

**How can we unite the dramaturgy of belonging with men's mental health
and create a piece of theatre that raises awareness through Monodrama?**

*An exploration of mental health in men and how to express it through Monodrama, Verbatim
and Life Story Theatre.*

Thomas Rees

Independent Project (ADPA6000/C)

2303758

AI Acknowledgment

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Wordcount: 6,976 (excluding AI acknowledgment, quotes, titles, appendices and bibliography)

9,320 (all together)

Research and Investigation Element

Men’s Mental Health and Theatre

“Male suicide is a public health emergency. In the UK, suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50, and in 2022 three-quarters of all suicide deaths were male... As a society, we must move beyond simply encouraging men to talk and start actively listening, ensuring the proper support is there when they do” (MANUP?, n.d.).

Mental health is a topic that stands close to home and the within 21st century it is a topic that is still a high cause of concern. There are many outreaches and support systems out there for men, but some are not accessible or some men feel that they cannot access them due to social expectations of masculinity. As a student studying in the creative sector, I propose the question: with support of appropriate organisations, can a monodrama that is crafted using verbatim and life story theatre (LST) ideologies produce effective theatre that explores themes impacting men’s mental health, and can it support access to services?

First, let’s outline why it’s important. Research has gathered that “males are 3 times more likely to die by suicide in Wales than females” (Samaritans, 2024). The statistics that follow are just as impactful:

Table 1

Wales	2022			2023			2024		
Number of deaths for persons aged 10+	Overall 339	Male 254	Female 85	Overall 386	Male 296	Female 90	Overall 436	Male 337	Female 99
Number of deaths by age group (years)	Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female
10-14	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
15-19	10	7	3	14	9	5	9	8	1
20-24	18	13	5	16	11	5	21	18	3
25-29	22	20	2	32	27	5	27	18	9
30-34	29	23	6	47	37	10	35	27	8
35-39	43	34	9	38	31	7	38	33	5
40-44	32	23	9	34	25	9	48	37	11
45-49	36	29	7	33	26	7	42	35	7
50-54	29	19	10	41	31	10	50	38	12
55-59	32	24	8	34	24	10	43	32	11
60-64	28	20	8	20	17	3	41	34	7
65-69	13	10	3	25	19	6	25	16	9
70-74	10	4	6	17	15	2	14	11	3
75-79	11	7	4	21	17	4	21	15	6
80-84	12	9	3	6	2	4	14	11	3
85-89	6	5	1	5	4	1	4	3	1
90+	7	6	1	2	1	1	3	1	2

Source: Office for National Statistics

(Samaritans, 2024)

The numbers alone were enough to form the following thought: what could I be doing that aligns with my field of study?

This led me to investigate who else is doing this work. Which resulted in the finding of a community theatre group from Stoke-on-Trent who created a piece of drama where men were encouraged to explore themes such as identity, sexuality, society and the impact that said themes has on their lives. This facilitated the group to have conversations, friendships and a new support network in which they'd feel comfortable. All these connections were built just from creating a piece of theatre that is performance from personal experiences (Arts Council England, 2019). Furthermore, a study was conducted on "using theatre to address mental illness stigma" (Michalak *et al*, 2014). The study highlights how a professional actress who lives with a bipolar disorder (BD) created a piece of theatre, that targeted the stigmatism toward BD. As I see it, plays that are crafted from real stories and real experiences are what makes theatre so special. This research study sparked my interest in Verbatim Theatre, Life Story Theatre (LST) and The Dramaturgy of Belonging.

Verbatim and Life Story Theatre and its connection to the Dramaturgy of Belonging

"The site and structure of the interview prompts acts of personal storytelling and this material thematically contains features of belonging through identity narratives" (Peters, 2019, p. 60).

First, what is dramaturgy and what does it mean to be a dramaturg? The task of a dramaturg is to "consider how the artistic choices made by the creative team in the process of production might enhance the philosophical, political, or aesthetic goals of the event" (Chemers, 2016). Additionally, practitioner Felicia Hardison Londré argues that writing creatively is at the peak of stimulation and most demanding when done through the literary genre of dramaturgical writing; for "the dramaturg's words constitute invisible connecting links between page and stage and between theatre artist and theatre consumer" (Londré, 2005, p. 1). Taking a dramaturgical approach through the process and relying heavy on research between the historical context that strengths the play's development, me as a performer, my connection to the text and its relationship with the audience during the development and application element of the verbatim and LST inspired piece is advantageous. Trezise agrees with this approach within the body of her work as she too, relies on copious amounts of research while relying on her connection with an actor to create a piece of theatre; that research on their experience then allows you to grasp a colour of the place and world you're retelling (Trezise, 2025).

Sarah Peters has an intriguing study into Verbatim Theatre and the Dramaturgy of Belonging. The key aspect discussed throughout was the sense of community belonging a piece of Verbatim can deliver. She revealed that the community belonging "fostered among audience members who had no involvement in the making of the play... data revealed consistent statements of familiarity with the characters" (Peters, 2019, p. 40). This data proves that this ever-growing wave of theatre is consistently relevant, important and beneficial towards the growth of communities.

This brings me on to discuss catharsis, catharsis is explained and illustrated with examples from philosopher Aristotle who identified the emotional response of audiences as an essential

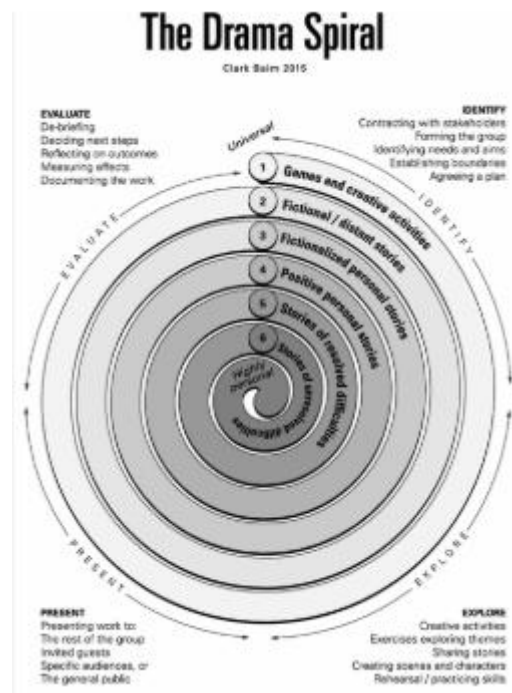
component of drama (Alley Theatre, 2024). I argue that uniting audience connection by the release of pent-up emotions allows an individual to associate emotionally with the characters journey and struggles. Witnesses of this drama are then hit with catharsis as a cleansing affect which creates an empathetic connection because “the act of bearing witness in the theatre to unspeakable events can also bring the release of strong emotions, which brings its own reward and satisfaction” (Gardner, 2023). In my opinion, this is an important element of theatre as it allows us to connect and grow as communities, which further solidifies the importance of the Dramaturgy of Belonging alongside Verbatim and LST. In conversation with Bulgo (see Appendix A.1) about meeting audience expectations, he highlighted how he thrives on his plays having a lingering effect after the show and that with his work on “Last Christmas” (Bulgo, 2012) that “someone tweeted that it’s the kind of play that makes you want to call up your parents as soon as you’ve left the theatre and tell them how much you love them” (Bulgo, 2025). Thus, a prime example of catharsis in a theatrical context, a factor that would be well married into my work; the goal was to leave the audience connecting, questioning and empathising with the character on stage. This feeling has resonated with my connection to theatre for some time and when going to watch as part of research on Monodramas and mental health in theatre, I experienced this exact feeling. Keiron Self complimented this (see Appendix A.2) on his comment about the development of “Martin Decker: DAD” (Self and Jones, 2025) by stating that when we approach harsh topics in the arts we want audiences to feel cathartic and to enjoy their connection with a character, everyone knows what is going wrong, it’s time we highlight what is right (Self, 2026). These monodramas are heavily inspirational towards my work, both well credited productions that explore mental health through a creative lens.

We can understand that the art of theatre is forever changing, it is a creative process that makes us reflect upon what is happening on stage. I believe that Verbatim Theatre is within the heart of that connection, it’s a “type of theatre which is based on the spoken words of real people” (Digital Theatre+, 2024). Knowing this before watching a production initially builds that relationship between audiences and stories because they aren’t watching fictional characters in a fictional world but watching real characters based upon true stories. Furthermore, Life Story Theatre (LST) practitioners emphasise this point further by that it creates “opportunities for people from all walks of life to have their experiences witnessed onstage has the potential to change attitudes, challenge injustice and discrimination, and influence policy” (Diamond *et al*, 2025, p. 4). While Verbatim and LST differ in their own respects, they both intake real events to produce their stories. Verbatim takes on the spoken words and mannerisms of a person while LST undertakes the task of conjuring stories together into a theatrical construct that celebrates and respects participants experiences (Karin *et al*, 2025, p. 34).

Whilst the positives sound impactful, it’s also important to discuss the negatives. Within a research paper by Florence Veitch (Veitch, 2024), she highlighted that creatives, such as Alana Valentine, believe that the form of theatre can cause improper community engagement which in turn, leads to a result of insensitivity and bad judgment (Valentine, 2024). Firstly, yes this can be completely valid dependant on many factors within standard theatre practice.

Secondly, I believe, it can only be valid if the practitioner doesn't follow the correct procedure of theatre ethics that needs to be embedded when approaching this line of work.

This brings me on to discuss The Drama Spiral:



This a theatrical decision-making tool “intended to help theatre and arts practitioners to work safely and ethically along the continuum from the fictional to the highly personal” (Baim, 2025, p. 52).

Exploiting this tool assists in the facilitation of safety and respectful boundaries which can counter Valentine’s argument of insensitivity and bad judgment but instead tackles the work with great sensitivity and proper judgment.

(Baim, 2025, p. 52)

A Conversation with Bethan Marlow

Wanting to gain more insight on the use of Verbatim, I hosted an informal interview with practitioner Bethan Marlow (see Appendix A.3). Verbatim allows individuals to tell, hear and experience stories through a creative lens, which Marlow complimented by stating that “it gives a voice to stories that are often unheard in theatre. It gives an authenticity that I don't believe any writer could write. It highlights lives and raises awareness of themes that are easily ignored otherwise” (Marlow, 2025). Which I wholeheartedly agree with as it's where the importance of Verbatim and LST comes into force. Given the nature of this project, the investigation of the importance of mental health in men was a key goal and as Marlow states, this field of the industry gives men a voice that can be unheard in theatre but also outside.

As I see it, Verbatim solidifies that human connection, as the work produced has a reach that no other artform can reach in the same respective. Paul Kalburgi supports this point, as Verbatim “can break down complex social issues and promote change, by presenting digestible, authentic piece of theatre, with clear messages to take home” (Kalburgi, 2017). So, what better significant social issue to tackle than mental health in men? And creating a piece of Verbatim / LST that promotes challenges and supports ideologies such as ‘the importance of speaking up as man’ or ‘the importance of emotional expression as a man’ or ‘the impact of toxic masculinity in a deprived area’. These issues are strongly passionate within both my

work and private life, therefore, I believe that creating theatre that can support and challenge these pernicious beliefs is fundamental to the development of communities and society.

The goal throughout this investigation was to create a piece of theatre that explores men's mental health through Verbatim and LST practices. Throughout the text, the actor would explore real questions, ideas, cultures and environments; all the qualities that play into the effect of mental health (Patterson and Sextou, 2017, p. 4). These explorations will allow the character to questions what it means to be man. To achieve this, investigation was conducted on a theatrical style that poses interest to myself and how Verbatim and LST elements can feed into and support the style of the drama. Researching this style of theatre allowed the development, application, combination and collaboration of ideas to produce a piece of work that unites the dramaturgy of belonging with men's mental health and create a script that raises awareness through Monodrama.

The Art of Monodramas

A Monodrama can be defined as “a play or dramatic scene in which only one character speaks; or a sequence of dramatic monologues all spoken by the same single character” (Baldick, 2015). A theatrical style that has always inspired me with its involvement of minimal set that strips away distractions to magnify the drama of a text.

Take “Fleabag” (Waller-Bridge, 2019) for example. A renowned Monodrama to date, which is a raw and real monologue that follows Fleabag in a vulnerable point in her life; through this we experience how she overcomes grief. From personal experience, a Monodrama solidifies that audience, performer and story connection. Waller-Bridge expresses her obsession with audiences, by stating that she is eager to learn “how to win them, why some things alienate them, how to draw them, what divides them. It's a theatrical sport.” (Waller-Bridge, 2019, p. 13).

Similarly to Verbatim and LST, finding the importance and impact of Monodramas was a key investigation point. Again, I hosted informal interviews with practitioners Matthew Bulgo (see Appendix A.1), Keiron Self (see Appendix A.2) and Rachel Trezise (see Appendix A.4). Bulgo stated that “in current times when financial constraints are a bit tight, they're economical... I for one enjoy them as a form, if something creative is done with the form of the structure or the relationship with the audience” (Bulgo, 2025). Trezise had a similar argument that highlighted the economic value while stating that we must use the upmost of our creativity to find creative way to tell a bigger story (Trezise, 2025). This cements the idea that monologues unite that connection in the theatre through bigger creativity and having a singular individual exploring and expressing their journey by innovating and creating an exciting piece of drama. It is a way of exploring delicate subject matters that are close to you but through someone else (Self, 2026).

Merging Monodrama, Verbatim and LST into a singular production allows for that creativity to blossom and those voices to be heard. You take one-man, exploring real lives and stories of real mean; that character then acts as a vessel for those men from a community. The goal of this project was to have open discussions with men located in a deprived area in which I lived and discuss how that has affected their life and how their experiences have shaped them into

the men they are. For when we read, watch or experience a play we want to see ourselves in those stories, to have our deepest thoughts and feelings reflected through characters (Hatch, 2024).

To be a Playwright

“In our plays we are asking larger questions about what it means to be human” (Neipris, 2005, p. 24)

What does it mean to be a playwright? Foxon argues that it is “someone who works to make movement happen, and that their play is wrought, hammered, beaten into shape... being a playwright is not just something you decide to do, it is something you decide how to do” (Foxon, 2018, p. 10). I strongly concur with this statement, for me, a playwright is to write a story that challenges, brings awareness or sparks questions on what it means to be human. Take “Last Christmas” (Bulgo, 2012) for instance, a monodrama that explores the meaning of being a human alongside men’s mental health; we see Tom explore his demons as he battles difficulties such as grief and regret. That is what makes play so powerful and inspires change within audiences, we see “unique individuals coming together in moments of crisis, which leads to conflicts, which leads to confrontations, which leads to resolution, and finally change” (Neipris, 2005, p. 1).

These further reinforce my reasoning for investigating Verbatim and LST. The style of these theatres is a fundamental tool to explore men’s mental health and what that means to other men; research has shown that “a dramatic writer must know his or her characters in the most intimate ways” (Neipris, 2005, p. 33). Hence, what better way to solidify that connection between writer and character, than to create a character that is based upon the stories and conversations of local men.

Within exploration on how to approach this style of theatre I found that a key starter is to have at least one question per play to ask everyone you interview (Marlow, 2025). Which resulted in the question: ‘How can we unite the dramaturgy of belonging with men’s mental health and create a piece of theatre that raises awareness through Monodrama?’. These conversations can make the process exciting from a writing perspective because it allows natural conversations to conjure without any fabrication. Similarly, another approach that came to light was allowing the script to be built in the room as you Research and Develop (R&D) that project (Trezise, 2025); that shared community experience from those you talk to, makes the process feel safe and rewarding.

To unite these elements, we must first understand how we approach them. When tackling theatre through Verbatim and Life Story, it is essential that you create a safe environment for the interviewee to talk, this can be known as the ‘the playful stage’, which “is an important stepping stone in building a foundation of trust for the sharing of deeper life stories” (Karin *et al*, 2025, p. 31). I feel this is a key facilitation tool to utilise when approaching this line of work as it allows the interviewee to feel more comfortable while creating a better working space for everyone involved; subsequently, this then acts as a relationship building connection between participant, interviewer and the artistic expression of the piece. It allows for there for the room to feel pressure free and find pleasure in their exploration and sharing

of life experiences. Additionally, this relates back to the Drama Spiral (Baim *et al*, 2025, p. 52), following this spiral when hosting interviews allows participants to identify, explore, present and evaluate real life stories in space that is safe and constructed. Thus, it's why I decided to incorporate components of the Drama Spiral into my practices because a discussion around mental health in men can be sensitive and triggering, so it's important that great care is taken throughout the process. Therefore, for this line of work and safety precautions, I only aim to reach the 'fifth ring' which encourages participants to enact and re-tell personal stories about "troubling issues that are resolved – for example, stories of healing, growth or overcoming adversity" (Baim *et al*, 2025, p. 63). This ring best supports my line of work as it allows playwrights to tap into participants insight and wisdom through their life and stories as they share, while staying in a ring that doesn't require qualified wellbeing facilitation. As proven by Life Story practitioners, she was able to express that working within the fifth ring allowed her participants to be seen and heard in a creative setting allowed them to see themselves and experiences in a more accepting light (Alison *et al*, 2025, p. 24). Utilising this tool will uncover and support mental health in men within that light, I believe it will show that it's normal to experience struggle and highlight the importance of speaking up about our internal and external problems.

That aside, my aim was to create a theatrical monodrama that is inspired and based on these conversations with me. So, when approaching the development of the work, it is key to find the line between staying true to the interviewees and holding my voice as a playwright. It's "important to remember that although the writer is using verbatim words, it is still the writer that is deciding what goes where and therefore what the audience's journey is and what the message of the play is" (Marlow, 2025). In parallel to this, pulling upon first-hand life experiences and drawing from my perception of the world will be key towards the project's evolution. Consequently, making use of my understanding on men's psychological health and my local community of Maesteg, will assist as an influence towards the building of the narrative (Bulgo, 2025). In addition, the reasoning for selecting Maesteg as the given community is due to the result of that initial bond I have with the valley and furthermore, it was listed as one of the more deprived areas in Wales (Wightwick, 2025). Moreover, a cohort study was conducted about the association between area deprivation and depressive disorder in British men and women; this study stated that "men living in areas characterised by high levels of unemployment were almost 80% more likely to have a depression" (Brayne *et al*, 2019, p. 5). Aligning these statistics with my community, I believe that Verbatim and LST can facilitate the daunting numbers so that men of Maesteg feel they can be heard in a creative setting.

This research has further enhanced my knowledge on playwrighting and been applicable to the development of my work. Exploring what it takes to be playwright, reading Monodrama's and Verbatim plays and watching documentaries has underlined how one tackles this field. Finding work that has similar DNA to the play I wish to produce has been advantageous, some of these play have entirely opposing themes but they still have the 'feel' of what seems inspirational towards investigation; I can then utilise these inspirations as a touchstone and reference point (Bulgo, 2025) when in the development, application and collaboration element.

Development, Application and Collaboration Element

A Conversation with Men

“You have conversations with people around a table and all of a sudden, you see the script come to life” (Trezise, 2025).

Talking. It can be a tough and heavy act for people to commit themselves to. Day to day we are usually engaging in some form of communication, but how often do those conversations lay on the line of mental health issues? It's common proof that 40% of men won't talk or open up about their struggles (Hinch, n.d.).

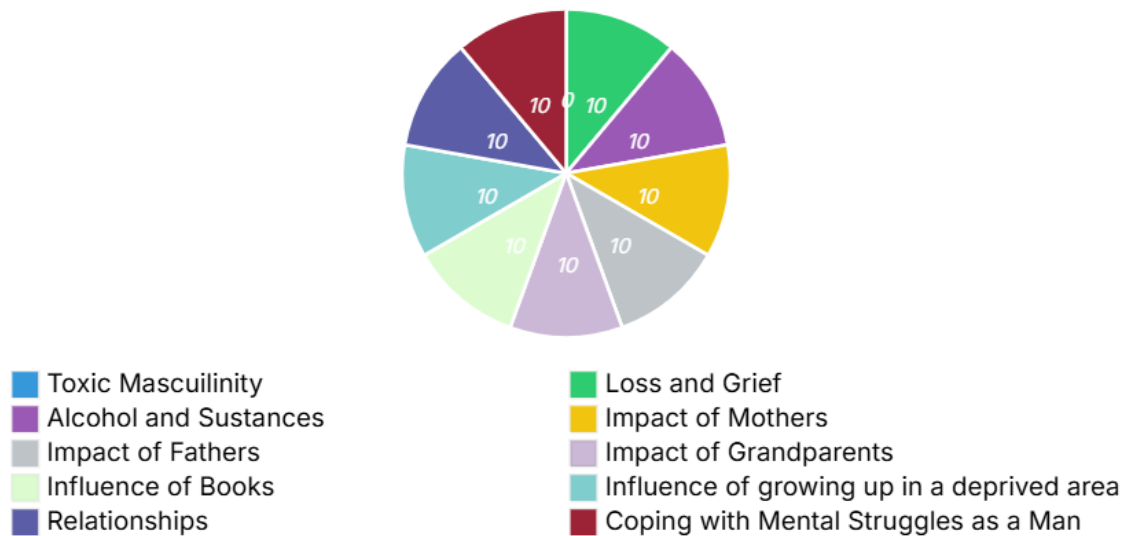
Before progressing on this topic, I would like to preface that all statements made with interviewees have been made anonymous prior to any use to protect their privacy. Alongside this, they were informed that taking part in the interview doesn't ensure use and that their contribution will not be shared outside of this project. The stories we discuss are used as stepping stones into the creating of a fictional world where this one person becomes a vessel for all the interviewees.

The first step into this process was to devise questions that would entice conversations about their achievements, struggles, upbringing within a deprived area and its impact. For this, inspiration was taken from “The Timeline Exercise” (Alison *et al*, 2025, p. 95 – p. 97); an exercise that is typically done independently but I thought it would be intriguing to take these questions to one-on-one conversations I have with men. For the “timeline invites us to be curious about what life has taught us” (Alison *et al*, 2025, p. 95) and keeps us within that ‘fifth ring’ discussed earlier. These discussions on life formulated the source of the drama, not just sticking to the questions at hand but allowing the interviewees to discuss further topics if they desire. Also, maintaining a calm and non-judgemental free zone was key in the facilitation participants to remain within that fifth ring and allowed them to open up about a difficult or painful experience that they have recovered from in a way that is protected, affirmative, positive, generative and developmental (Diamond *et al*, 2025, p. 65).

Employing the ‘Playful Stage’ throughout these conversations empowered those narratives to be built. With each participant, arrived a new theme which snowballed the play to explore bigger issues. The themes addressed in the room brought to light the impact a deprived area can have on men's mental health; alongside this, we were able to discuss what coping strategies come to mind when growing in said environment and how we can overcome ideologies like toxic masculinity and the influence of others.

As seen below:

Themes on Men's Conversations



Recording and noting down these themes and the impact of these themes allowed for the story to start to appear before me (Trezise, 2025). While this was immensely beneficial, this also appeared a challenge. Hearing these voices express their problems made me as a writer and mental health advocate to incorporate every single detail from every person. Here is where I had to take a step back and remind myself to keep my scope narrow and these men just talking, is still useful to the development of the play. While some stories may not be used, elements of their life will still live through the character.

This led to begin the craft of a monodrama about a man that has gone through these real-life experiences. This story started out as 'other voices' but as I drafted and re-drafted the characters voice became more vivid and started to reveal certain habits, types of language and views the world which then the character inhabited the script and they looked after themselves. Suddenly, all these voices became one and Dyn Bach as was a vessel.

Drafting and Re-Drafting of Dyn Bach / Little Man

Get everything out on the page, even if it feels scrappy or a bit rubbish. You can refine it later on (Bulgo, 2025).

Drafting and re-drafting scripts can be the most daunting experience when first approaching a new piece of work. So following Bulgo's advice, it's important not to censor ourselves during that first draft because as we continue with each draft, so does the text and the outcome of the production; inside each play is a short and better play (Bulgo, 2025).

So, when in the developmental phase, it was crucial to first work out what fascinates me watching productions? Of course, the premise of the proposal was a Monodrama but finding what is interesting textually was valuable. From a trained actor perspective, I take pleasure in plays that are heavy textually and not just written as one big contemporary drama that has no textual no textual intention to drive an actor or a story forward. The most notorious and

inspirational to utilise this is Shakespeare, when reciting Shakespeare “the word is the most fundamental of the givens. Without proper attention to the word, you will undermine any play” (Rodenburg, 2002, p. 72). Furthermore, this relates back to Waller-Bridge’s point on wanting to win the audience with her text. I am convinced the best way to win that battle with the audience was to incorporate those textual tools throughout the piece.

This led to using creative writing as a handbook when drafting scenes, which allows the actor to use the technical vocabulary to reveal emotion. For example, repetition contributes to the emphasis and draws attention to key phrases or words (Graham and Leach, 2007, p. 146). So, exploiting repetition throughout the text theatricalises a scene that remains true to the original voices. Another instance would be the use of onomatopoeia, during scenes like the ‘club fight’ for example (see Appendix B), I found the use of onomatopoeia drags out that dramatic tension in monodramas. Originally, the text read as ‘then I grappled him to the floor’, to me that felt flat, so during a re-draft the use of “SMACK. BAM. WALLOP” (Rees, Unpublished, p. 13) gives the scene the action to engage the audience. For when writing, “character is action” (Neipris, 2005, p. 3). The use of textual tools such as these will assist in winning that battle the audience and keep them engaged as it highlights the tension within scenes, whether it be through onomatopoeia, antithesis or rhyme etc.

Furthermore, given the nature of a verbatim/LST style production, I wanted to remind audiences that what is happening on stage is true to the lives of real men. What proceeded next was inspired by Bertolt Brecht and his socialist dramaturgy called Epic Theatre, where he encouraged his spectators to read the stage by devising plays that implemented significant social details and differences whilst raising awareness about the topic at hand (Chemers, 2016). The aim was to include real statistics on men’s mental health, so the audience switch from watching to realising that these numbers are factual and holds up a metaphorical mirror of the real world to the spectators. Like Marlow’s point on originality, I feel this enhanced the theatricality of the production without losing the heart or purpose of the piece (Marlow, 2025). For instance, during one of the interviews, a participant pointed out a statistic that he read, which was globally that male suicide rates in 2025 arose to “740,000 annually” (IHME, 2025). Breaking this down mathematically, it works out to roughly ‘2027 a day, 84 every hour and 2 every minute’. This is an example of how I married the use of a literary tool like ‘lists’ and Epic Theatre to assist in staying true to the voices and keeping the purpose of creating a piece of theatre that raises awareness.

Another essential point raised by Trezise was how she relies heavy on research between the historical context that strengthens the play’s development and her research on experiences allowed her to grasp a colour of the world she was building (Trezise, 2025). This helped the text find life, using experience as a performer/writer, my connection to the environment of the text and its relationship with the audience allowed me to re-tell the geographical context of the play, which brings the audience into the world in which these men have lived.

Thus, utilising these elements was profitable when developing the script further. Bringing the dramatic tension out of the script gives the actor playing the scene clues on how to play the scene. The textual tools build the character as the story progresses and remains authentic to the men’s voices.

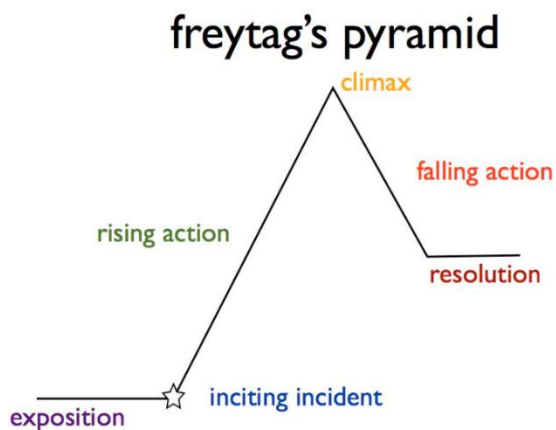
Five Act Structure vs Finding the Moment

“Inspire questions in your audience” (McEntire, 2023, p. 43).

Via drafting, I had the chance to explore what structure works most effectively. Through the research element, two methods raised on how we structure and develop our plays further. The first being the five-act structure suggested by Bulgo, as he believed that any audience experiencing a play, expects particular events to happen and expects there to be a cause and effect between those events (Bulgo, 2025). Whereas Trezise, argues that so much of theatre these days is written of research and development and that shared experience in the room (Trezise, 2025).

Considering both their success in the industry, it can be concluded that both approaches function as an effective way of playwrighting. During my studies I wanted to explore which works best for this line of work or can we find a way to utilise both practices?

Firstly, let's identify the five-act structure. Coined by Gustav Freytag, “Freytag’s pyramid is a narrative structure that breaks the story arc of a drama into five distinct sections. Also known as Freytag’s triangle, it is a variation on the five-act structure” (Masterclass, 2023).



As you can see from the image on the left (Glatch, 2025). The structure allows writers to format their plays. We see characters go through these five-part events of dramatic structure and allows us to build stronger and more compelling stories. This relates to a point highlighted earlier by Neipris on how plays involve “individuals coming together in moments of crisis, which leads to conflicts, which leads to confrontations, which leads to resolution, and finally change”

(Neipris, 2005, p. 1). This proves that even though Freytag’s pyramid can be considered outdated, it is still relevant within contemporary theatre.

Secondly, Trezise pointed out that “you have conversations with people around a table and all of a sudden, you see the script come to life” (Trezise, 2025); then using those conversations in combination with the upmost of our creativity and using creative ways to tell a story. Ultimately, this method was utilised in Draft One, the conversations with men allowed the story to build in front of me and I could use common themes such as: grief, toxic masculinity, relationships etc. and found creative ways to tie them into one another. For example, majority of conversations discussed ‘what it means to be a man’, so tying this into the theme of grief, I found that I could craft a play that explores one man going through philosophies of what it means to be a man as he speaks a eulogy at a loved one’s funeral. I could then cement this further within future drafts, holding onto the authenticity of their voices but dramatizing them creatively to turn from reality to fiction to theatre.

Moreover, once the first draft was crafted, along came the characters. So, to further develop these characters and story, I found Neipris' "fifty questions to ask when writing a play" (Neipris, 2005, p. 25 – p. 31) to be pleasant towards the forming of the piece. Answering these questions every time a new draft approached was a great tool that continuously demanded answers to the play's questions. Not only did this help develop the story but also assisted in its structure.

Through practice of these exercises, it can be expressed that all methods work depending on your goal as a practitioner. Trezise's approach felt fundamental to keeping the story authentic and real while keeping the story open to follow its own path. Although it was successful within my drafting, I the found I had a play that felt non-linear, meaning the chronological order of events were disrupted and the story instead started in the middle and then revealed earlier or later events through flashbacks (Hulat, 2023).

Hence, when approaching the next draft, I took upon Bulgo and Neipris' advice to build that structure from non-linear to linear. This allowed me to bring forth the dramatic tension of the piece and allowed the story to become more compelling. Taking each shift of scene and categorising them in the following: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution helped bring the story to life further. Suddenly a story that was an amalgamation of scenes based upon the men of Maesteg, was now a structured story about Dyn who talks and explores what it means to be a man through a eulogy.

Collaborating and Investigating Creative Questions

"There are lots of different moving parts that go into creating, performing and hosting a production" (Digital Theatre+, 2021).

First, let's define what it means to research and develop (R&D) a newly developed play. R&Ds are in-development rehearsals for theatre productions and are invaluable, it's as much as working out what doesn't work as what does (Drake, 2017). Essentially, they allow us creatives to investigate creative questions about the piece at hand.

First Table Read

Upon the completion of another draft, a R&D readthrough was hosted with five men local to my working environment. This readthrough was intentionally made small and strictly men due to the sensitive topics at hand, alongside this, it was important to hear the work coming from other men/actors so I could recognise the impact of what I'm creating. The readthrough allowed me to assess any clarity needed within the text and helped provide fresh perspectives.

Complementary to this, an anonymous questionnaire was offered for participants to fill out, and the results were intriguing, comforting and inspiring (see Appendix C.1). When in discussion about their connection to the piece, participant A stated:

'Yes. Dyn Bach relates to all men, he's a heightened perspective and personality to the reality of male experiences'

Similarly, participant B agreed by emphasising:

‘Yep. I spent the first 30 years of life in a small town where it felt impossible to get ahead. Some of those stories are similar to stories I've lived through. The ones I didn't live through personally, I feel could have been anyone in my hometown’

Despite them not being one of the men connected to the creation of the monodrama, there was still a unification amongst participants. This ultimately proves Peters’ case of the dramaturgy of belonging and that verbatim / LST theatre can bring communities together, it doesn’t have to be your story on display for you to relate or empathise. The relationships and connections developed between myself, the community of storytellers through community immersion, and verbatim / LST theatre reverberate through the material documented, to which audiences then expressed relation and a sense of belonging after hearing the work (Peters, 2019, p. 60).

This rehearsal was advantageous towards the development of the piece. Having more confidence in the impact Dyn Bach / Little Man has, was the encouragement needed to start developing from text to production with a director.

R&D with a Director

When collaborating an in-development piece with a director, communication is key. This way we can investigate the creative questions smoothly to develop the play further. Collaborating with Nicole Evans, an individual who is exploring a personal approach to theatre directing influenced by feminist ideologies and collective creativity; this collaboration would provide a rehearsal room that feels safe to tackle sensitive topics and allow those artistic conversations to happen on a non-hierarchical level.

First most, how we wanted the room to run as an R&D was an essential talking point. Through collaboration we found that literary manager Matthew May argues that “R&Ds in the creative process has shifted... they’re less of a playground and more of a pitch... when R&Ds become about proving rather than exploring, the room for risk shrinks” (May, 2025). This is an argument we both agreed with, we wanted to treat the rehearsal room as a playground for ideas that can grow, develop and go wrong. We didn’t want to treat the sessions and script as an audition to whether the idea was justifiable for a full production but instead be bold with our choices.

After examining the text collectively, Evans raised the question:

‘What is the story in one sentence?’

This fresh perspective allowed me to take a step back as a writer and consider my proposal for the project. The answer that followed:

‘A Welsh boy learning to become a man’

This permitted us to approach the next step with a collective dramaturgical mindset and investigate how the message comes across to an audience. Workshopping scenes with a director through a dramaturgical lens offered a mode of analysis that elucidates and enriches

understanding of the multiple intersecting factors such as: Dyn Bach's role in the space, expectations from performance and audience relations that inform the data gathered in such spaces (Shutt *et al*, 2022, p. 377).

As discussed previously, I find catharsis is an important element of theatre. It further connects the relationship between actor, audience and participants. Utilising the cleansing affect that is catharsis creates was a key goal, for when people have that empathetic connection to real life stories, they can then become knowledgeable about support available to those who relate. To outcome this, I collaborated with Steve Maddern who has worked in mental health care and treatment for fifty years, with additional to connections to the Men's Shed Movement who are also successful in establishing community groups around the needs of men (Men's Shed Cymru, 2023). Additionally, we wanted to utilise Brecht's Epic Theatre elements in unity with catharsis. Allowing the audience to read the stage and experience the awareness being raised on stage, by really empathising those statistics in scenes and the use of a projector to show real images and events from Maesteg. The aim was to use of the projector as a cleansing affect as well, cementing those connections and allowing the audience to empathise in silence, showcasing that "strong emotions are fine and natural, but over the long haul they're better out than in, and the way out is through" (Levoy, 2021).

Not only does the use of Brecht and projections, both physical and statistical, help cathartically connect but is also a key element of verbatim theatre. It felt important to implement within the piece, as it holds that societal mirrored reflection discussed. In turn they leave understanding that what they witnessed were real events. This is proven to be an essential technique in an investigation into Verbatim Theatre as reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa, as it shares some commonalities with the outcome of the participants, in relations to highlighting important narrative and social truths which underpinned the process (McCallum, 2021, p. 171).

These connections were fundamental to the growth and impact of my piece, as they were aimed to support that cathartic and community connection. Now having that comfortability of support behind my writing from directors, writers and organisations; we could move on to a rehearsed R&D in front of an audience.

In Performance

"Should art educate, inform, organise, influence, incite to action, or should it simply be an object of pleasure?" (Boal, 2008, p. 2).

After dedicated rehearsals with Evans, a performance was constructed. For this showcase, we worked collaboratively to dramaturgically flesh out the scenes that had the most fluidity between Dyn Bach's memories and the eulogy. Like rehearsals, we want to treat this performance as another R&D to see if connects with the audience. Given that the writer and performer are one, the connection was already there but I wanted to investigate as to whether audiences felt that relationship too and use this time and space as another creative playground of exploration once again.

Recordings and Findings

Prior to performance, I wanted to investigate creative questions. Which were all answered and recorded (see Appendix C.2). This allowed me to have detailed report in which I aimed to answer the following:

‘Did you feel a connection to Dyn Bach / Little Man and his story? If so, what allowed you to connect and grow as the narrative progressed?

If not, what could have been put in place to cement that connection between audience, character and narrative?’

This common reply with was yes! Audience member highlighted their connection to Dyn, his story, vulnerability and the struggles of mental health in men in relation with coping strategies.

‘What themes and topics stood out to you strongest?’

The aim of this question was to see if it relates to the topics highlighted within the interview during the research and investigation element. The common relations between this were topics such as: toxic masculinity, struggles within men’s mental health, relationships/community, the impact of being born in an underprivileged environment.

‘Does the fact that this Monodrama was sculpted from stories of real men change your view on the text and performance? Would it have had the same impact if it wasn’t Verbatim?’

This was a question that invoked some opposing views. Some audience members believed that, given the sensitivity of the subject and how it was handled throughout the process then that has power, whether it be fiction or non-fiction. Whereas others commented that they play hit harder than majority of productions they have seen and their reasoning for this is because the narrative was sculpted from real men and for how years how men are expected to act. Complementary to these, an individual pointed out while it is impactful due to the realness of men’s voices, it would have been equally as impactful if it wasn’t as, it is a serious topic that the audience can relate to.

‘Do you agree with this statement - This piece raises awareness about men’s mental health and showcased that there is support available for people who need it’

This came back with a resounding agreement; audience members were able to recognise the struggles within mental health and the consequences that can follow with those who choose not to speak out. Alongside this, the leaflets about Men’s Shed Cymru at the end of the showcase highlighted that there is support for men who wish to seek it out.

‘Did the piece make sense from an audience perspective? What did you take away from Dyn’s journey?’

I wanted to investigate as to where our dramaturgical approach was a success and see peoples’ takeaways from the shortened play. Firstly, audience members were able to follow along smoothly and was an effective piece of theatre. Secondly, what was most interesting for me was how different viewers had different perspectives on Dyn’s journey. Some members

took away the definition of being sonder and to recognise everyone's complexities of life, some found the harsh statistics on male suicide shocking and lingering, some thought that Dyn was masking and suppressing generational trauma and one even commented that they had no hope for Dyn's future or that he was on a different path, whereas others stated he embraced what he enjoys in life and that's important.

The point I'm making is that the piece encourages people to talk about they witnessed. It is a piece of art that aims to educate and is not for pure entertainment value. Which aids to my believe that this line of work is both important and beneficial towards communities because it provoked rational thoughts and social change through the principles of Verbatim / Life Story Theatre. It allowed people to tell, hear and experience stories through a creative lens.

Furthermore, this proves ideologies suggested throughout the paper, that this form of theatre can bring communities together to empathise and relate with a story that isn't theirs. Meaning I can agree with Peters case study on the dramaturgy of belonging and Verbatim theatre because we both found that "one of more surprising outcomes of this research was the sense of community belonging fostered among audience members who had no involvement in the making of the play" (Peters, 2019, p. 40). Moreover, the audience empathising with Dyn and his journey is a direct result of them experiencing catharsis; this was done with the result of projections, statistics and audience connection etc. Individuals became witness to these events sprung on the release of strong emotions, connections, which forth came its own reward and satisfaction (Gardner, 2023).

Having a Man Bear Witness

What has been discussed is the connection between the text and audience members who had input through the development. Now, what about individual who was one of the men interviewed in the development element? I wanted to see if the connection was stronger with someone who had the courage to have their story told or whether it would make them feel the opposite; self-conscious and less likely to talk in future. This study was inspired by Life Story Practitioners Diamond *et al*, who created a piece of Life Story Theatre with a woman called Terri, through this process Terri stated that "to be given the chance to show how I had felt about certain episodes in my life was both cathartic and empowering" (Diamond *et al*, 2025, p. 24).

For this, one of the men was invited to come watch the showcase. After the performance we sat down and had a conversation on how it felt to bear witness to parts of their story on stage (see Appendix C.3). Through this conversation he stated that to witness his story felt incredible, made him feel like he belongs and to be included in such topics was very affirming and a very positive experience. Similarly to Terri, he also stated it felt cathartic about his stories presented and that he 'thought a lot about the kid that experienced those things and I think he was pleased too'.

This is further proof of the power verbatim and LST can have on communities and individuals. Theorists such as Smith and Peters support argument of involving yourself within the development of the production in this nature, they state that "expressing emotions is healing in itself" (Smith *et al*, 2012, p. 45) and that "finding a voice for your story, even as

it evolves, is a very large part of accepting and understanding yourself” (Peters, 2017, p. 35). Alas, this showcases that getting our stories out there to be heard is important for the development of ourselves and communities; for they can raise awareness about social and ethical topics in a way that brings people together and support one another’s experiences in a more accepting light.

Conclusion

What this study reveals that we can unite the dramaturgy of belonging with men’s mental health and create a piece of theatre that raises awareness through monodrama. It has proved that theatre is a key tool we can use to bring communities together to highlight important social issues, not just for men’s mental health but whatever your passion may be.

This project has allowed me to find a new passion for both playwrighting and the use of real stories within the creative industry. The skills developed through this investigation have been pertinent towards my field of study and has assisted in the progression of my goals as a practitioner.

So, what can we now understand and see in a new light? We can appreciate the link between the Verbatim theatre, LST, monodrama and the gathering of communities as an art form. It highlights how important it is that we tackle these issues with care to allow everyone involved to feel accepted in themselves. These methodologies I have utilised and explored are not a binary way of creation, I’d encourage other practitioners to experiment with their aligning passions. For everyone who does, a new but just as important story will emerge; whether it be about mental health in men or the cost-of-living crisis or climate change or healthcare or anything you feel passionate about. Talk to people about it, record those conversations and create a piece of art that highlights the issue. The application of tools and techniques can be recorded with different data in a different context; my methods could be used to answer another question entirely. For, based on my research and development through this module, I believe that peoples voices are the heart of art.

Moreover, where can this research take me next? After a successful R&D performance that answered the questions I wish, it is time to take the script to theatre companies for future development. For this, I created a pitch and a short video showcasing the performance (see Appendix D) to send off to the literary teams. This will allow me to develop the script further and get these men’s stories heard in wider regions.

To summarise, researching and investigating this project has given me a comprehensive grasp of how to develop my career as a writer, actor and practitioner. It has given power to our voices and proven that while it can feel enigmatic at first, the skills gained are exponential towards our development as men, communities and learning of the world.

Bibliography

Alley Theatre. (2024) *CATHARSIS AND THEATRE. AN EXPLORATION OF CATHARSIS IN THEATRE AND ITS POWERFUL RELEASE FOR AUDIENCES*. Available at: <https://www.alleytheatre.org/what-is-catharsis-in-the-theatre/> (Accessed: 28 January 2026).

Arts Council England. (2019) *Community theatre helping men in Stoke open up about mental health*. Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-matters/news/community-theatre-helping-men-stoke-open-about-mental-health> (Accessed: 05 November 2025).

Baldick, C. (2015) *monodrama*. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (4th ed). Oxford University Press.

Boal, A. (2008) *Theatre of the Oppressed*. 2008 Edition. Pluto Press.

Brayne, C. and Khaw, K. and Lafortune, L. Remes, O. Surtees, P. and Wainwright, N. (2019) *Association between area deprivation and major depressive disorder in British men and women: a cohort study*. Volume 9 (Issue 11). DOI:10.1136/bmjopen-2018-027530.

Bulgo, M. (2012) *Last Christmas*. London: Oberon Plays.

Bulgo, M. (2025) *Interview with Thomas Rees*. 27 October. [Online].

Chemers, M. (2016) *Digital Theatre+ A Concise Introduction to: Dramaturgy*. Available at: <https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.uwtsd.idm.oclc.org/content/guides/dramaturgy#about> (Accessed: 26 January 2026).

Chemers, M. (2016) *Digital Theatre+ A Concise Introduction to: Epic Theatre*. Available at: <https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.uwtsd.idm.oclc.org/content/guides/epic-theatre> (Accessed: 22 February 2026).

Diamond, K. and O'Connor, A. and Baim, C. (2025) *Creating Life Story Theatre. A Guide for Applied Theatre Practitioners*. Methuen Drama.

Digital Theatre+. (2021) *Unlocking Community: Teamwork and Collaboration*. Available at: <https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.uwtsd.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/unlocking-community-teamwork-and-collaboration#about> (Accessed: 14 February 2026).

Digital Theatre+. (2024) *What's Verbatim Theatre?* Available at: <https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.uwtsd.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/whats-verbatim-theatre#about> (Accessed: 16 January 2026).

Drake, H. (2017) *Behind-the-scenes : R&D*. Available at: <https://www.insaneroot.org.uk/single-post/2017/08/13/research-development> (Accessed: 05 March 2026).

Foxon, C. (2018) *Being a Playwright: A Career Guide for Writers*. Nick Hern Books.

Gardner, L. (2023) *Catharsis In Theatre and Its Ability To Create Empathy*. Available at: <https://stagedoor.com/theatre-guide/lyn-gardner/catharsis-in-theatre-and-its-ability-to-create-empathy?ia=1476> (Accessed: 28 January 2026).

Glatch, S. (2025) *The 5 Elements of Dramatic Structure: Understanding Freytag's Pyramid*. Available at: <https://writers.com/freytags-pyramid> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).

Graham, R. and Leach, H. (2007) *Everything You Need to Know About Creative Writing (but knowing isn't everything...)*. Continuum.

Hatch, T. (2024) *Exploring Mental Health in Fiction: Brandon Sanderson's Approach*. Available at: <https://www.dragonsteelbooks.com/blogs/the-cognitive-realm/exploring-mental-health-brandon-sandersons-approach> (Accessed: 19 January 2026).

Hawke, L. and Hole, R. and Livingston, J. and Maxwell, V. Michalak, E. and Parikh, S. (2014) *Using theatre to address mental illness stigma: a knowledge translation study in bipolar disorder*. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4215813/> (Accessed: 05 November 2025).

Hinch, W. (n.d.) *Men's mental health: 40% of men won't talk to anyone about their mental health*. Available at: <https://www.priorygroup.com/blog/40-of-men-wont-talk-to-anyone-about-their-mental-health> (Accessed: 26 November).

Hulatt, L. (2023) *Non-linear Narrative*. Available at: <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/english-literature/literary-devices/non-linear-narrative/#:~:text=Non%2Dlinear%20narrative%20is%20when%20the,narrative%20and%20the%20parallel%20plot> (Accessed: 04 March 2026).

IHME. (2025) *About 740,000 global deaths from suicide occur annually – that's one every 43 seconds*. Available at: <https://www.healthdata.org/news-events/newsroom/news-releases/about-740000-global-deaths-suicide-occur-annually-thats-one> (Accessed: 22 February 2026).

Kalburgi, P. (2017) *The Power of Verbatim Theatre*. Available at: <https://www.breadandroses theatre.co.uk/news/the-power-of-verbatim-theatre> (Accessed: 19 January 2026).

Lavoy, G. (2021) *Blowing off Steam: The Power of Catharsis*. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/passion/202107/blowing-off-steam-the-power-of-catharsis> (Accessed: 09 March 2026).

Londré, F. (2005) *Words at Play. Creative Writing and Dramaturgy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

MANUP? (n.d.) *MANUP? Men's Mental Health Data*. Available at: https://www.manup.how/research?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21426257673&gbraid=0AAAAABPBTDD1sNtA2xNxzv5PRsUt-HDSG&gclid=Cj0KCQiAiKzIBhCOARIsAKpKLANC4Ctm5lxenrq0Biam1GLfWFqMXO6z3Z265-fdHknUWiBx2saSIo0aAolHEALw_wcB (Accessed: 15 January 2026).

Marlow, B. (2025) *Interview with Thomas Rees*. 24 October. [Online].

Masterclass. (2023) *Freytag's Pyramid: Definition, Elements and Examples*. Available at: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/freytags-pyramid> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).

- May, M. (2025) *R&D is about questions not answers*. Available at: <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/feature/rd-is-about-questions-not-answers> (Accessed: 05 March 2026).
- McCallum. (2021) *Theatre and witnessing: an investigation into verbatim 'theatre as reconciliation' in post-apartheid South Africa*. Volume 23 (Issue 3). DOI: 10.1080/10137548.2022.2062042.
- McEntire, B. (2023) *CRAFTING THE SOLO SHOW. A Practical Guide to Creating, Performing and Touring A One-Person Theatre Production*. Dribble Funk Books.
- Men's Shed Cymru. (2023) *Welcome to Men's Shed Cymru*. Available at: <https://www.mensshedscymru.co.uk/> (Accessed: 06 March 2026).
- Miyamoto, K. (2025) *HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE ONE-PAGE PITCH*. Available at: <https://screencraft.org/blog/how-to-write-an-effective-one-page-pitch/> (Accessed: 23 March 2026).
- Neipris, J. (2005) *TO BE A PLAYWRIGHT*. New York: Routledge.
- Patterson, P. and Sextou, P. (2017) *'Trapped in the Labyrinth' – exploring mental illness through devised theatrical performance*. Available at: <https://newman.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/15729/1/NU0022.pdf> (Accessed: 05 November 2025).
- Peters, S. (2017) *The Impact of Participating in a Verbatim Theatre Process*. Available at: <https://socialalternatives.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/peters.pdf> (Accessed: 14 February 2026).
- Peters, S. (2019) *Verbatim Theatre and the Dramaturgy of Belonging*. Saint Lucia: Australasian Drama Studies.
- Rees, T. (Unpublished) *Draft Four: Dyn Bach / Little Man*.
- Rodenburg, P. (2002) *Speaking Shakespeare*. London: Methuen.
- Samaritans. (2024) *Suicides in Wales*. Available at: https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Suicide_Stats_Wales_2024.pdf (Accessed: 15 January 2026).
- Self, K. and Jones, K. (2026) *Martin Decker: DAD*. Night Out Scheme.
- Self, K. (2026) *Interview with Thomas Rees*. 22 January. [In Person].
- Shutt, H. and Martin, L. and Coetzee, M. (2022) *The theatre of development: dramaturgy, actors and performances in the 'workshop space'*. Volume 44 (Issue 2). DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2022.2147060.
- Smith, V. and Collard, P. and Nicolson, P. and Bayne, R. (2012) *Key Concepts In Counselling And Psychotherapy: A Critical A-Z Guide To Theory*. Open University Press.
- Trezise, R. (2025) *Interview with Thomas Rees*. 18 November. [Online].

Veitch, F. (2024) *Research Log 1: Alana Valentine on Verbatim Theatre's Impact and Ethics*. Available at: <https://www.studocu.com/en-au/document/queenwood-school-for-girls/drama/research-log-1-alana-valentine-on-verbatim-theatres-impact-and-ethics/130286522> (Accessed: 16 January 2026).

Waller-Bridge, P. (2019) *Fleabag. The Special Edition*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Wightwick, A. (2025) *The 10 places that are now the most deprived parts of Wales*. Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/10-places-now-poorest-parts-32955211> (Accessed: 03 February 2026).

Appendix A

A.1 - [Transcript A conversation with Matthew Bulgo on Monodramas](#)

A.2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c15E1hf0hkI>

A.3 - [Transcript A conversation with Bethan Marlow on Verbatim The.docx](#)

A.4 - [A Conversation with Rachel Trezise on Monodrama's and Verbat.docx](#)

Appendix B

Dyn Bach R^0D Script.docx

Appendix C

C.1 - [Answers to R&D read through](#)

C.2 - [Dyn Bach Performance Feedback.docx](#)

C.3 - [Having a Man Bear Witness.docx](#)

Appendix D

Pitch to literary teams.