



Postdramatic Possibilities of Dramatherapy and their Applications to Trauma

Les Possibilités Postdramatiques de la Dramathérapie et leurs Applications au Traumatisme

Jean-François Jacques

This paper will explore the invitation made by Constantine P. Cavafy's in his poem *Ithaca* to enrich ourselves with new experiences and knowledge on the return journey home, knowing that the destination is only the result of these experiences leading to it. This invitation will be translated in this paper by examining the knowledge that can be gained from emerging discourses and traditions in theatre and performance (such as postdramatic theatre), and how they can be applied to dramatherapy practice, particularly for people who have experienced trauma and internal displacement.

As 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the publication in the English language of *Postdramatic Theatre* by Hans-Thies Lehmann, I will explore in this paper the facets of postdramatic theatre and how it represents the conceptualization of diverse and contemporary theatre practices that differ from the traditional forms of dramatic theatre. I will discuss how postdramatic theatre significantly diverges from dramatic theatre by distancing itself from the authority of the text, privileging non-linearity in theatricality, emphasizing the experience of the lived body, and rejecting mimesis and representational forms of drama. I will also examine whether the postdramatic paradigm has been integrated within dramatherapy theory and what could be gained from doing so.

In particular, I will argue in this paper that postdramatic theatre may be holding significant possibilities for dramatherapy practice, especially when working with clients who have experienced trauma due to its non-linearity and multimodality, the way in which it leaves somatic, aesthetic and relational imprints on the psyche and the lived body, and the limits of its representation as suggested by Derrida. I intend to outline the possibilities of postdramatic theatre to help facilitate the safe return of trauma survivors to an internal place that they can call home.



Biography

Jean-François Jacques, PhD, is a dramatherapist, somatic experiencing practitioner (SEP) and clinical supervisor in private practice, and associate lecturer in dramatherapy at Anglia Ruskin University (UK). His current area of research focuses on developing an innovative psychophysical and somatosensory approach to trauma healing that uniquely integrates dramatherapy with somatic practices. He is a published author in the field of creative therapeutic practice and has presented at conferences nationally and internationally. He has been co-editor and reviews editor of the academic journal *Dramatherapy*. He is also the creator and director of the *Theatre of Lived Experience*, a visual, performance and literary arts practice.

Recent Publications

Jacques, J.F. (Ed.) (2024). *Trauma and Embodied Healing in Dramatherapy, Theatre and Performance*. Routledge

Jacques, J.F. (2022). **Aesthetics of Connection in the Performance of Lived Experience**. In: M. Lopez Cao, R. Hougham and S. Scoble (Eds), *Imagining Windmills: Trust, Truth and the Unknown in the Arts Therapies*. London: Routledge

Jacques, J.F. (2020). **Investigation into the Production of Meaning in Autobiographical Performance in Dramatherapy**. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Vol.69