



ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ
Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies
Drama, Theatre and Performance Department

ATIS

ACTING TECHNIQUES INTENSIVE SEMINAR

ATIS 2014 SITE OF THE FIRE
Silence–Sound–Speech–Song–Silence
10–25 August 2014

Directed by Prof. Grzegorz Ziółkowski

Assisted by Maria Bohdziewicz and Maciej Zakrzewski (Studio ROSA)

The seminar, of a highly practical and exploratory nature, aims at studying elementary and advanced skills of the performer such as the abilities to be open to dialogue, to integrate action and speech, and to react swiftly and precisely to impulses which come from various sources: partners, texts, music, songs, space, images, and the inner realm of associations, imagination and memories.



grzeg@amu.edu.pl

www.grzeg-atis.home.amu.edu.pl

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ATIS-Acting-Techniques-Intensive-Seminar-AMU/544212128990411?fref=ts>



■ Meysam Ghaseminejad (Iran), Yıldız Gülmez (Turkey), Maria Kapala (Ostrów Wielkopolski/Wrocław, Poland), Julia Lewandowska (Poznań, Poland) and...

■ Paulina Wilczyńska (Olsztyn/Gdańsk, Poland)



■ WORK LEADERS

■ Grzegorz Ziółkowski – teacher, director, editor, translator, author of books on Peter Brook (2000) and Jerzy Grotowski (2007). He is Professor in the Drama, Theatre and Performance Department of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. He leads Studio ROSA and ATIS. Currently, he writes a book on self-immolation in contemporary culture.

■ Maria Bohdziewicz – a AMU theatre studies graduate who works at Studio ROSA and performs in *TAZM Silence of Light*. In 2012 she co-created *Dream: There Is No Time Left/Anymore*. She has directed educational and artistic projects in local communities and with disabled people. She writes poems and raps.

■ Maciej Zakrzewski – actor with Studio ROSA, where he performs in *TAZM Silence of Light*. He is a PhD student in drama at AMU in Poznań and teaches in the Poznań Academy of Performing Arts (PAPA). He is a musician and photographer (see: <https://www.facebook.com/fototeatr.zakrzewski>).

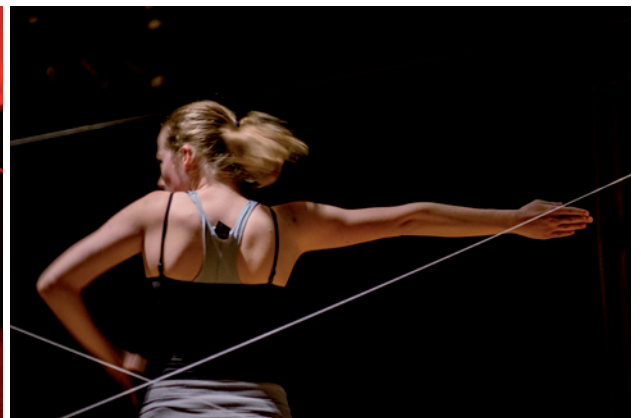


Silence–Sound–Speech–Song–Silence

The seminar was entitled after Wajdi Mouawad's drama *INCENDIES* (*Scorched*, 2003), later adapted for a Denis Villeneuve's film (2010), which follows the ancient Greek tragedy's pattern of searching for self-knowledge in the face of the deprivation of humanity, intolerance and war.

The work focused on:

- different aspects of actor training
- chi kung
- singing lullabies
- space compositions *Stars* and *Silence*
- and theatre individual and partner scenes (etudes) based on Wajdi Mouawad's play.



ELEMENTS OF ACTOR TRAINING

- **SPATIAL AWARENESS** – which is devoted to:
 - taking care of the space;
 - spatial balancing in movement;
 - creating a partnership with the space and others within it.

- **FLOW** – in psychology the term ‘flow’ refers to a state of joyful engagement when the body collaborates with the mind as a harmonized and united whole. In the work of ATIS Flow is a practice which focuses on lightness of action, on its fluidity and coordination with breath and word. It involves several precise elements (physical actions) which help to harmonize breath, body and voice. At an advanced level, one works on Flow in the framework of improvisations which allow to build a bridge between the training and the domains of imagination, composition and creation.

- **PARTNERSHIP** – a number of partnership actions which help to open up to the other person and to seek harmony in interaction – by listening to the partner. The work refocuses the performer from her/himself to the person with whom s/he interacts. Thanks to mutual listening, leading and coordination, the actions may take the form of ‘danced dialogue’ which embraces different dimensions of the interpersonal encounter.



- **THE WARRIOR ATTITUDE** – is a practice aimed to reinforce awareness and swiftness of response in combat situations such as stick fight, for example. Combat can also be seen as a model for remaining calm and being positive in stress situations.



- **ACTION-SPEECH** – the practice which helps to recognise that voice is an extension of the body, that it is rooted in it and related with it. It opens receptiveness and erases individual preconceptions about one's own vocal possibilities.
- **THEATRE MATHEMATICS** – the study of actions based on arithmetic and geometry, which aims to sharpen the participants' awareness of directions in the space and relations between protagonist/s and group (chorus) members.



CHI KUNG

spelled also '*Qigong*,' is described as 'a practice of aligning breath, movement, and awareness for exercise, healing, and meditation. With roots in Chinese medicine, martial arts, and philosophy, *qigong* is traditionally viewed as a practice to cultivate and balance *qi* (*chi*) or what has been translated as "intrinsic life energy." Typically a *qigong* practice involves rhythmic breathing coordinated with slow stylized repetition of fluid movements, a calm mindful state, and visualization of guiding *qi* through the body.' In theatre practice, chi kung may help on many levels, which include:

- coordination of inner and outer aspects of the actor's presence;
- awareness of breathing;
- cooling down after more energetic performance.

SONGS – LULLABIES

The traditional songs – like some lullabies – are essential elements of culture and repositories of human emotions, but above all they are partners in dialogues with ourselves, with others and with our surrounding. Communing with songs enables us to abandon the notion of ‘I sing’ and welcome – ‘I am sung.’ In the work, traditional songs from participants’ backgrounds are welcomed. During *ATIS Site of the Fire* we were singing Iranian, Polish and Turkish lullabies. We also learned a Greek lullaby *Nani nani*, passed to us by a former ATIS participant (2013): Aphroditi Evangelatou (thank you!).



SPACE COMPOSITIONS *STARS AND SILENCE*

with the music of Motion Trio, a Polish group of accordionists

The compositions study the individual re-actions against organized and structured systems represented by group formations.

Their aim is to:

- balance the group’s energy (they can be seen as ironic commentary on actor ‘star system’);
- study different aspects of training (above all: space awareness, rhythm, timing and synchronicity);
- create a frame into which advanced elements of work such as flow and partnership may be interwoven.



THEATRE ETUDES

based on Wajdi Mouawad's play *Scorched*

The scenes were performed in participants' mother tongues. The texts below are based on Linda Gaboriau's translation of the play.

Introduction: Back to the Beginning of Time

Prologue: Mother-Execution

Scene 3: Graph Theory

Scene 6: Carnage

Scene 9: Reading, Writing, Counting, Speaking

Scenes 31 and 33: A Sniper's Principles

Scene 37: Letter to the Son



■ Introduction: Back to the Beginning of Time
(Julia Lewandowska; music: Motion Trio *Sounds of War*)

From anger to harm, from sadness to grief, from rape to hatred...
Back to the beginning of time...

Two days ago, the militia hanged three young refugees who strayed outside the camps. Why did the militia hang the three teenagers? Because two refugees from the camp had raped and killed a girl from the village. Why did they rape the girl? Because the militia had stoned the family of refugees. Why did the militia stoned them? Because the refugees had set fire to a house near the hill. Why did refugees set fire to the house? To take revenge on the militia who had destroyed a well they had drilled. Why did the militia destroy the well? Because the refugees had burned the crop near the river where the wolves run. Why did they burn the crop?...

There must be a reason, that's as far as my memory goes,
But the story can go on forever...

■ Prologue: Mother-Execution
(Yıldız Gülmez; song: traditional Turkish lullaby)



Everything was on fire, everything went up in flames.

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One militiaman was preparing the death of three brothers.
He lined them up in front of the wall. I could see their legs shaking.
Three brothers. The militiamen pulled their mother by the hair,
stood her in front of her sons and one of them shouted:

“Choose, choose, which one you want to save.
Choose or I’ll shoot all three of them. I’m going to count to three, and at three,
I’m going to kill all three of them. Choose!”

Unable to speak, unable to think, shaking her head, looking from one son to the next!
With her heavy breasts and her body ravaged by having carried them, her three sons.
And the militiaman kept shouting,

“Choose, choose!”

Then she looked at him and said, as a last hope,

“How dare you, look at me, I could be your mother.”

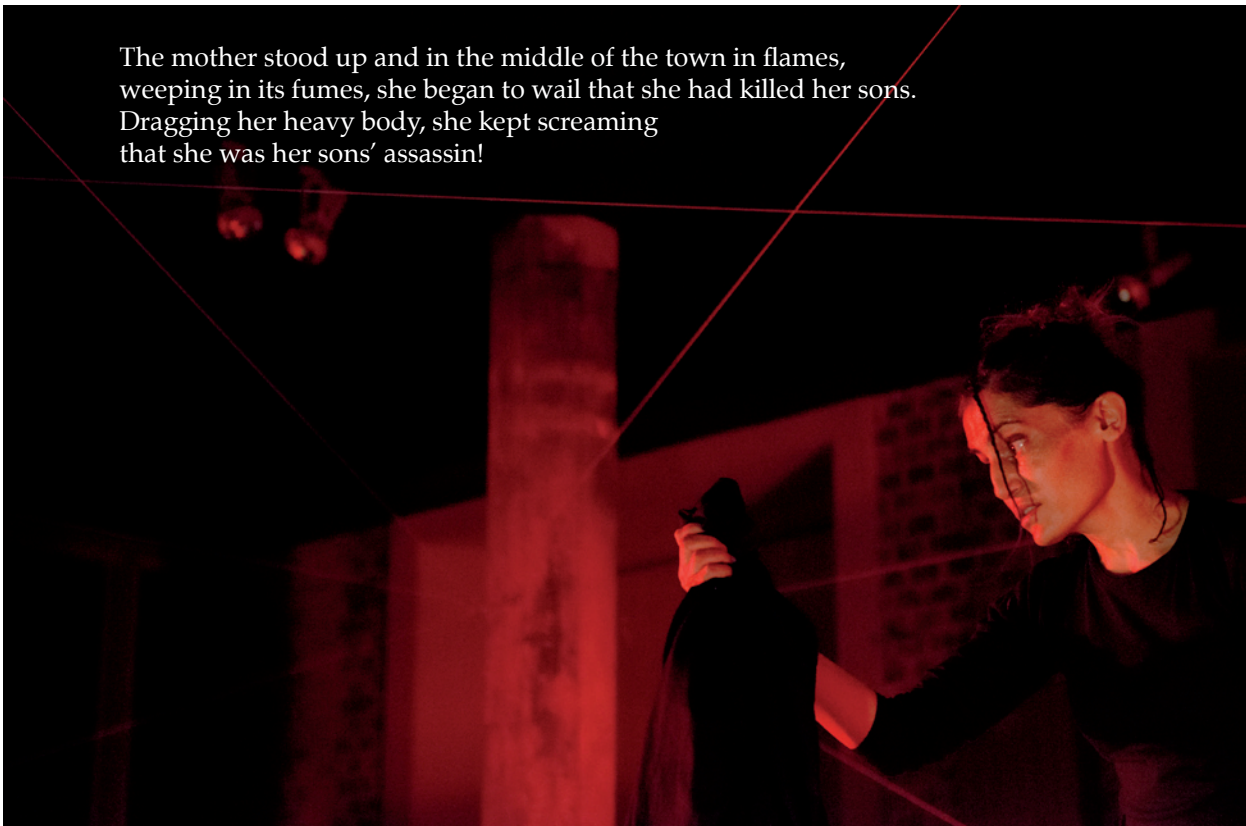
And he hit her.

“Don’t insult my mother! Choose!”

Then she said a name.

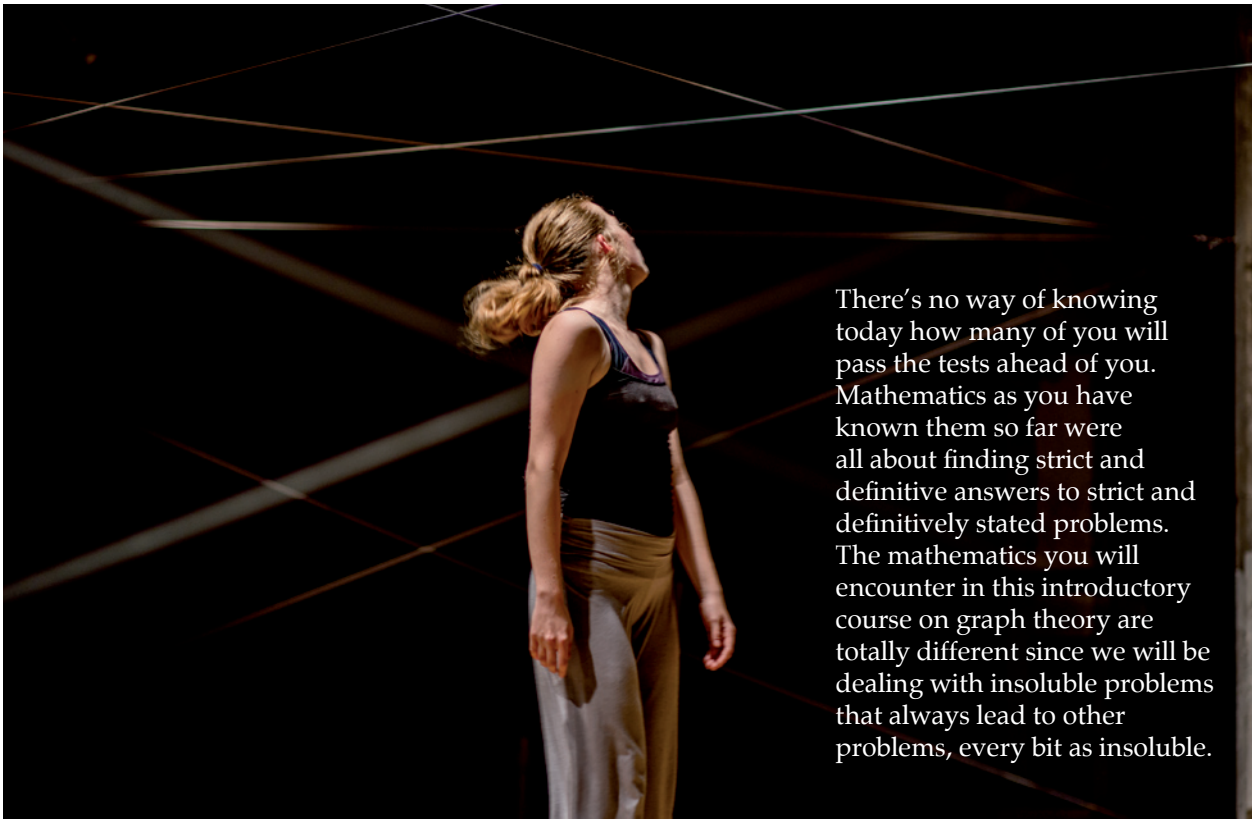
And she collapsed and the militiaman shot the youngest two.
He left the eldest son alive, trembling! He just left him and walked away.
The two bodies lay at his feet.

The mother stood up and in the middle of the town in flames,
weeping in its fumes, she began to wail that she had killed her sons.
Dragging her heavy body, she kept screaming
that she was her sons’ assassin!



■ Scene 3: Graph Theory

(Maria Kapala; music: Supertramp *The Logical Song* – remix)



There's no way of knowing today how many of you will pass the tests ahead of you. Mathematics as you have known them so far were all about finding strict and definitive answers to strict and definitively stated problems. The mathematics you will encounter in this introductory course on graph theory are totally different since we will be dealing with insoluble problems that always lead to other problems, every bit as insoluble.

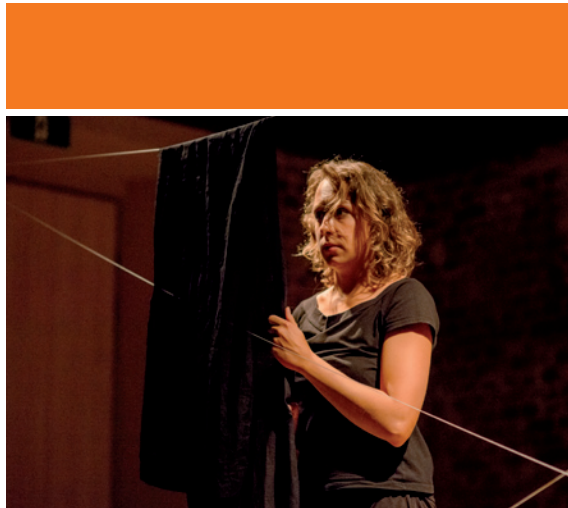


People around you will insist that what you are wrestling with is useless. Your manner of speaking will change and, even more profoundly, so will your manner of remaining... silent and of thinking. That is exactly what people will find the hardest to forgive. People will often criticize you for squandering your intelligence on absurd theoretical exercises, rather than devoting it to research for a cure for AIDS or a new cancer treatment. You won't be able to argue in your defense, since your arguments themselves will be of an absolutely exhausting theoretical complexity. Welcome to pure mathematics, in other words, to the world of solitude... Introduction to graph theory.

Let's take a simple polygon with five sides labeled A, B, C, D and E. Let's call this polygon K. Now let's imagine that this polygon represents the floor plan of the house where a family lives. And one member of the family is posted in each corner of the house. For the time being, let's replace A, B, C, D and E by the grandmother, the father, the mother, the son, and the daughter who live together in Polygon K. Now let's ask ourselves who, from his or her position, sees whom. The grandmother sees the father, the mother and the daughter. The father sees the mother and the grandmother. The mother sees the grandmother, the father, the son and the daughter. The son sees the brother and the sister. And the sister sees the brother, the mother and... the father!!!

■ Scene 6: Carnage

(Paulina Wilczyńska and Julia Lewandowska; music: Hanna Kulenty *A Cradle Song*)



...You will have to choose. Keep this child and this instant, this very instant, you will take off those clothes that don't belong to you and leave this house, leave your family, your village, your mountains, your sky and your stars, and leave me...

Mother:

Leave me, naked, with your belly and the life it is carrying. Or stay and kneel down, kneel down...

Mother:

Take off your clothes or kneel. You will stay inside this house. The child will be given to whoever wants it.

■ Scene 9: Reading, Writing, Counting, Speaking

(Maria Kapala and Julia Lewandowska; music: Hanna Kulenty *A Cradle Song*)



There are things we want to say at the moment of our death. Things we'd like to tell the people we have loved, who have loved us... to help them one last time... to tell them one last time... to prepare them for happiness...! A year ago you gave birth to a child, and ever since, you've been walking around in a haze. Don't fall, don't say 'yes.' Say 'no.' Refuse. Your love is gone, your child is gone. Don't accept it, never accept it. But if you're going to refuse, you have to know how to talk. So be courageous and work hard, my sweet! Listen to what an old woman on her deathbed has to say to you: learn to read, learn to write, learn to count, learn to speak. Learn. It's your only hope if you don't want to turn out like us. Promise me you will.



■ Scenes 31 and 33: A Sniper's Principles

(Meysam Ghaseminejad; music: Supertramp *The Logical Song* – remix)



No! No! I don't want to die!

"I don't want to die!" "I don't want to die!"
That's the dumbest sentence I know!

Please, let me go! I'm not from around here.
I'm a photographer.

Photographer?

Yes... a war photographer.

I wanted a shot of a sniper... I saw you shoot...

Did you take my picture?

I came up here... But I can give you the film...

I'm a photographer, too. My name is Nihad.

War photographer. Look. I took these.

Very nice...

No, it's not nice. People usually think it's shots
of people sleeping. They're not sleeping, they're dead.
And I'm the one who killed them! I swear.

I believe you... What are you doing?

Don't kill me! I could be your father,
I'm the same age as your mother.

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Kirk, I very happy to be here at Star TV Show...

My next song will be love song.

Yes, love song, Kirk.

You know, I wrote this song when it was war.

War on my country.

Yes, one day a woman that I love died.

Shooting by a sniper. I feel big crash in my heart.

My heart collapse. Yes, I cry.

And I write his song.

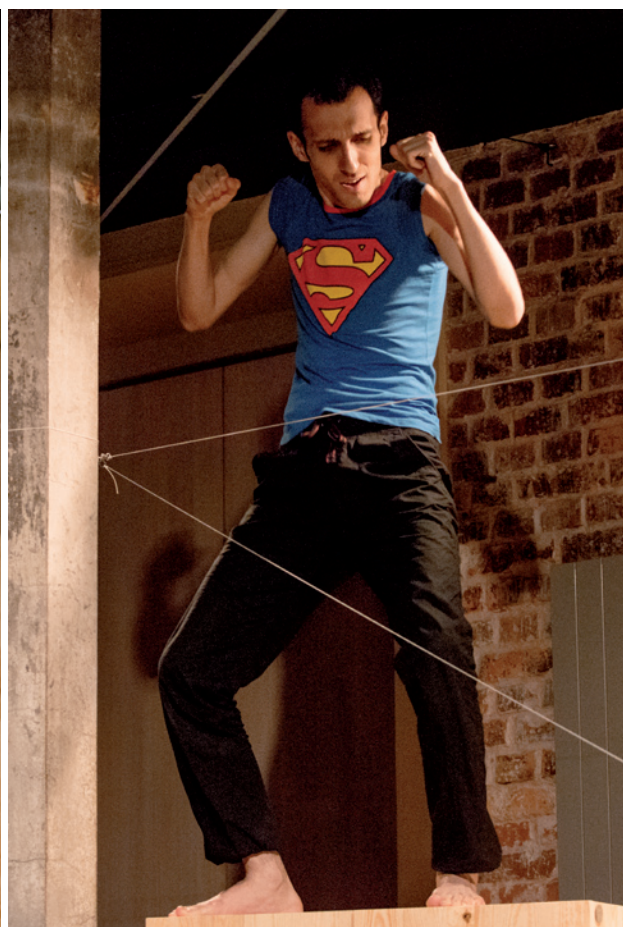
No problem, Kirk.

Thank to you, Nihad.
So Nihad, what is your next song?

Love song!

This something new on your career, Nihad.

It will be pleasure to hear your love song,
Nihad.



You know, Kirk, sniper job is fantastic job.

Yeah! It is very artistic job. Because good sniper don't shoot just any way. No, no! I have lot of principles, Kirk! First, when you shot, you have to kill, immediate, for not make suffering the person. Second, you shoot all person. Fair and same with everyone. For me, Kirk, my gun is like my life. You know, Kirk, every bullet I put in gun is like a poetry. And I shoot a poetry to the people, and it is precision of my poetry that kill people and that's why my photos is fantastic.

No, Kirk, not everybody...

Yes, yes, I kill children. No problem. It is like pigeon, you know.

I don't shoot woman like Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth Taylor is good actress. I like her very much and I don't want to kill Elizabeth Taylor. So, when I see woman like her, I no shoot her...

No, Kirk, sure not!

Welcome, Kirk.

Excellent, Nihad, can you tell us about this?

And tell me, Nihad, you shoot everybody.

I suppose you don't kill children.

So?

You don't shoot Elizabeth Taylor.

Thank you, Nihad.



■ Scene 37: Letter to the Son

(Paulina Wilczyńska; song: traditional Polish lullaby from Kaszuby region)



I looked for you everywhere.
I searched for you in the rain.
I searched for you in the sun.
 In the forest
 In the valleys
 On the mountaintops
 In the darkest of cities
 In the darkest of streets
I searched for you in the south
 In the north.

I searched for you while digging
 in the earth to bury my friends.
For an instant, you were horror.
For an instant, you have become happiness.
The silence in my throat.
These are ancient words that come from my
deepest memories.
No matter what happens,

I will always love you.



DISCUSSION-SHARING

On 17 August a discussion on qualities of silence was held. It referred to Peter Brook's book *Between Two Silences* (1999) and Philip Gröning's film *Into Great Silence* (2005).

SILENCE

On several days the group observed silence. It was a practical recognition of inner and outer silence as the source of sounds, speech and singing. This practice was introduced to sharpen perception and teach how to be present – to listen and to hear.

INDIVIDUAL TUTIONS

On several occasions the consultations on an individual basis devoted to pinpointing specific problems related to the demands of the artistic work were provided.



Never let hatred
be your guide,
never,
Reach for the stars,
always.

Wajdi Mouawad, 'Scorched'

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