⁵³ Fernyhough 2017 (2016):114

⁶⁵⁴ The first writing tip from script writer and novelist Hanif Kureishi to his writing students, in: Kureishi 2003:258

⁶⁵⁵ In the Keynote lecture ‘Modeling and Remodeling Writing’ by John Hayes at the SIG Conference, Porto 12 July 2012. SIG Writing is the Special Interest Group of the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI)

⁶⁵⁶ Based on Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of “perception”, Evans 2008:122 rightly says, “We are more of an activity than a subject that first exists and only then acts.”

Where the process is central, courses in higher art education are named after the activity rather than the one who carries it out. The ‘Writing for Performance’ course is not called ‘Writer for Performance’; we speak of a writing course, rather than a writers’ course.

III.4.1 The writing process model of Flower & Hayes 1980

“It feels as something you know already, but you didn’t know you knew. Sometimes it is a ‘déjà vu’-feeling. Writing is. I never have a plot (..) I wanna know what happens. But I don’t know why. I hate starting. I hate the proces.”

Dennis Potter, theatre and scriptwriter⁶⁵⁷

Many writing lecturers present the writing process to students as a chronological process: first you devise characters, choose a theme and figure out a story, then you start writing and then you read the whole thing back and revise it. In other words, a linear process of successively planning, writing and reviewing. Books on writing, and on scriptwriting in particular, are almost without exception based on this concept of a linear writing process. The first generation of writing process researchers in the 1960s and 1970s also assumed this. They chiefly studied the writing process for contemplative writing (a memorandum or article) and, from that linear concept, arrived at what I earlier referred to as product pedagogy: you hope to improve the writing process by defining how a good memorandum or article is structured.

The next generation of writing researchers, including Lester Faigley, Sondra Perl, Linda Flower and John Hayes, concluded that writers work in not so much a linear fashion as a recursive fashion. Activity such as planning, writing and revising alternate continuously throughout the writing.⁶⁵⁸ A comment such as that by Dennis Potter above, that he writes to find out which direction the story is taking, shows a writing process that does not occur in such a linear sequence as is presented by writing lecturers and instruction literature.

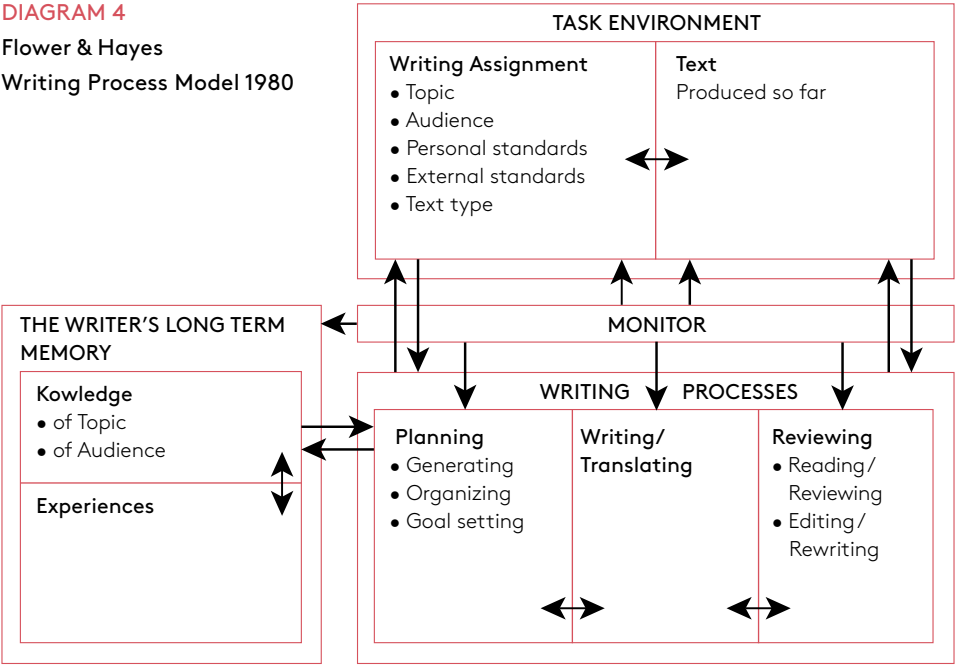
It looks very much as if planning, writing and reviewing do take place, but not neatly one after another in this order. They criss-cross one another, jumping rapidly from one to the other.

Somewhere, the author reads a sentence they like, this gives them an idea for a character, they re-write the sentence, then they revise it because it sounds better; while the writer is rereading the revised sentence, their idea

for the character and the story changes. This non-linear process, in which the parts of the writing process are all mixed up and can just as easily not start with planning, is referred to as a recursive writing process.

Linda Flower and John Hayes encountered this recursive writing process in their extensive research into how experienced writers work. When they attempted to describe what actually happens in such a jumping, recursive process, they came up with the following writing process model:⁶⁵⁹

DIAGRAM 4
Flower & Hayes
Writing Process Model 1980



⁶⁵⁷ Dennis Potter, *Potter on Potter*, (interviews by Graham Fuller), Faber and Faber, London 1994

⁶⁵⁸ Janssen 1991:14; Recent writing process research also confirms this: “The research literature clearly shows that planning, translating, and reviewing do not occur in a linear sequence in text production; rather, they occur and reoccur in complex patterns through prewriting, first draft, and subsequent draft or revision phases of composition”, Kellogg 2006:391

⁶⁵⁹ Published in: Hayes & Flower 1980. For a more extensive description of this writing process model: Moosmann, 2007:141-164, Bokhoven 1999:42-48, Janssen, 1991:13-41 and Hayes 1996

The 1980 writing process model, based on research into contemplative writing, was thereafter frequently used for creative writing⁶⁶⁰ and writing for the theatre, in particular.⁶⁶¹ The model has formed the basis for the pedagogy and curriculum for the HKU University of the Arts Utrecht BA course Writing for Performance since the start in 1992.⁶⁶²

The “planning”, “writing/ translating” and “reviewing” elements are in the block at the bottom right of the model. From those three elements, the writer regularly shifts briefly to the long-term memory (the block to the left) for anecdotes and images, words and snippets of information and also to the tasks they have set themselves (the block at the top). That task block contains the external task - such as: write a theatre piece for young people from ages eight to twelve for a small auditorium with a maximum of three characters, for example – but also the writer’s personal standards.

The essence of this writing process model is not so much the elements as the arrows between them. With experienced writers, we do not find that one of the elements or blocks is tremendously developed, but that the shifting between the elements takes place rapidly and continually. This shifting is a kind of speed surfing from element to element.

If someone gets stuck while writing, or even suffers from writer’s block, all that is happening is that they are stuck in one of the elements of the writing process and are no longer able to shift or surf to another.

Everyone will be familiar with examples of this from their own writing process. There are writers who, when diving into their memory while working, are almost incapable of re-emerging and stopping wallowing in their memories. It is like when someone finds an old box of letters and photographs while tidying their room and, three hours later, is still engrossed in the material, while the room remains untidied.

Another example is the burden of the task, which paralyses their writing. We cannot start writing because we keep thinking about the task we have been set. The task then also clouds our view during writing. The task could be an application letter, for example. This cannot be allowed to become a stream of abuse during the writing. Obsessed by the task in hand, we are unable to see the effect and possibilities of what we have actually written and only notice how the text fails to comply with what we had imposed on ourselves.⁶⁶³

The writing process model does not show the progression of an ideal writing process; it is a representation of all the ingredients active in the process and offers possibilities for describing how there is movement and shifting between those ingredients.

In Chapter IV, we will see how the development, easing and acceleration of the writing process that is, after all, the basis of every writing pedagogy, is facilitated by specific training in shifting between ingredients and blocks.

III.4.2 The theatre writing process as a writing process model

“The process of dramatic writing is not a science.”⁶⁶⁴

Richard Toscan

If we want to use this writing process model when writing for theatre, we have to adapt it in such a way that the aspects of the poetics of the linguistic theatre text are recognisable, that we incorporate the voices that emerged when describing that poetics and the underlying theory and that it honours the characteristics of a polyphonic creative making process and the image of man of the dialogical self.

Internalising external voices

Flower & Hayes’ writing process model assumes an individual writing process and authorship and does not refer in the various ingredients to the influence of others on the writing process. As we saw, writing for theatre, in particular, has a polyphonic authorship, in which the creation of theatre texts generally takes place in co-creation.

⁶⁶⁰ Witteveen 2006, and Christophe, “Writing as a reaction: a postmodern view to writing and the pedagogy of writing” in: Haslinger & Treichel (eds.) 2006:207-224

⁶⁶¹ Bokhoven 1999, Christophe 2008

⁶⁶² Within HKU, the writing process model is also adapted for creative making processes with other disciplines and media, as in the Art Education MA Course and in a number of BA programmes at the various HKU schools

⁶⁶³ I have borrowed the description of the Flower & Hayes 1980 writing process model from Christophe 2008:30-31

⁶⁶⁴ Toscan 2011, iKindle book, Chapter 41

Flower and Hayes have, themselves, frequently indicated that the social aspect is missing from their 1980 model. Bakhtin showed that the production of language is always determined by social circumstances, rendering texts polyphonic.

The social aspect of the writing is a voice in or during the writing process of which the author is aware to one degree or another.

One characteristic of theatre writing is that the writing process is pre-eminently a co-creation process, a collaboration between a large number of parties, such as co-maker, co-writer, commissioning party and spectator.

All those external voices, present in such large numbers in theatre writing, in particular, are internalised into internal voices and so collaboration, co-creation and polyphonic authorship can be incorporated into the theatre writing process model, while that process still remains individual.

That internalisation of external elements into internal voices is a process that, in psychology, is also referred to as the *dialogical self*.

"Drawing upon Lakoff and Johnson (...) this metaphorical positioning is mapped onto the mind – the metaphorical positioning is internalized. That is, personae (including the likes of parents, teachers, mentors, friends, and so on) are incorporated into the psyche and constitute an intra-psyche population of characters, and these engage in inter-subjective exchange."⁶⁶⁵

The psychologist Fernyhough describes how it is through the internalisation of external dialogue that we develop internal voices (inner speech) and therefore polyphony.⁶⁶⁶

This process of internalisation touches on Bakhtin's concept of outside-ness.⁶⁶⁷ In this process, in which the writer makes themselves an outsider in relation to themselves and, due to that very act, there appear to be two movements. On one hand, the author takes a distance from themselves and their material and observes themselves as another. On the other hand, they embrace voices from outside as their own voices.⁶⁶⁸ The author internalises the voice of the other as one of the voices in their writing process. That could be the voice of the co-makers, the voice of the commissioning party or, for example, the voice of the audience. In the ingredients of the theatre writing process, we will encounter the internalised voices in the blocks of the writing process.

Voices from the theatre writing process

If we want to make the Flower & Hayes writing process model suitable for theatre writing, then we have to incorporate into the model the voices that arose in the discussion of Bakhtin's theoretical concepts regarding polyphony (Chapter I)⁶⁶⁹ and in the polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text (Chapter II).⁶⁷⁰

The typical theatre writing voices that arose and sounded were:

- At the level of voices on stage:

The voice of the character, the voice of the narrator

- At the level of the collaboration

The voice of the co-maker, the voice of the social field, the voice of co-creation

- At the level of the material and style

The voice of the genre, the voice of the text type, the voice of the discipline, the voice of the linguistic, the voice of artificiality, the voice of destruction

- At the level of the dramaturgy:

The voice of de-dramatisation, the voice of (re)dramatisation, the voice of the representation, the voice of the presence, the voice of the theatre axes

- At the level of other texts and sources:

The voice of recollection, the voice of intertextuality

- At the level of the writing process:

The voice of the process, the voice of the author, the voice of the impersonal writer, the voice of self-referentiality, the voice of self-reflection, the voice of the inner critic

I have placed these voices in the various blocks of the Flower & Hayes writing process model where I felt they fitted with the ingredients of the model.

⁶⁶⁵ Hermans & Kempen 1993:85

⁶⁶⁶ See: Fernyhough 2017 (2016):99

⁶⁶⁷ See Chapter I

⁶⁶⁸ As we already saw in Chapter I.1

⁶⁶⁹ Diagram 2

⁶⁷⁰ Diagram 3

Conflicting pairs of voices

The image of man as a polyphonic, plural self is radicalised by the neuro-scientist Eagleman through his metaphor of *conflict*: the brain is a team of rivals. This implies that there is a conflict between the voices and some voices are dominant and others dominated but that this conflict in the polyphony is also necessary in order to simultaneously tackle problems in different ways.

Bakhtin talks not directly about conflict but about “contending voices” and “inner polemic”.⁶⁷¹

The duality of voices is the core of the polyphonic theatre writer, analogous with what Bakhtin so wonderfully says about the novelist Dostoevsky:

“In every voice he could hear two contending voices, in every expression a crack, and the readiness to go over immediately to another contradictory expression; in every gesture he detected confidence and lack of confidence simultaneously; he perceived the profound ambiguity, even multiple ambiguity, of every phenomenon.”⁶⁷²

We saw that the polyphony of the creative process manifests itself in, for instance, pairs of two opposing, conflicting voices. Writer J.M. Coetzee speaks of countervoices⁶⁷³ and Eagleman of a team of rivals.

In the psychology of the dialogical self, too, the dialogue between the voices is often seen as a continual conflict between two juxtaposed voices.⁶⁷⁴

The psychologist Hubert Hermans argues that it is precisely that conflict between the pairs of voices that leads to rhetorical strategies. In the creative making process, therefore, that conflict offers the possibility of realising form and form choices.⁶⁷⁵

While the philosopher Julia Kristeva refers to the writing process in the quote below as “opposing movements”, I believe she is also referring to those conflicting pairs of voices. Kristeva says:

“(...) the writer is a ‘subject in progress,’ a carnival, a polyphony, without the prospect of any possible reconciliation between all those conflicting movements, a ceaseless struggle”.⁶⁷⁶

In her 2009 book *(Syn)aesthetics; Redefining Visceral Performance*, writer and theatre maker Josephine Machon refers to the contemporary theatre text as a “playtext”. She, too, appears to refer to those conflicting voices in

the writing process for that type of text when she talks of resistance strategies in the theatre writing process.

"(...) interweave diverse linguistic registers, shaping them within or around dance, signing, music and design, ensuring these elements exist in the very substance of the *playtext*. They demonstrate that playwriting can be perceived as a physicalized practice in itself, with an indefinable nature and inherent resistance strategies."⁶⁷⁷

The philosopher Fred Evans reiterates Judith Butler in describing this resistance as not only psychological but also performative.⁶⁷⁸

The child has the strength and skill to adapt and love the person on whom she is dependent and, on that basis, builds the ego and the subject. At the same time, though, this process creates the internal resistance to the ego and the strength wants to resist the subject.

"The subject is simultaneously 'inaugurated' and turned against itself, desiring its own dissolution and its persistence at once."⁶⁷⁹

This countervoice inside us, which we see in the theatre as dramatic duality in characters and encounter in the abrasive polyphony of the creative making process – not as artistic masochism but as a recognisable pattern of the dynamics of creation – is indispensable in describing the theatre writing process.

For those reasons, where I refer to the ingredients in the Flower & Hayes model as voices, I have consistently classified them as opposing, conflicting pairs of voices.

⁶⁷¹ Quoted in: Clarkson 2013 (2009):80

⁶⁷² Bakhtin 2011 (1984):30

⁶⁷³ I discuss this conflict between the voices in Chapter I.3

⁶⁷⁴ See, for example, Cresswell & Baerveldt 2011:271

⁶⁷⁵ See Cresswell & Baerveldt 2011:272

⁶⁷⁶ In: Doorman & Pott: 2014(2000): 387

⁶⁷⁷ Machon 2009:71

⁶⁷⁸ See Evans 2008:132-135

⁶⁷⁹ Evans 2008:133, in a discussion of Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power*

Arrows in the theatre writing process model

In Chapter I, we saw that the writer's "personal voice" is determined by the individual and unique interplay between a number of voices. In my view, this concept can be used as a basis for theatre writing and theatre writing pedagogy.

It eases the tension between, on one hand, the modernist interpretation of the one, unique voice and, on the other, the postmodernist interpretation of the anonymous, fragmented voices. All writers actually use the 'interplay between several voices' in their own, unique way.

In the theatre writing process model, the interplay of voices, the way in which the various voices are in dialogue with one another – dialogical as Bakhtin would say – is represented by the arrows between the voices and between the blocks.⁶⁸⁰

In the writing process, the author shifts from one voice to another and often back again. This shifting means one voice reacts to the other, or allowing one voice to speak suddenly evokes the other.

Flower & Hayes already made it clear that the experience in the writing process is determined by the ease, smoothness and speed at which shifting took place between the arrows.

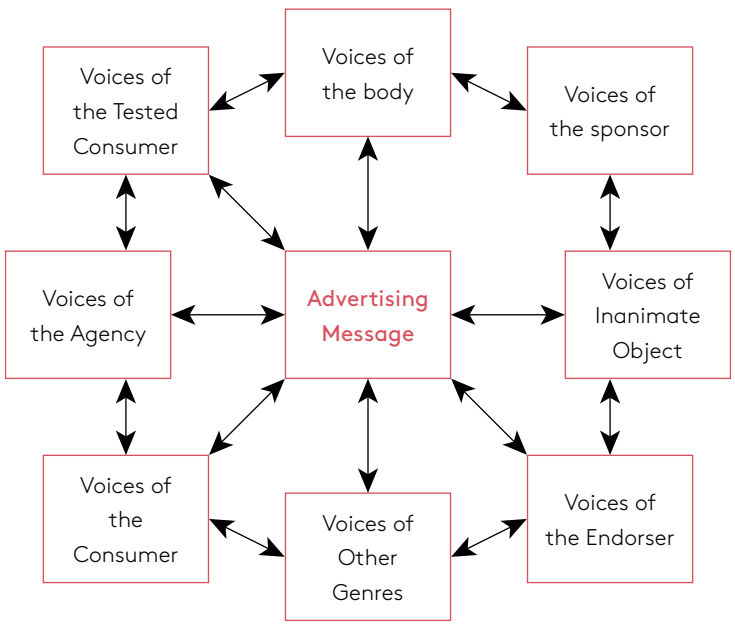
In Chapter III.6 *Zigzagging in the theatre writing process*, I will attempt to describe that shifting more precisely.

In Chapter II, I have used Jesse Schwenk's ideas to describe the position of the polyphonic theatre writer as being different from fulfilling a "role" as a writer within the collaboration. According to Schwenk, the theatre writer is more of a "relation" between various makers, disciplines, media and texts. In the theatre writing process model, the *author as a relationship* manifests itself in the rapid movement over the arrows between the various voices in the writing process.

In 2012, Gulnara Z. Karimova published the book *Bakhtin & Interactivity: A conceptual investigation of advertising communication*, in which she was the first to use that polyphony and dialogism to analyse, interpret and understand the creative making process.⁶⁸¹ For her, the making process consists of generating publicity and advertising. Karimova uses Bakhtin's concepts to define *and* measure interactivity.⁶⁸² Strikingly enough, she considers interactivity to be the interaction between voices and the

simultaneous co-creation between them.⁶⁸³ She comes up with the following model:

DIAGRAM 5



In Karimova’s work, too, the ingredients of the creative making process are represented by voices and she, too, includes external elements (such as “consumer” and “agency”) in the model as internalised voices. Without basing herself on Flower & Hayes, Karimova also adds mutual arrows between all the ingredients in a non-linear graphic representation, so the process has no clear beginning or end. This differs from my theatre writing process model in that, despite the focus on Bakhtin’s concepts, she does not present the voices as conflicting pairs of voices.

⁶⁸⁰ Also see Evans 2008:83 ff
⁶⁸¹ Karimova 2012:9
⁶⁸² Karimova 2012:8
⁶⁸³ Karimova 2012:11

III.5 The voices in the theatre writing process

The voices in the theatre writing process therefore manifest themselves as pairs of continually opposing voices and, at the same time, fit in with Flower & Hayes' writing process. I base the voices on those that emerge from the poetics of the linguistic theatre text in Chapter II (for an overview see Diagram 3) and from the discussion of the personal voice of the theatre writer based on Bakhtin's theories on polyphony in Chapter I (for an overview see Diagram 2).

We then arrive at a theatre writing process model, you can find inside the back cover of this book

The theatre writing process model consists of the following voices:

Long-Term Memory 1: Knowledge

A. The voice of intertextuality

B. The voice of the co-makers

Long-Term Memory 2: Experiences

A. The voice of recollection

B. The voice of collective memory

Planning 1: Organizing

A: The voice of structure

B: The voice of destruction

Planning 2: Generating and Goal Setting

A: The voice of preparation

B: The voice of improvisation

Writing 1: Production of language

A: The voice of the unsayable

B: The voice of artificiality

Writing 2: Speech

A: The voice of the body

B: The voice of the narrator

Reviewing 1: Reading / Reviewing

A: The voice of representation

B: The voice of presence

Reviewing 2: Revising / Editing

A: The voice of editing

B: The voice of transformation

Task environment 1: Assignment

A: The voice of the character

B: The voice of the commissioning party

Task environment 2: Reader / Audience

A: The voice of the reader

B: The voice of interactivity

Task environment 3: Personal standards

A: The voice of the writing

B: The voice of myths

Task environment 4: External standards

A: The voice of the genre

B: The voice of the disciplines

Task environment 5: Text type

A: The voice of dramatic dramaturgy

B: The voice of postdramatic dramaturgy

Text produced so far

A: The voice of the linguistic theatre text

B: The voice of the staging text

Attention distributor

A: The voice of the inner critic

B: The voice of self-reflexivity

Below, I will give additional information on and examples of what each voice can signify for the *process* of writing for theatre. For a number of voices, I shall also add writing strategies for tracing the voice and allowing

it to speak and sometimes to make a shift from the voice in question to another.

III.5.1 Long-Term Memory 1: Knowledge

When, in the writing process, we draw on our memory as it were hard disk full of potential material, then we see two pairs of conflicting voices emerge.

First of all is the duo of *the voice of intertextuality* and *the voice of the co-makers*. The first calls up concrete material: words, images, objects. The second emotion, atmosphere or drama, instead. Often, theatre writing students have difficulty accessing one of these two voices.

In the first year of the BA course Writing for Performance, students are given an assignment to describe a brief moment earlier in the day. Some find it difficult because they feel they have not yet experienced anything that day. This assumption obstructs access to the memory, or blocks the arrow from the memory to the voices in the 'Writing Processes' block, as it were. The task of describing a moment then functions as a tool for training how to use concrete material from the short or long-term memory for actual text material.

III.5.1 A The voice of intertextuality

In Chapter II, we saw that theatre texts as a product, in particular, can be intertextual. As other texts and voices are discernible in the theatre text and every text is, therefore, in direct contact with other texts and writers, it is not a finalised entity and is always, in the Bakhtinian sense, 'unfinalisable'. The philosopher Julia Kristeva also saw intertextuality as an artistic activity in which allowing yourself to be influenced by, using and being in dialogue with other texts is an important part of the writing process.⁶⁸⁴ Consequently, intertextuality can also be seen as a construction principle and as a voice in the writing process.

In the polyphonic poetics, we saw that intertextuality is recognisable in many text characteristics of the theatre text, such as participation, transformation, tropik, association, styling, parody, satire and dialogue. These text characteristics all lead to doublings, making the theatre text polyphonic. With these characteristics, we saw voices emerge that we then have to allow to speak in the writing process.

Suppose we want to write a theatre text based on the Orpheus myth. Then we read, for example, the text *Geen lied* [No Song], by Ramsey Nasr, which inspires us because it has the same theme and powerful sensory images. There are many ways in which Nasr's actual text, or parts of it, can then be used in the new text. In addition to the characteristics I discussed in Chapter II.8, I recommend the article '*Fuck being original; waarom Artaud altijd hoofdpijn had*' [Fuck Being Original; why Artaud always had a headache] by the theatre writer Eva Gouda,⁶⁸⁵ and my own text *Rewriting; reading as a basis for writing*, from *Writing in the Raw*.⁶⁸⁶

To allow *the voice of intertextuality* to speak requires more than just techniques in the writing process.

Firstly, we can only draw from the Long-Term Memory for other texts when there actually is one. Consequently, reading a lot and writing on the basis of that reading is necessary for *the voice of intertextuality*.

In addition, we have to occasionally shift to *the voice of myths*. One personal standard of many theatre writers is the myth that a text must be original and that texts by others may therefore not be used or quoted. By regularly asking ourselves which personal myths exist, the arrow to *the voice of intertextuality* can be kept open.

To train *the voice of intertextuality*, we need to continually alternate between reading and writing, reviewing and adapting. We therefore also shift between the voices associated with these activities.

Giving Writing for Performance students the assignment to write a theatre monologue for a historical character is a good way of developing this voice: researching into the character, looking for texts and concrete information in the collective memory and alternating that activity with rewriting and adapting the material found.

One example from postdramatic dramaturgy of how *the voice of intertextuality* can be handled is a project that René Pollesch carried out in 2009 with School of Theatre students from HKU University of the Arts Utrecht.

⁶⁸⁴ See Kristeva, in: Doorman & Pott: 2014(2000): 387

⁶⁸⁵ Berg & Overbeek & Christophe (eds.) 2016:261-303

⁶⁸⁶ Christophe 2008:43-65

Students (from various theatre disciplines) were given philosophical texts by, for example, Boris Groys. Reading these texts filled a common memory. The students were then asked which of the texts they had just read they would like to perform on stage. Some students found that strange, as they did not consider those texts to be theatre texts. They then asked themselves with *the voice of myths* whether they had an assumption in this regard. Thereafter and intermittently they started staging the chosen philosophical texts, thus rewriting and transforming them into theatre material.

III.5.1 B The voice of the co-makers

"I am alone when I write a book. In that solitude, though, I'm often disturbed by the voice of my mother... by the voice of my editor, (...), by the voices of my old teachers, (...) by the voices of friends, acquaintances, (...) but... I can send them all away. I chase them out of my head. (...) However stubbornly those voices sound, however, the writing still takes place in an imaginary empty room... (...)

Not so when I write for theatre. Theatre writing does not take place in my imaginary empty room. Theatre writing takes place... in an event hall. I find myself amongst that enormous audience when I am writing for theatre. I am NOT alone. To put it another way: WE are not alone. There is no I. I am not there. I am a group. (...)

I am afraid of the group. A playwright writes for the group. Not just for the audience but also for the actors and the director, for the technicians and the stage designer. They visit me. LITERALLY. Not only in my metaphorical event hall, but also in my quite tangible kitchen they visit me, bringing all the voices that are inside *their* heads, voices they leave behind with me, on my concrete kitchen table in the form of crossings out in my texts, references, tips, additions, changes, improvements, exclamation marks and question marks."

Esther Gerritsen, theatre writer and novelist⁶⁸⁷

In contemporary theatre, it is now virtually impossible to distinguish between writing and staging processes. *The voice of the co-makers* is therefore increasingly recognisable in the theatre text. The theatre writer becomes the theatre maker and the co-maker becomes a voice in the writing process. *The voice of the co-makers* is therefore not so much about learning to collaborate with the co-makers; it is more about strategies with which the other disciplines and makers of the show can function in the writer's head during the writing process as an internalised, productive voice.

These days, there are various ways in which the theatre writer co-creates with the co-makers.

1. The co-maker is often another writer. This is quite common in the writing of film scripts, TV series and soaps. In writing for performance courses, *the voice of the co-makers* is trained by giving a writing assignment to pairs of students. The joint writing process then often progresses with difficulty, as the writer wants to protect their own idea of emotions, atmosphere or drama. The arrow from *the voice of the co-makers* to the voices in the 'writing processes' block gets stuck and the writer feels they have to make artistic concessions.

2. The theatre writer works on a text together with directors and actors. The writing strategies for this way of working are extensively discussed in *De schrijver als theatermaker* [The Writer As Theatre Maker] by Daniela Moosmann. The co-makers can provide the writer with text material, image material, memories, anecdotes and ideas by means of acting improvisation, discussions and interviews. Moosmann says this expands the author's Long-Term Memory by adding the co-makers' Long-Term Memory.⁶⁸⁸ A collaboration project between acting students and Writing for Performance students is good for training this *voice of the co-makers*, as happens in many theatre writing courses.

3. Now and again, we see a collaboration form come about where the writer as a co-maker is entirely submerged in the common process. This position is also referred to as the *embedded writer*.

In 2012, the theatre company andcompany&Co staged a performance of *De (komende) opstand, naar Friedrich Schiller* [The (Coming) Insurrection according to Friedrich Schiller]. The programme booklet says,

"*De (komende) opstand* makes use of Schiller's *Don Karlos* (1787) and *Geschichte des Abfalls der vereinigten Niederlande* (1788), translated as *De opstand der Nederlanden*, and the – anonymously published – pamphlet *L'Insurrection qui vient* (2007). Alexander Karschnia and Joachim Robbrecht are embedded writers here: they

⁶⁸⁷ Esther Gerritsen, *Waarom ik eens even stop met toneelschrijven en waarom ik sommige anderen aanraad hetzelfde te doen* [Why I Sometimes Stop Writing For Theatre for a While and Why I Advise Others to Do Likewise], published by the Syndicaat Schrijversdagen, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 3-5

⁶⁸⁸ Moosmann 2007:152

write about theatre, state, constitution and revolution. They cheerfully and irresponsibly combine Schiller's work with historical facts and personal stories. Karschnia and Robbrecht also quote from Fernand Braudel's pioneering work *Das Mittelmeer und die mediterrane Welt in der Epoche Philipps II* [The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II] (1947). *The (Coming) Insurrection* also, however, quotes the work of Agentur Bilwet, Louis Bon, Bertolt Brecht, Eduardo Galeano and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Finally, andcompany&Co.'s *The (Coming) Insurrection* uses quotes from contemporary pop culture, including the Austrian band 'Ja Panik'."

We see two embedded writers who, in addition to the voice of the co-makers, also quite clearly allow the voice of *intertextuality* to speak as well.

4. Some theatre writers, as co-maker, consciously cross into the territory of other disciplines. These may be writers who present their texts on stage, as in writing-on-the-spot projects, poetry slams and projects in which directors write and stage their own texts. In her book *Autorenregie* [Author Direction], Karin Nissen-Rizvani has analysed the creative process of the latter group of director-writers.⁶⁸⁹ The voice of the writer and *the voice of the co-makers* can easily come into conflict with one another in one person, but that need not necessarily be to the detriment of a productive writing process.⁶⁹⁰ In that case, there will more easily be a place in the writing process for the voices in the 'Text produced so far' block: while writing, the theatre writer is aware of not only what they have already written in the way of text (*the voice of the linguistic theatre text*), but also what has already been established and decided in the staging (*the voice of the staging text*).

5. Then, finally, there is the practice in which the writing entity is no longer embodied in one person and the specific task of the theatre writer is assumed by a number of other makers. That can be seen in theatre collectives such as het Werkteater and De Warme Winkel and also in Kris Verdonck's show *End*, which I mentioned in the introduction. At the end of this chapter, I will describe the writing process for the text for *End*. There is then no longer a theatre writer, but there is an author function.

"The collaborative process is even more central among companies that create their own plays in the house. For these groups, the playwright's function is distributed across the entire cast, with everyone involved in designing a scenario, creating characters, writing dialogue. In this situation there is no 'playwright' at all..."⁶⁹¹

All the voices of the theatre writing process, such as *the voice of the co-makers* and, in this case, also *the voice of the writing* still speak, but now through a whole group of makers.

The Dutch dramaturg Tom Helmer states that the theatre writer is actually no longer able to write alone.

“In my experience, writing theatre text that is both captivating and meaningful for our complex society is no mean feat. It is almost too much of a burden for the mind and endurance of one single writer.”

Helmer argues for greater attention to be devoted to the writing process in the theatre system in the Netherlands and the time in which the text is developed and, in this respect, he deems co-makers crucial.

“To get the investment in the script up to muster, I think it is necessary to supply the writer with more auxiliary troops. Dramaturgs who are familiar with the whole box of tricks for drama and are capable of assimilating a subject can assist the writer in setting up the structure of the script. If needs be, colleague writers can be brought in at a later stage to contribute to the dialogues. Naturally, intensive consultation with the directors and designers during the entire writing process goes without saying.”⁶⁹²

Allowing the voice of the co-makers to speak in the writing process does not necessarily mean that the theatre writer also carries out the co-maker’s activities, with the author getting into directing, acting or designing, but rather that the author internalises the voices of the co-makers and makes them audible during the writing.

“While the initial part of the playwriting process may be solitary, everything afterwards is collaborative. (...) The playwright must consider the perspective of (most importantly) the director, the producer, the actors, even the stage manager.

⁶⁸⁹ See Karin Nissen-Rizvani 2011 and Karin Nissen-Rizvani 2015

⁶⁹⁰ See the interview with the German theatre writer Sabine Harbeke in which she talks of the conflict between herself as a writer and herself as a director, in: Hochholdinger-Reiterer & Bremgartner & Kleiser & Boesch 2015:132

⁶⁹¹ Bishop & Starkey 2006:148. They give examples in Toronto, Philadelphia and New Zealand

⁶⁹² Tom Helmer, in: *TM* March 2012

Typically, playwrights revise dialogue and action based on what happens in rehearsals. They may even continue revising after the play goes into production.”⁶⁹³

In *Keywords in Creative Writing*, Wendy Bishop and David Starkey use the term “collaborative” for the way you include the co-maker’s perspective in your writing, although they do compare it with part of the writing process which, in their view, takes place individually.

They also explain how rewriting can continue during and even after the première. This makes both the theatre text and the writing process “unfinalisable”.

Logically, the internalisation of *the voice of the co-makers* can be trained by, as a theatre writer, working intensively with other makers and making your own writing process open to others.

Treating the theatre writing process as co-creation is soon perceived as a threat to authorship and the writer, also because it appears to ensue from the directors’ theatre of the 1970s and 1980s, in which the theatre author was no longer as important as before. In the introduction to their book *Theater seit den 1990er Jahren* [Theatre Since the 1990s], Friedemann Kreuder and Sabine Sörgel describe how, from the mid-1990s onwards, the theatre writer returned, as it were, and that even great directors rediscovered that they could work with a writer, as with Ariane Mnouchkine and Hélène Cixous.⁶⁹⁴ It was during that era that, in addition to a return of the importance of the theatre text and the theatre writer, directors also started writing their own texts.

Internalisation of external voices is a major condition for a smooth theatre writing process. Not reducing the collaboration with the co-maker and the commissioning party or the audience to social processes or group dynamics offers major advantages, as that then assumes autonomous artistry, a singular authorship that ‘subsequently’ starts collaborating and relating to an outside world. When those external positions of the commissioning party, co-maker and audience are internalised as voices in the creative process, they can be far more acknowledged as part of the creation.

III.5.2 Long-Term Memory 2: Experiences

The neuroscientist David Eagleman describes how various parts of the brain work independently on the same problem. At the beginning of this chapter, I linked that to the ‘confluence approach’ in creativity research.

“(...) the need for simultaneous multiple components in order for the highest levels of creativity to be achieved.”⁶⁹⁵

In the theatre writing process, this is reflected in the principle of multiple memories. We already saw with *the voice of the co-makers* that the theatre author incorporates the memories of their co-makers into their own Long-Term Memory, to enable them to draw on multiple memories. We also see that, individually, the concept of multiple memories is very useful for *the voice of recollection*. In contrast with *the voice of recollection* is *the voice of collective memory*.

III.5.2 A The voice of recollection

In the theory of writing processes, writers can have two problems with dealing with the Long-Term Memory: *retention problems and adaptation problems*.

A writer with retention problems has no access to their own memory and is therefore unable to use the memory as a hard disk of enormous amounts of images, words and scenes from which they can freely draw. In the writing process model, the arrow to the Long-Term Memory is then blocked.

A writer with adaptation problems does have access to their own memory, but is unable to adapt the material or rewrite it for their own text. Parts of the memory have to be used in the text just as they are. You want to write a scene based on an early event with your parents. It is far better for the piece if you write one of the parents out of the scene, but you are unwilling or unable to do so because you want to remain true to history.

⁶⁹³ Bishop & Starkey 2006:147

⁶⁹⁴ Kreuder & Sörgel (eds.) 2008:230

⁶⁹⁵ Sternberg 2006 (1999):12

Due to postmodernism, over the past decade there has been a growing realisation that a memory is always subjective. In her 1990 instruction book on theatre writing, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, Sheila Yeger sets the assignment of meticulously describing a moment from your own memory.⁶⁹⁶ You then describe the same event from the point of view of someone else who was present. The aim of the assignments is to develop several perspectives of the same moment and, therefore, to realise that a recollection is not static and is certainly not objective.

Zooming in on details and the sensory perception trains *the voice of recollection* and enhances the realisation that there are multiple memories of any one moment.

This also tackles the adaptation problem.

The latter can also be done by building a character as a 'narrative self'. Our identity is founded on the stories told about us. We can create a character by having people from their social environment tell a story about them.

Adaptation in *the voice of recollection* can also be stimulated by continuously varying elements of a particular recollection on paper, by changing the age or gender of one of those present, for example. We will encounter the writing strategy used here in relation to *the voice of artificiality*.

III.5.2 B The voice of collective memory

Although, with the latest technology, the availability of information, even on individual and collective history, has become infinitely great, the collective memory actually seems to have shrunk. When the theatre writer adapts a fairytale, they can still assume that the audience will be familiar with the story, but we all know that this shared knowledge has vastly diminished. Unlike forty years ago, any clever reference to Shakespeare or the Bible will not generally go noticed.

A relatively new way of training *the voice of collective memory* is the script constellation writing method used in many German scriptwriting courses.⁶⁹⁷ Script constellation is a method for writing theatre texts, film scripts and stories and employs the constellation methodology derived from systemic work. Script constellations literally allow a writer to see characters come to life and explore concrete artistic issues with regard to action, language, space, plot, atmosphere and characters.⁶⁹⁸

In a script constellation, positioning characters and elements in space provides a wealth of information on the story and any possible directions of development. The systemic rules can also provide guidance for the consistency, a plausible progression and a satisfactory end to the story.

“The script constellation rendered a deeper layer of my play visible, exceeding psychological logic, and the representatives gave me real language for the characters, too”.⁶⁹⁹

The script constellation method works particularly well for theatre texts because theatre and film are eminently arts that work with body and space. It is the task of theatre and film authors to directly employ psychology in actions, bodies and space. In the script constellation, the information often comes from the direct bodily experience of the representatives, their ‘embodied knowledge’. Moreover, the constellation as a whole constantly provides information that seems to come from the space itself. Within the systemic work, this is referred to as ‘the cognisant field’.

Script constellation makes use of collective knowledge. We can say that every plot or every attempt at a plot is already familiar. First to the writer and, later, it manifests itself in the representatives and the other participants.

Script constellations appeal to the creative side of the representatives and participants to be the co-maker. Consequently, the script constellation is seen as a form of *co-creation*, as well.

Script constellations are also used for structuring the *author’s writing process*. You are then less occupied with developing the story or the characters and jointly attempt to ensure that the author’s writing process proceeds more smoothly and rapidly. The author presents a writing process question or writing problem, which is then structured. In that case, in addition to the

⁶⁹⁶ Yeger 1990:44

⁶⁹⁷ For example: as the *Performanz des Wissens* module in the project *Forschung in den Künsten und die Transformation der Theorie* at the University of the Arts Zurich; as the Munich Film Society *Drehbuchaufstellung mit eigenem Drehbuch*; as the *Systemische Drehbuchaufstellung* at the Berlin FilmArche film school; as the Movie-College *Drehbuchaufstellung* workshop

⁶⁹⁸ For more information see: Boutellier & Christophe 2018. The description of script constellation is borrowed from this publication

⁶⁹⁹ Lot Vekemans, theatre author, in: Boutellier & Christophe 2018, back cover

author, the director, the commissioning party, the designer or the audience can also be devised. The use of script constellation for the writing process also provides information on writing processes in general and can therefore function as a research tool for broader research into creative making processes.

III.5.3 Planning 1: Organizing

“Writing plays is one of the most schizophrenic pastimes on earth. On the one hand, you’ve got to be a rigorous architect, but if you want your plays to breathe, you’ve got to let your characters crash into the very walls you’ve so carefully designed. It’s all about control and surrender – knowing what you’re after and then letting the characters take over.”

Tina How, playwright and lecturer in writing for performance⁷⁰⁰

In her article ‘Bakhtin and the Dialogical Writing Class’,⁷⁰¹ Marilyn Middendorf describes two forces that, according to Bakhtin, are in every discourse: a centripetal force towards unity, meaning, authority, consolidation and hierarchy, and another, centrifugal, force that destabilises and tries to break all authority and structure.⁷⁰² Middendorf’s idea is that, as both forces are simultaneously active, this creates heteroglossia, or polyphonic texts.

We encounter those forces in the conflicting pairs of voices in the writing process, but certainly also in *the voice of structure* as opposed to *the voice of destruction*.

Whilst *the voice of structure* wants to keep control of the writing process in a strict schedule and cohesive form, the essence of *the voice of destruction* is the relinquishing of control and submission to the creative process. Tina How terms the above ‘submitting’ to the writing.

We hear that voice sound when theatre writers say their characters run away with them, or, as Heiner Müller put it, that “the material itself moves”.

In the theatre writing process, too, these two forces appear to manifest themselves as opposing voices or, as Bakhtin himself says about Rabelais’ authorship:

“Destruction and construction go hand in hand.”⁷⁰³

III.5.3 A The voice of structure

Many instruction books on writing for theatre argue that instilling structure is essential. They give you detailed instruction on how a plot should be meticulously constructed in such a way that everything is cohesive. Characters are constructed and tension is added.

The underlying dramaturgy is almost always the dramatic dramaturgy in which the characters are ‘round’, the plot logical and plausible and the ultimate theatre text a finalised entity.⁷⁰⁴

Although this instruction literature provides extraordinarily useful information on the theatre text, it says little about the process of tackling that as a writer. *The voice of structure* in the theatre writing process is often termed as the urge to be consistent, logical and cohesive and, above all: to make the text finalised and complete.

The philosopher and playwright Alain Badiou hits the nail on the head when he says,

“Grappling with incompleteness, martyred by the not-all, jealous of the novel, the theatre author often wants to *complete* things. Anxious of being suspended from the aleatory character of the event, he jumps ahead of the game in despair.”⁷⁰⁵

The voice of structure can be trained far more extensively than with just product information in instruction books.

The writer can, for instance, delve into new, more postdramatic structures. Books such as *Puzzle Films; Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*⁷⁰⁶ by Warren Buckland (ed.), and *Freistil; Dramaturgie für Fort-*

⁷⁰⁰ In: Herrington & Brian 2006: XIII

⁷⁰¹ In: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):205-214

⁷⁰² Quoted in: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):206

⁷⁰³ Paraphrased by Anton Simons, in: Simons 1990:36

⁷⁰⁴ I could give innumerable examples. I will limit myself here to *Story, Structure, Architect* by Victoria Lynn from 2005

⁷⁰⁵ Badiou 2013:49

⁷⁰⁶ Buckland (ed.) 2009

geschrittene und Experimentierfreudige [Freestyle; Dramaturgy for the Advanced and Adventurous] by Dagmar Benke⁷⁰⁷ emphasise the polyphony of film scripts by, for example, discussing plots with multiple main characters or non-linear storylines. This trains the doubling of structures, making *the voice of structure* far more dynamic, without silencing it, but it fosters the movement between *the voice of structure* and, for example, *the voice of destruction*, so that creating structure remains a lively, dynamic process that does not, like a sudoku, work towards finalisation and resolution.

This can also be done by practising making continual variations. Georg Büchner's theatre text *Woyzeck* is eminently suited to this.⁷⁰⁸ The scenes from this piece have survived, but not their definitive order. The author can keep making new montages of the scenes and it is that variation of the order that trains *the voice of structure*.

With the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, we could call the voice of structure an 'Apollonian' force. In his 1872 book *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, he describes two opposing forces, which he encounters in Greek culture and tragedies: the Apollonian, which strives for unity, rationality, symmetry, order and harmony, and the Dionysian, which strives for rage, irrationality, disorder, turbulence and ecstasy. The Dionysian voice is *the voice of destruction*.

III.5.3 B The voice of destruction

"Destruction as the beginning of creative ability. Those who cannot destroy can create nothing. There are three main gods in Indian mythology: one god that creates life, one that maintains it and another that destroys it – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Destruction, the negative, is therefore seen as a necessary part of the creative process."

Oek de Jong, writer⁷⁰⁹

The voice of destruction has many names. In addition to the *Dionysian* principle, there's also the Bakhtinian concept of *Carnivalisation*. As we saw in Chapter I, carnivalisation refers to a number of creative strategies for disordering and damaging existing structures in a playful manner in order to achieve polyphony in an artistic product.

In 2004, I wrote texts for the theatre company ELS Inc for the show *Morgen gaat het beter* [Tomorrow Will Be Better]. The director Arie de Mol wanted

to intersperse the texts with old Dutch songs. When he, the dramaturg Mart-Jan Zegers and I together made the montage of text and songs, this produced a structure in which the theatre text was regularly interrupted by a song to be sung by the actors. De Mol looked at the structure this had created and said, “This is too well constructed. This is too cohesive” and suggested doing two songs one after another without any text in between. Even then, we still felt the show remained too much of a nice unity. It was only when we did three songs, one after another, without any text in between that the structure became so strange that, substantively, the elimination of predictability actually generated extra meaning. We had made *the voice of destruction* into a creative force.

Training the voice of destruction begins, first and foremost, with the recognition that this voice works not against but for the creative process or, as in the motto Bakhtin adopted from the Russian anarchist Bakunin,

“The will to destroy is a creative will.”⁷¹⁰

In addition, it is important to realise that *the voice of destruction* is also really a linguistic act, a writing strategy within that framework, Christel Stalpaert talks of the disruptive potential of poetic language.⁷¹¹ In her book *Vor den KopfStossen* [Affront], Clara Ervedosa recognises Bakhtin’s carnivalisation in the subversive, disruptive language of the playwright Thomas Bernhard. Ervedosa discusses a number of Bakhtin’s strategies for fostering carnivalisation. The theatre writer could use these strategies to awake *the voice of destruction*:

1. Literary styles or devices can be relativised through derision or irony. When another style or style device is added, so doubling the styles, the writing process does not remain stuck in one block and therefore retains its dynamism. In theatre writing, there can be a tendency to remain close to

⁷⁰⁷ Benke 2002

⁷⁰⁸ Büchner wrote the play in 1836 and it was first performed in 1913, by Max Reinhardt

⁷⁰⁹ Jong 2006:73

⁷¹⁰ In: Morson & Emerson 1990:92

⁷¹¹ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:115

the voice of the genre: because we want to remain true to the demands and style devices of the chosen genre, ideas situated outside the genre are no longer permitted and the creative process stagnates. Adding style devices from another genre (songs in a well-made play, a choral text in a musical, etc.) allow *the voice of destruction* to speak, refreshing the writing process.

2. Just as the unity of the form can be affected, so can the unity be challenged at the level of meaning. The writer attempts not to achieve a semantically unambiguous content, but to increase the ambivalence in a text. *The voice of destruction* can be allowed to speak when, bearing in mind Michel Foucault's definition of philosophy, one does not wonder what the one true thought is but what more can still be thought. This relativises *the voice of structure*, which constantly works towards one essential thought, one core of the character and one message in the theatre text. According to Ervedosa, with Bernhard, for example, this leads to characters without any fixed form, characters with what I have here referred to as a dialogical self:

"Vorgänge erscheinen als unabgeschlossen, Menschen ohne fest konstruierte Identität".
[Scenes seem unfinished, people without any firmly constructed identity]⁷¹²

Josephine Machon calls this doubling of style registers, genres and disciplines an enhancement of ambiguity. Ambiguity is created by *the voice of destruction*.

"As with the play of multiple discourses available to the actual body in performance *playwriting* can juxtapose a variety of linguistic registers, emphasizing the corporeal and interdisciplinary within its very form. (Syn)aesthetic writing can destroy boundaries and cross fertilize itself with other disciplines and discourses, interweaving these within the substance of the text in order to produce a defamiliarized, visceral impact."⁷¹³

"Prevalent in (syn)aesthetic *playtexts* is a writerly ambiguity that provides interpretative freedom and disturbatory pleasure in the layers of meaning which explore difficult and complex states, revealing 'polyphonic consciousnesses'"⁷¹⁴

3. Allowing the inappropriate, the repressed, the eccentric can lead to the emancipation of suppressed voices. *The voice of destruction* often expresses itself in allowing uselessness and pointlessness. Ervedosa describes it like this:

“This is where the ‘alternative logic’ has its place, but also the trans-rational, the meaningless, that which has not yet been tamed by conventions and language and which does not fit into a harmonious unity.”⁷¹⁵

In our thirst for logic and unity, we feel everything we write must be useful and meaningful. The risk is that we immediately reject or fail to even notice all those ideas in us that are senseless. In my own writing practice, it was a long time before I could actually recognise and use the silly, corny remarks made while brainstorming with co-makers as potential text material. I had long considered silliness to be neither serious nor useful and to therefore be unusable.

In his *Le théâtre de la cruauté* [Theatre of Cruelty], which he initially referred to as ‘useless’, Antonin Artaud also pointed out *the voice of destruction* in use and sense. Artaud pleaded for a body without organs, for example, treating our organs as the useful parts of our body that ensure we function as a machine.

It is striking how many theatre makers and theatre writers say *the voice of destruction* is essential to the creative process, albeit under other names. Heiner Müller considers rehearsals places for disturbance, “*Inseln der Unordnung*”;⁷¹⁶ Annette Storr calls it a sense for *Démontage*,⁷¹⁷ making the theatre writer into a kind of cheerful saboteur.

In a conversation between the dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven and the Belgian theatre maker Kris Verdonck about the show *End*, Verdonck discussed Beckett’s idea about the impossibility of creation, *decreation*, which was also described as “aesthetics of disturbance”.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹² Ervedosa 2008:110

⁷¹³ Machon 2009:71

⁷¹⁴ Machon 2009:70, she borrows the concept of polyphonic consciousnesses from Bakhtin 2011 (1984):17-18

⁷¹⁵ “Die ‘andere Logik’ hat hier ihren Platz, aber auch das transrationale, das Sinnlose, das, was durch Konventionen und Sprachen noch nicht domestiziert wurde und sich nicht in eine harmonische Einheit fügt.”, Ervedosa 2008:109

⁷¹⁶ Heiner Müller, quoted in: Matzke 2012:267

⁷¹⁷ Storr 2009:75

⁷¹⁸ This public discussion took place at the Congress of Performance Studies International in Utrecht, 27 May 2011

III.5.4 Planning 2: Generating and Goal setting

Strikingly, with many theatre writers, planning is either dominant or brushed aside as undesirable. Writing for Performance students can be divided into two groups: those that prefer to write immediately and only then review and revise and those who first want to devise everything before setting pen to paper or putting a finger on the keyboard. For a smooth writing process, both voices are important and choosing one single voice has a stagnating effect.

III.5.4 A The voice of preparation

In creativity theory, creative processes are often divided into phases and each phase model includes a 'preparation phase'.⁷¹⁹ In this preparation phase, the artist is consciously occupied with a theme and works intensively on a specific thought or problem. The ideas that emerge produce a general orientation that is experienced as unfinalised, unsatisfactory and provisional. This generates something like a vague guiding concept. The problem is formulated and researched from all possible sides, using the available knowledge and experience.

Here, *the voice of preparation* seems not so much to seek to contrive and record everything before writing as to continue and expand the research. By regularly allowing this voice to sound, the writer practices researching and relating to other ideas, other texts or other genres. In this way, regular research also trains *the voice of intertextuality* and, moreover, negates the fear of being influenced as a writer;⁷²⁰ a fear we will encounter again with *the voice of myths*.

Every theatre writing course allows the voice of preparation to speak in the attention devoted to the contemplative, investigatory parts of the curriculum. Students always conduct research to expand their own writing practice. In the final research for the Writing for Performance BA, there is a compulsory cohesion between the research and the graduation project, the theatre text with which the student graduates. The student writes a thesis on, for example, the genre they would like to use or the theme they would like to write about and prepares for writing by researching for the writing process.

Incidentally, *the voice of preparation* can also lead to collecting material. For the theatre writer that could be not just secondary literature, but also primary texts and image and music material. In her research into the creative process of visual artists, Betty Edwards gives this phase in which material is collected its own name: the saturation phase.⁷²¹ In the instruction book *Spaces of Creation; the creative process of playwriting*, Susan Zeder & Jim Hancock refer to Edwards' phase.⁷²²

III.5.4 B The voice of improvisation

"*Dolly of avocado's bij de lunch* [Dolly or Avocados for Lunch] was the first piece I wrote entirely by myself. It was prompted by my anger at a subsidy rejection by CRM [the Ministry of Culture] for doing one of Bernhard's directions. I wrote this piece in one night for the actors who had already been engaged. And I managed it! I have often used this writing method, a kind of automatic writing, for *The Rhinestone Queen* and *Eczeem* [Eczema], for example."

Gerardjan Rijnders, theatre author and director⁷²³

To allow *the voice of improvisation* to speak, it helps to embrace the post-modern notion that not only does language ensue from thinking (we think something and turn it into language to express it), but that thinking also ensues from language.

Sometimes we do not realise we are already actually thinking about a certain topic until it comes up in conversation, for example. We also recognise this phenomenon in the principle of the narrative self, which we saw when discussing the human image behind the polyphonic identity of the dialogical self: the stories about us determine our identity and probably not vice versa.

Allowing *the voice of improvisation* to speak does not mean simply doing any old thing; it means writing without planning in response to other stimuli and other texts. In *Writing in the Raw*, I give a number of writing

⁷¹⁹ As with Graham Wallas' renowned four-phase model from *The Art of Thought*, from 1926, for example

⁷²⁰ See, for example, Harold Bloom's book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 1997

⁷²¹ See Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Artist Within*, 1986

⁷²² Zeder & Hancock 2005:8

⁷²³ Gerardjan Rijnders, in: Alphenaar (ed.) 1983:124-125

methods that can train *the voice of improvisation* and which, in the first year of the Writing for Performance BA course in Utrecht, are combined in the ‘Writing without Planning’ module.⁷²⁴

This includes writing to music, writing by looking at a photograph or painting and writing while moving or watching movement.

These writing methods, which can regularly be found in instruction books on creative writing, work on the basis of the Bakhtinian idea that language is always a social phenomenon and therefore generated as a response.

For the theatre writer, writing on the basis of actors’ improvisation also trains *the voice of improvisation*, as the author has to keep responding to text material that is offered and does not originate with them.

That same creative process can also be seen when Tim Etchells from the theatre company *Forced Entertainment* asks his co-makers to bring material he can use to make the show, specifying that these should be not finalised texts but just “a few scraps or fragments of text”.

“That is the way of theatre: everything responds to everything else.”⁷²⁵

III.5.5 Writing 1: Production of language

“(...) Through me many long dumb voices,

Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
Voices of the diseas’d and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the father-stuff,
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the deform’d, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil’d and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur’d. (...)”

Walt Whitman, poet⁷²⁶

The moment at which we actually produce language in the writing process, the question immediately poses itself of whether we really dare or can say everything, whether there are voices in us that we restrain or censor and the

eternal doubt as to whether what we want to say can actually be encapsulated in language.

III.5.5 A The voice of the unsayable

“Spirit of my silence I can hear you

But I’m afraid to be near you.”

Sufjan Stevens, American singer-songwriter⁷²⁷

In his instruction book *Dialogue*, scriptwriting guru Robert McKee says that every dialogue comprises three layers: ‘the said’ (what is actually said), ‘the unsaid’ (the subtext, which clarifies a character’s feelings and longings) and ‘the unsayable’. According to McKee, it is the site of our deepest longings, from where actual choices and actions stem and which is without language but can be vaguely discerned in and between the language.

The German theatre writer Sabine Harbeke refers to *the voice of the unsayable* when she claims that, while writing, in addition to possible texts and ideas, you can also hear the silence and the speechlessness.⁷²⁸

The philosopher Jacques Derrida approaches *the voice of the unsayable* based on the concept of *apophasis*. In his book *On the Name*, he talks of a doubling of voices as soon as we start speaking. In addition to what we are saying, there is always a ‘voiceless voice’ as well, eager to express what is unsayable.

“Sorry, but more than one, it is always necessary to be more than one in order to speak, several voices are necessary for that...” (...) “Still more, if this is possible, when one claims to speak about God according to what they call apophasis (l’apophase), in other words, according to the voiceless voice (la voix blanche) the way

⁷²⁴ See the chapter “Writing off the Top of Your Head; writing without planning”, in: Christophe 2008: 89-103

⁷²⁵ Gerardjan Rijnders in: Arjan Visser, “Ik heb altijd willen weten” [I Always Wanted to Know], an interview with Gerardjan Rijnders, in the Dutch quality daily newspaper *Trouw*, 11 November 2000

⁷²⁶ Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* (1892), also in: Evans 2008:59

⁷²⁷ Motto in: Rik van den Bos, *Een coming of age voor bejaarden* [A Coming-Of-Age for the Elderly], De Nieuwe toneelbibliotheek, Amsterdam 2016, p.5

⁷²⁸ In Hochholdinger-Reiterer & Bremgartner & Kleiser & Boesch 2015:129

of theology called or so-called negative. This voice multiplies itself, dividing within itself: it says one thing and its contrary."⁷²⁹

Apophasis refers to a kind of theology that considers God to be too great, too holy and too special to describe or name. As the divine being is indescribable, one can only name what it is not, and that is referred to as the negative.

The significance of this for the writing process is that, while writing, there is a voice speaking alongside, which knows that the essence, the core of what we want to say, is unutterable, but nevertheless wishes to make itself heard.

In his discussion of apophasis,⁷³⁰ Derrida adeptly shows how the unsayable can actually become linguised, not only by describing what it is but also because it refers, with all kinds of *circumscriptions*, to a core that is without language. It appears to speak of disappearing, of ending, of the void, a writing of which Beckett's work is so full, for example.

"Such and much more such the hubbub in his mind so-called till nothing left from deep within but only ever fainter oh to end. No matter how no matter where. Time and grief and self so-called. Oh all to end."⁷³¹

In the theatre writing process, *the voice of the unsayable* often expresses itself in the pauses we write. Naturally, words and pauses belong together in order to make sense.⁷³²

It is a place from which the subtext stems: the character says something and pauses. The audience suddenly hears a second voice, the dramatic doubling: the character is saying something else that (s)he is unwilling or unable to express with language. The pause is the transition between dialogue and the action, between language and the body, leaving a space for a second voice.

One writing strategy can be to revise a theatre text, inserting pauses. Those pauses create or facilitate the dramatic duality. When, on the basis of post-dramatic dramaturgy, we are not seeking a round character with internal conflicts, it is better to remove pauses from the text. That is also, for example, the reason why the director and writer René Pollesch directs his actors never to pause.

At the same time, the question is whether *the voice of the unsayable* is actually encapsulated in the pauses. The author Stefan Hertmans is referring to a different, tragic silence when he writes so beautifully about the hush of tragedy:

"A language that cannot be tamed and therefore intrinsically belongs to the hidden urges of society. Her pariah and clairvoyant, just as Lenz stumbles through the countryside and finds it unbearable to listen to the voice of silence screaming to the horizon. In such a context, language becomes 'parodic' without being parodied: it is the par-odos, 'the other way', the small mountain pass that runs straight through the speaking itself."⁷³³

Here, the silence is the desperate 'screaming to the horizon' that creates another voice, 'another way', as Hertmans calls it. It seems like the extra voice created by the language itself and the impossibility of a person coinciding with feelings and thoughts in language.

Allowing the voice of the unsayable to speak says something about the disappearance of the author, the relinquishing of the writer's ego as David Morley formulates it:

"One can write nothing readable unless one constantly struggles to efface one's personality."⁷³⁴

When you allow *the voice of the unsayable* to speak, to quote Roland Barthes, you keep as 'quiet as the grave'.⁷³⁵

⁷²⁹ Derrida 1995 (1993):35

⁷³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Post-Script*, in: Derrida 1995 (1993):34-85

⁷³¹ Samuel Beckett, *Stirrings Still*, New York/London: Blue Moon Books/John Calder 1988, end

⁷³² See Bakhtin 2010 (1979):134

⁷³³ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:174

⁷³⁴ Morley 2007:151

⁷³⁵ Pieters 2004:11 quotes here from Barthes' *Essais Critiques* from 1964

III.5.5 B The voice of artificiality

“The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, (...)”

Viktor Shklovsky⁷³⁶

In Chapter I, we saw Bakhtin’s concept of ‘outsideness’, of seeing oneself as another. In the writing process, this translates into ‘making something artificial’. The theatre writer notices they are too close to the subject, the target group or one of their co-makers. With *the voice of artificiality*, the writer gives form to the material specifically to distance themselves from it. This making something artificial is known by Viktor Shklovsky’s term ‘ostranenie’.⁷³⁷

In her book *Autorenregie* [Author Direction], Karin Nissen-Rizvani gives the example of theatre writers who, because they also direct their own texts, are too involved in making theatre and therefore are no longer capable of looking at the quality of their texts from a distance.⁷³⁸

When there is too little distance between writing and staging, between writing and the theatre making, then that cannot simply be resolved by continually allowing *the voice of artificiality* to speak; there has to be a continual shift between the voices in the writing process.

The voice of artificiality points out to the writer that there is no direct line from experience to language, or from description to reality. That is what Roland Barthes meant by his statement that the voice of expression should be seen as a demon. Writing always takes place via a detour, by making something artificial.

There are many practical writing strategies for training *the voice of artificiality*, by distancing yourself in the writing from characters, space, time, genre and language and from your own recollections or involvement in the chosen material.

I described a number of these in *Writing in the Raw*.⁷³⁹

At this point, I’d like to discuss three more distancing strategies in terms of plot, language and information density.

One traditional example of using *the voice of artificiality* is to break up the chronology of the plot. Tom Lanoye’s *Diplodocus Deks, Triomf der archeologie* [Diplodocus Dex, the triumph of archaeology] (2004) and Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal* (1978) are examples of theatre texts in which the story is

told back to front, as it were.⁷⁴⁰ Due to the conscious artificiality of the plot, the author notices that the spectator is no longer curious as to how the story ends – as that is where the plot begins – and therefore has room for other questions.

In his instruction book *New Playwriting Strategies; A Language-Based Approach to Playwriting*, Paul Castagno shows how we can use language artificially to achieve polyphonic theatre texts. He demonstrates how, by continually seeking contradictions in language, we can create dialogue within a character, which then, in Castagno's terms, becomes polyvocal. A character can quite easily first speak standard English and then burst into an American accent or suddenly use Russian slang or start swearing in Geordie. In the writing process, this has consequences for the progression of the text. After all, how, as a writer, do you respond to such contrasts? For Castagno, writing theatre text means struggling with language and a character is created as a function of that language.⁷⁴¹

Theatre scholar Christel Stalpaert⁷⁴² shows how *ostranenie*, as she refers to it, can be used as a writing strategy in postdramatic dramaturgy by consciously giving too little or too much information, overly-quiet or overly-loud information.⁷⁴³

Stalpaert gives Jan Decorte's 1983 performance of *King Lear* as an example of too little and Needcompany's 2000 *King Lear* as an example of too much information.

⁷³⁶ Shklovsky, 'Art and technique', quoted in McCaw, 2016:13

⁷³⁷ Also see Dick McCaw, *Bakhtin and Theatre*, 2016:13

⁷³⁸ Nissen-Rizvani 2015:118

⁷³⁹ Christophe 2008:119-124

⁷⁴⁰ See Johan Reyniers, 'Tom Lanoye: 'I believe in drama'', interview, in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten* [magazine for the performing arts], volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.30. My own radio play *Laatste liedjes* [Last Songs], from 1991, also has a reverse chronology, in: Nirav Christophe, *Liedjes van verlangen* [Songs of Longing], Amsterdam 2010, pp.366-409

⁷⁴¹ Castagno 2001:17

⁷⁴² Professor of theatre studies at the University of Ghent

⁷⁴³ Lehmann 1999:151 calls that "the non-normative use of the saturated and diluted symbol"

This writing strategy ranks all the dramatic signs, giving them equal weighting. The simultaneity of signs identified by Stalpaert and the philosopher Deleuze forms a ‘network of interacting bundles of forces’ and it is this that renders the theatre text polyphonic:⁷⁴⁴

“Due to the extremely high symbol density the spectator’s perception must be simultaneous and multi-perspective.”⁷⁴⁵

III.5.6 Writing 2: Speech

“The greatest challenge facing both actor and writer is to be both the player and the instrument being played. In other words, actors and writers are professional split personalities”

Bobbi J.G. Weiss, writer⁷⁴⁶

When producing language directly in the writing process there are, in addition to *the voice of the unsayable* and *the voice of artificiality*, two more conflicting forces or voices at work, in which expression and experience play a central role.

Firstly, there is the body of the theatre writer that speaks. In the picture of the gouache of Vac Devi, the goddess of language, her fifty-five voices were spread over her entire body. The body wishes first and foremost to experience. There is also *the voice of the narrator*, the urge to give expression, to express something. *The voice of the narrator* and *the voice of the body* are opposites, like expression as opposed to experience. The narrator wishes to share; the body wishes to be.

III.5.6 A The voice of the body

“Ich denke sowieso mit dem Knie” [Anyway, I think with my knee]

Joseph Beuys, visual artist⁷⁴⁷

Christel Stalpaert calls Peter Verhelst’s theatre texts ‘corporeal’. In her view, the musicality and corporeality of the texts invite a more physical perception of theatre (as with Verhelst’s text *Red Rubber Balls*).⁷⁴⁸ Can the corporeality of the theatre text be encapsulated in the writing process?

In an article about the book *Het statuut van de tekst in het postdramatische theater* [The Status of the Text in Postdramatic Theatre], Klaas Tindemans points out⁷⁴⁹ that, within postdramatic theatre, there is such a thing as through and through physical theatre texts that far exceed the postmodern form and are far sooner a reference to a personal and societal tragedy. He gives Jan Decorte's 1994 theatre text *Bloetwollefduivel* [Bludwulfdevil] as an example, saying,

"Artistic research is always interested in both language as a graphic or auditive symbol and language as an injury, an open wound."

Here, I read the open wound of the language as what I described earlier in this chapter as the fundamental distance between language and our thoughts, feelings and experiences, which leads to an extra voice in the writing process. When language is seen as an open wound and the theatre text as corporeal, then what are the characteristics of *the voice of the body*?

The tragedy which the French theatre maker Antonin Artaud spoke is the experience that, for man, language functions as if a prompt were whispering us every text we use. A rather unromantic, literal explanation of the word 'inspiration'. Artaud experiences that prompted language as theft from what he considers to be his individuality, his being. Classical theatre, with its literary masterpieces is the thief that pilfers our own experience and language.

Theatre writers can recognise themselves in this, in the years of getting their characters to speak the way they think they ought to on stage, in a dramatic structure that they assume is the only one fitting for the theatre. In contrast with the prompted voice, Artaud cites *the voice of the body*,

⁷⁴⁴ Stalpaert in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:118

⁷⁴⁵ Stalpaert in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:118

⁷⁴⁶ In: Bobbi J.G.Weiss, *Writing is Acting; How to Improve the Writer's Onpage Performance*; Weiss 2006:1

⁷⁴⁷ Written on a signed postcard in 1977

⁷⁴⁸ Stalpaert in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:122

⁷⁴⁹ Klaas Tindemans in: *Etcetera; tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten* [magazine for performing arts], volume 29, no. 127, December 2011, p.67

"of life, which does not allow itself to be dictated to, of the flesh, which is capable of restoring Artaud's individuality, his singularity (...)"⁷⁵⁰

In Artaud's view, we are continuously robbed of the body, causing schizophrenia, polyphony, the 'double', as Artaud calls it.

"No one was born alone.

No one dies alone, either. (...)

And I believe that at the moment of the most extreme death there is always still someone else to rob us of our own body."⁷⁵¹

What is *the voice of the body*? Artaud calls it 'the Word from before words'⁷⁵² and he sought it in the screaming and shouting of the absolute presence: no subtext, just the authenticity in which the thoughts and feelings of the one who is speaking coincide with what is being said. Strikingly enough, the most important surviving attempt by Artaud to make *the voice of the body* audible is a radio play, *Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu* [To Have Done with the Judgement of God]. This theatrical work from 1947, written, directed and (co-)played by Artaud was described by Jenny Schrödl and Doris Kolesch as the first example of a polyphonic postdramatic monologue:

"In the first part, Artaud presents a wealth of voice expressions that, according to Kolesch, 'shifts effortlessly between the voices of a politician, a messiah, a madman, a foul-mouthed fishwife, a preacher, someone spouting expletives and many others'"⁷⁵³

In the psychological literature on the dialogical self, *the voice of the body* is seen as an essential part of the polyphonic self. Hubert Hermans talks of 'the body in the mind', and James Cresswell and Cor Baerveldt explicitly describe the dialogical self as 'embodied'.⁷⁵⁴

The philosopher Roland Barthes says that, when the voice of expression, the urge to tell or express something, becomes less dominant, that leaves room in the writing process for *the voice of the body*, for the action:

"On the contrary, for him, his hand, separate from any voice, is led by the act of writing (and not the need to express something) and delineates a field that has no origins – or at least no origin other than the language itself, in other words something that now continuously destabilised any origin".⁷⁵⁵

When writing for dance and movement theatre, or for puppet and object theatre, when writing for bodies and postdramatic voices, in particular, the sensuousness, the directness and the materiality of the language are so important that *the voice of the body* should not be forgotten. This is probably what Heiner Müller, who also wrote texts for moving bodies,⁷⁵⁶ meant when he said that his theatre texts are best performed when delivered by dancers who have no need for meaning, just sound.⁷⁵⁷

In theatre writing courses and instruction books on theatre writing, you will find many strategies for arousing and exercising *the voice of the body*. The American theatre writer and lecturer Josée Rivera argues for theatre writing students to approach their writing on the basis of the senses.⁷⁵⁸ The HKU University of the Arts Utrecht Writing for Performance BA course has, for many years, included a 'Movement and writing' module, in which, by producing the text while moving or watching movement, the student attempts to track down *the voice of the body*. The Australian performance artist Rea Dennis⁷⁵⁹ developed walking as a method for Writing for Performance students to train *the voice of the body* by becoming more aware of the body,

"to locate (...) places within which I experience myself"⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁰ Bolle 1985:59

⁷⁵¹ Artaud on Vincent van Gogh, quoted in Bolle 1985:60

⁷⁵² Bolle 1985:66

⁷⁵³ "Artaud führt im ersten Teil einen Variationsreichtum stimmlicher Äusserungen auf und vor, die nach Kolesch "zwischen Stimme eines Politikers, eines Messias, eines Wahnsinnigen, eines lästernden Waschweibs, eines Predigers, eines Fluchenden" u.v.a. übergangslos wechseln.", Schrödl 2012:147

⁷⁵⁴ See Cresswell & Baerveldt 2011

⁷⁵⁵ See Barthes 2004 (1986):118

⁷⁵⁶ Luk Van den Dries, in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:127-128

⁷⁵⁷ "Introduction" by Luk Van den Dries, in: Heiner Müller, *Last Voyage; poëzie, proza, essays, toneel* [Last Voyage; poetry, prose, essays, theatre] IT&FB Amsterdam 1997, p.13

⁷⁵⁸ Herrington & Brian 2006:XI

⁷⁵⁹ Lecturer at the School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University, Australia

⁷⁶⁰ Described in Orr & Hind 2009

However useful and effective they may be, these writing strategies carry the risk of the emphasis on sensuousness soon starting to treat *the voice of the body* as a romantic primal image of anger and lust. The texts are about more than just sounds and associations.⁷⁶¹ When voices inside yourself want to express pain, fear and lust, that does not automatically mean *the voice of the body* is speaking.

One specific strategy for allowing *the voice the body* to speak without the urge to express comes from postdramatic dramaturgy and entails separating voice and body on stage.

From an article by Louise LePage,⁷⁶² “Posthuman Perspectives and Post-dramatic Theatre: the Theory and Practice of Hybrid Ontology in Kate Mitchell’s *The Waves*”,⁷⁶³ comes the lovely idea that when, in theatre, the word does not coincide with the body then the body, itself, becomes a second voice.

That, naturally, applies to not only stagings but also theatre texts.

The body acquires its own voice and the separated voice acquires its own ‘foreign’ body. Lehmann, too, refers to this creative strategy:

“...bringing to light that the word does not belong to the speaker.

It does not organically reside in his/her body but remains a *foreign body*.”⁷⁶⁴

This way of allowing *the voice of the body* to speak, actually describes the writing process for bodily writing, as developed in ‘*écriture féminine*’. The author Hélène Cixous pointed out that in feminine writing the non-logical, the impulsive, the bodily in yourself must be allowed to speak and, for her, those were the voices that are seen by others as deviant, as belonging to not you but another. *The voice of the body* then actually opens the other in yourself and, consequently, yourself in the other, the principle we encountered in the Bakhtinian concept of outsideness.

“... *écriture féminine* can be thought of as a writing of the other, a writing that makes room for and values the other as other.”⁷⁶⁵

Striking is that *the voice of the body* expresses itself not so much in rage, lust or deep emotion but rather in a longing for the impersonal, in an aversion to the individual. In numerous theatre writing courses, that is translated into the task of writing experience texts: observations and experiences that are

untainted by personal judgement or interpretation. When, in this way, the urge to tell or express something is tempered, the texts suddenly turn out to be considerably more sensual and corporeal.

In his article on the French philosopher Deleuze, Rick Dolphijn discusses his idea of the ‘body without organs’. This concept, based on Artaud’s ideas, also links the bodily with the impersonal. While the organs in the body are a metaphor for the useful and functional aspects, the concept of the body without organs strives for an impersonal essence. Dolphijn says,

“The body without organs wants to be a figure without a face. It is unwilling to allow itself to be captured in language. Language will paralyse the body. The body without organs is a plea to rid the body from dialogue. But is there a text that does not paralyse the body, is there a text without organs?”⁷⁶⁶

The impersonal aspect of *the voice of the body* also approaches what I mentioned in Chapter I as the voice of the impersonal writer, as the core of the personal voice of the theatre writer. In the text itself, we recognise that voice, also referred to as the ‘minimal voice’ or ‘impersonal voice’, often in stuttering or stammering, for example, in minimalism or endless repetition, in nonsense language or highly sensual images. The strategies Lehmann gives for how, in the theatre, to separate the voice from expression and the drama from a character, such as repetition, acceleration and accentuation, can also be used to allow *the voice of the body* to speak.⁷⁶⁷

In his article “The Body in the Sphere of Literacy: Bakhtin, Artaud and Post-Soviet Performance Art”, Yuri Murasov describes how, in the theatre, body and texts have traditionally been separated while we persistently act as if

⁷⁶¹ Hans-Thies Lehman also talks about this when he speaks of *Klangmaterial* [sound material] and *Associationsraum* [association space]

⁷⁶² Lecturer/researcher at the Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance, Royal Holloway University London

⁷⁶³ See LePage 2008

⁷⁶⁴ Lehmann: 2006:147

⁷⁶⁵ Blyth & Sellers 2004: 46

⁷⁶⁶ Dolphijn 2012:14

⁷⁶⁷ See Lehmann 2006:149

they were a unity. To that end, the assumption is continually created that the text is the realm of the mind and thinking and not the body. Before tragedy, that distinction did not exist.

"In traditional epic narration, body and text appear as a unity, an integrated whole, there is no external text."⁷⁶⁸

It is in this that Bakhtin and Artaud agree where they want to transcend that division between body and mind.

III.5.6 B The voice of the narrator

In Chapter I, we saw how, in every text, the identity of a narrator is evoked.⁷⁶⁹ In a prose text, that narrative entity is always visibly clear, but in the theatre text the narrative entity is often concealed or even denied, especially in dramatic theatre.

In dramatic dramaturgy, the voice of the narrator can be created by imagining the audience as a character while writing monologue. That can be a character talking to themselves or to another character. As the writer also imagines the audience as an addressee, this promotes the polyphony of the text. When the writer subsequently treats the audience as a character, this gives the speaker a direct motivation, rather than psychological motives. There is no answer to *why* the character speaking is saying this, but there is to the question of *why now*.

This writing strategy also rouses *the voice of the narrator*. Questions arise concerning both the character *and* the narrative entity: why do I want to tell this now? What, as narrator, do I want to bring about now: Am I trying to make an impression? Do I not actually dare tell the story?

Over the past few decades, in postdramatic theatre and in the pieces I referred to in Chapter II as 'the third category of theatre texts', the theatre writer is no longer a slave to 'show, don't tell'. The theatre author no longer hides, but shows himself *in the text* as a structuring, creating and narrating entity, as we also saw with *the voice of the writing*.

We can clearly hear *the voice of the narrator* in the Flemish theatre writer Paul Pourveur's working method. Fundamental aversion to characters often leads to theatre texts that read like a polyphonic monologue, but are distrib-

uted over various creative entities on the stage. *Shakespeare is dead, get over it!* from 2003 is a good example of this.

The German playwright and director René Pollesch no longer likes to have any characters on stage at all. He writes monological texts, which he then fairly arbitrarily distributes amongst various speakers on stage. A dialogical staging of his text appears to more closely approach the essence of his monological texts. In his work, this dialogical staging again harks back to the concept of polyphony and, in his writing strategy, is also recognisable as *the voice of the narrator*.⁷⁷⁰

III.5.7 Reviewing 1: Reading / Reviewing

Reviewing in the writing process is a skill of looking at the text material that has already been produced without any prior intentions or plans. And in *the voice of representation* and *the voice of presence*, it is not so much the dramaturgy of the material that is examined but, specifically, the directions or addressees of the text. While, with every line, the theatre writer considers the directions of the text and the possible doublings of the addressees (“could this text be directed from one character to the other or directly to the audience or to the co-maker?”), that way they develop strategies for reviewing rather than writing a text.

III.5.7 A The voice of representation

When *the voice of representation* is speaking during writing, the theatre writer realises that, even apart from the chosen dramaturgy, in the theatre, ‘the closure of representation’ always exists, as the concept is described in a legendary article by the philosopher Derrida on the theatre maker Artaud.⁷⁷¹ In his theatre, Artaud wanted the total presence, the direct authenticity here and now and Derrida showed how we can never entirely allow representation to disappear.

⁷⁶⁸ Murasov 2001

⁷⁶⁹ See, for example, Paul Dawson: “The voice of a work is not that of the author, but of the narrator, and this separate from the point of view.”, Dawson 2005:109

⁷⁷⁰ For René Pollesch’s polyphonic writing process, see: Moosmann 2007:59-95

If there is someone on stage who is not pretending to play a role and is being themselves, as in the cabaret genre, then we still cannot avoid also seeing the cabaret artist as a character. If they sometimes say something about their own life, then we will, by definition, mistrust that; if they tease us for arriving late, then we laugh because we know it is not meant personally; if they die on stage from a heart attack, like the English comic Tommy Cooper, then we will continue laughing for a while, because we think it is part of the show. Whatever the theatre type, the spectator starts with the suspension of disbelief, the willingness to consider what they see as representation and to 'believe' in it.

As a theatre writer, it is therefore useful to allow *the voice of representation* to speak by realising that every word and every line can include a subtext that refers to a fictional world.

Within dramatic dramaturgy, there are many writing strategies for enhancing representation, referred to by Stefan Tigges as 're-dramatising strategies'.⁷⁷²

The best known is that which seeks to intensify the dramatic duality or the dramatic conflict. When writing a monologue, this is achieved by shifting in the text between the various voices of the character, which also creates a subtext and, consequently, enhances the representation. When writing scenes with three people, this can be achieved by forging alliances between two of the three, so that one or another is always alone.

Imagine we are writing a postdramatic theatre text in which three actors deliver separate theatre texts directly to the audience, then *the voice of representation* can also help us look at that same text on the basis of the relationship and tension between three people as if they are all together in a representation story. Perhaps the three people are competing with or trying to impress one another. If you recognise that representation, too, then we can add another layer to the theatre text.

III.5.7 B The voice of presence

The voice of presence includes the author's desire to communicate directly with the audience in the here and now. Here, the opposite process is taking place from that in *the voice of representation*. The author is looking for writing strategies to make the material less dramatic and less of a representation.

Claire Swyzen and Kurt Vanhoutte give the shows Lucas Vandervost directs for the Flemish company De Tijd as an example. In *Elk wat wils. Iets van Shakespeare* [As You Like It. Something by Shakespeare] from 2007, for example, the integral Shakespeare play is adapted into a de-dramatised form.⁷⁷³ Swyzen and Vanhoutte also describe a number of de-dramatising writing strategies used in the creating and writing process.⁷⁷⁴

1. The existing text material is continually revised by applying *selection* and *isolation*. The texts are divided into pieces and fragments, each of which is then revised. Each text is also taken out of context, a dialogical, destructive practice, as we saw, which opens up the text to new contexts and new voices.⁷⁷⁵

2. The separate fragments that have been taken out of their context are then reorganised according to similarities in theme and form and into a textual, scenic but non-dramatic montage.

The dedramatising strategies⁷⁷⁶ also play a part in *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* and in the description of the writing process for the show *End*, with which I conclude this chapter.

III.5.8 Reviewing: Revising / Editing

We often see Writing for Performance students having difficulty allowing voices in the 'revising' blocks to speak and therefore do little revision. That is because revision is often confused with writing a totally new version, rather than making variations and corrections to the existing text version. In the theory of writing processes, the importance of plentiful revision in the writing process is emphasised time and again. One of the many examples is the research by Talita Groenendijk into the writing process of secondary school pupils when writing poems.

⁷⁷¹ Jacques Derrida, 'The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation', in: Derrida 2004 (1967):292-317

⁷⁷² See Tigges 2008:9-27

⁷⁷³ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:20-21

⁷⁷⁴ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:21

⁷⁷⁵ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:22

⁷⁷⁶ See Tigges 2008:9-27

"It turned out that when revising, writers who did not write linearly were solving a more complex problem than writers who wrote linearly and, without reviewing, immediately wrote down what occurred to them. (...) The better poems were, in general, preceded by a great deal of text production at the beginning of the process and a lot of large-scale revision at the end of the process."⁷⁷⁷

From that point of view, it is rather striking that the instruction literature on theatre writing makes little to no mention of revision. Exercises and strategies are always offered for prompting text production, but seldom for text revision. At the same time, every writer recognises the importance of revision.

When we revise a theatre text, the revision takes places in two areas:

- the author sees whether the text itself should be altered to make each line more intense, for example, more rhythmic or more dramatic. I call this linguistic revision *the voice of editing*.
- the author looks at each text fragment to see whether the text could alternatively be replaced with expressions from other disciplines, through play, image or sound. In *the voice of transformation*, the revision is not linguistic but theatrical. For this, the theatre writer as a theatre maker needs insight into the other disciplines, even though the activity itself remains a writing strategy.

III.5.8 A The voice of editing

This is a voice that continually examines text material that has already been written, for the purpose of revision and editing. It seems to be important to keep shifting between this voice and three others.

First of all, *the voice of intertextuality* must actively sound: what is the source text that I am editing – it could be a tragedy or a novel or, alternatively a philosophical text fragment – and also: what do I know of and about the source text? The Long-Term Memory is continually checked for knowledge of the source text.

The voices in the 'text produced so far', *the voice of the linguistic theatre text* and *the staging text*, also need to be consulted again and again to see which choices have already been made in the existing and in the new text material and what consequences these have for the rest of the writing process.

III.5.8 B The voice of transformation

In Chapter II, I discussed the concept of transformation as an aspect of intertextuality, where another, existing text is incorporated into the writer's own new text and, to that end, is also completely altered and edited. I explained how HKU Writing for Performance BA students are trained in this principle by getting them to write a monologue for a historic character. By bringing in data from outside their own text, the existing text material is reviewed and revised anew.

Here, transformation takes place with other texts or, alternatively, *other theatre disciplines*.

Imagine we are writing a play with the main character Pete. When we show Pete, we can use not only text but also image. Pete's home can, for example, be seen as an extension of his character. If Pete's texts reveal an extremely confused person, then a neat and tidy home would give extra information on Pete that need not be clear in spoken text. Using *the voice of transformation*, with the aid of the space, the theatre writer creates the dramatic duality of the character.

One genre that is ideal for training *the voice of transformation* is the radio play. After all, the theatre writer is obliged to make everything clear through sound. In a radio play, how do you let the audience know that the light goes off, for example, or that the character dies when you do not want to solve everything with spoken language?

In postdramatic theatre, the voice of transformation is becoming ever louder, as all disciplines are becoming equal, so the theatrical doubling of the character on stage has been given an entirely new interpretation in recent multimedia performances. In his marvellous stagings of *The woman who walked into doors* and *Bezonken rood* [Subdued Red], for example, Guy Cassiers continually doubled the character in image, projection and sound, spreading the character out over the entire stage.

III.5.9 Task environment 1: Assignment

In the voices within the various Task Environment blocks are all the assignments we and others imposed on ourselves while writing. We will see that those assignments are not only psychological but also dramaturgical, structural and stylistic.

The first two voices here are *the voice of the character* and *the voice of the commissioning party*. We already saw with Bakhtin that the character has its own autonomous voice in the text, but also in the writing process. The character sets its own assignments, has something to say to us and speaks incessantly in us. It is important not to muzzle this voice during the writing. With the commissioning party, we tend to see them as an external factor that sets requirements with which we have to comply. The theatre writer finds it hard to imagine that they are co-creatively collaborating with either the character or the commissioning party and that we are continuously in dialogue with them.

One way or another, the character and commissioning party seem to be opposite one another. As a theatre writer, we cannot readily accept that the characters give us assignments any more than we can see our commissioning party as a character.

III.5.9 A The voice of the character

Writing for performance is a curious occupation. You write a text, dividing yourself entirely into different, multiple voices. Not descriptions of nature, not fantasies, but speaking voices. In scriptwriter Julian Friedman's view, a good drama writer must

"suppress his I feelings, project himself into the personality of each character and write from everyone's perspective."⁷⁷⁸

The theatre writer must be able to slip, as the scriptwriter Oliver Schütte⁷⁷⁹ puts it, into multiple characters.

Sharing yourself between the voices of your characters and the influence of *the voice of the co-makers* are two factors that make writing for theatre polyphonic, but one more major, third facet also plays a role.

A core concept of drama is the fundamental double voice of each character in itself. A character is seen as dramatic when it has two opposing feelings

at the same time. Medea murders her two children, even though she dearly loves them. If she hadn't loved her children, we would not have found it so dramatic.

Every dramatic character speaks with a double tongue; saying one thing but, at the same time, meaning another. We are familiar with this principle as subtext. Consequently, a theatre writer must, at all times, be conscious of the duality and polyphony of their own characters.

The theatre writer also reflects their own image of man and the world in their own characters. In the Albert Verwey lecture that theatre writer Tom Lanoye gave in 2015, he says that the external tragic conflict of characters refers back to the fragmenting and polyphony of man. He connects *the voice of the character* with a polyphonic world image.

By now, many ways have been developed with which theatre writers can shape and train the polyphony of their characters and their own polyphony.

The first technique is to have the character shifting between various voices or levels of consciousness. There are innumerable levels, but within a monologue there are three logical levels: the story being told, the character's reflection of themselves and their direct sensorial experiences in the here and now. A character is telling a story, suddenly asks for coffee and then, out loud, wonders whether the story is actually interesting. Shifting between those voices is the basic structure for the contemporary monologue.⁷⁷⁸ The monologues by the main character in the film *Shine* are a wonderful example of this. Incidentally, in this shifting technique, the double voices still have the function of constructing a rounded, whole character, with one false and one true voice. One example of this is the text *Juhanni* by Wolfgang Deichsel, in which the main character hears a voice in her head telling her to commit a murder.⁷⁸¹

The polyphony of characters can, naturally, be shaped not only dramatically (within the fictional situation) but also theatrically, (in the form of staging). The Greek chorus, where a large number of people simultaneously speak the same text, is a clear example. In the early twentieth century, in

⁷⁷⁸ Friedman 1999:31

⁷⁷⁹ Schütte is also the head of Script!Forum, which supports and assists the development of scenarios

⁷⁸⁰ Christophe 2008:105-117

⁷⁸¹ See Waldmann 2004:200

his text *Naar Damascus* [The Road to Damascus], the theatre writer August Strindberg mentions a number of those theatrical techniques, which he categorises under ‘dream dramaturgy’:

“The characters divide themselves on the stage, they double themselves, they replace one another, they disappear, they compile themselves, they flow together and conjoin themselves. But pure awareness stands above all this, the awareness of the dream dramaturgy.”⁷⁸²

Over the past few decades, in particular, the fragmentation, splitting or doubling of characters has become a regularly recurring writing and creating strategy.

Beckett was pioneering in his fragmentation of characters with texts such as *Happy Days*, in which we only see the upper part of a woman sticking out of the sand as a character and *Not I* in which the character is reduced to a speaking mouth. There is nothing more to be seen on stage.

Over the past couple of years, we have regularly been seeing this theatrical doubling strategy in Dutch theatre. In his 2006 text *D'r was daar ook een hond* [There Was a Dog There, Too], the Flemish director and theatre writer Peter De Graef writes in his first stage direction,

“Calmly sitting on the edge of a hospital bed,
enfolded in a straitjacket, is Bert.
On the floor, knee-high grass is growing.
All around him are his feelings and thoughts.
There are five of them.”⁷⁸³

Margje, one of the five people or voices – who enter into a heavy debate during the piece and even shoot each other away at the end –, puts into words the individual voices of the multiple personality on stage, giving De Graef’s vision of the self:

“So actually, with our individuality – I – we are all pieces of limitation of something that, in essence, is unlimited and omnipresent: consciousness. We are like little tinkling ice cubes in an enormous water mass. Little clots, concentrations and clumps relating to the feeling of ‘mine’ and the idea of ‘I’ (...)”⁷⁸⁴

One of De Graef's plays, *Da'iss...!* [There's...!], from 2004, was written for children. As in *D'r was daar ook een hond* [There Was a Dog There, Too], characters speak who are not people but internal voices. It is about an adult man who is referred to as *De Verschrikkelijke Man* [The Frightful Man]. Two internal voices point out incorrect convictions to him while he is under anaesthetic for an operation.⁷⁸⁵

The work of the German theatre writer Theresia Walser is also a good example of this strategy of character doubling. She wrote a piece with two Hitler's on stage, for example, in which she also allows *the voice of self-reflexivity* to speak because that character doubling also humorously thematises the piece itself.⁷⁸⁶

That self-reflexivity can also be seen in her 2007 text *Ein bisschen Ruhe vor dem Sturm* [A Little Calm Before the Storm], which discusses the contemporary theatre text and puts no fewer than seven Hamlets on the stage. Walser does this to show the identity as a multiple personality.

Over the past few years, there have been plenty of examples of this writing strategy for allowing a character to be interpreted by several people on stage. Theatergezelschap ELS Inc. does this in 1999 with Erik-Ward Geerlings' text *Strindberg! verkeer van een gek* [Strindberg! a madman's encounters], in which the Swedish theatre author is 'divided' into five on stage.

In her texts, especially those she wrote in direct collaboration with Ariane Mnouchkin and Théâtre du Soleil, the French theatre writer and philosopher Hélène Cixous elaborated on the polyphony of the characters in many ways, including character doubling, such as in *Le Nom d'Oedipe* [Oedipus' Name] from 1978, in which she divides each character into a speaking and a singing person, with the sung and spoken texts differing entirely.

⁷⁸² Quoted in Fritsch 2005:63

⁷⁸³ Peter De Graef, Erik-Ward Geerlings, Marijke Schermer, *Walhalla; tekstboek Het Zuidelijk Toneel* [Walhalla; Het Zuidelijk Toneel text book], ITFB, Amsterdam/Eindhoven 2006, p.73

⁷⁸⁴ Peter de Graef, Erik-Ward Geerlings, Marijke Schermer, *Walhalla; tekstboek Het Zuidelijk Toneel* [Walhalla; Het Zuidelijk Toneel text book], ITFB, Amsterdam/Eindhoven 2006, p. 86

⁷⁸⁵ Also see Anna van der Plas' article on this in: Peter de Graef, Erik-Ward Geerlings, Marijke Schermer, *Walhalla; tekstboek Het Zuidelijk Toneel*, ITFB, Amsterdam/Eindhoven 2006, p. 182

⁷⁸⁶ Mentioned by Birgit Haas in her introduction to Haas (Hg.) 2007:7-32

Theatrical texts require *the voice of the character* to be heard in such a way that the character itself is allowed to speak. In film director and scriptwriter Quentin Tarantino's view, writing then becomes almost writing down what the characters tell you. When writing, Tarantino therefore often feels like an imposter, as he believes it is the characters who actually do the work. That implies that the characters are there before even Tarantino starts writing. In the writing process, Tarantino sees them simply as voices in his head, to which he listens. But then who is speaking and who is listening and then, actually, who is actually writing down what they say? We can see here how the voice of the character is seen as an individual, autonomous voice, something like the way in which Bakhtin talks about the hero of the novel, which has his own life and voice, separate from the author.

When we allow *the voice of the character* to speak, not only do we devote attention to how we construct a character, make them polyphonic and represent them on stage, but while writing there is also still the question from Chapter I: "Who is actually speaking here?" Is the one speaking still a character and, if not, what are they and what does that signify for the language and the staging?

The duplication or fragmentation of characters, as we just discussed, can also be seen as a step towards characters disappearing. In her book *Regieanweisungen* [Stage Directions] from 2009, Annette Storr writes,

"What kinds of text, image, film show this process of the disappearance of the character, the replaceable, weak, speechless, non-acting protagonist, or the group character rather than the hero; and what does that process say, what do these retiring characters say?"⁷⁸⁷

The plentiful research conducted into the disappearance of characters, by theoreticians,⁷⁸⁸ students⁷⁸⁹ and theatre writers,⁷⁹⁰ appears to focus on continually surveying the characteristics and the underlying human image of characters of the dramatic dramaturgy and in that survey, which is also being conducted while writing, we can hear *the voice of the character*.

In the third category of theatre text that I mentioned, which includes characteristics of both dramatic and post-dramatic dramaturgy, the character has not disappeared, neither has it been maintained as monophonic; it has become polyphonic.

The polyphonic character can also suddenly become an impersonal messenger or chorus; it can distribute itself over many objects and persons on the stage, just as well as the actor can directly address the audience through the character in the performance.

In the theatre text *Reichnitz*, from 2008, by the Austrian Elfriede Jelinek, the people on the stage alternate between being characters, who are involved, and distanced chorus members, generating a doubling.⁷⁹¹ A re-view of Jossi Wieler's staging for the Münchner Kammerspiele says,

"Like a Greek chorus, they come as a harbingers of doom. Nonetheless, listening to their account, we do not get a clear picture. The relationships, perspectives and points of view keep shifting. Are we actually outsiders?"⁷⁹²

III.5.9 B The voice of the commissioning party

"If you write, everything is commissioned."

Paul Feld, theatre writer⁷⁹³

As theatre writers, we quickly associate *the voice of the commissioning party* with frameworks within which we have to remain, as if the commissioning party only determines the preconditions for the writing process.

In a discussion with the Swiss theatre writer Sabine Harbeke, she describes how she is commissioned by the city to write on a particular theme and then does extensive research to familiarise herself with the unfamiliar

⁷⁸⁷ Storr 2009:19

⁷⁸⁸ See, for example, Heidi Wunderlich, *Dramatis Persona: (Exit); Die Auflösung der dramatischen Figur als produktive Überschreitung* [Curious, *Dramatis Persona: (Exit); the dissolution of the dramatic character as a productive excess*], Berlin 2001; Daniela Moosmann, *No characters in my theatre; Staging postdramatic theatre as module for higher education*, Utrecht 2012

⁷⁸⁹ HKU Writing for Performance students investigate various questions they have chosen themselves, such as "How do I write a non-aspiring character" (Dirk van Pelt 2004, Sarah Blok 2015), "Who do I write a polyphonic character?" (Jannemieke Caspers, in: Caspers & Christophe 2011:17-63)

⁷⁹⁰ The work of René Pollesch is an example of this. The statement, "No characters in my theatre!" is his

⁷⁹¹ The German dramaturgy books call these "text carriers" rather than characters

⁷⁹² Karin Veraart, Dutch daily newspaper *de Volkskrant*, 11 June 2010

⁷⁹³ In: Mirjam van Gogh, *Jago de Beschouwing* [Jago the Perception], Utrecht 2006, see: <http://www.asom.org/JAGOBeschouwingdef.pdf%20.pdf>

theme.⁷⁹⁴ The theme dictated by the city remains present in *the voice of the commissioning party*, not as a demand, but as substantive inspiration.

The above quote from the director and theatre writer Paul Feld comes from the essay *Jago de Beschouwing* [Jago the Reflection], in which he reflects on the *Jago de Wraak* [Jago the Revenge] project developed into 2006 by the Growing Up in Public theatre company in collaboration with the business community. The show, written and directed by Feld, was used in change processes in organisations and institutions.

In the description of the project, which studies commissioned creative work, everyone is still doing their best to declare and protect artistic freedom and the autonomy of the artist:

"The deal was absolute freedom."

"You have to be free in your artistic aspirations."

"An artist needs autonomy."⁷⁹⁵

It seems the artist needs to be continually assured that collaboration with a commissioning party will not affect their creative freedom. That reflex is no longer necessary, though, in the artistic dialogue that comes about between an enthusiastic client and a theatre maker reflecting on society. In fact: the commission adds an extra voice to the artist's polyphony, expanding their creative process and, yes: also their autonomy. True artistic autonomy probably exhibits itself in the degree to which the artist accepts being influenced by context and commission.

One description of artistic autonomy is therefore: continuous dialogue with context and commission, and analogous with the smooth writing process expressed in the shifting between the various voices.

Nowadays, more and more theatre writers are working in transmedia art: projects in which a story is told through various media and a variety of artistic expressions. In this way of working, where several media disciplines co-create together, *the voice of the commissioning party* is crucial.

In the book about a big transmedia project, in which art and care were linked, *If you are not there where are you; Mapping the Experience of Absence Seizures Through Art*, the director Maartje Nevejan and producer Willemijn Cerutti talk about that collaboration:

“Transmedia is collaboration.

Director and producer are equal,
a two-unity,
in which each has their own task.

The director purely and uncompromisingly practices the artistic discipline,
while the producer is occupied with audience and marketing.

Surround yourself with good products, designers and production people.

No collaboration is ever what you hoped it would be.

It always works out differently.

You cannot imagine it beforehand.

Forge alliances, remain involved and make sure they remain involved with you, too.

It is all about joint research.

Co-creation is easier when you see your project as a joint research.”⁷⁹⁶

To a theatre maker, *the voice of the commissioning party* can sound loud if we treat the client as a co-maker and the collaboration as co-creation. And that means we have to treat the authorship as multiple.

In his work, the philosopher Boris Groys focuses on the untenability of the concept of individual authorship, primarily in the visual arts, but also in the creative processes for film and theatre.

Groys wonders why the fight against the romantic concept of individual artistry is still being fought while, in his eyes, the concept has long since ceased to exist. He feels there is a political reason, because it is also a struggle against hierarchy and the dominating force.

“The struggle against the figure of the author is thus understood as a struggle against an undemocratic system of arbitrary privileges and unfounded hierarchies that de facto represent base commercial interest.”⁷⁹⁷

Groys claims that multiple authorship has existed for a long time already. He gives theatre, music and film as examples, although he refers chiefly to

⁷⁹⁴ In: Hochholdinger-Reiterer & Bremgartner & Kleiser & Boesch 2015:129

⁷⁹⁵ Statements by, respectively, Giep Hagoort, Lex Berger and Lodewijk Ouwens, noted down in Mirjam van Gogh, *Jago de Beschouwing*, Utrecht 2006

⁷⁹⁶ Dörr & Hübner (eds.) 2017:185

⁷⁹⁷ Boris Groys, “Multiple Authorship”, in: IDEA no. 26 2007

interdisciplinary collaboration rather than *the voice of the commissioning party*.

He does so for visual and other arts, though, clearly naming the producer, commissioning party, curator, institutions and sponsors as co-authors of the work of art because, for example, they determine the space and the selection and compilation of the works of art.

III.5.10 Task environment 2: Reader / Audience

When we write for theatre, the audience that will soon be watching the performance is, naturally, in our head, as is the reader who will be reading our text. Because the theatre text is a double product, in us speak *the voice of the reader*, for whom the text is a literary product, and *the voice of interactivity*, the audience for whom the text serves the performance. The reader is passive and can no longer change anything in the text or influence it in any way; the spectator can, though, and therefore becomes interactive.

III.5.10 A The voice of the reader

In the theatre writing process, the voice of the reader consists of not so much the internalised views and opinions we expect from a future reader, but rather the realisation of the direction of the text and of whom the author is addressing with his text.

Earlier, I gave examples of theatre authors who, in their stage directions, quite directly address the co-makers who will soon be reading the text. It does not mean that this improves the text, but it trains the writer to allow *the voice of the reader* to speak, by making the act of writing into more of a conversation. If I directly address a reader, I can imagine how that reader responds and what that reader might say back to me. The writing therefore becomes more dialogical.

That can be done by, for example, writing dramolettes, as I mentioned earlier.

Moreover, when writing such mini dramas, which are primarily intended for reading and publication, the author trains *the voice of self-reflexivity* because they perform themselves as a character in the text and learn to very directly say something personal about a current topic. The theatre writer also practices allowing the reader to speak as an internal writing voice.

III.5.10 B The voice of interactivity

"The spectator is also a *character*!"

Willem Capteyn⁷⁹⁸

In his 2007 Lira lecture, the scriptwriter and scriptwriting lecturer Willem Capteyn gives an extensive description of how polyphonic his own writing process is. Not only does he hear characters in his head, but his study is also filled with spectators.

"The scriptwriter is rarely alone during the writing process. Here, I am not thinking of the known, existing people who besiege him, such as the producer, the dramaturg or the director. No, the scriptwriter's study is so busy because it is populated with *fictional* characters. They walk shamelessly in and out, look over his shoulder, make remarks or mutter amongst themselves in the background. Amongst those fictional characters we see the *dramatis personae*, but there is also slightly larger group of fictional characters consisting of a selection of *future spectators*. Many writers deny the presence of that group, but they are there, no matter how loudly the writer protests that it is all nonsense. They are there and the writer has a problem."⁷⁹⁹

Capteyn then despondently claims that, while scriptwriting instruction books tell you how to deal with internal characters, they say nothing about spectators inside you. The writer cries:

"You have to go! I am an artist. I don't want to think about you yet! Get out of my study this instant!" Nothing happens.⁸⁰⁰

Capteyn himself says: forget the idea of a group. They are always individuals. Each spectator is an individual, even if they are fictional.

"The spectator is a *character*, too!"⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁸ Capteyn 2007:7

⁷⁹⁹ Capteyn 2007:7

⁸⁰⁰ Capteyn 2007:6

⁸⁰¹ Capteyn 2007:7

Capteyn therefore radically draws the audience into the writing process as a voice. Capteyn argues for an individual, active spectator in yourself while you write.

If you see the audience as a static, passive group, you have fixed ideas about what the text should comply with. Imagine being commissioned to write a text for eight-year-olds. I can decide, in my head, what I think eight-year-olds find fun, exciting or comprehensible but, because that is based on a group and, therefore, on a generalisation, it will result in me setting myself rigid tasks that do not encourage the writing process to flow more smoothly, because *the voice of the spectator* as an individual is not being accommodated.

When, within us, the spectator is allowed to become a co-maker, as it were, to really influence the text and the writing, then *the voice of interactivity* starts speaking. One concrete way of doing this is the discussion evenings the Mighty Society theatre company organises during the writing process with everyday experts on the chosen theme. This is how the writer and director Eric de Vroedt conducts research with the aid of the audience.

Since the advent of postdramatic theatre, the interactivity of shows has been continually increasing: during the performance, the spectator influences the progress, the development and, sometimes, also texts. Every theatre writer realises that writing for an active audience complicates the writing process, as the author no longer has total control of what they make. *The voice of interactivity* can play a major role here, when the audience is treated not as a group but as individuals or, as Capteyn says, as characters.

The theatre writer and philosopher Alain Badiou also refers to this in his 1998⁸⁰² theses on theatre, where he argues for the aspect of chance in the theatre:

“We have to resist any interpretation that makes the audience into a community, a public substance, a consistent gathering. The audience represents humanity in its inconsistency, its eternal variety. (...) Only a new generic audience, a chance audience has any value.”

III.5.11 Task environment 3: Personal standards

Every theatre writer has assumptions in their head about how a properly-functioning theatre text is instructed and what it means to have a smooth writing process. In the theories about writing processes, these are referred to as personal standards, as the assumptions also lead to specific tasks that the author sets themselves: my texts must, for example, be amusing or deep or, preferably, both.

The author's personal standards can, first and foremost, relate to the product, the text itself. I call the assumptions at the basis of those standards 'myths' and the voice in us that keeps reminding us of those assumptions during writing *the voice of myths*. Allowing the voice of myths too much room to speak also feeds *the voice of the inner critic*, as the author often judges their own or other people's assumptions.

When the author's personal standards relate to the process – in other words: "What kind of writing process does a good writer have?" – I am talking about *the voice of the writing*.

With many Writing For Performance students, we see the writing process stagnate because the task block is supposedly 'full up'. The writer has given themselves so many tasks that they are no longer writing because the shift from *the voice of myths* to *the voice of the writing* fails to take place and that applies even more to the shift to the block in the theatre writing process, which contains the voices that are actually engaged in language production, such as *the voice of the body* and *the voice of the narrator*.

III.5.11 A The voice of the writing

In Chapter I describe *the voice of the writing* identity that is suggested in a text, sometimes referred to as 'the implied author'.⁸⁰³ We read a text, project a person onto it who has created everything so meticulously and confuse that writing entity with the physical, living author of the text.

The voice of the writing, however, refers not to the living writer,⁸⁰⁴ but to

⁸⁰² Badiou 2012 (1998):261

⁸⁰³ See, for example Clarkson 2013 (2009):77

⁸⁰⁴ As Nobel Prize winner, JM Coetzee, writes in his thesis about that other Nobel Prize winner Samuel Beckett, "The author-narrator cannot of course be identified with the historical Beckett". See Clarkson 2013 (2009):81

a creating identity and therefore to *the writing process*, the actions that resulted in the text. The writer Coetzee therefore calls this voice ‘the agent of the action’.⁸⁰⁵ *The voice of the writing* evokes more of an action than an identity, hence my choice of the word ‘the writing’.

In contemporary theatre, there are many examples of texts in which the author does not conceal the choices, doubts, hesitations and claims, but allows them to be heard in the text. That, naturally, happens in performances in which the author writes or produces their text on the spot, as with the Rimini Protokoll *Parallel Cities* project that I mentioned in the introduction. In a more traditional theatrical setting, too, there are theatre texts in which *the voice of the writing* can be read in the text, though.⁸⁰⁶

For a smooth theatre writing process, it is useful to regularly devote attention to our thoughts and feelings about the writing process, not as psychological information, but as a source of possible text material: *the voice of the writing* can generate words, images and ideas for the ultimate text. The fatal assumption that smothers *the voice of the writing* is that we have to conceal the writing process and talk about it as little as possible in order to maintain the mystery. This has also led to the myth that it’s not really ‘done’ to show the writing process in the theatre text. The misplaced ideal then becomes, to use the title of Ger Beukenkamp’s instruction book, *De verborgen schrijver* [The Concealed Writer].

III.5.11 B The voice of myths

The four myths of authorship that I name in *Writing in the Raw; the myths of writing* – originality, genius, profundity and suffering – can each and every one be seen as attempts to retain the writing process in one place, in one block and therefore block one arrow in the model.

That is because each myth overvalues one part of the writing process, so the writer gets stuck there. That way, the myth of genius, rational craftsmanship traps the writer within the two Planning blocks within the theatre writing process model and the myth of experience and suffering hold them prisoner in the Long-Term Memory blocks.

And all myths together become mammoth demands or tasks so the writer rarely comes back out of the Task environment blocks.⁸⁰⁷

In their article ‘Writer’s and Collaborative Practice’,⁸⁰⁸ Jen Webb and Andrew Melrose refer to one more major myth that makes the writing

process more sluggish when it is not acknowledged. This is the assumption that a writer writes their texts independently of and without influence from others.

This ‘myth of isolation’⁸⁰⁹ is often expressed in the writing process as the writer’s fear of being influenced by others.⁸¹⁰ For that reason, when writing an adaptation, a theatre writer will avoid reading any other adaptations, while another will want to avoid reading anyone else’s plays to avoid losing their own voice.

This myth hinders the smooth movement from *the voice of myths* to, for instance, *the voice of intertextuality* (which is based on being influenced by other texts and writers) or *the voice of the co-makers*, particularly where those co-makers are co-writers.

Finally, there is also the umbrella myth that writing cannot be learnt anyway.⁸¹¹ This assumption applies to many art disciplines but appears to be extraordinarily stubborn when it comes to writing. It touches on the myth of genius and the myth of isolation, which both deny the role in the writing process of training, practising, learning, sharing and being influenced. The myth that you cannot learn to write is expressed in resistance to writing courses in general and writing courses in higher art education in particular.

For a smooth writing process, myths have to be acknowledged and honoured as voices in the writing process. During the writing process, it is handy to occasionally ask yourself what fixed assumptions there are about writing and about the texts people produce and, in particular, which ideas are excluded from the writing process because of those assumptions.

⁸⁰⁵ J.M.Coetzee, ‘A Note on Writing’, quoted in Clarkson 2013 (2009):88

⁸⁰⁶ Orr & Hind 2009 gave the example of the theatre writer Emma Cocker

⁸⁰⁷ Christophe 2008:11-23

⁸⁰⁸ In: Peary & Hunley 2015:102-125

⁸⁰⁹ This term was introduced in 2010 by Alex Pheby in his article “The Myth of Isolation: Its Effect on Literary Culture and Creative Writing as a Discipline”, in: *Creative Writing: Teaching Theory and Practice* 2.1 (Feb, 2010), pp. 51-58

⁸¹⁰ Also see, for example, Harold Bloom’s book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, from 1997

⁸¹¹ See, for example, *Can It Really Be Taught? Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*, Ritter & Vanderslice (eds.) 2007

Many of the assumptions in *the voice of myths* support the idea that the theatre writer has one voice and deny the polyphony in the writing process. In Chapter IV, we will see how, in the pedagogy of polyphonic theatre writing, a large part of the first phase consists of recognising that there are various myths and, hand-in-hand with that, the development of the realisation that more than one voice is heard in the writer and their process.

III.5.12 Task environment 4: External standards

In Chapter II, we saw that, when we view the theatre text as not a half-product but a double product, two voices emerge in a text: *the voice of the genre* and *the voice of the disciplines*. During the theatre writing process, both genre and disciplines quickly become a task in our heads.

III.5.12 A The voice of the genre

There is often assumption in writing that you should write in one genre. After all, it started in one specific genre.

The voice of the genre trains us to constantly question the chosen genre: remind me why this was a monologue or musical and what significance does that have for the text I am writing?

In Chapter II we saw that, in the theatre text, the polyphony is often expressed through a doubling of genres and styles. When the voice of the genre is active, proposals are continually made to place texts in another genre around, next to and through the chosen genre.

Director and theatre writer Gerardjan Rijnders has set various genres side-by-side in many of his shows. Earlier, I gave the example of his theatre text *Mooi* [Great] in which, in the writing process, he consciously sought a countervoice in the form of texts from a completely different genre.⁸¹²

Writing theatre often means a subjectivising process. While writing prose and poetry is often an objectivising process of increasingly shaping a subjective feeling, the drama writer has to continually draw the material closer to themselves from a roiling sea of voices, themes and forces.

These processes are already visible in a simple exercise that is given in the first year of the HKU Writing for Performance course. When the student is asked to write a short text on a fact or theme that touches them, then

with a prose poetry text that will almost always lead to an autobiographical feeling, story or fact while, with a drama text, this is seldom the case. Characters are then immediately devised who certainly have no autobiographical background.

Writing a radio play, for example, can work as a writing strategy when the writer asks themselves whether their interest lies more in the internal process of thoughts and feelings of one person or in the drama between the people. Because it comes to us through our ears, the radio play genre tends to sit in our heads and therefore soon inclines towards an internal personal rather than an inter-personal theme.

III.5.12 B The voice of the disciplines

We have already encountered the other theatrical disciplines we have to deal with as a writer in many voices, such as *the voice of transformation* and *the voice of the co-makers*.

This specific voice of the disciplines continually asks, during the writing, what the other discipline actually entails. Every writer knows that, when a text is written for a theatrical installation, this influences the writing process. And this influence can only become clear when we examine how the images and the room work in such an installation, also specifically as autonomous visual work.

The doubling we have seen in the polyphonic theatre text (the text as a proposal for a performance and as an autonomous literary text) can actually also be seen in the other disciplines, especially as they have become more equal and independent since postdramatic theatre.

In (transparent) acting, we see the doubling of actor and character. *The voice of the disciplines* asks itself what that means for each line of the text. In contemporary theatre design, there is a doubling of fictional space and real space (as with site-specific theatre). Here, *the voice of the disciplines* is also concerned with the implications for the theatre text.

⁸¹² Also see Moosmann 2007:125

III.5.13 Task environment 5: Text type

Once the theatre writer has decided that the text type is a theatre text, then the dramaturgy will have a continuous voice in the writing process. The text type automatically poses dramaturgical questions and, in answering them, *the voice of dramatic dramaturgy* and *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* are in conflict or, at best, in dialogue.

III.5.13 A The voice of dramatic dramaturgy

When the chosen text type is a theatre text with a dramatic dramaturgy, that has specific implications for the writing process. The author continually poses himself questions about the dramaturgy-related aspects, such as conflict, character, plot, development, tension and dialogue. The existing instruction books on theatre writing give innumerable strategies for allowing this voice to sound. Often, it even seems as if it is therefore the only voice within an otherwise monophonic writing process.

The voice of dramatic dramaturgy can, in any event, be used to refute that assumption and keep shifting to *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy*, not so much to make a choice as to train the realisation that there is more than one dramaturgy.

In this, during the writing process, it works well to bring back the two voices of the dramaturgies to the two axes in the theatre. The German theatre scholar Theresia Birkenhauer refers to the two directions ‘between characters’ and ‘from actor to audience’ as the two axes of theatre. The axis between characters evokes a fictional, closed story, which I have called: *the voice of representation*. The axis from actor to audience is located in the reality of the here and now, *the voice of presence*. Birkenhauer sees the doubling of the axes as the main characteristic of theatrical language.⁸¹³ A doubling of directions or axes, in fact, describes the polyphony of the theatre text.

I already mentioned the example of writing for puppet theatre, which must also often be aware of a third axis: that between the puppeteer and their puppet – a third level where a fight for survival is always being fought between puppet and puppeteer, in addition to the two other axes. When *the voice of dramatic dramaturgy* speaks clearly, you become aware that, as a theatre writer, you do not provide one single theatre axis or one

dramaturgy. Not infrequently, that awareness comes about during the writing as a result of what the dramaturg Ivo Kuyl so succinctly worded:

“..., funnily enough the story always turns out to tell something different from or even the opposite of what it wanted to tell.”⁸¹⁴

III.5.13 B The voice of postdramatic dramaturgy

With *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy*, the essence is not the characteristics of postdramatic theatre texts but, rather, the creating or writing strategies that can be used to really arouse that voice and make it audible. Here, I give a few that are analogous with what Hans-Thies Lehmann writes in his *Postdramatisches Theater* [Postdramatic Theatre]:⁸¹⁵

- Interlink signs and disciplines (play, text, movement, design, etc.) in a non-hierarchical manner. The disciplines are all equal and none any longer serves another. Setting signs on stage (or writing them!) at one and the same time creates new meanings.
- Treat text as a musical sign with its own independent way of creating meaning and causing impact.
- Use the body as something independent on stage, no longer just as a character carrier. Lehmann calls this concrete theatre, as focusing on the body turns it into a concrete adaptation of physicality, movement, sound, space and time.
- Involve your direct reality in your text, allowing *the voice of presence* to speak.
- Involve the theatrical experience in your text, by allowing *the voice of interactivity* to speak. Postdramatic theatre brings about a process of individual reflection, self-questioning and experience.

The role of technology is also important in *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy*. As, in addition to the disciplines, the media have also become equal to the theatre text, technology gains a place in various voices in the theatre writing process.

⁸¹³ Theresia Birkenhauer, *Schauplatz der Sprache – das Theater als Ort der Literatur* [A Stage for Speech – theatre as a venue for literature], 2005: 76-84

⁸¹⁴ Ivo Kuyl in: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:154

⁸¹⁵ Lehmann 1999; here, I use the inventory in Jellie Schippers', *Communicatie als dramaturgische strategie* [Communication As a Dramaturgical Strategy], MA thesis, Utrecht 2006

Technology has an important function in *the voice of artificiality*, for example. Louise LePage gives a number of examples.⁸¹⁶ She writes how the electronic amplification of the voice creates an artificiality and how a film clip in a performance separated the voice from reality and isolated the voice from the body, all resulting in what Lehmann calls a

“voice mask that ‘ghosts’ the ‘character’ and renders him/her a spoken ‘it’ as opposed to a speaking ‘I’.”⁸¹⁷

When delivered through a microphone, spoken language becomes

“an *unnatural, not self-evident* process (...), bringing to light that the word does not belong to the speaker. It does not organically reside in his/her body but remains a *foreign body*.”⁸¹⁸

III.5.14 Text produced so far

The ‘Text produced so far’ block already contains material written within a writing process: the chosen or structured storyline, the characters that have been constructed and the dialogues and monologues that have been written. Everything that has already been written in that way limits the further possibilities of the writing process. The choices made provide frameworks for the further writing process.

The ‘Text produced so far’ block is divided into linguistic choices that have already been made (*the voice of the linguistic theatre text*) and the theatrical decisions that have already been made (*the voice of the staging text*).

III.5.14 A The voice of the linguistic theatre text

Whether they are short fragments or already a first draft of the piece: the text that has already been written speaks along during the writing process, not only as material that must be taken into account but also as a source of new ideas.

This is also the reason why Writing for Performance students often tend too readily to throw away their earlier text material when revising or further developing texts. The fuller the ‘Text produced so far’ block is with material, the fewer possibilities there are, so there is the temptation to throw material away, completely emptying the ‘Text produced so far’ block again.

Learning to revise theatre texts *in* existing material is a good strategy for allowing *the voice of the linguistic theatre text* to speak. The author then notices that the ‘Text produced so far’ can again provide material and ideas for writing and is in dialogue with the writing.

We saw in Chapter II that the polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text evokes many voices and prompts them to speak. In addition, *the voice of the linguistic theatre text* facilitates the movement to other voices in the blocks of the theatre writing process model relating to revision, namely: *the voice of representation*, *the voice of presence*, *the voice of adaptation* and *the voice of transformation*.

III.5.14 B The voice of the staging text

The staging text is a container concept for all dramatic signs for performance, for everything with a semiotic value.⁸¹⁹

The choices that have already been made for the staging, in other words with regards to all other disciplines apart from text, must continue to sound during the writing process; otherwise they can no longer have any effect on the linguistic theatre text.

By letting *the voice of the staging text* be clearly heard like this, the theatre writer is also practising the movement to *the voice of the co-makers* and *the voice of the disciplines*.

III.5.15 Attention distributor

In Chapter I, we saw how the Bakhtinian concept of the Superaddressee referred to a duo of two conflicting voices: one is a critical voice, stemming from the creative process, and the other is the voice of an almost ego-less consciousness of the writing process.⁸²⁰

This *voice of the inner critic* and *the voice of self-reflexivity* take the place of the monitor or the attention distributor in the writing process model.

⁸¹⁶ LePage 2008:143

⁸¹⁷ Lehmann 2006:10

⁸¹⁸ Lehmann 2006:147

⁸¹⁹ The term was coined by Schechner, as I mentioned in the Introduction

⁸²⁰ Referred to as “reflexivity” by Hunt & Sampson 2006

First of all, there is the question of whether there is such a thing as one central attention distributor. Is it perhaps a half-hearted attempt at again creating unity; just as with people with MPS (Multiple Personality Syndrome) there is a question as to whether there is still a central management that can allow internal voices to speak or silence them, in other words a body that can settle or decide the fight between what Eagleman calls the internal *team of rivals*.

And if such a central body or 'monitor' exists, then is it also a voice in the theatre writing process?

This has caused great controversy within research on the writing process. In the latest version of his writing process model,⁸²¹ John Hayes omitted a separate place for the monitor, with the reason that the monitor is, as it were, already present everywhere and does not occupy a separate place in the process. In the attempt to link the writing process model to the concept of polyphony, we can draw the conclusion that, in his view, the monitor does exist but is not an individual voice.

Neuroscientist David Eagleman cites an aspect that is present in every voice or part of the brain, calling it awareness. He compares this awareness with a hard-working boss who does nothing if expectations are met and only sets to work if everything is new or problematic. He indicates that, on the basis of evolution, awareness is necessary for being flexible, but the flexibility he talks about is first and foremost intellectual.

In my view, if we look at the writing process, this would be too limited an interpretation of the 'attention distributor' or 'monitor'. The creative process is traditionally divided into four phases. This division is based on the work of Graham Wallas in his book *The Art of Thought* from 1926.⁸²² One of those phases is the incubation phase, in principle a subconscious phase of apparent rest. In this phase, no actual work is done on the problem or creation, but such thinking activity does take place. Wallas feels that a subconscious process is then in motion: the 'ripening' process. Those who have been brought up with the idea that doing nothing is a sin and continual activity a virtue can find it difficult to accept that there are times in which you achieve more with passivity than activity. The psychologist Arieti says this incubation phase allows you to "sleep on it, letting it cook".⁸²³ That deliberate passivity as an activity is difficult to define, especially as the results within the creative process ostensibly originate in that passivity.

There is therefore a great deal of controversy within creativity research as to whether this incubation phase actually exists. In his 1993 book *Creativity; Beyond the Myth of Genius* Weisberg finds no basis for this and, in 1990, Hayes & Mellon do not produce any empirical proof.⁸²⁴ Nonetheless, artists themselves often cite this incubation phase,⁸²⁵ deliberately not being occupied with the creative process, as an essential part of that process.⁸²⁶ The psychologist Howard Gardner, known for the theory of multiple intelligence, even claims he can distinguish between a number of clear ingredients in that incubation phase.⁸²⁷ The incubation phase remains a difficult phase to define, especially as Wallas already used it as proof that the creative process also has subconscious aspects.

The solution for the existence and effect of the incubation phase appears to be given by the writer Sybren Polet, who describes the creative process on the basis of the psychological theory of ego splitting. That concept explains how a fragment of the ego follows conscious systematic creative processes while another fragment simultaneously goes through subconscious, though not consequently less controlled, processes.⁸²⁸

This is a long elaboration on part of the creative process, but it is important when we consider how this relates to the attention distributor or Flower & Hayes' 'monitor'. What I have noticed, as a theatre writer and theatre writing lecturer, is that the incubation phase may be subconscious but that

⁸²¹ John Hayes presented this model at the 2008 Writing Pro conference in Porto

⁸²² Graham Wallas, *The Art of Thought*, Franklin Watt, New York 1926

⁸²³ Arieti 1976

⁸²⁴ John R. Hayes & Carnegie Mellon, "Cognitive Processes in Creativity", *Occasional Paper* no. 18 1990, p.10. In this article, Hayes and Mellon give an overview of the attempts to demonstrate the incubation phase

⁸²⁵ Referred to by Sybren Polet as "deliberately thinking outside the box"

⁸²⁶ Examples can be found in in Sybren Polet, *De creatieve factor* [The Creative Factor], Amsterdam 1993. Innumerable writers have said that taking time off to simply loaf around or go for a walk is an essential part of the writing process

⁸²⁷ He does this in his book *So genial wie Einstein; Schlüssel zum kreativen Denken*, Stuttgart 1996 (1993), and his categorisation is used with great insight in the book *Applied Drama* by Helen Nicholson, New York 2005, for example

⁸²⁸ See Polet 1993

the writer/artist knows very well when it is necessary to start incubating and not occupy themselves with the creative process for a while. This realisation that “I have to let that scene rest for a bit” or “I ought to just put the wash on or go for a little walk” is a conscious process that can be developed and trained.

Many writing students are unable to either accept this incubation phase, as it brings on the guilty feeling of “doing nothing”, or control it, so the phase leads to distraction and postponement.

In this example, the writing process awareness is more than the intellectual awareness of which Eagleman⁸²⁹ speaks. It is also embodied knowledge, when it is necessary to drop it for a while and go into the incubation phase.

III.5.15 A The voice of the inner critic

Some writers call it *self-censorship*. All through our lives, parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, priests and cultural leaders have drummed into our heads with varying degrees of subtlety what we ought to do, what is right and what is wrong. One essential characteristic of those authoritarian voices is the fact that they always have an overarching, indiscriminate opinion and let themselves be heard by means of macro judgements, which become personal. All have the tendency to internalise those external voices into an inner critic, which passes destructive judgement on us and our activities. During writing, the voice of the inner critic not only determines the personal and even objective standards but, even more importantly, the voice keeps us stuck in one block of the writing process model.⁸³⁰ When we are writing and the voice of the inner critic passes general judgements (“This text is rubbish, you can’t write, you’re not creative, other people are much better, it’s a wonder you got admitted to this course”), all our energy is expended on that voice and we stop writing. There is no longer any shifting to other voices or blocks; there is no longer any movement. This getting stuck in one voice is experienced as the dreaded writer’s block.

Writing lecturer Peter Elbow is referring to *the voice of the inner critic* in entitling his famous writing book *Writing Without Teachers*: we have to learn to write without the voice and judgements of teachers, the professional field or even fellow students. It is precisely here that Elbow reiterates Mikhail Bakhtin as an opportunity for liberating yourself from those teachers and the personal standard they define.⁸³¹

The voice of the inner critic is referred to in psychology and in spirituality as the superego and by Bakhtin himself, as we saw in Chapter I, as the super-addressee.⁸²⁹

Outside the domain of the arts, many ways are being tried to fight against the inner critic. Examples are the psychologist Todd Kashdan, who uses humour and curiosity to distance himself from that voice and therefore stop believing⁸³⁰ it as much, and Byron Brown who, with his book *Soul Without Shame: A Guide to Liberating Yourself from the Judge Within*, examines the super-ego on the basis of intensive self-inquiry.⁸³¹

A great deal of attention is also devoted to the inner critic in writing instruction books. Hal Zina Bennett, for example, devotes an entire chapter to it in her book *Write from the Heart*.⁸³² She talks about how ironic it is to discover that the heaviest critics turn out to be not outside but within us and she gives many examples of writers whose inner critic is often the voice of their parents.

Writers have thought up all kinds of ways to circumvent self-censorship. Writing teachers and instruction books recommend numerous forms of “free writing” as a way of getting round internalised censorship.⁸³³ *The voice of the inner critic* therefore appears to be briefly stilled, but then comes back stronger than ever.

Writers benefit when *the voice of the inner critic* is first and foremost recognised as an internalised old voice and distinguished from healthy evaluations of parts of the text. It allows the writing process to flow more smoothly when the writer is aware that *the voice of the inner critic* says nothing about the text that is being worked on at the moment but is an old voice, with constantly repeated prejudices.

⁸²⁹ Eagleman 2012:140-144

⁸³⁰ Compare Bakhtin 2008 (1981):342

⁸³¹ See Helen Rothschild Ewald, in: Farmer (ed.) 2009 (1998):228

⁸³² Frank Farmer describes the writing lecturer as the super-addressee in his book on teaching writing *Saying & Silence; Listening to Composition with Bakhtin*, 2001:5 ff

⁸³³ See, for example, his Tedx lecture in Utrecht 8 Nov. 2012

⁸³⁴ His approach is rooted in the spiritual tradition of H. Almaas' *The Diamond Approach*

⁸³⁵ See Bennett 2001 (1995):73-89 Chapter 5: 'Making Peace with Your Inner Critic'

⁸³⁶ Kureishi 2003:269. Incidentally, we also see this approach in writing books aimed more at self-development, such as Julia Cameron's *The Right to Write: an invitation and initiation into the writing life*

Like Odysseus' siren, a voice comes to the writer saying what you have to do and where you have to go. Is it inspiration or is it the superego? And, when it is *the voice of the inner critic*, then do I, like Odysseus, bind myself to the mast in order to not obey but still listen? Can I listen to *the voice of the inner critic* without believing it?

The poet and critic David Morley works on the basis of the interesting idea that *the voice of the inner critic* leads to the discovery of other voices as, when that voice paralyses your writing,

"it's time to discover your other writing selves"⁸³⁷

You can literally use the things *the voice of the inner critic* says as text. If you write a dialogue and the inner critic says that the entire dialogue is boring, then you can have one of your characters saying, "What a boring conversation this is". It is then interesting to see how the other character responds within the dialogue. The advantage of this strategy is that *the voice of the inner critic* is no longer paralysing and direct movement takes place to other voices relating to text production. This relieves the writer's block that always happens because a writing process is stuck in one voice. *The voice of the inner critic* is set to work. Bennett says,

"Our inner critics are part of that inner landscape, waiting to be transformed through our craft."⁸³⁸

In his instruction book *Playwriting Seminars 2.0*,⁸³⁹ Richard Toscan calls *the voice of the inner critic*, when it leads to texts, 'talking-to-yourself lines', but he treats it more like a subconscious voice that ends up unintentionally in a theatre text. He advises taking those lines out again, as they wouldn't belong to the character. That can certainly be handy in the revision stage, but my writing strategy wants to argue for inserting *the voice of the inner critic* into the text to silence it by allowing it to speak in the characters, to encourage movement in the writing process model from the superego voice to the writing voices.

The voice of the inner critic can also be used by deliberately incorporating failure into the writing. In their article 'Space and Place: writing encounters self',⁸⁴⁰ Susan Orr and Claire Hind cite various authors who use this in the writing process for theatre writing. Alissa Clarke, for instance, uses deliber-

ately and consciously failing as an alternative methodology for Writing for Performance.⁸⁴¹ As the writing process itself ends up in the text (referred to in Chapter II as the voice of referentiality), there is a movement from *the voice of the inner critic to the voice of self-reflexivity*.

III.5.15 B The voice of self-reflexivity

The word attention in ‘attention distributor’ is a wonderful term that is quite usable in the arts. As the philosopher Samuel IJsseling says, attention is an intensive involvement: it is

“to a large extent being by yourself and, at the same time, with the other: inter-esse”.⁸⁴²

It demands openness and receptivity. The attention distributor is not the producer deciding, like a super identity or an umbrella voice, what has to happen. It is literally an attention distributor, which remains centered and devotes attention to a voice.

IJsseling also says that attention can be devoted to not only objects but also the *difference* between objects, in our case the transit area between the voices. It is the difference that makes each meaning possible

“Words can only mean something because they differ from one another. Colours and sounds, scents and feelings in all the nuances can only be perceived on the basis of them being differentiated.”⁸⁴³

And that is perhaps the actual meaning of the arrows in the theatre writing process model: they indicate the difference between the voices. They are, as it were, the attention to the difference as a difference. And that is exactly what *the voice of self-reflexivity* is. The arrows point to the intermediate

⁸³⁷ Morley 2007:143

⁸³⁸ Bennett 2001 (1995):85

⁸³⁹ Toscan 2011

⁸⁴⁰ In: *Journal of writing in creative practice* 2 (2) 2009 pp. 133-138

⁸⁴¹ Cocker and Dennis, other authors mention this as well in Orr & Hind 2009

⁸⁴² IJsseling 2015:129

⁸⁴³ IJsseling 2015:130

area, to what the philosopher Henk Oosterling and others have called ‘inter-esse’: the intermediate area.

The movement between the voices *is* the attention. The arrows, which indicate the difference, are, in themselves, an illustration of movement and activity. IJsseling says:⁸⁴⁴

“The difference is not something static, it is not a state; it is *at work*.”⁸⁴⁵

The voice of self-reflexivity is actually always found between the voices. For that reason it is also referred to as the ‘middle voice’, as Carroll Clarkson does in her book on Coetzee:

“the verb ‘to write’ as an instance of middle voice”⁸⁴⁶

In her article ‘Polyphony and Polyphasia in Self and Knowledge’, Alicia Renedo also describes the attention distributor and *the voice of self-reflexivity* but, rather than attention, she calls it ‘commitment’:

“If there are possibilities for movement across multiple positions, what is it that drives the eclectic selection of the mind within the plurality of the person?”⁸⁴⁷

Renedo also says that it is this very movement between the various voices or I positions that gives one the feeling of unity and the writer the feeling of having their own voice.

Self-reflexivity is frequently mentioned as one of the characteristics of the contemporary theatre text. Literary scholar Norbert Otto Eke⁸⁴⁸ mentions it together with the “polyphonic character of theatre text”⁸⁴⁹ and the principle of metafiction.⁸⁵⁰

As the countervoice to the superego voice, *the voice of self-reflexivity* is not necessarily that of creative confidence,⁸⁵¹ but rather that of the realisation that there is more than one voice. *The voice of self-reflexivity* is the writing process awareness as a voice.

III.6 Zigzagging in the theatre writing process

"Be not one, nor many, be multiplicities!

Never make points, make lines!

Speed transforms the point into a line!

Be fast, even when stationary"

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari⁸⁵²

In the model, we have seen thirty voices as ingredients in a theatre writing process, but this does not yet describe the arrows in the model, the interplay between the voices, as Evans described Bakhtin's dialogism. In Flower & Hayes' writing process, the author's experience and writing process are encapsulated in the agility in moving rapidly amongst the blocks. Is this also perhaps where the theatre writer's creativity, their 'personal voice', their art lies?

Seeing the writer's 'personal voice' as the 'interplay between several voices' is perfectly usable as a basis for theatre writing and theatre writing pedagogy, precisely because it also refers to the body and because it acknowledges both 'the voice as style' and 'the voice as expression'. In the movement between the voices, the way of moving, the speed, the choreography and the elegance of the dynamics between the voices is where the theatre author's personal voice originates.

⁸⁴⁴ The philosopher Derrida calls that dynamic activity, which I call the process, "Différance", a linguistic attempt to express the difference ("différence") as an event, an activity, a movement. Also see IJsseling 2015:132

⁸⁴⁵ IJsseling 2015:132, the italics are mine, NC

⁸⁴⁶ Clarkson 2013 (2009):78

⁸⁴⁷ Renedo 2010:12.15

⁸⁴⁸ Professor at the faculty of Cultural Science at the University of Paderborn

⁸⁴⁹ Eke 2015:214

⁸⁵⁰ Schmidt 2005:88-92

⁸⁵¹ Also see: Kelley & Kelley 2013

⁸⁵² Rhizome, Deleuze & Guattari 1976:74

In Chapter II.10, we saw that movement is a useful metaphor for describing the polyphonic theatre text itself. A theatre text is a dynamic artefact, continually in dialogue with other texts, writers and makers, in which meanings are never fixed but continually appear and disappear, in which many voices are in conflict and are heard amidst one another. In short: the theatre text is continually in motion and, therefore, a paragon of dialogism.

The image of man associated with the polyphonic theatre writing process, the 'dialogical self', is also characterised by movement.

"With polyphony, identity is finally presented not as a stable and constant, unchanging concept, but rather as a variable, an already-existing category or one that is still coming into being (...) instead, it is the continual *movement* that attracts the attention."⁸⁵³

The self is no longer stable and fixed, but continually in motion. Philosopher Julia Kristeva says,

"(...), that there is no such thing as a fully-defined subject: the writer is a 'subject in progress,' a carnival, a polyphony, without the prospect of any possible reconciliation between all those conflicting *movements*, a ceaseless struggle."⁸⁵⁴

The writing process as continual movement, as a dynamic journey. Philosopher Walter Benjamin is perhaps referring to this when he detects in all writing a basic wish, which feels like wanting to lose yourself in a forest.⁸⁵⁵ You cannot get lost if you are not moving.

Just as in Flower & Hayes' writing process model the arrows between the ingredients are essential to the writing process, so is the movement between the voices the most important element in the theatre writing process model.

Deep inside them, the writer finds

"the immeasurable lexicon from which they draw writing that will not suffer any stagnation."⁸⁵⁶

We find variations on this metaphor of movement in many texts that attempt to clarify the writing process in general and the theatre writing process in particular.

In theories on writing processes, such as Flower & Hayes, one speaks of *shifting* between various ingredients being essential to the writing process. In her book about contemporary theatre (*Syn) aesthetics; Redefining Visceral Performance*, Josephine Machon uses the terms *shift* and *slippage* to describe the dynamic of the creative process as a movement between the disciplines, between the sensorial and the intellectual and between the somatic and the semantic.⁸⁵⁷

In my view, the way Machon describes the elements that are shifted between fits well into the paradigm of the voices I use.

The theatre writer Heiner Müller describes the core of the theatre writing process as a *surf dramaturgy*⁸⁵⁸ in which he moves between text fragments and between text, image, music and sound as autonomous expression systems.

The concept that, in my view, best represents the movement, the interplay between the voices, comes from the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. When Deleuze was interviewed by Claire Parnet in 1988, that led to *Abécédaire*, conversations based on the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. The discussion was not broadcast on television until 1996, after Deleuze had jumped out of the window.

For the letter 'Z', Deleuze brought up *Zigzag*, the power of 'unpredictable linking', or 'the essence of creativity', as Sarah Posman puts it in her afterword to Deleuze's *Kritisch en klinisch* [Critical and Clinical].

"Zigzagging is the elementary movement here. (...) Zigzagging stands for the essence of creativity. Like a lightning flash, 'Z' is the ultimate letter."⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵³ "Mit der Polyphonie wird Identität schliesslich nicht als stabile und konstante, unveränderliche Grösse präsentiert, sondern als variable, im Fluss oder im Werden befindliche Kategorie (...) vielmehr tritt die fortwährende Bewegung in den Vordergrund der Aufmerksamkeit.", Schrödl 2012:152; The italics are mine, NC

⁸⁵⁴ Julia Kristeva, in: Doorman & Pott: 2014 (2000): 387; The italics are mine, NC

⁸⁵⁵ Described in: Storr 2009:20

⁸⁵⁶ Barthes 2004 (1968):119

⁸⁵⁷ Machon 2009:4

⁸⁵⁸ Cited in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:131

⁸⁵⁹ Sarah Posman, in: Deleuze 2015 (1993):234. Charles Stivale associates the "Zigzag" concept with creativity: "Thus, this element – dark precursor, intensity – is the flash of creativity that Deleuze describes at the end of *L'Abécédaire* as the Zigzag.", in: Stivale 2008:128

Deleuze himself says,

"There is no word after zigzag. Zigzag is perhaps the very first movement, that which heralded the creation of the world. The origin of the creation was the 'Z', not the big bang. Zigzag means: there are no universalities; just ensembles of singularities. The question is: how do those individuals singularities allow themselves to be put into proportion. In physics, they use the word potentials. Chaos is full of potentials. How do you put those potentials into proportion? There is such a thing as *Dunklenentladung* [dark discharge] or *Dunkle Vorbode* [dark harbinger]. If that is present, then two potentials enter a state of reaction and that becomes the flash, the Z. As is the world, so too is philosophy and so too is thinking. The Zen master is the dark harbinger. The zen stick is the Z, which illuminates everything."⁸⁶⁰

The core of the theatre writing process consists of the zigzags between the various voices, at the speed of lightning. When, in his book *Cinema 2*, Deleuze talks about the film-maker Jean-Luc Godard and how he uses the characteristics of the novel in his films, he uses the word 'zigzag' as a movement between elements that we have referred to as voices:

"This is a broken line, a zigzag line, which brings author, his characters and the world together, and passes between them."⁸⁶¹

In the theatre writing process, the zigzag between the various voices expresses itself in never sitting still in one single voice. It is the flexibility, while one voice is heard, to at least be aware of the countervoice and, subsequently, to allow that countervoice to speak in the writing. The theatre writer is, for example, capable of writing interdisciplinary texts because, in the writing process, they always shift back to *the voice of the co-makers* and *the voice of the disciplines*. That way, interdisciplinary work does not come *after* the craft of writing; it *is* the craft.

The theatre writing process is, at once, both an analytical and a creative practice; it shifts between thinking and doing and is, therefore, an endless zigzagging between *the voice of preparation* and *the voice of improvisation*, or between *the voice of structure* and *the voice of destruction*.

Many strategies have now been developed for going from one voice to another in the theatre writing process. These strategies, already partially

indicated in the description of the voices, form the basis of a theatre writing pedagogy as I will demonstrate in Chapter IV.

It appears that the zigzagging between the voices is not only the essence of the creative process known as theatre writing but that, in this dynamic activity, the author suddenly gets a feeling of individuality and unity. In *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin talks about the unity against which he fought so strongly in his life. He describes the unity of the work of art, the unity of the voices and the unity of creativity as the unity of activity:⁸⁶²

"of the embrace of the object and event. So, the beginning and end of the work, from the point of view of the unity of form, is the beginning and end of activity. I am beginning and I am ending."⁸⁶³

Here, Bakhtin does not say that the author is apart from and prior to the work, but that the author lights up, appears in the unique activity that I have described as zigzagging between voices. Bakhtin says that, actually, nothing exists other than the process, the activity of writing itself: the beginning and end of the text are the beginning and end of the activity of writing. There is no beginning to the writing, as we are always reacting to other people and texts. There is no end to the writing, the same way that the theatre text is unfinalisable. There is no first word and, according to a famous quote from Bakhtin, there is no last word.

The activity of zigzagging between the voices depends on the unending process in which polyphonic theatre writing finds itself. Although she is talking about the theatre performance, in my view Jenny Schrödl's description applies to the writing process of theatre texts:

"Essential to polyphony is that there is no end to the creation of the identity and the subject. Quite the opposite: their sense lies in the continuous movement itself,

⁸⁶⁰ I have paraphrased this from the video images and the German subtitling, 2.20:35 on the third DVD

⁸⁶¹ Quoted in: Stivale 2008:22

⁸⁶² Also see, for example, Haynes 1995:73

⁸⁶³ Bakhtin 2011 (1984):82

which makes the permanent transformation and the *flux* of the self presentable and experienceable."⁸⁶⁴

I feel that what Schrödl says about theatre performances applies to the theatre writing process:

"In shifting between the various voices identities, polyphony is able to show that behind one voice there is always another, then another and another ad infinitum. Consequently, there is no real self concealed behind any particular voice mask; rather, the opposite is true: the self only comes into being in and by means of respective voice masquerades."⁸⁶⁵

The zigzagging movement between the voices is the core of the creative making process. In fact, it is the unity of the artistic work and the unity of the theatre author. This is not the fake unity suggested by the myths of romantic authorship, but a unity that recognises that polyphony and diversity needs it to exist.⁸⁶⁶

When the zigzagging between the voices is fluid, the theatre writing process becomes a game and, according to Josephine Machon, that 'playful practice' is the core of theatre making and

"(...) 'vital (...) to writerly practice in particular'"⁸⁶⁷

The unique way of zigzagging between the voices constitutes the unity, the theatre writer's personal voice.

Theatre writing as a zigzagging between the voices also seems to fit into the way in which, following in the footsteps of Jesse Schwenk, I describe the author in the theatre as a kind of 'relation' between various makers, disciplines, media and texts, as a multiple authorship.⁸⁶⁸

Strikingly enough, within the concept of an author-as-relation, continually zigzagging between the voices without occupying any *fixed position*, the writing itself becomes, in some way, *impersonal*.⁸⁶⁹

We saw impersonal writing with *the voice of the body*. The movement, the zigzagging, makes writing impersonal and, therefore, at once individual and personal.

“The Self can be seen as a synthesizing activity, that is, as a continuous attempt to make the self a whole, despite the existence of parts that try to maintain or even to increase their relative autonomy.”⁸⁷⁰

It is very likely as the philosopher Deleuze says in his *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet:

“... the aim of writing is to bring life into the state of an impersonal force.”⁸⁷¹

In the zigzagging between the voices, the author lights up and a feeling of unity and individuality of the dialogical self is created. Alicia Renedo describes it as follows.

“This conceptualization helps us to explain how a sense of having a united self-identity is possible within the multiplicity of selves.”⁸⁷²

In Renedo’s view, Mikhail Bakhtin

“suggests that self and knowledge are co-developed through a clash of plural multi-voiced meanings in co-authorship with manifold others.”⁸⁷³

And that is exactly what the polyphonic theatre writing process model demonstrates: zigzagging between the voices is the unity of the artistic work and the unity of the theatre writer.

⁸⁶⁴ “Wesentlich an der Polyphonie ist, dass die Identitäts- und Subjektconstitution nicht zum Ende kommt. Ihr Sinn liegt vielmehr in der fortwährenden Bewegung selbst, welche die permanente Verwandlung und Prozessualität des Selbst präsentier- und erfahrbar macht.”, Schrödl 2012:153, my italics, NC

⁸⁶⁵ “Polyphonie vermag im Wechsel der diversen Stimmen/Identitäten darauf zu verweisen, dass sich hinter einer Stimme immer eine weitere und noch eine weitere – ad infinitum – befindet; es versteckt sich folglich kein wahres Selbst hinter einer bestimmten Stimm-Maske, sondern umgekehrt, das Selbst entsteht überhaupt erst in und durch jeweilige Stimm-Maskeraden.”, Schrödl 2012:156

⁸⁶⁶ The latter form of unity can be found in Fred Evans’ *The Multivoiced Body*

⁸⁶⁷ Machon 2009:22

⁸⁶⁸ See Chapter II.7 “Does the theatre text have an author?”

⁸⁶⁹ See Krause 2011:161

⁸⁷⁰ Hermans & Kempen 1993:93, quoted in: Akkerman & Admiraal & Simons & Niessen 2006:466

⁸⁷¹ Cited in the afterword of Deleuze 2015 (1993):237

⁸⁷² Renedo 2010:12.14

⁸⁷³ Renedo 2010:12.10

III.7 The writing process for Kris Verdonck's *End*

In the introduction, I briefly mentioned Belgian theatre maker Kris Verdonck's *End*, created in 2008, a postdramatic performance, the text for which has multiple authors and varying authors in the course of the writing and revision process. With the aid of the voices from the polyphonic theatre writing process model, I will now describe the writing process for this show.

"In the piece *End*, a man in a mobile ticket booth reads out reports on disasters: bombings, Hiroshima, a village that disappeared. All kinds of creatures and things enter on the right and immediately exit on the left, along fixed lines, again and again."

So begins Wilfred Takken's review of *End* in the Dutch daily newspaper *NRC*.⁸⁷⁴ It is immediately evident that the text in the show, the messages spoken from the mobile ticket booth by the actor Johan Leysen, have a separate place alongside and apart from the other "creatures and things". Nevertheless, the words from the mobile booth fit perfectly into the machinery of perpetual movement on stage. The extensive disaster text is neither illustrated by the images nor interpreted by the actor, but it undeniably has its own place within a minimal performance:

"He (Verdonck, NC) presents not a story with dramatic suspense, but images without any clear beginning or end and in a repetitive rhythm, with slight shifts: minimal performance."⁸⁷⁵

It seems there is no writer, but there is a text. There is no personal voice of the author, but there is a specific tone to the linguistic utterance. How was the text for *End* created? If there was no writer, then how can the text have been written? How did such a theatre text come about?

The information in this text about the writing process for *End* is taken from the book *Listen to the bloody machine; Creating Kris Verdonck's End* by Marianne Van Kerkhoven and Anoeek Nuyens from 2012, and from conversations with Kerkhoven and Nuyens, who were involved in this show as dramaturg and intern. *Listen to the bloody machine* is devoted entirely to the creative process for the show *End*.

From the very beginning of the making process for *End*, it is clear that Kris Verdonck wants text in his installation. He wants to work with text on the basis of the chosen theatrical device. In this initial choice, we hear *the voice of the text type* and *the voice of the disciplines* speaking.

At the same time, the choice of working on the borderline between theatre and the visual arts also implies that, from the beginning, there is a struggle to prevent a story from emerging. Surrendering to narrative would mean: choosing theatre. Even before a single letter had been committed to paper, the fight against the narrative is the point of departure for the writing process. *The voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* can be heard and, throughout the entire writing process, we can see the de-dramatising strategies that we encountered with *the voice of presence*.

The messenger is then the first figure to be discussed and take form in the genesis process. Not a character with a will, a conflict and a development, but a messenger and commentator who, themselves, takes no part in the action. *The voice of the narrator* occasionally speaks, continually questioning what it means to deliver the text in this theatrical situation. At the same time, there is a regular switching to *the voice of the character*, to check whether any and which aspects of a possible character are evoked in the text that is being created.

In this phase, *the voice of recollection* also plays a role, for instance in the knowledge of the producer, dramaturg and actor of performances each of them has given in the past. Thematically, *the voice of preparation*, with which the makers together attempt to articulate and plan what exactly the subject of the performance will be, also speaks.

Generating text

It is important for this theatre writing process that the first step consists of generating text rather than building a character. This 'Language-Based

⁸⁷⁴ Wilfred Takken, "Asregen in eindtijdfantasie op Brussels Kunstenfestival" [Ash rain in end times fantasy at Brussels Art Festival], in: NRC 16 May 2008

⁸⁷⁵ Ibidem

Approach to Playwriting', as Paul Castagno calls it,⁸⁷⁶ does not write the right texts for chosen situations, conflicts and characters, but chooses texts and, on the basis of those texts, allows a layout, a structure and possibly a development to emerge.

With *End*, the text is generated by a number of people at the same time. Director Kris Verdonck, dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven and interns Frans Hendricx, Najade Pringels and Lore Jacobs collected three hundred pages of text from the internet.

There is a zigzagging between *the voice of improvisation* (because you never know what you are going to come across and the writers browse the net in the hope of hitting on something by chance) and *the voice of preparation*, which collects and immediately sorts the material suitable for the chosen theme and text type.

The voice of collective memory also plays a role in this process of text generation. With each text, the writers see how far the information is generally known and to which further collective knowledge the text refers. This also influences the way they browse on the web.

One of the selection criteria in generating text is the intensity and horror of the stories, a criterion that is not easy for collectors to stick to. This not only reflects their personal sensitivity, but we also hear *the voice of myths* questioning whether this kind of text can and should be presented on stage.

In addition to the texts from the internet, literary texts are also collected, texts by Alexander Kluge, Curzio Malaparte and W.G. Sebald, for example. Surprisingly, in collecting these texts, different voices speak than with the internet texts. In this case, *the voice of recollection* (which literary texts do I, myself, as a writer, still remember with regard to this theme?) and *the voice of intertextuality* (which other texts does the chosen text remind us of and to which texts does this text refer?).

It is useful to see this collection of existing text material, as the basis of the writing process, as an initial revision phase. The texts are plucked ready-made from reality and literature and given a direct, new application in another context and another combination.

The writing strategy of taking existing texts out of their context was one of the de-dramatising strategies encountered in *the voice of presence*.

When examining text from the internet or from literature, we also hear *the voice of the genre* and *the voice of the text type* and there is a regular shifting between the two. With each found or chosen text, the question is: what genre of text is this and which form characteristics does it have (*the voice of the genre*)? And this question always relates to: what kind of theatrical text should this become and which form characteristics should the ultimate text possess (*the voice of the text type*)?

In the case of *End*, after this period of generation, which is, with its reuse of existing material, in itself, a revision activity, follows an almost endless process of revision. Here, we continuously hear the voices from the ‘revision’ block, in other words *the voice of editing* and *the voice of transformation*.

This revision is carried out by means of five strategies:

1. *Revising by reduction*

The reduction process lasted until after the première. Even before rehearsals started, there were many text discussions with the actor, dramaturg, director, production leader and dramatist plus intern, in which text was scrapped.

Text fragments regularly disappear, but reduction also takes place at a micro level within those fragments. This is done on the basis of criteria such as: “Is the text visual?”, “Does the text run smoothly?” and “Is this information too technical?”

Slightly later, the question of whether a text sticks in your head after being read a number of times becomes a scrapping criterion. If the text does not stick, then it is scrapped. Strikingly, the text is judged on not its meaning, but its effect and direct impact. Briefly, it seems as when asking whether the text sticks in your head the writers are thinking of the reader and, in particular, the spectator. *The voice of the reader* and *the voice of interactivity* then appear to be active.

In the course of rehearsals, it turns out that there is too much text. At this point, the dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven and the actor Johan Leysen often scrap between the two of them, without much discussion. It also

appears that the easily written text on the internet comes out on top of the rather heavier literary texts.

As an actor is also working on this phase, *the voice of the co-makers* is speaking here. The actor has a voice in the writing process based on his own discipline.

2. *Revising by structuring*

Soon after they are generated, the texts are divided into five text clusters, compiled in accordance with the chosen themes and topics (famine, murder, natural disasters, nuclear arms, civil war). In fact, the texts that have been found themselves indicate this thematic classification. In this process of structuring, texts are automatically abandoned or adapted and revised. This structuring is done chiefly by the director and the dramaturg.

Strikingly, the division into five clusters again reminds the makers of the structure of Greek tragedy. The clusters instil a structure and construction, while it turns out not be necessary for the audience itself to be able to recognise or distinguish between the clusters.

Naturally, *the voice of structure* speaks loudly in this process. The fact that the writers arrive at a tragedy structure indicates that *the voice of recollection* is also active.

When compiling clusters in the course of the creative process, here, too, it is the direct effect and impact rather than the meaning of the story that is considered. During the making process, the director, Kris Verdonck, often stresses, for example, that the sum of the text fragments should engender shock effects. He says hardly anything about what meaning should be conveyed. When the cluster of nuclear disaster texts threatens to occupy too central a place in the performance, intervention takes place because that evokes a 'general message', which he does not want. It seems as if the personal standards of the director and then, specifically, *the voice of myths*, can be heard here.

3. *Revising by adding cohesion*

When reviewing three hundred pages of internet text fragments and individual literary texts, there is always a need to add cohesion. The material is overwhelming in its references and effects, does not work substantively towards either a development or endpoint and has no possible dramatic line in its structure. With *End*, cohesion is chiefly added to the text at a linguistic rather than a character level. The narrative perspectives (we, you, I) of the text fragments

are aligned and sometimes removed. Existing place names are also removed, so the texts form more of a whole.

In reviewing the narrative perspectives, we again hear the zigzagging between *the voice of the narrator* and *the voice of the character*. These voices in fact hold an unending dialogue on the question of the extent to which and how there is a character in the text.

To accommodate the actor, short repetitive phrases are woven into the text to instil or at least suggest unity and cohesion through repetition. In accommodating the actor, *the voice of the co-makers* can clearly be heard.

4. Revising by breaking down cohesion

At the same time as instilling cohesion, in revision the struggle against the story and the character continues and it is in revision that cohesion is continually broken down. In this phase, *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* and *the voice of presence* are heard but, essentially, it is, of course, *the voice of destruction* that continually zigzags to and from *the voice of structure*.

When a number of texts on cloning risk turning the actor into too much of an orating professor and, therefore, a character, the texts are adapted and revised. In the struggle against the character there is, simultaneously, a quest for the actor's speaking motivation. That speech motivation is interpreted pathologically rather than psychologically. The character in the ticket booth is simply unable to stop talking. The talking comes from neither the importance of the content nor a communicative need; it is simply a compulsive neurosis. Consequently, even at character level, the (psychological) cohesion and development of the character is broken down, while the motivation to speak is, nonetheless, achieved. The postdramatic 'figure'⁸⁷⁷ in *End* seems to be looking for the direct motivation, whereas with a dramatic character the psychological motive is central. In the quest for the direct motivation in the text, *the voice of the narrator* and *the voice of presence* are heard.

⁸⁷⁷ It is still difficult to give the postdramatic figure a good name. Gerda Poschmann uses the extremely neutral term 'text carrier' / *Textträger* (Poschmann 1997:309), and Katharina Keim the word 'entity' in the terms 'Diskursinstanz' and 'Verlautbarungsinstanz' (Keim 1998:55). Personally, I prefer to talk about "voice with awareness"

In *End*, the breaking down of character and story is a linguistic revision process. Texts that work best in that quest are texts that are somewhere between poetry and reporting.

Here, there is a shift through *the voice of the genre* (poetry and reporting) and *the voice of the text type* (the desired theatrical text).

The advantage of a report, for example, is its concreteness, while the risk is that it can quickly evoke the emotions of a possible character. And therefore a story, a narrative. As Marianne Van Kerkhoven says,

"In *End* an attempt is made to avoid any narrative or chronology: the entire performance is contained in one big, 'abstract', cyclic movement."⁸⁷⁸

The poetry in the texts seems to more quickly emphasise those other 'abstract' sides. Nonetheless, the actor Johan Leysen impresses on the other co-workers that they must

"try not to say the poetry".

Poetry, too, can easily evoke an association with emotion and therefore a story. Within the revision process, it seems that an area between poetry and reporting is continuously being sought. With this process, *the voice of artificiality* appears to speak along, looking for the right way of expressing the harsh content. At the same time, more and more of the literary texts are scrapped, as they are too virtuoso in their writing. Here, there is a zigzagging between *the voice of artificiality* and *the voice of myths*, which accommodate assumptions about what is literary and virtuoso.

Reviewing in order to break down cohesion is also a struggle against excess clarity in the text. Although, for the makers of *End*, it is clear the language should not clarify, but simply consist of a series of consecutive text fragments, from the very first run-through the audience appears to be looking for harmony, narration and clarification. In the writing process, too, the struggle against story and character appears to be just as hopeless a fight as that against representation. As the actor Johan Leysen says,

"Even in doing nothing there is a narrative lurking."

As, when running through, *the voice of interactivity*, of the spectator, sounds increasingly loud, the zigzagging is between *the voice of dramatic*

dramaturgy, which is audible in the audience's reactions, and *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy*.

5. *Revising by staging*

Naturally, during the weeks of rehearsals, the text is also continually revised on the basis of its place in the performance, its relation to the other figures and disciplines on the basis of the staging.

If the text is to be really equal, then it must also be included in the carousel of images and movement. According to the makers of *End*, the text should not be experienced as a story, nor should the actor Johan be perceived as a dramatic character. That movement, the question as to whether the text should be included in the carousel, remains part of the discussion between the makers throughout the entire making process. Consequently, the position of the text in the performance and the relation of the text to other disciplines and to the audience is continuously questioned and constitutes an important basis for the revision process.

That is one of the reasons why the decision was ultimately made not to provide subtitling for the text. Subtitling would have placed too great an emphasis on the text as far as the audience is concerned, turning the images into an interpretation of the text.

Here, the zigzagging is clearly between *the voice of the linguistic theatre text* (all the language in the performance) and *the voice of the staging text* (all the semiotic signs in the performance). Within this process, *the voice of transformation* and *the voice of disciplines* are also active.

Fairly far into the making process, when the first run-throughs are held, the text is again a problem, as it becomes too dominant in the staging. Plenty of consultation between the director, dramaturg and actor lead to the question of whether the ten minutes of text with which the show begins is not too leading for the spectator. The text there is removed. It is striking to see how, in that revision process, on the basis of a great love and concern for words and stories, a continuous, loving battle is fought against the dominance of language.

Later in the making process, when the texts are already much shorter and have been extensively revised, the figures in the performance suddenly turn

out to recognise themselves in little references and links in parts of the text. Suddenly, the text itself starts working.

In the theatre writing process for *End*, there are two recognisable dynamic forces at work:

The zigzagging between the search for structure and cohesion on one hand and, on the other, the attempt to resist the narrative, the character and clarification. In this movement, we hear *the voice of structure*, *the voice of destruction*, *the voice of dramatic dramaturgy* and *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy*, in particular.

Zigzagging back and forth between the text and the staging, to and from the other disciplines. This consistently includes both linguistic and theatrical revision. In this movement, *the voice of transformation*, *the voice of editing*, *the voice of the disciplines* and *the voice of the co-makers*, in particular, can be heard.

These movements in the writing process appear to be a reflection of the linguistic movement of the text itself, the movement between the various voices in the text. During the rehearsal process for *End*, the actor Johan Leysen says,

"It's like ping-ponging in your head, like holding a conversation with yourself."

The text of *End* is characterised by polyphony, which gets its tension from the relationship and jumping between the text fragments.

The inner dialogue Johan Leysen is talking about seems to resonate with the dialogue the performer Mark Iglesias experienced as a result of the interaction with the machine on stage. Is the text a machine for Johan, is his dialogue the conversation with the repetition and rhythm of the words, with the forces unleashed by the stories?

The question remains as to who, amongst all those voices and movements, can be seen as the author of this theatre text. First of all, there are the dozens of authors of the stories from the internet and the literary texts that were chosen in the first stage of the writing process. That generation and selection of texts, which, as I said, can be seen as a kind of revision process, was done by the director, the dramaturg and three interns.

The shortening and revising was done by groups in various line-ups. Sometimes by a large group consisting of the director, dramaturg, actor, production leader and dramaturgy interns, sometimes as a pair by the director and the dramaturg (in an early phase of the making process) and sometimes just by the dramaturg and actor (in the later phases of the making process). In that sense, clearly, the text had multiple authors and the authors changed over the course of the writing and revising process. It can equally be argued that this performance text has no author at all.

Neither is the writer of the *End* text confined somewhere within the final text itself nor do they precede it.

This is directly related to the radical unfinalisedness of the text. The endless process of revision means a text is ‘in progress’, not as a sign of weakness but as an essential characteristic. In this unfinalisedness we encounter Bakhtin’s ‘unfinalizability’. With material that is always in progress and never ‘finished’, it is far more difficult to indicate a writer or creator than it is with a clearly-defined, finalised text.

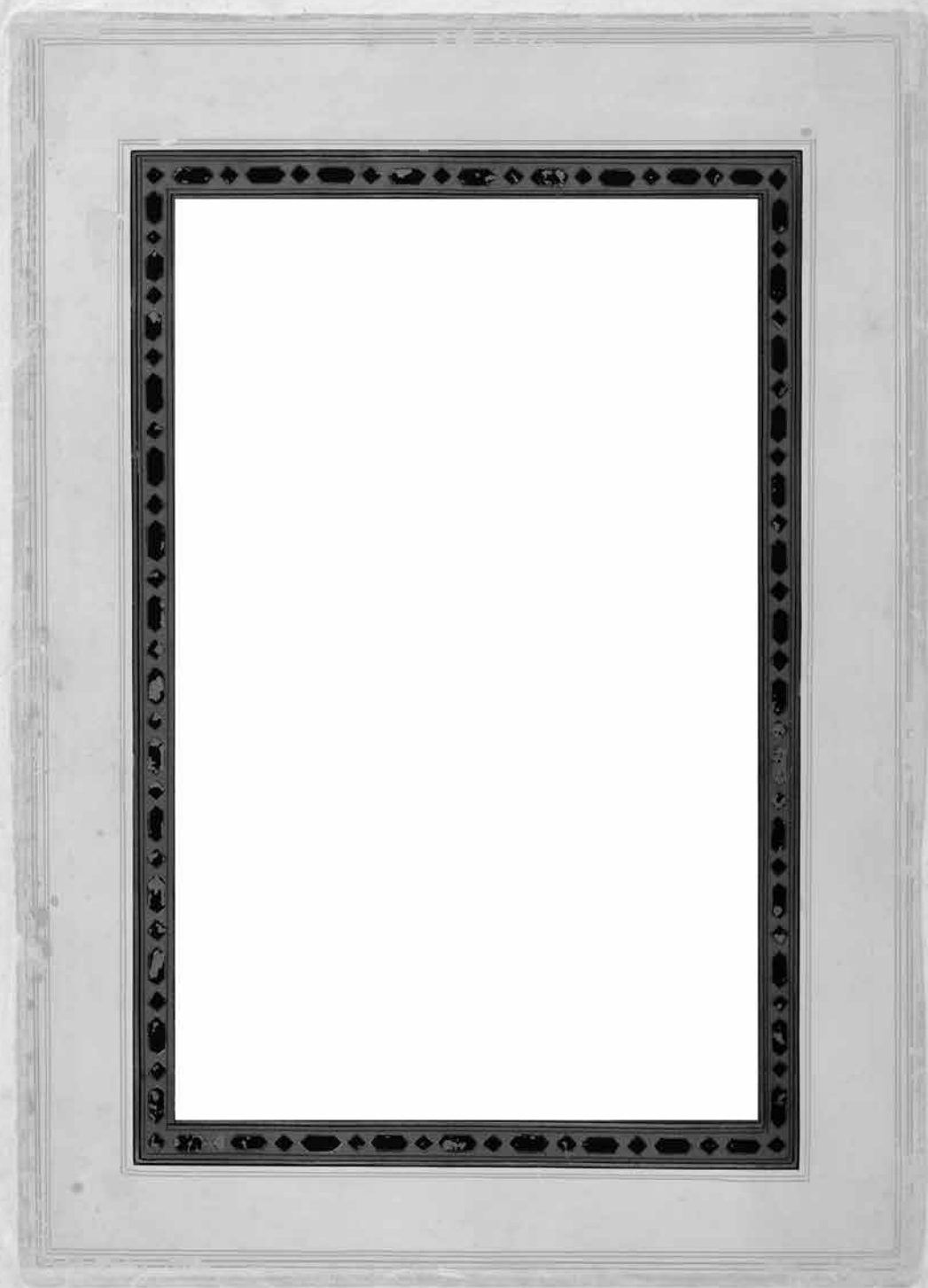
As Simon O’Sullivan so succinctly puts it:

“We are moving towards a notion of art experience, of art practice, whether it be making it, seeing it, or writing about it, as complex and expanded. No longer the static production, distribution and consumption of an object, but art practice as a process, as a ‘desiring-machine’, always ‘in’ production.”⁸⁷⁹

In this chapter, based on the poetics of the linguistic theatre text from Chapter II, I have analysed the theatre writing process, by presenting a polyphonic theatre writing process model in which I have linked Bakhtin’s theories regarding the concept of polyphony with Flower and Hayes’ writing process model.

In the next chapter, I sketch the contours of what I think a polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text and a polyphonic concept of the theatre writing process could or should mean for a productive theatre writing pedagogy.

⁸⁷⁹ O’Sullivan (2007) 2006:24



Ten Thousand Idiots

It is always a danger
To aspirants
On the
Path


When they begin
To believe and
Act

As if the ten thousand idiots
Who so long ruled
And lived
Inside

Have all packed their bags
And skipped town
Or
Died.

Hafiz⁸⁸⁰

⁸⁸⁰ Hafiz is a 14th-century Iranian poet (1325/26-1389/90). The poem comes from Hafiz, *The Subject Tonight is Love; 60 Wild and Sweet Poems of Hafiz*, Penguin Compass, London 2003 (1996), p.51, translation: Daniel Ladinsky

The image features a large, abstract graphic composed of thick black and red lines. These lines form a series of parallel, slanted strokes that create a stylized, elongated 'Z' or 'N' shape. The lines are layered, with some appearing in front of others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The background is plain white.

The contours of
the polyphonic
pedagogy of
theatre writing

“The pedagogy of playwriting may be one of the great mysteries of all arts training. In fact, many playwriting teachers and playwright practitioners have posited that playwriting cannot be taught. (...) Given that playwriting is taught, how is it being taught? Who teaches and what techniques do they use? Which is the best approach? There is little published on the subject of playwriting pedagogy, and what is available is inconsistent.”⁸⁸¹

Michael Wright, theatre writer and lecturer

The pedagogy of theatre writing is still shrouded in mist, it seems. That does not mean to say that lecturers and courses are just doing any old thing, but it does mean that the educational background or cohesion is often rather unclear.

Throughout Europe, there are only a handful of multi-year bachelor playwriting courses. Strikingly, all these started in the early 1990s⁸⁸² and related analysis and theorisation have only come about over the past few years.⁸⁸³ There is surprisingly little literature and debate on the subject, probably also because there is no clear consensus on what exactly a theatre text is and what the process of theatre writing entails. As the theatre text is, for example, both an applied product and an autonomous work of art, and the writing of the theatre text takes place individually but is also a process of co-creation and collaboration, its pedagogy has little cohesion and is, according to Michael Wright, inconsistent.

Moreover, the existing theory on the pedagogy of theatre writing is rather old-fashioned and orthodox.⁸⁸⁴ In their 2013 article ‘Teaching playwriting in the 21st-century’, the theatre writers Anna Garcia-Romero⁸⁸⁵ and Alice Tuan⁸⁸⁶ say that the latest developments in the world and technology demand a renewal of that pedagogy:

⁸⁸¹ Wright, M., ‘Pedagogy of Playwriting; The Transmutable Classroom’, in: Flotsos & Medford 2004:83-84

⁸⁸² Szenisches Schreiben, Berlin University of the Arts (1990), Writing for Performance, Dartington School of the Arts (1994), Writing for Performance, University of the Arts Utrecht (1992), Dramatist School at Aarhus Theatre (1995). The first master’s degree course in playwriting in England began in Birmingham in 1989

⁸⁸³ Wright 2005, Eick 2006, Wandor 2008B, for example

⁸⁸⁴ See, for example Castagno 2001:1

⁸⁸⁵ Theatre writer and Associate Professor of the Department of Film, Television and Theatre at the University of Notre Dame

⁸⁸⁶ Theatre writer, lecturer and performer

"Teaching playwriting in the twenty-first century presents new challenges to cultivating past traditions while incorporating new developments in the field and addressing an increasingly globalized society. Playwrights who teach today must address the areas of voice, liveness, and contradictions as they train tomorrow's writers for the theatre. How do we empower a writer's voice? How do we teach liveness in a technologically mediated world? How do we encourage the contradictory skills of solitary creation and collaborative expansion? How do we help students engage with the conundrums such as marketplace versus art form?"⁸⁸⁷

The pedagogy of theatre writing does not, however, seem to have grown with the developments in the theatre itself.

In 2009, John van Duffel, the current head of the Berlin theatre writing course 'Szenisches Schreiben',⁸⁸⁸ was wondering whether the expansion of the possibilities of the theatre text and the theatre writing process through postdramatic theatre has not led to despair within art pedagogy.⁸⁸⁹

The majority of books on playwriting are about writing a well-made play for tried and trusted traditional theatre practice.

"Playwriting textbooks largely ignore the major theatrical movements after WWII."⁸⁹⁰

It is still so that, in nine out of ten playwriting books, you are snowed under with plot, conflict, character building and climax.

"The vast majority of the so-called how-to or textbooks on the market for playwriting focus primarily – sometimes only – on the tenets of Aristotle and the well-made play form. There is nothing inherently wrong with either of these tools for writing, but they do not accurately or entirely reflect the current theatrical landscape."⁸⁹¹

In her doctoral research, *The Gap: Contemporary Playwriting Exercises* from 2015,⁸⁹² Kyle Reynolds Conway convincingly demonstrates this gap between an overwhelmingly Aristotelian pedagogy and a, by now, far more postdramatic theatre practice.

"There are gaps; between prevalent teaching tools for playwriting (i.e. Aristotle) and current artistic trends (e.g. postmodernism);" (...) New playwriting tools are needed so that we can educate a new generation of playwrights. These new tools cannot be primarily based on Aristotle's two-thousand year old approach. Traditional storytelling tenets like causality and linearity have been inadequate at least since the emergence of postmodernism.⁸⁹³

This gap is widely recognised in the debate on theatre writing pedagogy and, in instruction books, attempts are made to bridge that gap but, as yet, that is leading to individual exercises or writing assignments aimed at producing postdramatic texts,⁸⁹⁴ but not a cohesive pedagogy that can be translated into a multiple-year course curriculum.

So an adequate, contemporary pedagogy of theatre writing should not simply respond to recent developments in the world, the theatre and writing; it should also be able to relate to *multiple* dramaturgies and *multiple* methods. In my view, a polyphonic poetics of the theatre text and the description of a polyphonic theatre writing process can offer a solution here.

Garcia-Romero and Tuan describe it as follows:

“The teaching of playwriting involves a myriad of approaches, strategies and philosophies in midwifing a play into being. There is the finding of a voice, the actual writing of the play, the development towards production, the production itself (which is the completion of the writing of the play and usually outside of the playwright’s mind).”⁸⁹⁵

If a pedagogy for playwriting is to reflect the theatre writing process, then how do contemporary hybrid artists and their hybrid theatre texts fit into teaching playwriting? If a theatre text uses both dramatising and de-dramatising strategies, for example, then how can that be incorporated into a cohesive curriculum?⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁸⁷ Garcia-Romero & Tuan 2013

⁸⁸⁸ At the Berlin University of the Arts

⁸⁸⁹ Symposium *Leibhaftig schreiben – Welten phantasieren* Berlin Universität der Künste Studiengang Szenisches Schreiben 3 & 4 July 2009. Van Duffel made this observation as moderator on July 4th

⁸⁹⁰ Conway 2015:13

⁸⁹¹ Conway 2015:10-11

⁸⁹² At the Texas Tech University

⁸⁹³ Conway 2015:XIV

⁸⁹⁴ See, for example, Castagno 2001 and Conway 2015

⁸⁹⁵ Garcia-Romero & Tuan 2013

⁸⁹⁶ In the recruitment text for the renowned Playwriting MA course at Kingston University, London, you can see the attempt to include both dramatic and postdramatic theatre writing processes in the pedagogy of the course: “Teaching on this course includes a foundation in the traditional writing skills of characterisation, dramatic structure, dialogue and action, and also in collaborative and interdisciplinary creative approaches that go beyond solo and text-based authorship.”

"In this period of great cultural change we cannot only teach or follow one method of artistic production: we must embrace *several* approaches at the same time. We must make use of 'the related combination of playfulness and discipline (...)'⁸⁹⁷ that is found in the creation of art. Psychology professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's numerous studies of creative people revealed a tendency for them to express – at the same time – traits at opposite ends of a spectrum."⁸⁹⁸

In this chapter, I use the polyphonic poetics of the linguistic theatre text (Chapter II) and the theatre writing process model for the polyphonic theatre writing process (Chapter III) as a basis for formulating a number of ideas for a polyphonic pedagogy of writing for theatre.

IV.1 Pedagogy of art

Art pedagogy and higher art education are, in general, extraordinarily complex. How do you develop artistic talent, how do you coach the personal voice, how do you communicate an ever-developing craftsmanship? When the theatre writer Stefan Hertmans talks of his own practice as a lecturer in the visual arts, he argues for a humble attitude towards art education, as it appears to have no clear legitimacy, explanations or principles.

“The ground on which we walk is far from solid.”⁸⁹⁹

Designing an art pedagogy starts with establishing what the art product entails, so we can determine what the pedagogy is working towards. Naturally, an interpretation of art as I have endeavoured to grasp in a poetics in the case of theatre texts is not bereft of value.

“(...) art education owes it to itself to pretend to have a correct definition of art and to know precisely what should be taught”⁹⁰⁰

Today, globally speaking, art pedagogy has two central conflicting images of man and the world. On one side there are work forms and curricula based on the romantic image of the individual, autonomous artist. On the other, postmodernism and poststructuralism have had a great influence.

One example is the criterion of originality, which fits well with the image of the individual art genius. Art education prioritises that demand while, under the influence of postmodernism, there is the consensus that it is impossible to do anything new.

“You can’t be original,” art courses say, “but originality is still the core of creativeness, so the innovation lies in the unique way in which the artist links existing, non-original texts, sources and images.” And then, quite often, they give music sampling as an example.

⁸⁹⁷ See Csikszentmihalyi 2004 (1996)

⁸⁹⁸ Conway 2015:35

⁸⁹⁹ Stefan Hertmans, in: Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:132

⁹⁰⁰ Stefan Hertmans, in: Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:134

When two interpretations of originality are linked in this way, though, that must be taken seriously in the art pedagogy. Is there, then, room in the curriculum for linking existing text, sources and images and are the students also assessed on that criterion? And do we select future students on that basis, or do we nonetheless suddenly see whether they do have any original, new ideas?

Like any other pedagogy, art pedagogy is, as I said, never neutral. I have therefore attempted to base the poetics of the theatre text and the theatre writing process model on a clear, contemporary human image, in this case a polyphonic identity or dialogical self. Consequently, for me, too, a pedagogy of theatre writing must be based on the concepts of polyphony and dialogism.

Stefan Hertmans also says⁹⁰¹ that, in higher art education, there is a risk of everyone remaining in their own discipline domain because they only have knowledge of that specific domain. In his view, we are not going to solve that problem with a pep talk on interdisciplinarity and art philosophy. He says we need to find a balance, rather than running after every novelty,

“but neither must we foster nostalgia for old-fashioned craftsmanship, as we still see so often at weekend academies.”⁹⁰²

While art pedagogy involves conflicting human and world images, in professional art education, I feel there is a conflict between a nostalgia for old-fashioned craftsmanship and the utopian call for the philosophical meaning, unpredictability and interdisciplinarity of art.

At the same time, Hertmans claims that, on one hand, art pedagogy is influenced by the postmodern sociological principle of there being no criteria for art – anything goes – and, on the other hand, it is burdened by the absurdly-high public demands made on art: directly accessible, non-elitist, enterprising.

These contrasts in art and art pedagogy could, in my view, benefit from following the concept of polyphony, as the paradoxes in the arts within art pedagogy are honoured by a polyphony of conflicting pairs of voices.

“And yet there is little we can do but humbly acknowledge the fact that in art education we make paradoxical demands. On the one hand we are confronting students with a romantic wish list: creative power, imagination, creativity, originality, and

even genius, while on the other hand undoing this formless demand – when it comes to juries and evaluations – by confronting them with exactly the historical opposite, the wish list of classicism: finish your work, look before you leap, comply with rules and regulations, honour your predecessors, and don't be silly."⁹⁰³

It is striking that Stefan Hertmans here cites romantic and classicist demands but does not juxtapose these with postmodern demands (the unfinished, the fragmented) and fails to give any pattern that would allow them to be contained in one single pedagogy.

Art education is paradoxical because it trains both discipline and total freedom. Art pedagogy is paradoxical because art itself is paradoxical.⁹⁰⁴

"What we teach them in terms of crafts and skills should serve this fundamental question that they have to formulate themselves, and not the other way around: first learn the skill and then see what you can do with it, a static form of education that no longer fits the present dynamics of the artistic field."⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰¹ In: Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:136/137

⁹⁰² Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:137

⁹⁰³ Stefan Hertmans in Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:138

⁹⁰⁴ Hertmans, in: Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:138

⁹⁰⁵ Hertmans, in: Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:141

IV.2 Pedagogy of writing

Within higher art education, literary or creative writing plays a subordinate role. There are funds for performance arts, visual arts and literature, but there is no language faculty at art colleges alongside the faculties of music, drama and visual arts. Within higher education and universities all over the world, literary writing courses are rare. Literary writing has already long been the odd man out in art education, in view of the dominant assumption that literary writing is not something that can really be learnt.

Kay Halasek, head of the First-Year Writing Program at the Ohio State University, has conducted research⁹⁰⁶ into alternative writing pedagogy methods for composition teachers, using Bakhtin's perspectives of pedagogy. Her research at the same time questions the disciplinary status of teaching writing as such. This actually also applies to the research in this book: while, in theatre writing pedagogy, I link Bakhtin's perspective of polyphony to Flower & Hayes' writing process model, I also endeavour to show that theatre writing is a specific form of writing and my text therefore becomes an attempt at describing and advocating the disciplinary status of teaching theatre writing.

Within Composition Studies, the collective name for writing studies in the United States, Bakhtin's ideas are employed for many different perspectives. In her book *A pedagogy of possibility; Bakhtinian Perspectives on Composition Studies*, Halasek mentions poststructuralist, pluralist and feminist writing pedagogy, for example, but also teaching writing aimed at co-creation and multiple authorship, although it is often done in a rather abstract and general way rather than methodically. The question is, of course, whether Bakhtin's thinking, with his unfinalizability and dialogism and with his fundamental postponement of fixed meaning, does lend itself to this methodical approach to writing pedagogy. In their book *Bakhtinian Pedagogy*, Jayne White and Michael Peters call into question the fact that:

"...the task of 'applying' Bakhtin to education must necessarily be seen as a messy unfinished process of intertextuality that assumes an ongoing engagement and assessment with 'dialogue' as the principal 'method' and philosophy of education."⁹⁰⁷

There is virtually no application of Bakhtin's ideas in the pedagogy of writing for theatre, film and television.

Many of the theatre writing instruction books and higher art education courses are based on what I have referred to as 'product pedagogy': the student learns to write a theatre text by being shown how a good play is structured. The idea behind this is that when the student knows how a good product is constructed they will be able to produce one themselves. The development of the theatre writing process model in Chapter III was actually aimed at 'process pedagogy': insight into and practising the theatre writing process will help the student produce better theatre texts.

In the 1970s and 80s, there was a bitter fight within *composition studies* between the advocates of product and process pedagogy.

Composition studies has been recognised since the 1970s as a term describing writing training and writing courses, but also represents the whole field of specialists engaged in writing and teaching writing, referred to as 'compositionist' or 'rhetoricians'. The basis of the debate within composition studies is the continuous study of what product and process actually entail:

"Those in composition studies draw on research in composing practices, theories of reading and writing, linguistics and literature, and the history of rhetoric."⁹⁰⁸

Between 1982 and 1988, the conflict between product and process pedagogy led to three types of school or tradition within American writing education:⁹⁰⁹

- Objectivist schools

The pedagogy of this school is product-oriented, the way of working and learning is highly cognitive and creativity is treated as problem solving. The objectivity lies in the fact that language and language systems are viewed separately from the individual and society.

⁹⁰⁶ Halasek 1999:xii

⁹⁰⁷ White & Peters 2011:248:

⁹⁰⁸ Bishop & Starkey 2006:37-38

⁹⁰⁹ In 1987, James Berlin made this categorisation. See, for example, Halasek 1999:16

- Subjectivist schools

This approach is process-oriented, but is based on the romantic view of the writing process as mysterious, inaccessible and expressionist. Here, there is a strong belief in individual autonomy.

- Social schools

The ideas of this school, which is also referred to as transactional, are based on Bakhtin's concepts.⁹¹⁰ Learning always takes place socially and language is seen as discourse. Writer, reader and text flow together or, as Halasek describes it:

"Here reality is constructed only through the interaction of these particular elements."⁹¹¹

The social school also breaks down many of the assumptions of the other two:

"(...) transactional (social) rhetorics subvert and decenter objective and subjective rhetorics in the same way Volosinov suggests the sociological subverts and decenters the objective and subjective."⁹¹²

A polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy fits into the tradition of the social schools and is, therefore, both a product pedagogy and a process pedagogy. For that reason, the poetics, writing process and pedagogy are also fundamentally linked and mirrored in this book.

The pitfall in the plea for a good, coherent writing pedagogy can lie in too great a purity of theory, such as Halasek frequently encounters in composition studies.⁹¹³ The longing for cohesion then leads to purism of the method, to

"a template imposed on the discipline."⁹¹⁴

Writing pedagogies often borrow from other domains. They use insight and methods from the creativity theories, for example.

"Debates surrounding the teaching of playwriting are heavily influenced by theories of creativity."⁹¹⁵

In the 1970s and 80s, writing pedagogy often looked to cognitive psychology – such as the research by Flower & Hayes, whose writing process model I use – to develop a better understanding of writing as a discipline. More recently, use has been made of anthropological methods and terms and models from literary studies and literary criticism.

When using knowledge and insight from other domains, there is a risk that the borrowing degenerates into imposing and the writing pedagogy developed in this way becomes not so much descriptive as prescriptive.

The danger of too strict a pedagogy is that it can lead to dominant, conscious strategies and that monologism rather than dialogism becomes dominant, leaving no room for paradoxes.

⁹¹⁰ This is convincingly demonstrated by James Berlin

⁹¹¹ Halasek 1999:17

⁹¹² Halasek 1999:17

⁹¹³ Halasek 1999:xiii

⁹¹⁴ Halasek 1999:xiii

⁹¹⁵ See Gardiner 2016. Paul Gardiner is Research Fellow at the Faculty of Education and Social Work of the University of Sydney

IV.3 Pedagogy of theatre writing

When, in the early 1990s, theatre writing courses emerged in Europe, in German language university theatre studies, the ‘how-to’ books, such as Lajos Egri’s 1946 classic *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, were scorned as they were seen as examples of normative, prescriptive poetics. That was at odds with the dominant romantic view of creativity in universities, which was translated into a worship of the ‘open’ drama from Shakespeare to Schiller to Handke. This then produced the stubborn pedagogic myth that a poetics that can be learnt must automatically be normative.

Consequently, instruction books such as Gustav Freitag’s *Die Technik des Dramas* [Drama Technique] are still often seen as a tool for mediocre theatre and film writers.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, they were far more pragmatic and, in theatre writing courses, that often led to de-dramatising and neo-avant-garde aesthetics and strategies. The course is based on a learnable poetics, so the historical genius view fades into the background.

In Chapter III, with *the voice of myths*, we saw the assumption that writing cannot be learnt.⁹¹⁶ That myth is proving to be stubborn. Related to the myth of isolation, this myth does not believe in practising, training, learning, sharing or being influenced.

In his book *Teaching Creative Writing* from 2006,⁹¹⁷ Graeme Harper poses the two central questions on the learnability of creative writing that, in my view, apply just as well to writing for theatre.

1. Those who argue that writing can be learnt must be able to say what exactly is learnt,⁹¹⁸ without entering into the conflict between style and expression (that I described in Chapter I as the tension between the ‘personal voice’ as a style and the ‘personal voice’ of expression).

Within that conflict, ‘writing talent’, for example, is used as a metaphor for ‘what can’t actually be learnt’ and consequently claimed by one of the two camps. They then say, “Technique is what you learn, but what you have to say, that is the real talent”. A polyphonic view of ‘the personal voice’ can constitute the basis for a writing pedagogy that assumes that all voices can be trained and exercised and then goes on to honour that principle in the curriculum.

This means that both style and expression can be learnt and, in the case of theatre writing, for example, both the ‘well-made play’ and the postdramatic theatre text.

2. The learnability of writing can also be measured against the degree to which the students ultimately end up in the work field. Harper says:

“Creative writing teaching and learning is about creative writing, a particular set of activities and understandings forming a large component of the writing arts. It is not *primarily* about whether creative writing maps onto the needs and functions of the contemporary publishing industry, or contemporary film-making, web design or performance industries for that matter.”⁹¹⁹

In higher art education, the learnability of arts is becoming increasingly linked to this ultimate usefulness in the work field. Hertmans also says as much:

“But as art education, like all education, has to comply with generalized educational principles, we are faced with a very practical problem: we have to comply with educational models that are forced upon us in terms of social purpose, functionality and benefit.”⁹²⁰

The field in which the theatre writer works has changed and expanded enormously over the past few decades. When a polyphonic poetics of the theatre text is used, into which a wide variety of text sorts can fall, and the theatre writer is able to use various writing processes, this automatically opens up a far greater, more diverse and more hybrid work field. It therefore also applies that a pedagogy of theatre writing should not be preparing theatre writing students for a fixed work field, but teaching them to develop and create new work fields.

⁹¹⁶ See, for example *Can It Really Be Taught? Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*, Ritter & Vanderslice (eds.) 2007

⁹¹⁷ Professor Harper is editor-in-chief of the international magazine *New Writing*, and head of the Department of Creative Arts, Film and Media at the University of Portsmouth

⁹¹⁸ See Harper 2006:2

⁹¹⁹ Harper 2006:2

⁹²⁰ Stefan Hertmans in Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:134

We used the Bakhtinian concept of polyphony to create a poetics of the linguistic theatre text. We then linked the characteristics of the art product to the theatre writing process.

To be able to subsequently use this theatre writing process model for a productive, effective theatre writing pedagogy, we need Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism'. As I said, dialogism describes the interplay between the various voices and it is that very activity – the movement between the voices – that I consider to be the core of a smooth theatre writing process, as the basis of the artistic making process.

The pedagogy must offer strategies for each theatre writing student for recognising and training this dialogism.

A polyphonic pedagogy of theatre writing must, in my view, answer three key questions.

1. How does the pedagogy reflect the theatre writing process?

Like any creative making process, writing a theatre text takes time. The core of any art pedagogy is that it takes time to develop skills, takes time to grow and develop yourself as an artist.⁹²¹

Many instruction books seem to underestimate the role of time. Often, these books restrict themselves to individual exercises for starting to write. There are hardly any revision assignments, for example.

Many are limited to a kind of writing course level, assuming that the reader or participant has no experience as yet (Wandor 2008B and Yeger 1990, for example) Only Wright 2005 and Bray 2001 talk about curricula and degree courses.

To reflect the pedagogy of the theatre writing process, I will outline the contours of a polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy within a multi-year course curriculum, in which time-related aspects such as repetition and exercise play a role.

When Hertmans says that art education should be based on a clear definition of art then, in my view, he is referring to both the art product and the art process, to the fact that both product and process should be reflected in the pedagogy.

A simple example of that reflection is the question as to whether, within the theatre writing pedagogy, writing should actually be taught by theatre writers themselves.

In 2006, Joan Herrington⁹²² and Crystal Brian⁹²³ asked a number of American theatre authors how they teach theatre writing, drawing some interesting conclusions and asking some interesting questions about the pedagogy of theatre writing, particularly in the introduction to the book. Their title *Playwrights Teach Playwriting* already gives the idea that, in their view, it is practising theatre writers who should be teaching the discipline and not, for example, theatre scholars, dramaturgs or directors. If the theatre writing pedagogy is to reflect the polyphonic writing process then, rather than being a theatre writer, it would be better for the writing lecturer to be a polyphonic, hybrid writer who is or could be not only a writer but also a researcher, a dramatist, a lecturer or a theatre maker who can demonstrate their continual shifting between the voices.

If the curriculum for a theatre writing course is to reflect the writing process, then such a pedagogy demands a good understanding and description of the theatre writing process, with a clear view of authorship as a crucial element. When the playwriting process includes the myths of authorship,⁹²⁴ such as the author's over-identification with the text, for example, then, inevitably, the pedagogy of playwriting should be related. Perhaps the myths in the writing process also result in myths in the pedagogic process. Is that, perhaps, why there is such an aversion to prescriptive pedagogy, from a romantic fear of killing creativity?⁹²⁵

Another example of the mirroring between product, process and pedagogy in theatre writing is the Bakhtinian concept of outsideness. We saw that appear as a characteristic of the theatre text as *ostranenie* (Shklovsky) or artificiality. In Chapter III, we encountered it again in the theatre writing process as an artistic strategy of 'defamiliarisation' and as *the voice of artificiality*.

⁹²¹ "Like all other applied skills, writing is its own skill. It takes time to learn and develop.", Wandor 2008B:9

⁹²² Head of the Department of Theatre at Western Michigan University

⁹²³ Head of the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Quinnipiac University

⁹²⁴ I described this in Christophe 2008

⁹²⁵ Herrington & Brian 2006:XIV

In the pedagogy of theatre writing, the concept then comes back in a number of strategies for teaching the author to distance and disidentify themselves from their own work.

2. How are voices and countervoices developed and trained within the pedagogy?

We already saw the paradoxes in higher art education in general and the gap between dramatic instruction books and the more postdramatic theatre practice, in particular, need to be solved in the pedagogy by means of multiple approaches and strategies. To do so, it is also necessary to train and develop multiple voices and, in particular, pairs of countervoices within the theatre writing pedagogy. The question is how to do so, though.

Often, in art pedagogic discourse, the goal-oriented, systematic and conscious voices become the dominant voices and, not infrequently, the only voices. That goal-oriented aspect, which is so dominant in literature on creativity theories – based on the definition of creativity as the ‘goal-oriented creation of something new’⁹²⁶ – should be refuted in a higher art pedagogy. The contours of a theatre writing pedagogy should therefore explicitly include and make room for subconscious, unpredictable, non-systematic and disinterested voices.⁹²⁷

Bearing in mind Chapter III, think about *the voice of the body*, *the voice of destruction*⁹²⁸ and *the voice of the unsayable*, for example.

This is where the experimental character of art lies – and Hertmans also appears to refer to it – and therefore also of art pedagogy:⁹²⁹

“Isn’t unpredictability the very *raison d’être* of art? Isn’t art the epitome⁹³⁰ of experimental thinking based on existing patterns, or, to put it fashionably: Isn’t art the epitome of serendipity?”

It is a polyphonic theatre writing process model that can concretise such a countervoice. We recognise, for example, Hertmans’ notion of serendipity in the artistic process in Sybren Polet’s concept of ‘thinking wide of the mark’, which we encountered in the incubation phase of the creative process.⁹³¹

“We have to invent standards for something that cannot be standardized, a type of education that incorporates serendipity in its didactic methods.”⁹³²

In some writing pedagogies, however, the training of the subconscious, Dionysian, intuitive voices led to an exaggerated longing for ‘authenticity’, which attributes a great deal of value to the so-called freedom of the countervoice.

This can be found in the writing pedagogies of Peter Elbow, known for his free writing assignments. The countervoice then becomes the dominant voice, which misses the point.

This risk can be obviated by continually training the conflicting pairs of voices in conjunction in the theatre writing pedagogy. For instance, not just *the voice of preparation* but also *the voice of improvisation*, not just *the voice of structure* but also *the voice of destruction*, not just *the voice of dramatic dramaturgy* but also *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* are developed and practised in the pedagogy.

3. *How do doing and thinking interrelate in the pedagogy?*

“What has poisoned us is the division between theory and practice.”⁹²³

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, philosophers

In his two recent works *Du musst dein Leben ändern*⁹²⁴ [You Must Change Your Life] and *Scheintod im Denken*⁹²⁵ [Suspended Animation in Thinking], the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk convincingly demonstrates that, in

⁹²⁶ See, for example R.W. Weisberg, *Creativity Beyond the Myth of Genius*, Freeman, New York, 1992

⁹²⁷ Consider the theatre theories of Antonin Artaud, who calls his Theatre of Cruelty first and foremost “disinterested”

⁹²⁸ In their book on higher art education in neoliberal times, for example, Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne, talk about *the voice of destruction* when they discuss abandoning all technique: “...since that pivotal moment, technique can also mean: abandon all technique.”, Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:133

⁹²⁹ Stefan Hertmans in Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:134

⁹³⁰ “Embodiment”

⁹³¹ See Polet 1993

⁹³² Stefan Hertmans in Gielen & De Bruyne 2012:135

⁹³³ Paraphrasing of Scheepers in his introduction to *Rhizome*, Deleuze & Guattari 1976:23

⁹³⁴ Peter Sloterdijk, *Du musst dein Leben ändern*; *Über Anthropotechnik*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2009 [You Must Change Your Life, on Anthropotechnics, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013]

⁹³⁵ Peter Sloterdijk, *Scheintod im Denken*; *Von Philosophie und Wissenschaft als Übung*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin 2010

Western history, we continually separate thinking and doing, eliminating from our system the whole concept of practising, trying out and training; concepts that, nonetheless, constitute the core of professional education and, certainly, higher art education.

One of the major aims of a polyphonic art pedagogy is to build the bridge between reflective and practical practices, between thinking and doing, between philosophy and art. Within writing pedagogy, we see this again as, for example, a conflict between the *cultural studies* approach (lecturer-oriented, plenty of text analysis, a great deal of reflection and analysis) and *process pedagogy* (student-oriented, plenty of writing, peer response in class).⁹³⁶

We find the polyphony of reflective and practical strategies in Sloterdijk's image of 'practising', in which they, in fact, coincide. Polyphonic pedagogy does justice to what Peter Sloterdijk describes as the two natures of art-work: 'total craftsmanship and total wonder'.⁹³⁷

Paul Gardiner argues for a similar combination of reflective and practical aspects, of theory and practice, in the theatre writing pedagogy:

"I argue for a paradigm shift in this approach to playwriting pedagogy and encourage re-engagement with theory in practice, and suggest that adopting a systems view of creativity (...) could have a significant positive impact on the way playwriting is taught in the classroom. I conclude by suggesting that refocusing pedagogical dynamic, from critic to dramaturg, could create a more rewarding experience for both teacher and student, resulting in increased student autonomy and a more satisfying teaching experience."⁹³⁸

This way, analysis methods can also be used as artistic practices, for instance. One good example of this is the 2007 instruction book on screenwriting *Drehbuch reloaded* [Screenwriting Reloaded] by Katharina Bildhauer. She analyses new film dramaturgies in screenplays that fit perfectly into the polyphonic poetics for theatre texts that I have described. She talks about 'multiple realities', 'multi-protagonist', 'multi-perspective' and 'parallel concepts', for instance, in such a way that the pedagogy is aimed at both the product and the writing process.⁹³⁹

When, in polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy, reflective and practical strategies, theory and practice go together, the task is to question and describe theory and reflection anew.

One concrete example can be seen in the curriculum for the BA Writing for Performance course at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht.

Students are given extensive lessons in writing non-fiction texts and they write reflective reports, reviews, articles and essays. These texts are also discussed and assessed on the basis of their literary and creative aspects, not because non-fiction writing is part of a future work field, but because the theoretical and research-based activities and curriculum are seen as an artistic practice, as well. From that point of view, writing for theatre can be seen as a form of artistic research and practical dramaturgy.

In the literature on theatre writing and its pedagogy, there is frequent mention of the co-relation between theory and practice.

In her book *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity*, Geraldine Harris states that in feminist views of performance and theatre writing, the theory is also ‘ambiguous and playful’ and that this demands a continual theoretical shift,⁹⁴⁰ which requires the theatre author to continually self-reflect on their theoretical tools.

“(...) in so far as it offers interpretations of performance while questioning the grounds on which these interpretations are constructed.”⁹⁴¹

In *(Syn)aesthetics*, Josephine Machon describes how, in the ‘*écriture féminine*’ trend, writers/philosophers such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, with their focus on ‘embodied writing’, have always placed theory within creative practices.⁹⁴²

We already saw in Chapter III, in the description of the voices in the theatre writing process model, that some voices appeal more to doing and others more to thinking.

⁹³⁶ Vandermeulen, C. *Imagining a contact zone for writing process pedagogy and cultural studies*, Nebraska 1995

⁹³⁷ Sloterdijk 2011:307

⁹³⁸ Gardiner 2016

⁹³⁹ Bildhauer 2007:272

⁹⁴⁰ Harris 1999:21

⁹⁴¹ Harris 1999:21

⁹⁴² Machon 2009:28

In addition, in the polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy, an extraordinarily major role is also allotted to reflection and self-reflexivity. When the theatre writing process is characterised by polyphony and the pedagogy is to reflect the writing process, then knowledge of and insight into one's own writing process are an essential part of the pedagogy. Many modules in the curriculum will study the theory of writing processes and continually examine and question one's own writing processes and those of others.

In higher art education, there is always a discussion underway of how conscious a student should be of their making process and how much meta-knowledge is artistically productive. In my view, the student can and should be highly aware of and have insight into the writing process. The fear that this would stagnate the creative process ensues from a romantic view of artistry and from the myth of isolation, which we encountered earlier. Much creative theory confirms that the artist can also reflect on unconscious parts of the making process and that those reflections accelerate the creative process and allow it to proceed more smoothly. The writing theoretician Jeffrey Sommers⁹⁴³ claims that good, extensive reflection actually brings the author in contact with their own generative inner voices and, consequently, ultimately also their own 'authentic voice'.⁹⁴⁴

The theatre writing student must be prepared to develop and experiment with voices and allow them to speak in the writing process and should maintain a theoretical, research-based and reflective attitude towards those voices.

"If a new writer cannot take the steps of experimenting with different states of mind or practice such as 'suspension of belief', 'the Other', 'playing dead', 'playing and being others', 'translation', self-effacement' or 'writing cold', then they must review the question of writing at all."

David Morley⁹⁴⁵

IV.4 Three phases of the polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy

A polyphonic pedagogy of theatre writing can be roughly divided into three phases. That structure is supported by three domains.

1. In *creativity theories*, the development of a creative process has traditionally been divided into three recurring phases. As far back as 1575, the Spanish doctor Juan Huarte distinguished three phases in the development of creative intelligence:

- lower sensorial cognition
- generative thinking that works autonomously
- a way of knowing

“(...) by means of which some, without artificial intervention or practice, can say subtle and surprising things such as have never before been seen, heard or written or even considered, even though they are true.”⁹⁴⁶

Here, Huarte was harking back to the Arabian cultural philosopher Ibn Chaldoun, who made a similar categorisation of the creative process in 1379: first immersion, then critical distinction and, after that, experimental speculative creation.

Strikingly, this phase division is also recognisable in the curricula for contemporary higher art education courses. Often, the first year of a bachelor degree course is aimed at sensorial immersion and practical doing and experiencing. In the second and third years, there is far more theory and self-reflection and, in the final year, students work towards the third phase, in which the artist’s ‘personal voice’ is also developed. Linda Seeger, the scriptwriter and writing lecturer, refers to these three phases as ‘creativity’, ‘craftwork/techniques’ and ‘personal voice’.⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴³ Professor of English at the College of Arts and Science of Miami University

⁹⁴⁴ Jeffrey Sommers 1989:184 (quoted in: Vandermeulen 2011)

⁹⁴⁵ Morley 2007:153

⁹⁴⁶ In: Polet 1996:20

⁹⁴⁷ Linda Seeger, in an interview with Dennis Eick, see Eick 2006:213

2. *Theories on writing and writing processes* feature the wonderful classification that the theatre writer Hélène Cixous gives in her acclaimed book *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, from 1993. Cixous, too, refers to the role of time in the writing process and to the importance of an open, non-purist approach.

“Giving oneself to writing means to do this work of digging, of unburying, and this entails a long period of apprenticeship, since it obviously means going to school; writing is the right school. What I’ve learned cannot be generalized, but it can be shared.”⁹⁴⁸

She defines three phases in the writing process:

- The School of the Dead
- The School of Dreams
- The School of Roots

We will see that these phases, described by Cixous in a poststructuralist, feminist manner, fit perfectly with the phase classification of a polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy.

3. On the basis of *theatre studies*, there will be a structure or classification into dramaturgies within the phases, where both *the voice of dramatic dramaturgy* and *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* will be addressed and there is also room for the dramaturgy of what I earlier referred to as the ‘third category of theatre texts’. That then leads to the following phase classification:

- postdramatic dramaturgy

The central focus here is the recognition of moments of theatrical doubling

- dramatic dramaturgy

Here, the focus is on recognising moments of dramatic doubling

- dramaturgy of the ‘third-category’ theatre texts

In this phase, the feeling of tragic polyphony is developed.

IV.4.1 Phase 1 (year 1) Writing without organs

“My perspective on ‘You Can’t Teach Talent’ is that we need to *unlearn* as much as learn.”⁹⁴⁹

The poem *Ten Thousand Idiots* by the fourteenth century Iranian poet Hafiz, which I also use as the motto of this book and have included at the top of this chapter, illustrates the core of a multi-year theatre writing

curriculum: each apprentice who sets off on the path, including the theatre writing student, must realise that all the voices in them, of whose existence they are not aware of which they think have all packed their bags or are dead, are actually still there.

In the first phase of the pedagogy, the theatre writing student therefore primarily learns that there is more than one voice, not just in theatre texts but also in their writing process. The objective of this phase is for the student to refute the idea that there is only one voice and, to do so, they must see through myths, assumptions and conditioning that have caused that idea of unity.

In higher art education, the first phase of the pedagogy often consists of students unlearning the ingrained ideas on the discipline they practice and the related making process. This unlearning is described in many different ways.

Some higher art education courses call it a phase of *deconditioning*; the philosopher Roland Barthes describes it in his article “The Death of the Author” as a process of *desacralisation*⁹⁵⁰ or *demystification*.⁹⁵¹

The theatre writer Heiner Müller who, himself, was the leader of the ‘Szenisches Schreiben’ [Scenic Writing] course in Berlin, uses the term *expropriation* in his 1978 article “The Fright, the First Appearance of the New”. The fixed ideas and assumptions on writing with which the author is stuck are often linked to privileges and power principles. The writer’s task consists of freeing themselves of that form of authorship.

“... the individual contribution to his expropriation belongs to the criteria of talent”⁹⁵²

Polyphony can help in ridding oneself of the view that there is only one voice, one way of writing for theatre and one dominant dramaturgy.

⁹⁴⁸ Cixous 1993 (1990):6

⁹⁴⁹ Goldman 2012:232

⁹⁵⁰ Barthes 1968:116

⁹⁵¹ Translation by J.F. Vogelaar in Raster p.40

⁹⁵² Heiner Müller 1997:165, quoted in Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:133

Jenny Schrödl clearly describes the polyphony in theatre performances and texts as a critical core strategy for *destabilising* normative practices. In her view, polyphony then functions as the breaking down of the notion of unity, as a process of deconditioning with which the theatre writing pedagogy begins.⁹⁵³

Deconditioning takes place at many levels. This phase is characterised by a number of activities:

1. *Starting to write*

Short material is generated and there is a great deal of practising various ways to start writing. This expands the student's writing strategies and evokes new voices in the writing process.

Many modules and exercises are aimed at stimulating, training or awakening one specific voice in the theatre writing process model.

By continually allowing new voices to speak, the student notices that they exist, eroding the assumption of one single voice.

Chapter III includes a number of exercises for allowing voices to speak, such as *the voice of recollection* (by describing brief moments) and *the voice of improvisation* (with a 'writing without planning' module, in which texts are written on the basis of the sensorial experience of music, visual arts and movement, without prior planning).

The voice of the body can be trained with physical assignments. The American theatre writer and lecturer Tina How, for example, uses yoga, visualisation assignments and describing dreams to evoke new voices or, as she puts it, to focus attention on

"other sides of the brain".⁹⁵⁴

To allow new voices and countervoices to be heard, these exercises actually devote precious little attention to technique or the functionality of the text. This phase therefore also refers to Gilles Deleuze's notion of the 'body without organs', based on Artaud's ideas. When discussing *the voice of the body* in Chapter III, I showed how this concept always refers to the aimless, disinterested and even impersonal aspects of art and of writing.

The voice of improvisation, *the voice of presence* and *the voice of the writing* can also be trained with free-writing-style strategies so as those developed by Peter Elbow, in which the author carries on writing for a certain length of time without planning and without reviewing. David Morley says that these

strategies allow other voices to speak, giving the author an idea of their existence.⁹⁵⁵

2. Playfully breaking down concepts of unity

This breaking down takes place in many areas: writing (there is more than one voice), dramaturgy (there is more than one meaning, more than one dramaturgy), philosophy (there is more than one human or world image). Cixous appears to be referring to this when she talks about the ‘School of the Dead’. To start writing, you need the dead because they destabilise all certainties and fixed concepts.

Incidentally, this breaking-down process already takes place while writing in creative practice, with strategies that we can group under Bakhtin’s concept of ‘carnivalisation’. Ridicule and irony are used in writing and new genres or styles are continually added to a specific one. This facilitates new voices and the writer is disidentified (Bakhtin calls it counter-identification) from their own text and ideas.

3. Hybridisation

In this phase, the student does not write any long texts; instead they learn to fragment, snippet and isolate texts. Often an expression of the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy, Claire Swyzen and Kurt Vanhoutte call this strategy de-dramatisation⁹⁵⁶ or disassembly.⁹⁵⁷

So, in this first phase, a start is made on de-dramatising rather than dramatising strategies, also because the student is so inundated by dramatic dramaturgy, through film and TV that these have already often become the dominant or only possible dramaturgy in the writing process.

4. Collabowriting

Many writing assignments are carried out in pairs with the aim of picking away at the myth of singular authorship that assumes writing is done by an individual and that this individual possesses one voice. In his article “The

⁹⁵³ Schrödl 2012:149

⁹⁵⁴ Herrington & Brian 2006: XI

⁹⁵⁵ See Morley 2007

⁹⁵⁶ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:22

⁹⁵⁷ Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:21

Death of the Author”, the philosopher Roland Barthes quotes writing strategies from surrealism which were aimed at destroying or, as Barthes puts it, desacralising the singular writing interpretation. Barthes also mentions automatic writing (the hand writes what the head is not aware of), later adopted by Elbow in Freewriting.⁹⁵⁸

5. *Reflection on the writing process*

Throughout all the phases the writer reflects on the writing process, which amounts to continuous training of *the voice of self-reflexivity*.

The first phase starts with a ‘Theory of Writing Processes’ module, which has a double goal:

- Insight into your own writing process leads to further writing strategies. A writing strategy demonstrates a particular pattern of movement in the theatre writing process model.
- Insight into and reflection on the notion of authorship prises the monophony away and creates the feeling of dialogism.

Throughout all the phases, there are lessons in philosophy, to substantiate reflection.⁹⁵⁹ In the first phase, their core themes are: processes, differences, polyphony and authorship.

In his statement that we live in a time of processes and differences,⁹⁶⁰ the philosopher Jan Bor indicates that those are the two philosophical concepts determining our thinking at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is precisely these two concepts that form the basis for the polyphony of the theatre writing process.

The philosophy lessons discuss these concepts and philosophical backgrounds of the writing and thinking strategies used, such as *carnivalisation*, *hybridisation* and *deconstruction*.

6. *Expanding writing strategies*

As a result of new media, particularly the internet, the writing process itself has changed and expanded. By using specific writing assignments, it is possible to bring those writing strategies to life as a voice in the writing process. Remarkably, that expansion, defined by Roberto Simanowski⁹⁶¹ in his article ‘Der Autor ist tot, es lebe der Autor – Autorschaften im Internet’⁹⁶² [The Author Is Dead, Long Live the Author – authorships on the internet], can easily be included in a theatre writing pedagogy, as it demonstrates so many similarities with the characteristics of polyphony mentioned earlier:

- Hyperfiction and Chance Writing

Here, hyperfiction is seen as interactive fiction, in which the author writes the text together with the reader. This strategy erodes the myth of singular authorship and trains *the voice of interactivity*.

Chance writing works the same way as automatic writing and erodes the idea that all writing must be intentional. It exercises *the voice of improvisation*.

- Interactivity and self-reflection

Both activities include the voices of the reader and the spectator in the writing process and train *the voice of the writing*.

- Readymades and programming

The author uses existing text material as a basis for writing a text. This writing strategy, based on the adage “nothing is created from nothing” brings *the voice of intertextuality* to life. Programming indicates not only that the author produces language, but also that the choice of medium and interface is part of the writing process. A start is therefore made on training *the voice of the genre* and *the voice of the disciplines*.

– Copying and collaborating

Copying and borrowing texts again exercises *the voice of intertextuality*, while, through co-creation and collaboration, *the voice of the co-makers* is allowed to speak.

7. Feedback from minor to major

The first phase of a polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy requires starting with minor feedback and going on to major feedback. Giving direct global overall feedback (as Peter Elbow does when teaching writing) emphasises dominant voices and installs the human image of a single underlying voice. Many bachelor theatre writing courses in the United States already start in the first term with writing an evening-length piece.

⁹⁵⁸ Barthes 2004 (1968):116

⁹⁵⁹ Strikingly, over the past few years, the curricula for European theatre writing courses have included far more lessons in philosophy

⁹⁶⁰ Bor 2011:277

⁹⁶¹ Simanowski is professor of Digital Media Studies and Digital Humanities at the English Department and the School of Creative Media at the City University of Hong Kong

⁹⁶² In: Bieber & Leggewie (eds.) 2004:190-213

When discussing theatre text, feedback from minor to major leads to the initial posing of the question “why now?” with relation to each element and only later the overall question “why?”. In texts with a dramatic dramaturgy, the direct motivation of the characters is first discussed and only later the psychological motives.

After reading through a text together, reactions are also primarily focused on fragments and moments (“Which moment stays with you, which image or word stays with you?”), rather than overall reactions that often take on the character of a judgement and sustain the dominance of dramatic dramaturgy.

Supported by Margaret Atwood’s *Negotiating with the Dead; a Writer on Writing* and *Writing: Self & Reflexivity* by Celia Hunt and Fiona Sampson, David Morley writes the following on the absolute necessity for writers who are just starting out to train polyphony from the first phase of the writing process:⁹⁶³

“However, if a new writer cannot access one of the others within themselves who can perform these placebos of voice and self, and be the first audience to that writing, then there may be no option than to stop writing or to change their life.”⁹⁶⁴

IV.4.2 Phase 2 (year 2) Writing and its countervoices

“The writer isn’t attempting to find his voice, as if there were one such thing to find, but is discovering multiple inflections and the numerous attitudes from which it is possible to write without wholly identifying with any of them.”⁹⁶⁵

Hanif Kureishi, novelist and scriptwriter

Every voice has, as the author J.M. Coetzee puts it, a countervoice and a great deal of the writing process consists of the contact and dynamics within such a pair of voice and countervoice. In the second phase, the student learns the practice of these pairs of conflicting voices.

Hélène Cixous calls this phase ‘The School of Dreams’, because the dream refers to the endless possibilities and variations that are at the essence of that practice.

1. Revision

As I said, instruction books on theatre writing are virtually entirely based on starting to write and rarely on revision.

Revision is often seen as complying with the rules and not as a reactive, creative process. Students not infrequently have a slight aversion to revision, as no new texts or ideas can then emerge.

In the polyphonic explanation of revision, however, new things are always emerging. Revision is seen here as training to shift between various voices. The writer obtains a product from one writing voice – that could even be an earlier draft of their own text – and then reacts from the viewpoint of another voice or the countervoice, so the text keeps changing. This phase therefore makes plentiful use of Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability.

2. Variation

Suppose the student is writing a monologue. The character's circumstances can be continually varied, after which the text is revised to suit the new situation. The language will react to the change in the character's circumstances, for example.

The variation could also be in terms of genre. The text is rewritten in another genre, as it were.

The philosophical concept of variation comes from Gilles Deleuze⁹⁶⁶ and seems a useful basis for revision strategies. It is a basic technique for breaking away from linearity and causality and allowing us to realise, like Bakhtin, that all meaning is relative.

"Dialogism, like relativity, takes it for granted that nothing can be perceived except against the perspective of something else."⁹⁶⁷

Demonstrating variations in the text focuses attention on the making process rather than the product, training *the voice of the writing*. The film *Lola rennt* [Lola Runs] is a good example.

⁹⁶³ Morley 2007:153

⁹⁶⁴ Morley 2007:153. Morley extensively describes the parts of this process, even giving exercises

⁹⁶⁵ Kureishi 2003 (2002):258

⁹⁶⁶ The concept of variation is based on, for example, Jean-Clet Martin's "Zur Dramatisierung von Bildern" [On Dramatising Images], in: Peter Gente & Peter Weibel, *Deleuze und die Künste* [Deleuze and Art], Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main 2007, pp. 54-67

⁹⁶⁷ See, for example, Holquist in his book *Dialogism*, Holquist 2002 (1990):21

3. Doubling

In the second phase, many of the writing strategies work with what we encountered in the polyphonic poetics: the doubling of axes, addressees, languages, characters, styles, texts and genres. These doublings are expressed in the writing process by means of a continual shifting between voice and countervoice. When doubling axes, for example, we see a continual shifting between those axes.⁹⁶⁸

In Chapter III, I suggested a number of possibilities for using doubling strategies to train *the voice of the character* and *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy*. I also showed that the doubling of styles, genres and disciplines can be used to allow *the voice of destruction* to speak.

In 2011 I was sitting in the Volksbühne in Berlin during René Pollesch's monologue, *Ich schau dir in die Augen, gesellschaftlicher Verblendungs-zusammenhang!* #In this play, the makers continually mock interactive theatre.

In the middle of his monologue, the actor Fabian Hinrichs suddenly calls out, "Script!" And the prompt, in the first row and visible to everyone, reads aloud a couple of words from the script.

Pollesch is showing that, at that moment, the monologue is theatre. In the text, we hear *the voice of self-referentiality*, which we see in the writing process as *the voice of the writing* and *the voice of self-reflexivity*.

There is also a doubling of the theatre axes, characteristic of *the voice of post-dramatic dramaturgy*. In fact, there is yet another, third theatre axis: not between two characters on stage, nor between character and audience, but between actor and co-maker.

At the same time, calling out "Script!" is just about the most forbidden voice on stage.

The agreement seems to be that *the voice of the writing* should not actually be so explicitly heard from the author or actor. It seems like expressing the ultimate failure: "I'm showing as an actor that I no longer know my lines. I am showing that everything is prompted and that total dependence exists in me."

The theatre writer does not give the character any emotion, any thought, any dilemma or any expression. All that is heard is self-reference and self-reflection. And from whom? From the character? The actor? The writer?

In that one word “Script!”, which has become part of the linguistic theatre text, we can hear innumerable voices all at once. The polyphonic theatre writer’s writing process is balled up into the exclamation, “Script!”.

4. *Adapting and Retranslating*

In this phase, revising, varying and doubling are expressed in many exercises and writing assignments in the way of adapting, retranslating or writing on the basis of existing texts (such as writing documentary).

These activities include practising *the voice of editing*, *the voice of intertextuality* and *the voice of the writing*, for example.

The doubling can also be in theatre disciplines, so that *the voice of transformation* is trained: when writing a radio play, for example, the student has to keep transforming information from various disciplines into sound and spoken language.

In this phase, many writing strategies are aimed at developing *the voice of artificiality*. As we saw in Chapter III, that can be by creating distance in the information, plot or character, for example. It is *the voice of artificiality*, analogous with Bakhtin’s concept of outsideness, that is capable of evoking countervoices in the writing process.

5. *Reflection and Theory*

The voice of self-reflexivity is the theatre author’s awareness of their own polyphony and dialogism, the knowledge of their own voices and the insight into writing strategies for deploying and shifting between those voices.

In the pedagogy for writing for theatre, this voice is concentrated into a conscious research in theory and writing processes. In writing lessons, this can take the form of concrete reflection exercises.

When, in his writing lessons, Peter Elbow asks students to write reports on writing process, which he calls process notes, he is also attempting to train that voice.⁹⁶⁹

In her study on writing pedagogy, *Observe and Explore*, Talita Groenendijk also cites writing process notes as a method, intended to increase the student’s process awareness and to train *the voice of self-reflexivity*.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁸ Compare: Swyzen & Vanhoutte 2011:21

⁹⁶⁹ For a description, see Vandermeulen 2011, chapter 3

⁹⁷⁰ Groenendijk 2012:126

In her book *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Kathleen Yancey⁹⁷¹ describes a similar methodology. In the HKU Writing for Performance BA course, in the first two years separate modules have been developed in which the theory of polyphony and Flower & Hayes' writing process model are studied so that students also gain a language for describing and analysing their own and other people's writing processes.

There is far more reflection, theory and philosophy in this phase than in the first phase. In describing the voices in Chapter III, we saw that, for a number of voices, a long, hard mulling over of parts of the writing process, such as medium, discipline, genre, text type, character and audience is necessary.

IV.4.3 Phase 2 (year 3) Writing and co-creation

"What is poignant about their research is, however, the fact that, regardless of which collective trend gains the upper hand, both the theory and the practice of a writing pedagogy (composition lessons) is still based on the assumption that writing is, in essence and necessarily, a singular and individual action."⁹⁷²

Martha Woodmansee, professor at the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland

The second phase of the pedagogy includes a part that is focused entirely on collaboration and co-creation as an element of the theatre writer's craft. In a four-year curriculum for a BA course, this is included in the third year and it trains primarily *the voice of the co-makers, the voice of the disciplines and the voice of the inner critic*.

1. Internalisation

When theatre writing is carried out by several people at the same time, that is also and primarily an exercise in internal polyphony within the writing process of each person individually. In all phases of the pedagogy, voices in the individual writing process can be stimulated through collective writing and collaboration exercises.

In this phase, the student develops and trains the polyphonic author position, the co-creation within one individual, or what I earlier described as the 'theatre writer as a relation'. This is chiefly done through writing strategies in which external voices in the writing process – such as those of other makers, other writers, the audience or the commissioning party – are internalised into internal voices, which can be shifted between. In this process, insight into Bakhtin's concept of outsideness is indispensable.

In the previous chapter, we saw examples of this process of internalisation, which, as a method, also often evokes *the voice of self-reflexivity*.

In the case of *the voice of the inner critic*, internalisation has long since already happened. The writer has already, from an early age, internalised the outside judgements to such a degree that they have become convinced that these are their own judgements. It is essential, to learn how to actually make sure *the voice of inner critic* is actually productive and actually heard. In Chapter III, I gave some suggestions that mainly boil down to the fact that the judgements and criticism end up in the text by themselves, analogous with the way in which Peter Elbow⁹⁷³ says that writing about being unable to write can help in the writing process. In including *the voice of the inner critic* in the text you can also use *the voice of the writing*.

2. Writing subgenres

An excellent way to train the internalising process is to write and explore subgenres of theatre writing.

In Chapter III, for example, we saw how writing dramolettes can allow *the voice of the narrator* and *the voice of the writing* to speak, for example.

In the book *De kern is overal; schrijven voor de theaterpraktijk van nu* [The Core is Everywhere; writing for today's theatre practice] from 2011⁹⁷⁴ the writing process for subgenres of theatre writing is discussed. They are about writing for movement theatre, for musical theatre, for puppet and object theatre and for documentary theatre. In the subgenres, in which the other theatre disciplines play an important role, the process of internalising also, naturally, trains *the voice of transformation*.

It is these subgenres that can form the paradigm for polyphonic writing.⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷¹ Yancey 1998: 28-29

⁹⁷² "Das Bedrängende ihrer Untersuchungen besteht jedoch in der Tatsache, dass ungeachtet der sich durchsetzenden kollektiven Tendenzen sowohl die Theorie als auch die Praxis einer Pädagogik des Schreibens (Kompositionsunterricht) noch immer unter der Voraussetzung operieren, dass Schreiben wesentlich und notwendig ein singulärer und individueller Akt sei." Woodmansee 2000 (1992):309

⁹⁷³ Elbow 1986:38

⁹⁷⁴ Edited by Jannemieke Caspers and Nirav Christophe. The articles in this book were written by the theatre writers Anouk Saleming, Anna Maria Versloot, Babiche Ronday, Maud Lazaroms and Jannemieke Caspers

⁹⁷⁵ I got this idea from John Freeman, *New Performance / New Writing*, Palgrave/MacMillan, New York 2007 p. 79. He describes how the way director Robert Wilson dealt with texts in the theatre formed the paradigm for what the new theatre text actually is and how it is constructed

3. *Interdisciplinary collaboration projects*

Alfred Behrens, a big name in film scriptwriting in Germany, argued at a symposium on writing for theatre and film in Berlin that you need to learn directing, camera and editing in your course and that, as an author, you also have to know everything about the latest technology⁹⁷⁶. In my view, this is essential for the theatre writer, too, not so much to be able to fully master other disciplines or media, but to familiarise yourself with external voices from the inside so you can then internalise them.

Theatre writing courses are often linked to or universities with strong theatre programmes.⁹⁷⁷ The theatre writing takes place in an interdisciplinary writing and research environment to allow co-makers to access the curriculum and therefore train *the voice of the co-makers* and *the voice of the disciplines*.⁹⁷⁸

4. *Reflection and Theory*

In the philosophy lessons in the second phase, various human and world images are studied and, specifically, the concept of the polyphonic or dialogical self.

The theoretical focus is on the way in which collective theatre making processes influence the dramaturgy of the theatre text and the performances that are developed.

"(...) the process of developing a cumulative, multi-selved multi-voiced identity, which takes place between and among composing events, and the associated texts."⁹⁷⁹

IV.4.4 Phase 3 (year 4): Writing as Zigzagging

The third phase is about the movement and dynamics between the voices in the text and finding your 'personal voice' as a zigzagging and interplay between the voices in the theatre writing process. When Cixous talks of her third phase, 'The School of Roots', she is referring to the core of authorship, the digging and looking for your 'personal voice'.

1. *Artistic graduation work*

Bakhtin describes how, within the concept of polyphony, a writer can work on developing their 'personal voice'. He thinks it can be done by building a 'reflexive' relationship with language. To do so, it is necessary to become aware there are multiple voices in the writing process. The task is then to learn to distinguish between those voices and allow them to speak. The

objective is not to make the voices disappear but for them to be rewritten, as it were, retold in our own words. The voices then change from monological to dialogical, giving them creative potential.⁹⁸⁰

In her 2009 PhD thesis *The Anxiety of Feminist Influence; Concepts of Voice in Margaret Atwood and Carol Shields*, Nicola Jayne Stead comes to the similar conclusion that the interplay of the various voices in the author forms their ‘personal voice’.

“The ‘voice’ is multiple, ambiguous and influenced, but it is also apparently unique”⁹⁸¹

In her book on writing pedagogy *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Kathleen Blake Yancey also talks about the “multi-selved, multi-voiced identity”⁹⁸² of the writer.

“This notion that composing writing and composing the identity of the writer both depend upon an inner dialogue among these three independent selves.”

In the ‘independent voice’ Yancey acknowledges three dominant voices, which she bases on Bakhtin’s ideas:

“The self I am aware of at any given moment

An ideal self/hero self

A guide self”

The description of Yancey’s last voice demonstrates many similarities with what I call *the voice of self-reflexivity*. A good theatre writing course, says Yancey, develops and practices those three voices.

⁹⁷⁶ *Leibhaftig schreiben – Welten phantasieren* Berlin Universität der Künste 3 July 2009

⁹⁷⁷ Such as Yale, UCLA, New York University, Columbia

⁹⁷⁸ Bishop & Starkey 2006:149

⁹⁷⁹ Yancey 1998:14 ff

⁹⁸⁰ Also see: Hunt & Sampson 2006:27 ff

⁹⁸¹ Stead 2009:2

⁹⁸² Yancey 1998:14

When discussing the ‘personal voice’, Bakhtin talks about a situation many writers aim for as an ultimate artistic moment; the situation in which there is a unique zigzagging between the voices. Script writer and novelist Margaret Atwood describes this in her own, unique way in her wonderful book *Negotiating with the Dead; a Writer on Writing*:⁹⁸³

“The act of writing takes place at the moment when Alice passes through the mirror.

At this one instant, the glass barrier between the doubles dissolves, and Alice is neither here nor there, neither art nor life, neither the one thing nor the other, though at the same time she is all of these at once.”

The French philosopher Julia Kristeva says that, in the moment when all voices are given equal space and allowed to speak at the same time, then the writer’s self changes and therefore become a self in progress:

“In the creation of the artwork the creative artist opens up the possibility of being transformed.”⁹⁸⁴

The student’s artistic graduation work is questioned and assessed on the basis of the following, for example:

- How is the theatre text polyphonic?
- Can various voices be seen in the text?
- How does *the voice of intertextuality* sound in the text? In which discourse is the text placed? Writing training is also discourse training.
- How did the author deal with the notation options for the text and its voices? How do *the voice of the linguistic theatre text* and *the voice of the staging text* relate to one another in the text?
- What is the dramaturgy of the text? How do *the voice of dramatic dramaturgy* and *the voice of postdramatic dramaturgy* relate to one another in the text?
- Is there a clear zigzagging between the voices in the text, and if so, what effect does that have on its meaning, expressiveness and theatrical possibilities?

2. Graduation research

In the third phase – in a BA curriculum this is the fourth year – students also work towards a test of the kind of practice based research that should be entailed in higher art education: by theatre writers about theatre writing and about their own theatre writing process. Students conduct their research in

the same period in which they write their artistic graduation work, focusing their research on an aspect of that graduation work: the genre, the theme, the dramaturgy or the style. They combine theory and practice and the notions and questions in their research originate in their own writing practice and are then tested there as they write.

The research also gains methodological characteristics from the artistic process, the polyphonic theatre writing process. Creative strategies such as interdisciplinarity and co-creation are also deployed in the research.⁹⁸⁵

To allow theory and practice to merge and to train research as a creative activity, the language of the contemplative, research-oriented text must also be guided and evaluated. Perhaps the text with which the artistic research is shared is also polyphonic. Annette Storr, for example, calls her own text on theatre, *Regieanweisungen* [Stage Directions], ‘polyphonic’.⁹⁸⁶

Susan Melrose distinguishes various writing registers in research texts, which she borrows from Gregory Ulmer, such as ‘explanatory myth’, ‘expert or technical register’, ‘popular register’ and ‘personal/anecdotal registers’. Melrose makes a powerful plea for the use of multiple writing registers at the same time, which she refers to as ‘multifocal’.⁹⁸⁸

3. Tragedy

Cixous also expressly uses the third phase of authorship to train *the voice of the unsayable*. On the last page of her book *Three Steps on the Ladder of*

⁹⁸³ Atwood 2002:57

⁹⁸⁴ Quoted in Hunt & Sampson 2006, pp. 15-17

⁹⁸⁵ That process can also be recognised in design research: “Like designers, design researchers prefer to work in multidisciplinary and multicultural workshops to quickly expose themselves to multiple perspectives.”, See Koskinen, I., et al. *Design Research through practice. From the Lab, Field, and Showroom*, Amsterdam 2011, p. 131

⁹⁸⁶ See Storr 2009:11 and 16. In the theatre magazine *Etcetera*, the book *Listen to the Bloody Machine*, on Kris Verdonck’s theatrical making process, is also referred to as “polyphonic”, incidentally in one breath with process-oriented, as if synonymous (Jeroen Peeters, ‘Hoe werken kunstenaars vandaag?; nieuwe publicaties over Rosas and Kris Verdonck’ [How do Artists Work Nowadays?; new publications on Rosas and Kris Verdonck], in: *ETCETERA* no. 130, October 2012, p. 38)

⁹⁸⁷ Professor in Performing Arts at the Middlesex University in London

⁹⁸⁸ Melrose 2006:122

⁹⁸⁹ Also described in Blyth & Sellers 2004

Writing⁹⁸⁹ she uses the term ‘Imund’. This term is explained in the article “Making the Silence speak: Angela Morgan Cutler’s *Auschwitz*” by Abigail Rine :⁹⁹⁰

“The third step on Cixous’ ladder of writing is the School of Roots. Here, writing is portrayed as digging, burrowing down deep, past the order and ruthless logic of the world, beneath the law. It is in this school that Cixous introduces her notion of the “imund”, the unclean. Playing with the French word for “world” (*le monde*) she describes the imund (*l’immonde*) as that which is rejected from the world. To be imund is to “no longer belong to the world” or live by its rules; to write the imund is to write beyond the logic of the law, past its arbitrary and absolute “because Writing that resists the finality and authority of this *because* is imund, a kind of writing that comes from “deep inside”, from the “nether realms”, that defies all “mental, emotional, and biographical clichés” (Cixous, pp. 118-19).”

The attention to that which exceeds all mental, emotional and biographical clichés, which I see recur in *the voice of the unsayable*, refers, from a dramaturgical point of view, to the tragic.

While, in the first phase of the theatre writing pedagogy the theatrical doubling (in postdramatic dramaturgy) is central and, in the second phase, the dramatic doubling (in dramatic dramaturgy), the final phase devotes attention to the third category of theatre text in which the dramaturgy is doubled and to the tragic, the silence and the unsayable.

4. *Reflection and Theory*

The central theme in the philosophy lessons in this phase is ‘artistic research’, both the various forms and methodologies and the strategies for sharing and disseminating artistic research.

The tragic and tragedy are also researched and questioned in this phase.

The polyphonic theatre writing process includes both conscious and more unconscious voices, more productive and more reflective voices, and honours both types of voice.

In the theatre writing process, we see polyphony recurring in all three pedagogic phases:

1. Polyphony within the first phase: starting to write (the destruction of myths as breaking down unity notions)

2. Polyphony within the second phase: strategies for writing and revising (polyphony in the collaboration with other disciplines and the expansion of the discipline voices within the writing process)
3. Polyphony within the third phase: the 'personal voice' as the zigzagging between various voices

⁹⁹⁰ In: *Oxford Journals, Forum for modern language Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 340-351
See Cixous 1993:118-119



Postscript

“Who am I?
Where do I come from?
I am Antonin Artaud
and I say it
the way I know how
immediately
so you will see my current body
burst into bright shards
and re-collect itself
into ten thousand renowned facets
a new body
where you can never, ever again
forget me”.

Antonin Artaud⁹⁹¹

⁹⁹¹ In: Sybren Polet (ed.) *Door mij spreken verboden stemmen* [Forbidden Voices Speak Through Me], Bert Bakker, The Hague 1975, p. 46, translation: Rosalind Buck

Outroduction

I'm getting on for sixty and out on my bike. I'm attempting to get to the traffic lights while they are still green. Hurrying on, I encourage myself as if I were another:

"Come on Nirav, step on it. You can do it!"

At the same time, the sports reporter inside me heroically gives a running commentary. The voice of Ned Boulting cheers as if I were riding in the Tour de France:

"There he goes! Left, right, dodging and weaving, some beautiful moves: dancing on the flanks of the Aubisque!"

That is the way my mind works and that is the way I write theatre.

The Bakhtinian struggle against the notion of unity is central to my way of thinking about theatre writing and its pedagogy:

The unity of the theatre text

(closed dramaturgy, the finalised product)

The unity of the writing process

(the linear writing process with its myths)

The unity of the writer

(authenticity, autonomy, monophony)

The unity of theatre writing pedagogy

(product pedagogy)

Art pedagogy must be aware of the assumptions on art, man and the world, on which its pedagogy is built. These times call for a new polyphonic human image, the 'dialogical self'.

Bakhtin's polyphony-related concepts help with a poetics of the linguistic theatre text that fits with that human image and is open to multiple dramaturgies.

The polyphonic theatre writing process model is a dynamic model, which can include all methodologies for the theatre writing process and does not exclude or prefer any way of working.

Based on that writing process model, a productive polyphonic theatre writing pedagogy can be developed.

Product, process and pedagogy mirror one another.

That mirroring should be the mantra of contemporary higher art education.

Ten Thousand Idiots

Just over ten thousand days ago
in Pune, India, I was given a new name.
At the cloakroom of my spiritual master's ashram
I had to give a password.
I chose the theatre maker Antonin Artaud's term 'double'.
Three years earlier, to conclude my theatre studies, I had
directed the show *Mômo*,
an adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* using Artaud's theories.
Mômo was Artaud's nickname and means 'idiot' in the
Marseilles dialect.
In that Indian ashram, evening after evening, Osho⁹⁹²
gave lectures to his many followers.
He concluded those lectures, without fail, with the question:

“Can we meet ten thousand

boeddha's tonight?"

⁹⁹² At that time known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

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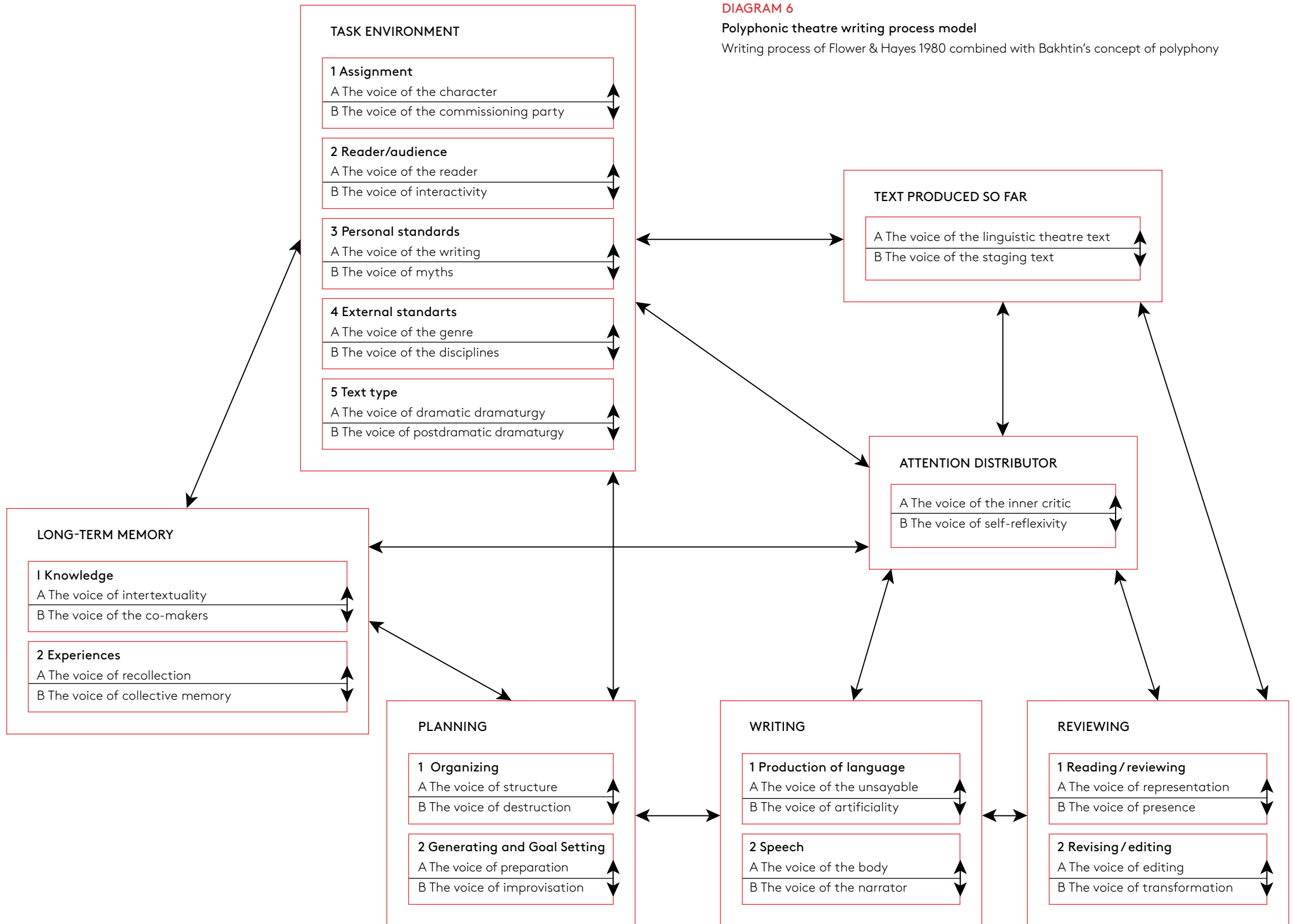
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DIAGRAM 6

Polyphonic theatre writing process model

Writing process of Flower & Hayes 1980 combined with Bakhtin's concept of polyphony



oes! Left, ng and me beautiful cing on the e Aubisque!"

Ten Thousand Idiots describes the innumerable voices dwelling in us in this day and age as we live, write and make theatre. Learning to distinguish your internal voices, play with them and switch rapidly between them is the basis of the creative process.

Ten Thousand Idiots uses a brand-new poetics to describe what a theatre text actually is, goes on to examine all the voices that sound in the writing process for theatre texts, and develops ideas on how the pedagogy of theatre writing could be structured.

While *Ten Thousand Idiots* is an aide to writing good theatre texts, at the same time it subtly presents a case study on how we can make the creative process more flexible, rapid and profound and how art education might be tailored to today's hybrid artists.

