

Drama Education in Postnormal Times

Towards a Postdramatic Pedagogy

Moema Gregorzewski

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the potential of a process drama-based Applied Theatre practice, Drama Education, to respond to postnormal times. Specifically, I examine how Drama Education can encourage young people who do not identify as refugees to critically encounter and challenge right-wing populist rhetoric and xenophobic representations of refugees in a hyper-technological world. As we are confronted with the so-called global refugee crisis and increasing public resentment towards 'foreigners' in the face of international Islamist terror, right-wing populist movements incite processes of excluding Others, especially as they are propelled by rapid advancements in social media and mass communication.

In order to undertake this exploration, I examine the history of Applied Theatre and the pedagogical approach of Critical Multicultural Education. This examination leads me to conceptualise, carry out, and analyse a Drama Education workshop in my home country Germany. I employ Applied Theatre As Research as a set of methods to generate qualitative data together with my participants. My methodology of Reflexive Interpretation, ontologically and epistemologically anchored in a Critical Poststructuralist paradigm, allows me to critically analyse my own reflective-analytic engagement with my practice. This analysis throws light on how the creative process of translation can act as an innovative methodological tool. As kaleidoscopic prisms, acts of translation can shatter normalised perspectives by multiplying im/possibilities of meaning.

My discoveries lead me to propose that fostering social responsibility and critical citizenship in the 21st century requires a Postdramatic Pedagogy fit to respond to postnormal times. A Postdramatic Pedagogy regards the entire Drama Education workshop as a performance event of autopoietic feedback loops. Interplays between principles of dramatic theatre (representation, mimesis, and theatricality) and elements of postdramatic theatre (presence, poiesis, and theatReality) can catalyse critical empathy, which, in turn, has the potential to propel the deconstruction of attitudes and behaviours in metaxic moments of f(r)iction. In these ephemeral moments, learners consciously experience themselves as occupants of the realms of reality, theatricality, theatReality. These moments

are not devoid of emotion but acknowledge the significant roles of both catharsis and critical thinking in learners' explorations of how stages of signification and politics of representation operate.

DEDICATION

To those losing their homes
Those seeking safety, somewhere to belong
Those unheard, unseen
I cannot change much
But I hope in the smallest of ways
I could do something for you.

And to those fearing to lose their homes
Those longing for safety, somewhere to belong
Those who feel unheard, unseen
I cannot change much
But I hope in the smallest of ways
I could do something for you too.

And to my tūpuna
I don't know most of you
And I never will
But if I can bring you any peace
any home
in me
I'll try.

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and showing me that a different life is possible;

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and for making me feel so at home;

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containing the nerves of steel able to proofread this beast;

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for holding space for my mamae, and being my home
(and for the mountains of curly kale and put-away washing
and all the date nights with Dwight K. Schrute neither of us ever really wanted to be a part of);

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GLOSSARY

adapted from Moorfield (2020)

aotearoa	North Island - now used as the Māori name for New Zealand
awa	river, stream, creek
āwhina	to assist, help, support
kapa haka	Māori cultural group, Māori performing group
karanga	a ceremonial call of welcome to visitors onto a marae, or equivalent venue, at the start of a pōwhiri. The term is also used for the responses from the visiting group to the tangata whenua ceremonial call. Karanga follow a format which includes addressing and greeting each other and the people they are representing and paying tribute to the dead, especially those who have died recently.
kōauau	cross-blown flute, traditionally made of wood, bone or a species of kelp
kōhanga	nest, nursery
kōhanga reo	Māori language preschool
mā	white, clean
mamae	ache, pain, injury, wound
marae	courtyard - the open area in front of the wharenuī, where formal greetings and discussions take place. Often also used to include the complex of buildings around the marae
maunga	mountain, mount, peak
mihimihi	speech of greeting, tribute - introductory speeches at the beginning of a gathering after the more formal pōhiri. The focus of mihimihi is on the living and peaceful interrelationships.
moana	sea, ocean, large lake
moe	to sleep, close (the eyes), dream, asleep
nīkau	a native palm, the fronds of which meet to form a bulbous head and the unbranched trunk has circular leaf scars. Flowering doesn't begin until a tree is about 30 years old.

papa	box, chest (for holding prized feathers, etc.) floor, bed (of a lake or the sea), earth - anything broad, flat and hard
pōwhiri	invitation, rituals of encounter, welcome ceremony on a marae, welcome
tangata whenua	local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried
taniwha	water spirit, monster, powerful creature - taniwha take many forms from logs to reptiles and whales and often live in lakes, rivers or the sea
te	the
reo	voice, sound, language, dialect, tongue, speech
te reo māori	the Māori Language
tongarewa	precious, precious greenstone
tūī	parson bird, songbird that imitates other birds' calls and has glossy-black plumage and two white tufts at the throat
tūpuna	ancestors
tūrangawaewae	domicile, standing, place where one has the right to stand - place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa
whakapapa	genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent
whānau	extended family, family group
whareniui	meeting house, large house - main building of a marae where guests are accommodated
whenua	country, land, nation, state; territory, domain; placenta, afterbirth

an end

Tāmaki Makaurau
Auckland
May 2017

PAST

GUILT

SILENCE

NEVER BELONGING

ALWAYS LEAVING

ALWAYS MINIMISING

MYSELF

TO PACK

UP MY
LIFE
MY SELF

TO INITIATE

ANOTHER
CUT

TO TRY TO FORGET

WHERE I'VE JUST

COME
FROM

WHERE I COME
FROM

MANIPULATING

MIGRATING

NEVER-ENDING

WHY?

TO LOSE YOUR MOTHER

TO LOSE YOUR FAMILY

TO LOSE YOUR PAST

WELL THE LITTLE BIT OF IT

YOU KNOW
YOU'VE KNOWN
YOU ONCE KNEW

IS TO HAVE

NO PLACE TO RETURN TO

THEN UNDERNEATH
THE GRIEF

YOU HEAR

THE KARANGA

BENEATH ALL THE MUTTERING

BENEATH ALL THE MADNESS

BEYOND ALL THAT IS

AND YOU

FOLLOW
THAT
VOICE
IN
THE

DISTANCE

WITH A
FEELING
OF
GUILT

IN HOPES TO FIND AGAIN
THAT PLACE

THOSE PEOPLE

THOSE WAYS OF KNOWING

THOSE WAYS OF BEING

WHERE THE HEART
MATTERS

WHERE THE PAST

IS NOT SILENT

WHERE I ONCE CAME

ALIVE.

THE PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

STILL DON'T MAKE SENSE

THE PIECES

I STARTED

I STARTED CUTTING

WHEN MY FEET FIRST TOUCHED

THIS GROUND.
I, STILL IN BETWEEN
I, NEITHER HERE NOR THERE
I, STILL NOT BELONGING
HERE
NO MORE BELONGING
THERE

IN TRANSIT FOR

THIRTEEN YEARS

STILL TRYING TO ~~FORGET~~ ERASE THE

SILENCE
MY TRACES
MY EVERY TRACE

TO BE SOMEONE NEW.

THERE'S A BLAZE IN EVERY WORD.

It doesn't matter which you heard
The holy or the broken Hallelujah.
"You hold your cards close to your chest"

my office mate said to me the other day. I guess he is right. If there is one thing that scares me, it is talking about myself. I have become quite efficient at avoiding it. When people ask me questions about my personal life, I re-direct their attention to something or someone else, to their very selves at best. I can be quite charming. Quite funny. I can make people feel good. I can make people enjoy talking about themselves. This is how I save myself. I convince myself I can get away from my own snippets of story. But now here I sit, a PhD student from Germany in Aotearoa New Zealand, this country that once felt like home; here I sit at the very beginning of this daunting journey, feeling homesick and lonely and confused and terrified, and my first task is to write about myself. To write about myself so it can be read. So it can be known. My breath becomes shallower.

Yeah, just write about that.

About ... *myself*?

Yeah, how you got here, here
and now.

How I got here, here
and now?

Yeah, 'cause... 'cause I still
haven't quite understood it yet.

My stomach turns. How can I ever make sense of the bits and pieces of life that have led me here? How can I ever pin them down in a linear order, glue them together, understand them, let alone explain them to someone else? Shame fills me, and guilt, as if there is something brutally wrong with the paths I have taken. With me being here. With me existing, here and now. I wish I had become an accountant. I wish I had been sitting at a Deutsche Bank office in a white-bread hick town in North Rhine-Westphalia for the last ten years. Three kids at home. Four bedroom house. Cisgender, heterosexual accountant husband. A cisgender, heterosexual dog, maybe. Lavender venetian blinds. Feeling slightly nauseous, I picture the past. I picture myself. Sweet sixteen. No trouble. Excellent at school. Quite talented, musical, creative. And, not that it matters, quite a pretty girl really. But you know about those perfect pictures, I guess. I was dying to get away from the choke-hold of my middle class neighbourhood, my

petty-minded school, this compulsion to fit in, to be perfect, to be someone I had nothing to do with. But before we come to that sweet 17th year of my little life, let me tell you that I grew up comfortably in the fringes of Eppendorf, a rather well-off suburb in Hamburg, as a privileged, naive but bright, white little girl named Gesine Moema whose biggest dream was to run away with the circus. I think especially my mum tried to guard me from anything that was not part of the dollhouse bubble that was Eppendorf. She was grateful to have found a safe spot for her son and her daughter to grow up in. The tiny terraced houses on my street were owned by a trust whose mission it was to provide affordable housing to young families. Outside my little blind alley, the bourgeois way of life reigned. Looking back, I feel that my family was so out of place there.

From the age of nine I worked as a voice actress for the children's programme of a public radio broadcaster. Acting in audio dramas, it was here that I experienced that it was possible to be someone else, even if only for a short time. I tasted blood and wanted more. And so it happened that I got involved with a youth drama school. Every Friday afternoon I would travel from dollhouse central to my drama class in Altona, a grungy, artsy, colourful, and diverse part of town with a high proportion of migrants and people with less resources than the average Eppendorf crowd. My mum did not like the idea of me walking through Altona by myself, especially after dark. Yet, to me, those Fridays in Altona were the highlights of my dreadful school weeks, days characterised by my hounded mind commanding me to get perfect grades, to be good, and to fit in. Dumbstruck, I was anxious to follow orders and keep myself as small and silent as a mouse so I would not undermine the hierarchy that was this institution. Every Friday after school, though, I would open the special drawer of my cupboard and reach for the secret spot behind the candy-striped leggings and the linty winter socks and pull out that beautiful dark blue satin bra that I had swiped from my grandparents' house. I had found it there years before in an old chest of drawers below neatly folded piles of clothes from decades ago, clothes of faded pastel colours smelling of an unforgettable melange of ancient cellar air and strangely familiar laundry powder from a long-ago era. This bra. It was a big deal. I did not have a proper bra of my own at the time, and I was anxious to get one. Too embarrassed to go to the shops, I was ecstatic about my lucky strike, my unhoped-for find, my unexpected treasure.

“Can I take this home to Hamburg with us?”, I had asked my mother years earlier when we once spent our holidays in Detmold, holding up a wrinkled sketchbook which showed a drawing of a girl labelled “Gesine”. My mum had made that drawing when she was a teenager herself. She had called her creation “Gesine”, long before she knew she would give birth to me. It touched me. It gave me a sense of origin, of a life story starting, of identity. “Leave it here, yeah?”, she replied, “What is in this house belongs in this house.” My grandparents’ house clearly was something sacred to her that had to remain untouched. Maybe that is how she wanted to keep the memory of her parents alive, of her childhood, of her brother who had committed suicide when he was very young. Of course, in reality, in my official reality, he died in a car crash. That was the truth that I was allowed. I guess my mother did not want to lose her idea of home.

So yes, I did feel quite guilty when I snatched that bra, but I did take it with me to Hamburg anyway. Every Friday afternoon, I would have an extra-long shower, put on my favourite clothes, underneath of which I wore the forbidden, ancient brassiere in question, and put on an outrageous number of layers of black Mascara and something extra sparkly and colourful from my extensive jewellery collection (it was a luxuriant little treasure chest but hardly ever opened). Proud and tall, I would flounce out through the streets of Eppendorf to my local bus stop and hop on the number twenty which would take me - efficiently and punctually, of course - to the forbidden place: Altona. Here, I transformed. I moved and danced and proclaimed and imagined and created. Here I was beautiful, here I was confident, here I was a fish in the sea. I tanked up enough fuel to get me through another week of adhering to the hierarchies of school life, memorising and disgorging historical dates and processes of photosynthesis, and cycling home to our tiny terraced house with the last ounce of energy left in me. In return for moving out of our tiny terraced house, my dad was recently offered thousands of euros by a real estate agency who wanted to turn this slightly shabby, crooked thing into a luxury apartment so our cul-de-sac too would become a *real* part of Eppendorf. The real deal. They kept nagging him for years, but he always declined. This was our home, even though there was only him and my rabbit Wursti left in it. Ultimately, when they offered more money, he moved out and started a new life with a new family in a new city, a new world cut off from loss and grief and the slightest memory of his late wife, my mum, and his two biological children, my brother Malte and me. The feeling of home had left the house long before it was destroyed. At the time, losing it felt like a relief; now I am experiencing utter grief when I am picturing it.

Back when our tiny terraced house was still standing, back when I was close to turning sweet sixteen, I made a wish that would change the course of my life. My parents' ability to grant me that wish still haunts me to this day. It is quite common in Germany that, when you are about sixteen, privileged kids like me would get to spend some time abroad to go to school and improve their English. What a dream! Can we make this possible? Imagine! I remember there was this awful New Zealand made, youth television programme broadcast in Germany at the time which was based around all the adults dying from a virus, leaving only the young people alive; having to, and being free to, set up their own world. Their own new world. New Zealand. Neuseeland. Let's check the map. You cannot get any further away from Hamburg than that. Do they speak English there? 2004, the year my feet first touched New Zealand soil, was probably the most exciting year of my life. Every second of the day I would pry my eyes open to not miss a millisecond of these strange yet beautiful lands, seas, sounds, and scents. I would not miss a gust of wind rushing through the trees, not one whistle of a tūī. My new school mates here in New Zealand were full of neon hair dye, piercings, and funky clothes, and I took subjects like photography, drama, media studies, and te reo māori. A language was so much more than just a language, I learned, it truly was a rich and all-encompassing taonga. It was stories, histories, legends, traditions, songs, dances, and prayers; it was distinct and precious ways to look at and make sense of our world - past, present, and future. It gave us our identity. Once I discovered I would progress to the next year level back at school in Germany regardless of what grades I received from my New Zealand school, I was free. My goodness, that gave me a different way to live life. To view life. To experience it. I became someone new.

Fernanda, a Brazilian girl who looked like she was Japanese, became my best friend, and we ended up learning kapa haka at our school, singing "I'm not crazy, I'm just a little unwell" till late in the night on her host brothers' trampoline, and writing FE MO in big letters in the sand of Piha beach just outside Auckland, so big you could see them loud and proud from the top of Lion Rock. Moema, she told me, is a suburb in Brazil, and means "sweet" in Tupi Indian. Just a few days before remembering Fernanda and writing these words, I met another Brazilian lady on the streets of Auckland. Moema, she said, is a Brazilian bird. And back in 2004, Matua Rawiri from Western Springs College explained: "Moe, that is to sleep in te reo māori. And mā means white, or clean, or pale." Moema, that is also the author of a

book that a beautiful young woman named Ines Gregorzewski read some time in 1987. She liked the name. In the same year, just days before Christmas, I started making my way into the world at a Hamburg post office, two months before I should have. Sleepy pale bird, what was calling you? There were many lonesome weeks in the incubator, I heard, and that it was an extremely cold winter. Every day, my mum and dad would bring my mum's expressed milk to me. They would hop into a friend's rusty old car and set off to the hospital on the icy streets of Hamburg. There was one single tape in the car stereo, there was one single song on it, and that one single tape with that one single song was stuck, so you could only ever push repeat and listen to that same old song over and over again. Every day. Day after day. Week after week. With my mum's warm milk in the bottle, swinging in the rhythm of potholes and snowflakes, Ines and Michael sang:

Now I've heard there was a secret chord
That David played
And it pleased the Lord
But you don't really care for music
Do you?
It goes like this
The fourth
The fifth
The minor falls
The major lifts
The baffled king composing
Hallelujah

These days I know that reverse culture shock is a well-known phenomenon, but at the time, after my return to Germany, I could not understand my intense feelings of disconnection, alienation, grief, and depression. I noticed how reserved and distant people were back in Germany, and this mentality hung above me like a dark heavy cloud wherever I went. When I said "thank you" to the bus driver, he, plus all passengers aboard, looked at me like I was insane. When I tried to start a friendly chat with the lady in front of me in the supermarket queue, she stared at me helplessly and somewhat appalled, before turning her back to me. When I visited the *Reichstag* in Berlin and brought my poi with me, security officers x-rayed and confiscated them while I despairingly tried to explain that they were for singing and dancing. Somehow I could see history in people's behaviours, in their speech and mannerisms, in their faces and eyes. A history of minding your own business, a history of not getting involved, a history of wearing blinkers, *Scheuklappen*, a history of being suspicious of each other and cautious not to reveal

too much of oneself, and I recognised, even more in myself than in those around me, a history of silently following orders, of obeying hierarchies, of not going against the tide. It scared me. As I played by the rules and never rebelled against anything, I graduated with a brilliant *Abitur*, and, while everyone around me went off to University to pursue their brilliant careers and make their brilliant money, spending another second in any education system sounded like hell to me.

With no master plan in mind, I applied for a Working Holiday Visa and returned to New Zealand. I travelled the islands for a bit, made friends with Keri, a te reo Māori teacher from Motueka, and found a little home in Wellington and a little job at Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Museum. Keri and I would sit in front of Te Āwhina Marae for afternoons on end, and he would tell me stories about his ancestors, teach me how to sing the waiata of his people, how to strum the guitar and play the kōauau, and invite me to community te reo classes. I washed a thousand dishes and volunteered at the local kōhanga reo, and after a while I became part of the whānau. For a short time. I left Motueka with a heavy heart full of stories and alternate ways to view the world, and with the idea that treasuring where you come from can keep you strong and proud. “Your ancestors”, I was told, “are sitting here and here, on your shoulders, and they’re with you wherever you go, always looking out for you. And they’re very, very proud of you.” Soon after this, I returned home and my mum died, and she took with her the glue that stuck my little family together. Let us not worry about the details, let us just note that I felt like a complete stranger in my own country and that, on that morning in April 2010, I lost all I thought I had. Total collapse. I never had the chance to say goodbye.

There is very little I can tell you about my family. I got my surname from my mum, and I was always happy people assumed I was not German. And it was not only me who compulsively tried to cover up that I was German. Many Kiwis told me they observed the same tendency in other Germans who came to the other side of the world. My mum’s brother said to me not too long ago “Well, we’re actually from France and Austria, well, not Germany”. I do not really know my dad’s side, and I do not know why. They just disappeared from our lives when I was a little child, disappeared from my conscience. We do not talk about it. There is an unspoken pact of silence about them. When my mum and dad got married, my dad took on my mum’s surname, Gregorzewski, but after a decade or so he wanted his own name back. All I really know about my mum’s side of the family is that Gregorzewski was once Grzegorzewski,

that it was 'germanised' back in the day, and if you could hear me now, I would show you how the latter is pronounced quite differently to the first. In fact, my mum's parents had their own language back at home, back in East Prussia, Masurian. It has died out. I remember a few words that my mum used when she spoke to me. When the Russian troops arrived in East Prussia towards the end of the Second World War, they cast out or killed most Prussians who had their home there, and those who were allowed to stay had to assume Polish citizenship. People assimilated I guess, either by speaking Polish or German, and that is what my grandparents Helmut and Elisabeth did. They fled their home in Lyck in Mazury, leaving all they had behind, and found refuge in Detmold, West Germany. Here, Helmut started building a house. When my mum was little, the street was called *Sonnenhügel*, Hill of Sun. I, however, have only ever known the street as *Agnes-Miegel-Weg*, Agnes Miegel Way. Only a few years ago it was changed back to its original name. Agnes Miegel, people in the neighbourhood found out, was a national-socialist poet glorifying Hitler and propagating Nazi ideology. They protested and crossed out the street sign until, finally, a new street sign was mounted on top of the old one. Many years passed, however, until the council actually dismantled the defaced Agnes Miegel.

I feel so guilty when I talk about refuge in regards to my grandparents. But I guess that is what it was. All I know is that they never felt quite at home in West Germany, that they always tried hard to fit in, to be unobtrusive and attract no attention. Every now and then, my mum would get a bit nostalgic and speak of some intangible *Heimat*. I know that there was a small painting in the house in Detmold with a farm on it, and I think *that* was, or is, my family's home, but I never really understood. I know that Helmut and Elisabeth wanted to emigrate to Canada, but they were poor and could not afford the tickets. I do not know when and how they wanted to go, I just know that it was their dream. Funnily enough, when I was working at Te Papa in Wellington a few years ago, out in the exhibition space with my name badge on, I helped a young woman from Canada to find some resources. She caught sight of my badge, and her eyes lit up in surprise; "Are you from here?" "No, I'm from Germany, actually." "You know what", she replied, "my mate back home in Canada has got the exact same surname as you!" A "No!" exploded out of my mouth as a rush of surprise and a tingling sense of utter joy and connectedness filled every cell of my body. We stared at each other and laughed for what felt like an eternity. "I have never, never, ever met a person who shares my surname, never, nowhere!", I gasped amongst my giggles of astonishment. A sense of safety and belonging came with the idea that there could be someone,

somewhere out there who I am somehow connected to; that my family was more than a handful of estranged lost souls minding their own business.

It is thanks to this surname, that a random guy in Canada and I share, that I have been born into this world in the first place. After the Second World War, my grandfather Helmut worked on a French farm as a prisoner of war - for two years, I think. One night, he escaped. For nights on end, he ran through the woods and fields. My mum explained to me that, back then, anyone was allowed to shoot an escaping German prisoner of war. One night, Helmut, running for his life, heard someone command him to stop. His blood froze in his veins. "That's it," he thought, "I'm dead." Helmut stood still. The Frenchman with the rifle who had called him drew closer. "Who are you, what's your name?" Helmut had adapted well and spoke excellent French. "Gregorzewski, monsieur" he gasped. The Frenchman looked Helmut in the eye. Puzzled, he whispered, "My name is Grégoire. My god. We could be cousins. Run, run!" So Helmut ran. Days, months, I do not know. I only know that one day, he found a piece of broken glass along his way. For the first time since his escape, he looked at his own reflection. Helmut could not recognise himself.

Helmut's future wife Elisabeth had one sister who she was particularly fond of. Elisabeth's 'favourite' sister and her mother went missing during the war, my aunt once told me, no one knows what happened to them. My uncle knows a different story. He said they died on the MV Wilhelm Gustloff, the German military transport ship which was sunk in 1945 by a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea. As the Red Army came closer, the ship evacuated German refugees and military personnel from Poland to Germany. My auntie said my grandmother was never particularly warm and affectionate towards my mother. Not much emotion, not many words. A speechlessness I know. A speechlessness which has made me doubt my own worth and achievements so often, and ultimately, my mother's love for me, an endless love that had always been there but that was hardly ever made explicit. My aunt showed me a picture of my grandmother's sister once. I could not believe my eyes. Elisabeth's lost sister and my mum, they could have been twins. Did her daughter's face remind my grandmother of her lost sister, of her laughter, her smile, her voice? Is it the pain of constantly being reminded of this unbearable loss that inhibited Elisabeth from allowing her emotions to be known and shared? Inhibition from speaking words of love, pride, praise, and affection to my mother? Did seeing her lost sister in my mum give rise

to this speechlessness which has shaped their somewhat distant mother-daughter relationship, a culture of speechlessness that has subconsciously been passed on to my own mother and myself, to the whole family? Lots of things could have been different. I could have had the chance to say goodbye. At my mother's funeral, one of her friends mentioned how astounding it was that all of my mum's relatives have migrated far and wide, left their home town, home district, home state, and in some cases, their home country, home continent, home hemisphere. This compulsion to leave and somehow find a home somewhere else, a place that *really* feels like home, somewhere where we feel we belong or where we can be someone new and start afresh, seems to dwell in all of us. My aunt once told me of a theory, how certain traits or feelings are passed down unspoken from generation to generation. And sometimes I wonder where this feeling of pervasive guilt comes from, this guilt that follows me wherever I go, a tendency to constantly apologise for, essentially, existing, the compulsion to pack up my things, remove all my traces, throw half my belongings in the trash, and find a new home. Regarding the past as a taonga and as the roots from which we grow has deeply impressed me about Māori culture. Remembering and treasuring the past was, and still is, something completely alien to me. I do not know who my grandparents were. Who they were in the 1930s, 1940s. I could not ask. I cannot ask. But I do remember that, in Helmut's house, my brother once found a swastika badge. He showed me. Looked me in the eye and whispered: "Scary." He put it back. We left the room. Ubiquitous silence reigns over our past. Over our present.

Maybe it is this silence which has made me fall in love with theatre in the first place. I remember I was Pippi Longstocking when I was maybe five, in a community theatre production in my hometown. I became Pippi, the girl who lives in a big colourful house all by herself with a horse and a monkey, who takes care of herself, who lives by her own rules, who sometimes goes on adventures out at sea with her two best friends and her pirate dad. I remember it so vividly. It was amazing. I became Pippi, and everyone witnessed it. I think I had always been so anxious to follow rules correctly, it was pure freedom to somehow be both Pippi and myself at the same time. I had always been so anxious to stay silent and accept my parents' speechlessness and inability to explicitly critique or praise anything I had done, I had always been so careful to keep the silence, to make everyone happy, to minimise myself, that I felt so alive on this tiny improvised stage where I could be someone new, where I could be safe, seen, and acknowledged for my courage. I guess I tried to make my profession based on what has gifted me

enormous amounts of strength, belief, confidence, and courage to dream big and to be whoever I wanted to be. Bringing people together to play, explore, question, reflect, and transform through theatre has become my passion. There is so much potential in the notion that there is always an alternate way to imagine, to create a life, a world.

I have now returned to New Zealand for the third time to delve into my passion and start my PhD journey. Every time I hop on a plane, I make a clean incision which separates one life chapter from the next. All these chunks of life sit uncomfortably in my chest. I feel the compulsion to separate them so they do not know about each other, as if I am trying not to leave the slightest trace behind. As if there is a German me and a Kiwi one; a past me and a present one. And I am absolutely terrified of what would happen if the two meet, if the two were to play, explore, question, reflect, and transform each other. I cannot tell you why. Can I tell you what has called me back here? Was it the open-heartedness of the people, the easiness of simply being, the freedom from that pungency, rigour, and discipline that I encounter in Germany? Spiritual ways of knowing, being, and living together, where acknowledging our ancestors and each other's existence, where singing to each other after a work meeting or a school assembly is normal? It might sound silly but, for a few years, from the moment I first stood up to speak my first mihimihi when I was sixteen, I have often secretly wished to be Māori myself. To have an identity. To have a communal, coherent identity. To have an identity to celebrate. A wider whānau, marae, a tūrangawaewae, a maunga, an awa, a moana. Roots you know, roots you are proud of. Pride and belonging that you sing and dance into existence with all your heart and might. Maybe my passion for learning te reo māori stems from my urge to be part of the revival of a language that has almost died out. Maybe my joy in joining kapa haka and waiata groups emerges from this awe of celebrating the past and the homeland, not my own, but those of the people of Aotearoa. Whenever I've come here, I've felt like I can breathe again. It is like going to my drama class, back in the day in forbidden Altona. Here in Aotearoa, I transformed. I moved and danced and proclaimed and imagined and created. Here I was beautiful, here I was confident, here I was a fish in the sea.

Now, I am a fish in misty clouds. Picture me in 2017 at a workshop at the Auckland Regional Migrant Services Centre. I am here because I signed up for an Intercultural Communication workshop; I thought it would fit with my PhD and volunteering interests. I want to support refugees. I thought there would be

all sorts of people here, Kiwis and migrants and everyone in between. I thought intercultural communication was for everyone, goes both ways, goes all sorts of ways. Except for one lady, we are all from overseas, and it is all about learning how to, well, maybe not assimilate, but how to make sense of living in New Zealand. Here I sit, and we talk about where we are from and how long we have been in New Zealand, we talk about the difficulties of being somewhere new and trying to settle in, about the distinct Kiwi ways of speaking and behaving, and about certain cultural codes in our home countries. Then it hits me: *I am a migrant now too.* I have never seen myself as a migrant. But here, now, I am just like the others in the room. “So, Moe, welcome, how long have you been in New Zealand for?”

I’m feeling slightly dizzy.

I’m feeling inferior to those who have the privilege to call themselves New Zealanders. I am feeling lost. I can’t stand this loneliness. Soon I will need to worry about visa regulations. About my residence status. About getting kicked out. Why did I bring myself into this situation? I could be living comfortably in Germany, with a little job, in a little flat, without all these worries. I would be normal. I guess I took a somewhat naive leap of faith. Now, I can afford a dark damp room, and I run through the supermarket aisles shocked about how expensive everything is here. What if I don’t get a job? The streets are different, the houses are different, the sky is different, the clouds are different, the trees are different, the shops are different, the people are different, the doctors are different, the way of life is different. I am isolated on an island so far away from everything; so far away from something that could have been home. I am feeling tiny. I want my safety back. I want to be safe but I am out of place, I am displaced, I am in between, and I am scared.

Have I arrived at that in-between space in which there is no more clear incision between the German and the emerging Kiwi in me? No more clear incision between my various broken bricks of the past and the future I am creating right here, right now? Am I in that space in which, for the first time, people I have left behind are still pounding in my chest and my past is constantly calling me? Is it this state of incessantly being haunted and hounded by a lost home and nebulous guilt from long ago which has called me to return to Aotearoa to embark on this PhD journey to investigate Applied Theatre as a means of exploring what it means to migrate and seek refuge in these turbulent times, as a means of challenging widespread reductive and ethnocentric perceptions of cultural identity?

Let me remember. Did I feel uncomfortable on my flight from Manchester to Bremen in 2016, when my plane was stopped just before hitting the runway and police entered to ask a lady wearing a burka to move to the front of the aisle to hand over her passport? What was I thinking in these fifteen minutes, when all I could see was three heavily armed officers and a veiled black figure at the end of a long empty aisle, and dozens of necks craned greedily towards the cockpit? What was I thinking when all I could hear was pervasive muttering about explosives under her dress, about how she was going to blow us all up, about her blue eyes, about her “foolishness to do this Islam stuff to herself”? Was I appalled at these comments? Was I scared of the woman in front of the cockpit door? Was it my own fear, grief, and anger shaking me after ISIS follower Anis Amri had driven a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin in December 2015, and after Salman Ramadan Abedi had committed a suicide bombing in the name of Islam a few weeks ago at a pop concert just round the corner from my friends’ flat in Manchester? In my own backyard, right-wing populist parties are on the rise. Every Monday in many German cities, thousands of people march against what they call the “islamisation of the occident”, conjuring up ethnocentric and xenophobic conceptions of the many refugees and asylum seekers who have come here since 2015. At a demonstration against Donald Trump’s attempt to ban people from Muslim majority countries from entering the US in Manchester last year in 2016, I caught a glimpse of a placard saying “We are history teachers. We know how this ends.” I stood amongst the massive crowd on Albert Square when it hit me. Fear. Urgency. For the first time, really, I had the feeling that I had only ever had in those fictitious worlds that I would dream up in my head or in a theatre space or a drama workshop, that I probably dreamt up when I was a young girl watching that NZ TV show which never quite let me go: this was my world too, and I was creating it. I was responsible for it. I was responsible for my action, for my inaction, for my words, for my silence, for my involvement, for minding my own business, for going along with things or for standing up and giving voice to my dissent. My mum once told me that my grandmother said to her that it was not true that you had to become a Nazi too. That you did not have to join in, that you did not have to go along. You could keep out of it. But if you keep out of it, if you do nothing, if you look the other way, if you mind your own business, what do you do but go along?

I did my best
It wasn't much
I've told the truth
I didn't come to fool you
And even though it all went wrong
I'll stand before the Lord of song
With nothing on my tongue
But

INTRODUCTION

Wir müssen die Grenzen dicht machen und dann die grausamen Bilder aushalten. Wir können uns nicht von Kinderaugen erpressen lassen.

We must seal the borders and then withstand the cruel images. We cannot let ourselves be blackmailed by children's eyes.

Alexander Gauland
Lawyer, Publicist
Politician (Alternative for Germany)
Fled as a refugee from East to West Germany in 1959
About photographs of dead refugee children

Unser Deutschland leidet unter einem Befall von Schmarotzern und Parasiten, welche dem deutschen Volk das Fleisch von den Knochen fressen will.

Our Germany is suffering from an infestation of vermin and parasites that wants to gorge the flesh straight off the bones of the German people.

Thomas Göbel
Painter
Politician (Alternative for Germany)
About refugees

Das große Problem ist, dass Hitler als absolut böse dargestellt wird. Aber wir alle wissen natürlich, dass es in der Geschichte kein Schwarz und kein Weiß gibt.

The big problem is that Hitler is depicted as entirely bad. But we all know, of course, that there is no black and white in history.

Björn Höcke
Secondary School Teacher for History & PE
Politician (Alternative for Germany)
About Hitler

When I was a child, hearing such words on the mainstream news, in parliamentary debates, or at rallies attended by ordinary people like my neighbours, my teachers, my political representatives was unthinkable. For young people in my home country, Germany, today, words like these are becoming a normality. Disguised as concern in times of uncertainty and chaos, right-wing vernacular and xenophobic representations (which I must have naively assumed our history had somehow immunised us against) is making its way back into the unquestioned normalcy of everyday life.

In this thesis, I explore how creative and embodied engagement in theatre-making processes can provoke young people to critically grapple with the postnormal times in which they live. I will investigate the explorations of young people who identify as belonging to a receiving nation, Germany specifically. Rather than employing the term 'host society' as is the unquestioned standard in the German migration discourse, I will use the term 'receiving nations' to describe people who already live in countries that have become the destination of refugees. I do not regard people who live in receiving nations as mere interim 'hosts' with temporarily or ethically limited responsibilities and moral obligations.

Sardar (2010) defines postnormality as an age dominated by complexity, chaos, contradictions, and uncertainty resulting from the globalised technocratic neoliberal world order of the 21st century. In the New Normal of 2020 caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic, postnormality has reached yet another dimension. In the New Normal none of us have so far found, fears are amplified, and social cohesion is even further out of joint. The pandemic directly impacts a distinct social development of postnormality that I am interested in. This is the emergence of right-wing populism in times of rapid advancements in social media and mass communication.

A fundamental nationalist movement, right-wing populism has seen an upsurge in recent years across the global North. With the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis and the rise in international Islamist terror, the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and its associated street movement Pegida, short for Patriotic Europeans Against The Islamisation Of The Occident, have gained a significant number of supporters in Germany. Such movements slowly reintroduce into everyday vocabulary dangerous, discriminatory rhetoric, proclaiming as legitimate attitudes reminiscent of exclusionary thought and behaviour patterns nurtured and normalised in Nazi-Germany. Right-wing populist rhetoric is based on Othering, the process of constructing people as fundamentally culturally, ethnically, or religiously alien and therefore inferior.

How can engagement in theatre-making challenge young people to critically encounter right-wing populism and xenophobic representations of migrants and refugees in a hyper-technological world? To explore this question, I will examine a distinct practice of theatre-making, which I will define as Drama Education (DE). As a specific approach to socially engaged participatory theatre practice, DE sits under

the umbrella term of Applied Theatre (AT). I will investigate how DE can create aesthetic experiences that take young people beyond mere empathetic identification with fictional characters by provoking them to critically reflect on and deconstruct their own and others' representations, attitudes, and behaviours within and outside dramatic frames.

In order to undertake these explorations, I will examine the histories, pedagogies, and principles underpinning both Applied Theatre (AT) and Critical Multicultural Education (CME), a distinct approach to fostering inclusive democratic societies. I will explain the Multiple Case Study (MCS) approach of this research project and outline the fieldwork I undertook, which involves the conceptualisation and implementation of a DE workshop. I will discuss my methods for data generation and my methodology for data analysis as well as their limitations and ethical implications. Finally, I will offer reflective-analytic accounts of two implementations of the workshop to subsequently discuss the findings emerging from my critical engagements with these accounts.

With this thesis, I aim to contribute to countering the contagious spread of right-wing populism. I hope to offer insights into how existing pedagogical practices concerned with nurturing multicultural societies can be enriched so that future educational endeavours are fit to play a vital part in fostering social responsibility, critical citizenship, and social cohesion in postnormal times.

This thesis comprises eight chapters:

Chapter 1: The Resistible Rise of Populism in Postnormal Times

This chapter introduces the notions of postnormality and right-wing populism. It outlines the social, historical, cultural, and political contexts of this thesis and the fieldwork it comprises.

Chapter 2: Critical Multicultural Education

In this chapter, I outline several distinct theoretical approaches to multicultural education that seek to foster inclusive democratic societies. These approaches are benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, anti-racism, and postmodern theory. I explore how these approaches have led to the

development of a new approach, Critical Multicultural Education (CME). I discuss the pedagogical principles of CME and their potential to respond to postnormal times.

Chapter 3: Applied Theatre

In this chapter, I explore different approaches to socially engaged theatre, subsumed under the umbrella term Applied Theatre (AT). I trace the history of theatre-making with educational intent, explore associated pedagogies, and explore essential concepts that have been employed to analyse AT practice. I discuss existing theatre practice that seeks to respond to the so-called global refugee crisis and point out the need for additional initiatives.

Chapter 4: Making a Case for Drama Education

In this chapter, I introduce the workshop I conceptualised as the basis of my fieldwork to generate qualitative data. I define its underlying Applied Theatre (AT) approach, Drama Education (DE). I discuss my conceptualisation of DE and suggests that this approach is a fruitful pedagogy capable of putting CME-inspired educational initiatives into practice. I throw light on the ways DE can productively respond to postnormal times and right-wing populism.

Chapter 5: Methods & Methodology

In this chapter, I explain the research methods and the methodology employed in this research project. I outline the Multiple Case Study (MCS) approach underpinning my research design. I explore Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR) as a set of methods used to generate qualitative data. I outline the tenets of Critical Theory and Poststructuralism to make a case for Critical Poststructuralism as an ontological and epistemological anchor underpinning my work. I explore the quadruple hermeneutics of my chosen methodology, Reflexive Interpretation, and make a case for Benjamin's notion of Translation as Art to inform my methodology. I also discuss the ethical considerations underpinning my research.

Chapter 6: Waking up our Walls of Thought: Workshop One

This chapter offers a reflective-analytic account of one implementation of the workshop.

Chapter 7: Voices from beneath the Veils: Workshop Two

This chapter provides a reflective-analytic account of another implementation of the workshop.

Chapter 8: Discussion of Findings

In this chapter, I outline four themes that emerge from my explorations of my reflective accounts of the workshops. These are the presence of a seemingly paradox simultaneity of calls for humanity and acts of Othering, participants' analyses of fear as the basis of the inner workings of right-wing populism, participants' sustained acts of 'thinking beyond' and making connections to the real, and the methodological possibilities opened up by the creative process of translation. The focal point of this chapter is a thorough exploration of the fifth theme, the reconceptualisation of the DE workshop as a postdramatic performance event of autopoietic feedback loops. This exploration points to a reimagination of a central concept in AT research, metaxis.

Conclusion

I conclude by providing a succinct summary of my research and its findings. I consider the limitations of my practice and offer recommendations for future Applied Theatre practice and research that seeks to respond to right-wing populism in a New Normal phase of postnormality whose ever-changing shape and form are yet unknown.

CHAPTER 1

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF POPULISM IN POSTNORMAL TIMES

All that was 'normal' has now evaporated; we have entered postnormal times, the in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense.

(Sardar, 2010, p. 435)

Complexity, chaos, contradictions characterise the globalised technocratic neoliberal world order of the 21st century that Sardar (2010) calls postnormal times. Vast inequalities in power and resources reach into the everyday lives of ordinary people. Rapid advances in mass communication technology promise community, belonging, information, and identity but create isolation, uncertainty, confusion, fear, and alienation. As I write in November 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic amplifies experiences of isolation, anxiety, uncertainty, and chaos around the world. In a desperate global search of a New Normal, right-wing populism offers ready-made soothing narratives of a stable sense of home and safety amidst the unpredictability of postnormality.

With the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, Western nations have experienced an upsurge in right-wing sentiment. Following the Arab Spring in 2011, protest against the Assad government in Syria evolved into the Syrian civil war. Extremist terrorist Islamist groups have been participating in this conflict, including the so-called Islamic State (IS). Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, the number of global terrorist attacks performed in the name of the IS ideology has increased dramatically. This trend also affects Europe and the global north, as they have directly or indirectly been part of anti-IS interventions in Syria and elsewhere or are regarded by IS followers as having done so by publicly condemning IS ideology. While the number of such Islamist attacks increases, more and more refugees escape to Europe from violence, turmoil, and lack of human security caused by IS and the Assad regime as well as other oppressive organisations and governments around the globe. These refugees predominantly flee from Syria and other war-torn places of armed conflict with mostly Muslim populations in the Middle East, as well as, for instance, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Somalia (Brady, 2017; Nesser et al., 2016; Zunes, 2017). As I write in November 2020, 79.5 million people around the

globe, almost 26 million of whom are refugees, are fleeing their homes due to armed conflict, persecution, or poverty (UNHCR, 2020a).

These two complexly interwoven parallel developments, the rise in global Islamist terror and the so-called refugee crisis, have led to a growth in xeno- and Islamophobia not only in Europe, but the entire global north. Notably, it is the world's most powerful who can be accounted responsible for these crises. Assad himself, it has been argued, has a role to play in the emergence of IS, as he released Islamist militants in large numbers from Syrian prisons in order to keep the international community from staging an intervention against him for violently oppressing his own people (Weiss & Hassan, 2015). Furthermore, IS was originally founded and led by Iraqis radicalised during the 2003 Iraq war ignited by the Bush-led US administration, which caused the backlash of radical Islamist movements in the Middle East whose ideologies, fuelled by new technologies, especially social media, spread to Western countries in the form of terrorist attacks (Danner, 2003; Jhaveri, 2004; Palast, 2005; Richter, 2014). Zunes (2017) notes that, "ironically, refugees resulting in part from such U.S. policies are now bearing the brunt of the resulting racist backlash" (p. 2) evident in the West.

This racist backlash is at the root of nationalist right-wing parties winning significant percentages of democratic votes Western democracies, and, in some instances, entry to parliamentary representation in national and regional elections (Vieta & Poynting, 2016). My home country Germany has seen the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and its affiliated street protest movement Pegida, or Patriotic Europeans Against The Islamisation Of The Occident. After attempts to ban the ultra-right neo-Nazi National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) were unsuccessful in German courts in 2017, the party continues to mobilise followers, especially in economically deprived areas of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). While the history of Nazi-Germany makes Germany a particularly disconcerting case for the proliferation of right-wing populist politics, Vieta and Poynting (2016) stress how the phenomenon of populism is neither limited to Germany nor the EU. With the electoral successes of right-wing, anti-immigration parties across the West, exclusionary nationalist sentiment has spread and is regarded by an increasing part of the public as somewhat socially acceptable (Vieta & Poynting, 2016). In the UK, such *ressentiment* has led to British voters choosing to leave the European Union (EU) in the 2016 so-called Brexit referendum. Anti-immigrant hate crimes have risen,

not only against refugees and people of Muslim faith, but also against politicians advocating the immigration of refugees, attested by the recent assassinations of Jox Cox in the UK and Walter Lübcke in Germany (Travis, 2017; Trimborn, 2017; Zunes, 2017). In Aotearoa New Zealand, a person exhibiting right-wing populist and white supremacist convictions carried out two mass shootings during Friday Prayer at two Christchurch mosques in March 2019. Via the internet, the perpetrator had direct connections to the far-right Identitarian movement in Austria which attracts young people across Europe and beyond.

While very few citizens of receiving nations actually commit hate crimes based on their fears and frustrations, many are genuinely worried that the movement of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa is weakening their country's security (Brady, 2017). Further fears include that refugees will strain their country's resources, either unintentionally or purposefully, and that terrorists are coming to their country in disguise as refugees. Increasingly, both pertinent parties and the public express the suspicion that refugees themselves could be or become terrorists. Research suggests that there is little proof that terrorists organisations such as IS take advantage of the refugee movement to move jihadists into Western nations. Neither does research show that refugees are more susceptible to radicalisation than persons who have not fled their home country (Brady, 2017). A very small number of refugees have actually committed any terrorist attacks (United Nations, 2016).

A rise in deprecatory attitudes towards refugees affects the receiving nations of the entire global north (Brady, 2017). Such perspectives have become an everyday phenomenon in many countries. Views and claims previously condemned as intolerable in democratic societies have become the socially accepted everyday vocabulary of the "‘native’ and self-proclaimed ‘indigenous’ Christian[s]" (Vieten & Poynting, 2016, p. 536). Pegida gains in popularity and branches out into Austria, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Political parties and, increasingly, ordinary citizens use the disguise of concern for their homeland and protection of cultural heritage to make exclusive nationalism and islamophobia a respectable, moral, and normal ground to speak from. In so doing, they deny people conceptualised as not belonging to their homeland and culture equal citizenship and humanity (Vieten & Poynting, 2016). Gusterson (2017) calls this phenomenon nationalist populism. Others have referred to it as authoritarian populism, right-wing populism, cultural nationalism, nostalgic nationalism, and neo-nationalism

(Balthazar, 2017; Evans, 2017; Gingrich & Banks, 2006; Green et al., 2016; Hall, 1980; Makovicky, 2013).

Populism, as I will refer to this phenomenon henceforth, purports to represent and give voice to 'the people.' They are regarded as "the true repositories of the soul of the nation" (Cox, 2017, p. 13). Central to populism is the notion of nativism, that is, the claim that the common good of society is the inherited privilege of 'the people' (Vieta & Poynting, 2016). Coupled with the demand for retrieving and preserving one's own country's tradition, another marker is hostility towards immigrants and "ethnic others" (Gusterson, 2017, p. 210), or, as Vieta and Poynting (2016) put it, "the racialised Other [who acts] as a threat to 'our' way of life" (p. 535), particularly when such Others¹ are of Muslim faith. These Others serve as "an enemy figure on whom real insecurities may be projected" while "ethnicity, 'race' and religion [serve] as social divisions and identity containers" to make such Othering possible (p. 537). Populism also rejects the elite. The latter is defined as the current political establishment since it conspires against 'the people', as well as transnational organisations such as the EU, and the facts distributed by the public press or intellectuals (Jansen, 2015; Mikus, 2016; Mudde, 2015; Shoshan, 2016; Taggart, 2004; Zúquete, 2014). All populist rhetoric, then, has dual dichotomy at its core. One division exists between 'we' the authentic, hard-working people, and them', the corrupt elite and fraudulent established government institutions. The other postulates the existence of a 'we', the native nationals, and 'them', the alien barbaric invaders (Vieta & Poynting, 2016).

Dzurinda (2016) notes how the history of Europe attests that populist movements have always emerged from economic, social and political crises. Indeed, the worldwide growth of right-wing populist movements can be regarded as a response to the uncertainties that have sprung from the recast of power, wealth, and identity that global neoliberalism has caused (Gusterson, 2017; Vieta & Poynting, 2016). The neoliberal political and economic order, emerging in the early 1970s and expediting after the Cold War with the beginning advancement of digital communication technologies, has led to degrees of social and economic inequality the West has not experience since the early 20th century

¹ In the 1980s, the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak coined the notion of Othering as a praxis of conceptually constructing people as 'culturally alien' on the basis of certain marks of difference, be it ethnic, religious, or physiognomic, to subconsciously build, demarcate, and solidify one's 'own' identity (Spivak, 1985). Following Spivak (1985), I will henceforth use the notation Other(s).

(Cox, 2017; Gusterson, 2017). Not only can the global financial crisis of 2008 and its austerity measures be regarded as a direct consequence of neoliberalism. In part a result of the emergence of IS, the refugee crisis too can be considered to be rooted in neoliberalist greed for demonstrating and increasing Western power and, arguably, resources. After all, IS is principally the consequence of the power vacuum resulting from the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq as the Bush administration's dubious response to 9/11, and the growth of IS in part facilitated by the Assad regime (Danner, 2003; Jhaveri, 2004; Palast, 2005; Richter, 2014). A breeding ground for populism, neoliberalism produces complexly interrelated catastrophes such as the global financial, refugee, and Islamist terror crises. "[F]eedback loops between neoliberalism and nationalist populism" (Gusterson, 2017, p. 212) produce poisonous concoctions of fear and entitlement readily consumed by ordinary people thirsty for order, clarity, and certainty in post-normal times of chaos, complexity and confusion (Sardar, 2010).

If we shift the focus from those bearing the most hardship to those belonging to receiving nations, contemporary forms of populism can be regarded as a search for meaning, identity, certainty, control, belonging, and safety in a neoliberal age of globalisation (Cox, 2017; Giddens, 1999b, 1999a). In this light, Montier and Pilkington (2017) argue that the backlash in the form of populism does not come at a surprise. Catering for the emotions, anxieties, and frustrations of searching citizens who feel they have been left behind in a post-normal world, populists offer "sensational narratives, myths and fears that plant the seeds of distrust in a constructed enemy" alongside "simple solutions to complex problems" (Dzurinda, 2016, pp. 171, 172). Rapid advances in mass communication technology and social media have profoundly bolstered the spread of distinct and often distorted allegedly truthful representations of Others. Algorithms bombard the public with a variety of new kinds of often image-based texts in echo chambers and filter bubbles (Dittrich, 2017; Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017; Engesser, Fawzi, et al., 2017; Hameleers & Schmuck, 2017; Krämer, 2017; Machill et al., 2013; Manucci & Weber, 2017; Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2017; Younes & Al-Zoubi, 2015; Zweig, Hauer, et al., 2017; Zweig, Deussen, et al., 2017).

In 2020, the chaos, complexity and confusion of postnormality could not be more pronounced. Covid-19 has caused not only a global health crisis, but also a socio-economic one. In the search for certainty and clarity in the unstable New Normal of 2020, "[a] digital pandemic populism" (Vieten, 2020, p. 1) is

enhancing the mobilisation of right-wing populist agenda on social media and “the normalisation of extremist standpoints and the blurred boundaries between facts and fiction (post-truth)” (p. 9). During ongoing street anti-hygienic protests against governments’ pandemic policies, citizens frustrated with Covid-19 restrictions share their anger and anxieties and solidarise with representatives of far-right anti-elite movements (Kelly, 2020; Malik, 2020; Ruser & Machin, 2020; Sold & Süß, 2020b). As Islamist extremist groups too exploit the Covid-19 crisis to spread their ideology and possibly gain social media presence, right-wing populism might experience increasing attention and support as a response (Sold & Süß, 2020a). Ruser and Machin (2020) warn that “Europe might well witness a renewed surge of far-right populism” as a result of the pandemic (p. 5). Those ending up bearing the brunt of these developments are the world’s most vulnerable - people seeking refuge from terror, war, and poverty.

Populist rhetoric and even non-populist discourse insists that the current so-called global refugee crisis is an entirely unprecedented phenomenon. Interestingly, Neumann (2016) notes that many characteristics of today’s crisis are not new. Rather, how receiving nations in the global north perceive, label, and respond to waves of migration and refugee movements has changed. As Neumann (2016) states, “[t]he problem of global mobility is not caused by migrations but rather by the response to these migrations” (p. 10). While acknowledging that the quality of forced migration is novel indeed, he stresses that the severe dearth of human security in some places of the world is nothing unfamiliar at all. Finding parallels between the Syrian refugee crisis and the refugee movement catalysed by the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Neumann (2016) notes that, “as a proportion of the global population, the number of refugees worldwide was higher between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s than it was in 2014” (p. 12). It is equally telling that not the global north, but developing countries look after 85 per cent of the world’s refugees (UNHCR, 2020b). If we regard human migration as novel, and frame it as the cause of unprecedented crisis, we run the risk of failing to notice that the West’s reaction to human migration, especially when it is the consequence of loss of human security, has changed gravely in recent years (OECD, 2015). While nations like Germany are countries of immigration, the majority of their nations’ citizens and politicians share the strong tendency to regard and define the arrival of migrants, especially refugees, as a problem (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2015). Neumann (2016) pointedly insists that too little attention has been paid to

the integration of people who do not want to accept that their societies have changed and continuing to change in response to immigration and that they themselves need to adapt to these changes, and who then embrace the anti-immigration rhetoric of demagogues such as Frauke Petry, Pauline Hanson or Winston Peters.

(p.11)

It is not only politicians such as Petry² who regard refugees almost exclusively as a potential security risk in their rhetoric. Politicians from the entire political spectrum and public media outlets define the migration of refugees almost entirely as a threat. This “securitisation of refugee migration” as “a result of post-9/11 anxieties” incites fears that one’s country might be invaded by somewhat dangerous Others (Neumann, 2016, p. 11). These fears are as distinct in Germany as they are in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere (Neumann, 2013).

Educators have attempted to counteract such anxieties for many decades. Pedagogical approaches associated with benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, anti-racism, and postmodern theory have been developed in the pursuit of social cohesion, equality, and inclusion. These approaches are based on distinct conceptions of culture. Within the last forty years, these conceptions have evolved significantly in the academy. In the next chapter, I will trace the history of these educational approaches to throw light on the state of educational attempts to nurture democratic societies. This exploration will suggest that educators and learners alike will benefit from engagement in Critical Multicultural Education (CME) initiatives as a response to the current wave of populism that wash up on our shores of free speech and threaten to breach the dams of inclusive democracies.

² Frauke Petry was the leader of AfD from 2013 until 2017.

CHAPTER 2

CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

In the previous chapter, I discussed how postnormality characterises the times in which we live. I outlined the rise of right-wing populism across the global north and the discriminatory world view it propagates. In this chapter, I will trace the history of several pedagogical approaches that attempt to counter discrimination and exclusion. This exploration will suggest that educational endeavours inspired by Critical Multicultural Education (CME) can adequately respond to right-wing populism in postnormal times.

I conceptualise CME as a compound and multifaceted theoretical framework. CME attempts to inform pedagogical practices aiming to promote inclusive democratic societies characterised by migration. CME draws on the tenets of Critical Pedagogy (CP) to critically review and expand on existing conceptual approaches to understanding multicultural societies, most notably benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, anti-racism, and postmodern theory. These approaches are based on specific definitions of culture. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the very meaning attributed to the notion of culture has shifted significantly within academic discourse. Such shifts are the result of globalisation and the ensuing complex phenomena of migratory movements and cultural change. Consequently, the past sixty years have seen social and cultural anthropologists challenge the idea that our world is a mosaic, tessellated of rigidly separated cultures. In this chapter, I will respond to this long-standing conceptual challenge. I will consider its relation to the interrelated histories of the approaches preceding CME. I will argue that the postnormality of our times require CME-based pedagogical initiatives that refuse to turn a blind eye to this challenge any longer. I will discuss how CME can be an adequate response to the new wave of right-wing populism emerging across the global north and make a case for putting the fragmentary but fruitful theoretical framework of CME into practice.

The Development of Critical Multicultural Education

Until the 1960s, cultural anthropologists firmly stipulated the congruence of groups, territories, and cultural boundaries. This definition presupposes that cultures are virtually unchangeable, static

structures independent of people. According to this view, human beings are mere bearers of pre-existing cultural systems. People are regarded as permanently settled in distinct locations, identifying exclusively with one common and timeless culture that can be perceived and analysed objectively. As a result, assimilatory models of integration dominated the responses that receiving nations offered their own discourses, policies, and pedagogical practices as regards migration and multicultural education (West, 2014). Throughout the next decades, benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, anti-racism, and postmodern theory emerged as alternative perspectives to understanding multicultural nations and possible educational strategies that may ensure these societies are based on lived inclusivity, democracy, and equality.

Benevolent Multiculturalism

In the 1980s, the concept of benevolent multiculturalism emerged as an alternative approach to assimilatory models of integration (May, 1994). Benevolent multiculturalism does not aim at complete assimilation of migrants into receiving nations. Rather, it intends to foster the respectful coexistence of distinct cultures, worldviews, and ways of life under the general rule of a receiving nation's culture (Schulte, 1991). Educational initiatives based on benevolent multiculturalism work exclusively with people belonging to cultural minority groups so that they may interact effectively in mainstream society, that is, conform to the majority culture of the respective nation-state. Alternative benevolent multiculturalism-inspired approaches focus on working with groups of people of both majority and minority positions to encourage them to see minority cultures as positive 'additions' to mainstream culture. At the centre of such efforts are the transmission of factual information and an appreciation of canons of alleged knowledge about migrant numbers and causes of migration as well as ostensibly static cultural attributes, such as food, clothes, rituals, beliefs, performing arts, and folklore (Sarma, 2012).

From a benevolent multicultural perspective, differences are framed "as already knowable" fixed characteristics (Sharma, 2010, p. 120). Regarding culture as an amalgamation of prescribed essentialised and depoliticised characteristics and practices that educators should categorise and transmit to their students, benevolent multiculturalism transforms people not belonging to a society's respective dominant culture and their cultural identities into ethnitisised objects of knowledge.

Consequently, benevolent multiculturalism turns a blind eye to the unequal power relations within the broader socio-political context that formulate and uphold such categories and the discourses on culture and difference framing them (May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Thus, benevolent runs the risk of impeding the exploration of the operational processes and material determinants of discrimination, disadvantage, and inequality. It follows that benevolent multiculturalism is likely to fail to investigate the mechanisms of how the norms agreeing with cultural majority values dominate the representations of and within everyday life. In this way, benevolent multiculturalism is unable to provoke educators and learners alike to consider how difference is defined against this very invisible frame of reference. Rather, benevolent multiculturalism propagates a problematic individualism. It implies that the primary problems pluralist societies face are individual deficiencies. At fault are either migrants who fail to adequately adapt to mainstream culture or receiving nationals' inability to fully tolerate and celebrate minority cultures by overcoming their own personal prejudice (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999).

Interculturalism

Interculturalism challenges the benevolent multiculturalist approach. Interculturalism rejects the propagation of a mere coexistence of people living alongside each other (Gemende et al., 1999). Instead, interculturalism aims to promote dialogue and exchange locally, nationally, and internationally, taking into view society as a whole so that the question of integrating people who the majority perceives as culturally different becomes a question of inclusion to be achieved by everyone (UNESCO, 2006; West, 2014). Intercultural education includes a variety of didactic approaches intending to foster so-called intercultural competences. These constitute purportedly objective knowledge about cultural milieus and adequate ways to interact with them. Suggesting that a firm sense of identification with a certain singular culture is necessary for the development of self and identity, interculturalism identifies certain cultural differences among people, such as place of origin, religion, or tradition in order to make visible misunderstandings and prejudice (Nohl, 2006; Otten & Treuheit, 1994). What underlies interculturalism and related educational initiatives, then, is an archaic understanding that links ethnic or national origin to culture. This understanding defines cultures as disparate incommensurable opposites (Breidenbach & Nyíri, 2008; Koch, 2008; Motakef, 2000). Like benevolent multiculturalism, the tenets of interculturalism threaten to homogenise and essentialise cultures as rigid entities by fixing differences

and insisting on an alleged natural and thus insurmountable disconnectedness of cultures (Sarma, 2012).

Anti-Racism

Another perspective is proposed by the anti-racism movement. Race here is conceptualised as the social categorisation of humans on the basis of shared physical attributes, most notably skin colour, to designate national affiliation and belonging. Anti-racism approaches to education aim to counteract racism. Racism is a proposition that someone's genetic makeup unequivocally determines someone's race, and that the latter incontrovertibly dictates their attributes, abilities, worth, and intelligence. Racism specifically presumes that race defines certain people as inferior to others. In this way, racism produces prejudice and discrimination disadvantages and marginalises people. Racism does not only reproduce itself via individual bias and behaviour and interpersonal relationships and communication, racism also affects society on a systemic level. Systemic racism emerges from the history of specific laws, policies, and institutions that explicitly or implicitly favour some people over others. The anti-racism approach regards racism as the predominant source of social injustices. However, it has been argued that anti-racism approaches overemphasise race at the expense of considering other intersecting factors that contribute to discrimination and inequality, such as class, religion, gender, and culture, that is, customary beliefs, traditions, and social norms and according codes of behaviour (P. Gilroy, 1992; May, 2003; Modood & May, 2001). The failure to recognise the significance of intersectionality means that anti-racist strategies fail to take into view 'new racisms' (May, 1999a, 1999b). As conceptualisations and rhetoric around race, ethnicity and culture have shifted throughout the past decades, 'new racisms' have emerged as a set of discourses that convert the notion of 'race' into the purportedly more admissible and justifiable rhetoric of 'cultural difference' (Brah, 1992; Rattansi, 1992, 1999; Short & Carrington, 1999). 'New racisms' regard 'cultural differences' as rigid attributes that originate in a person's fixed historical situatedness and cultural heritage. Without resorting to palpably racist vocabulary, 'new racisms' propagate the essentialist view that individuals belong to homogenous groups based on immovable cultural habits that determine not only their behaviour, but also their identity. 'New racisms' purport that minority groups deviate from the mainstream in terms of customs, mother tongue, religion, ancestry, and/or geographic origin (Barker, 1981; Modood, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The recent emergence of right-wing populism lives on 'new racist' discourse that defines

people, especially refugees of Muslim faith “as a homogeneous collective threat to western nations” (May & Sleeter, 2010, p. 8)

Postmodern Theory

In contrast to anti-racism approaches, postmodern theory emphasises that people create differing notions of ‘culture’ semiotically and discursively. From this perspective, the use of signs, symbols, and written and spoken communication constructs meaning, and thus different cultural identities. Crucially, these processes take place within unequal relations of power (Anderson, 1983; Geertz, 1975; Hall, 1992; Said, 1978; C. Taylor, 1992). The concept of Othering, coined by the postmodern and postcolonial theorist Spivak (1985) offers a theoretical lens that throws light on the semiotic-discursive nature of the phenomenon of ‘new racisms.’ Spivak usefully defines Othering as the process of conceptually constructing people as ‘culturally alien’ on the basis of certain markers of difference - ethnic, religious, and/or physiognomic - to subconsciously build, demarcate, and solidify one’s ‘own’ identity. Regarding cultural identity as an ever-changing mosaic negotiated and re-negotiated in an ongoing active process, postmodern theory maintains that individuals are always in dynamic exchange with a multiplicity of possible cultural identifications. This hypothesis is the basis of the postmodern concept of cultural hybridity. Insisting on the existence of individual choice, rights, responsibility, voice, and agency, hybridity theory repudiates discourses that regard cultures as incommensurable closed spheres with unchangeable traditions and origins (Bhabha, 1994). Opposing the notion of group-based identity, culture, from this point of view, is first and foremost transgressive. On this basis, postmodern theory asserts the notion of cultural hybridity undermines essentialist ideologies, that is, fixed assemblages of moral standards, ideals and beliefs based on suppositions about reality that influence groups of people to think and act in certain ways, such as nationalism (Werbner, 1997a, 1997b).

By reinforcing dichotomies such as purity and hybridity, however, postmodern theory assumes that *all* group-based identities are negative and essentialist, equating nationalism and ethnicity (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Gilroy, 1987). From a CME perspective, it is crucial that people have the opportunity to identify themselves culturally and ethnically. Only then can they position themselves within, and contribute to, discourses on social justice (May, 2003). Political agency, people’s capacity to make their own choices and act independently, is not enacted in a vacuum or in “displacement”, as Ahmad (1995)

notes, “but in given historical locations” (p. 16). It is this consistent “sense of place, of belonging, of some stable commitment to one’s class or nation” (p. 14) that upholds political agency. Analogously, May (2003) argues that individuals and groups can feel profoundly and passionately connected to their own historical, cultural, religious, ethnic, and/or linguistic communities while wishing to be inclusive and receptive to cultural transformation in the pursuit of social equality.

From Principles to Practice

Despite the shortcomings discussed above, postmodern theory can be considered a key player in paving the way for the development of CME. Critiquing benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, and anti-racism from a postmodern perspective offers academics and educators alike a critical lens that, together with Critical Pedagogy (CP) as its base, has provoked scholars such as May (1999a, 1999b, 2003), McLaren (1995, 1997), Kalantzis and Cope (1999), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) and Sleeter (1995) to produce insightful writings pointing towards CME as a multifaceted, compound theoretical framework that can inform pedagogical practices aiming to promote inclusive and democratic multicultural societies.

Self-Recognition as the Catalyst for Social Change

Rather than understanding cultures as static relics of the past, CME frames them as conglomerations of beliefs, viewpoints, patterns, and codes of behaviour constituting distinct perspectives on reality. Cultures lay out social rules that guide groups of people to judge and interpret everyday interactions and events in certain ways (Shade & New, 1993). Cultures become amalgamations of multifaceted, shifting, and intricate processes that actively shape everyday interactions and events yet to occur, creating feedback loops between interactions, occurrences, and people’s perceptions, observations, and interpretations. Individuals, all located in distinct historical, economic, and political circumstances, catalyse and actualise such processes simply by participating in social situations (May & Sleeter, 2010). These circumstances and structural forces give form to historical and contemporary relationships entrenched in unequally distributed resources and shape the way individuals and groups participate in them. It is these situated everyday interactions that engender, act out, and sustain distinct social relations of power (Hall, 1997; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995).

By considering the unequal power relations occurring in distinct socio-cultural contexts, CME aims to refrain from losing itself within a vacuous cultural relativism. Such relativism overlooks that differences in values and norms between groups choosing to live according to different cultural traditions, and between their individual members, do exist. CME argues that it is vital that such differences are negotiated. Structural forces, such as racism and capitalism, effect the choices for cultural identification of some individuals and groups more than others (Alcoff, 1996). According to CME, for social change to occur, it is essential that individuals recognise their role in the social matrix. This recognition presupposes the explicit acknowledgment that majority and minority cultures do exist as historically contingent discursive constructions within tangible material and structural conditions and hence social constraints whose effects constitute real lived experiences (May, 2003; McLaren, 1997). CME calls for learners and educators alike to come to recognise and critically reflect upon where they themselves are culturally and historically located. CME asks us to interrogate how our experiences within this respective located-ness influences our conceptualisations of ourselves, alleged Others, and the space in-between these two self-erected poles. This process of personal discovery and recognition must not involve succumbing to an ethno-cultural determinism that conceptually erodes the possibility of agency and the validity of other, intersecting types of identity (Hall, 1992; May, 2003). CME, then, provokes the critical exploration not only of Other individuals' and groups' cultural identities, self-proclaimed and ascribed, but also their very own (McLaren & Torres, 1999).

A Matter of Perspective: Tracing the Shapes of Invisibility

In order to theorise and facilitate such critical explorations, Sleeter (1995) classifies two perspectives on the workings of society, the dominant and the minority position perspective. Based on a deficit worldview, the dominant position proposes that society is free and open, and that advancement within it is possible through individual effort. This view regards individual deficiencies in language, culture and/or religion on the part of people situated in the minority position as the cause of existent inequalities, or individual prejudice on the part of people situated in the dominant position. In contrast, the minority position perspective postulates that societal structures, unequal power relations and access to resources subjugate marginalised people. Sleeter (1995) usefully emphasises that individuals identifying with the majority culture are likely to have learned and internalised the dominant perspective.

It follows that CME requires pedagogical strategies that provoke young people occupying majority positions to become conscious of their internalised perspectives. This process involves safely encountering the concept of the dominant and the minority position perspectives, enabling them to explore these two outlooks, to make links to their own cultural situatedness, and to even play with the experience of walking in the shoes of someone who occupies the very opposite position to them. Alternatively, if educational efforts disregard people belonging to a nation's respective dominant culture, pedagogical initiatives bolster discourses and behaviours that oppress members of minority cultures (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; McLaren, 1995). Equality for marginalised so-called Others becomes an on-going collaborative process in which all members of society deconstruct the ways in which 'new racist' practices as well as mainstream discourses on migration and integration normalise and render invisible dominant cultures and discourses (Gay, 1995; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). This collaborative process involves the critical exploration of how the domination such alleged neutrality affords shapes people's experiences, interpretations, and thus understandings of the world and the ways they act within it (Flynn, 2010; May, 1999a).

Decentring the Dominant: Experiencing Counternarratives through Collaboration

As we have seen, CME calls for practical strategies to encourage people to explore their own position within the hierarchically structured social matrix, how discourse creates, reflects, and reproduces these social relations of power they are embedded in, and how their own situatedness forms and restricts their and Others' choices of cultural identification (Haymes, 1995; May & Sleeter, 2010; McLaren, 1997). CME can enable such exploration by providing people situated in dominant positions with spaces and provocations that bear the potential to facilitate encounters with counter-memories. Aronowitz and Giroux (1990) define counter-memories as experiences, perceptual realities, and worldviews of marginalised people that make experiences of subjugated groups explicit. Coming in contact with and experiencing counter-memories seems particularly pivotal in postnormal times. In a digital age of fake news, the lived realities of subjugated groups are often misrepresented. This trend does not acknowledge that these lives are real experiences of actual human beings (Gay, 1995). Distorted representations of the precarious lives of Others obfuscate empathy, compassion, and agency. They impede critical thinking about the troubling state of the status quo and the roles we all play that uphold it. From this perspective, the emancipation of Others is always also the emancipation of the self. Social

justice becomes a personal pursuit of transcending the narrow confines of oppressive discourses and technologies that thrive on and reproduce ethical inertia, individual isolation, and the numbing consumption of ready-made images of alleged truths. Such quest can begin if we explore how social conditions influence our very own societal participation, even if our location within the social matrix is that of cultural dominance (Gay, 1995; McShay, 2010).

The task for CME is to bring minority position perspectives into the centre of educational endeavours by shifting vantage points through lived experiences. Bombarding learners situated in dominant positions with texts explicating minority perspectives is both common and dangerous, as coercion mostly leads to a resistance of exploring alternative ways of seeing and living (Sleeter, 1995). CME suggests that fostering moral courage and political engagement requires us to resist normative teaching methods based on hierarchical interactions between learners and educators. Decentring majority position perspectives by decentring dominant forms of pedagogy, CME can offer ways to structure processes of knowledge production of which learners themselves are increasingly in charge (Gay, 1995). Such dialogical explorative experiences based on learner's own lived realities can only occur if an egalitarian relationship between educators and learners, through sustained acts of sincere collaboration, provides a level of emotional safety (Elshtain, 1976; May & Sleeter, 2010). The provision of such safe spaces is crucial because learners bring with them their own histories, struggles, and ingrained emotions (Sleeter, 1995). In creative partnerships, educators and learners may counter the intellectual imperialism dominating educational practices that supply commodified answers that educators already know and learners blindly accept (Gay, 1995; Smyth, 1992). Fostering safe spaces in which learners and educators collaboratively encounter ambiguity as playful potential, CME can provoke them to generate their own texts - "counternarratives" (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 18) - that catalyse a multiplicity of possible interpretations, perspectives, and realities. In this way, they can encounter themselves and each other as experts of their past lived experiences and authorities of knowledges yet to be devised (Gore, 1992; Sleeter, 1995).

The Stage of Signification: Troubling the Seams of the Omniscient Narrator

If CME dares learners and educators to collaboratively challenge the ubiquitous assumption that the existence of Otherness is divorced from their own existences and everyday lives, the provision of the

means to investigate cultural representations is a crucial component of learning initiatives (McLaren, 1995). Cultural representations are understood here as portrayals of cultural Others, or attributes of such Others, in specific manners within certain politics of signification, that is, through continuous acts of creating signs. If we critically explore the intricacies of the very process of creating signs, we can destabilise meanings taken for granted. Such critical explorations can enable us to investigate the ways in which minorities are represented in the civic realm, and how the creation and propagation of these representations subordinate people. According to CME, it is crucial to consciously examine such acts of ascription. I define the latter as processes of assigning distinct identity markers to other human beings, thus casting them as the role of the Other. This conscious examination should include genuine reflections on how acts of ascription occur within our own everyday behaviours and lifeworlds. As I have discussed, the prerequisite for such explorations is encountering oneself as an individual situated in a dominant position that itself is uniquely located in distinct historical, economical, and political contexts (Gay, 1995; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; May & Sleeter, 2010). It is not only crucial that people explore how they themselves constitute active players and, simultaneously, audiences on and before the stage of signification. It is also critical that they investigate how the very *mise-en-scène* and stage machinery - distinct power relations embedded in those specific historical, economical, and political contexts and the socio-cultural determinants they produce – not only provide them with a stage in the first place, but also influence and frame their performances (McLaren, 1995; Sharma, 2008, 2010). The production and reception of cultural signs is, then, always embedded in ideology. These two intricately interwoven processes are subject to ideology while concurrently creating it. In this feedback loop lies the potential for either maintenance or disruption of oppressive representations that subjugate minorities and narrow the minds of dominant groups.

To provoke the exploration of the workings of signification, it is vital that we examine the constituents of signs themselves. Borrowing from postmodern theory and semiotics, CME regards the sign as the relationship between the signifier and the signified. The signifier is a representation of a concept or an idea in the form of, for instance, an image, a sound, a word, a facial expression or a gesture. In other words, it is the form the sign takes. The signified, in contrast, is the concept or idea – the content - that the signifier provokes in a person. A third element, the referent, is the one specific image, sound, word, facial expression or gesture a person refers to when producing a sign. The referent is one - the first, but

only one - distinct example that the sign points to, influencing a person how they may construct meanings in the future (Jacques, 2012). The relationships between signifiers and signifieds do not adhere to pre-determined fixed natural orders. Rather, they are in flux, ever-shifting, and, in this way, arbitrary. Representations do not passively occur in a vacuum but emerge from constant active contentions – struggles that are contingent on power and privilege - over signifiers and their signifieds, that is, over meaning (McLaren, 1995). Human beings create, play out, and perform meaning within these relations, within and through social relationships of power. In this way, they devise difference by producing distinct realities and truths framed in and by their specific everyday life worlds through interpretation and utterances of these interpretations.

According to CME, it is paramount that educators provoke learners to “refuse the role of the omniscient narrator” (McLaren, 1995, p. 49) when exploring the processes involved in creating cultural representations. In other words, an integral part of any CME endeavour is the challenge of the very concept of truth “as some timeless essence” that emerges “from the metaphysical deep freeze and thawed out for consumption as a unitary, motionless, and apodictic meaning” (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 20). Rather, humans create multiple versions of truth into existence, and they all are “ideologically “sutured”” constructions (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 20). The notion of one inherent, natural, and neutral meaning revealing a unitary self-evident and certain reality gives way to the provocation that what we perceive as truth is held together by distinct ideologies whose structures winnow out and streamline the infinity of interpretations potentially to be created into existence, a single worldview that complies with the norms and values these ideologies seek to uphold and reproduce. Ideologies, in turn, are contingent upon specific historio-political contexts and the discourses that these contexts enable to circulate. Ultimately, learners engaging in CME may start to regard their everyday experiences as “situated meaning” (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 20), sewed up into their current interpretation by a distinct politics of representation that limits their frame of reference (McLaren, 1995). Sleeter and McLaren's (1995) metaphor usefully makes clear that such learning experiences do not simply occur through unstructured self-reflection, but can only be catalysed and sustained if educators provide adequate tools sharp enough to cut the threads that hold together purportedly solid chambers of universally valid logic, disrupting the seemingly seamless neutrality of truth claims whose incessant echoes have reverberated into unquestioned mantras of the everyday. Sharpness, that is, the

characteristic of edges and points clearly defined and distinct in outline and detail, capable to safely pierce and pry open what it seeks to alter, is demanded from both carefully thought-out pedagogical tools – approaches, structures, processes – and the distinct, overt, and transparent positioning of the educator’s political standpoint, from the conceptualisation phase of creating I/session plans through to facilitation and evaluation.

Ethical Encounters with Otherness: Suspending our Excess of Difference

Refusing a vacuous idealism in the pursuit of harmony, CME aims to enable learners to grapple with a variety of, at times, antagonistic standpoints and knowledges. In so doing, CME can acknowledge the uncomfortable and chaotic contradictory complexities that characterise everyday life in postnormal times. These complexities are the very uncertainties that right-wing populist and ‘new racist’ rhetoric transmutes into clear-cut *Feindbilder*³, images of threat (Gay, 1995; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Rather than asking learners to ignore the existence of different cultural worldviews and perspectives, CME calls for educators to provoke learners to examine how Others are represented and thus grow to be known as Other. This exploration has the potential to constitute rehearsal spaces for egalitarian alternatives to live with difference.

To actualise such potential, such rehearsal spaces must enable learners to momentarily suspend the “excess of difference” (Sharma, 2010, p. 119) that, in everyday life, compels them to engage in processes of Othering. Echoing Spivak (1985), Sharma (2010) defines processes of Othering as continuous acts of negating what one is not to solidify one’s own identity. People permanently engage in the negation of an array of perceived and potential differences. These are infinite; an excess of difference haunts our every struggle for identity and security. Striving to fortify and shield our own senses of self, we permanently engage in Othering to work towards completing ourselves in the face of an insurmountable incompleteness (Brown, 1995; Nealon, 1998). As we can never accomplish completeness, Othering becomes a cycle of dependency that turns into its own invisible filter bubble. The dependence on Othering as a process that can ultimately only ever fail to assure our own identity often results in *ressentiments* towards perceived Others, especially when people perceive a heightened

³ das Feindbild (German, noun) literally ‘the enemypicture’; plural: die Feindbilder
pronunciation of ‘Feind’ = engl. “find” > a picture in/with which to find – perceive, interpret, create – ‘Feinde’

sense of insecurity (Sharma, 2010). It is this shared “groundlessness” (Sharma, 2010, p. 119) that can constitute the common ground from which to explore how else we could grapple with our own excess of difference, that is, how we could “defin[e] identity in ways other than through the strategy of negation of the other” (McCarthy, 1998, p. 92). In this way, CME can create “ethical encounters with “otherness”” (Sharma, 2010, p. 113). Educators cannot plan for such fleeting moments by preparing pre-filtered ready-to-serve canapés of knowledge to be handed out and consumed. They can, however, provide the conditions for learning experiences in which ethical encounters with Otherness may occur (Sharma, 2010). Such conditions must allow for genuine questions to be imagined, formulated, asked, and reflected upon so that educators and learners, in creative partnerships, may “illuminate new pathways for challenging and resisting practices that seek to limit their potential and maintain the status quo” (McShay, 2010, p. 146).

Affect as Fleeting Fissures of Possibility: Embodiment, Safety & Open Receptiveness

Signifying practices are affect-laden processes, since “representations when dealing with difference, engage[s] feelings, attitudes and emotions, and it mobilises fears and anxieties [...] at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way” (Hall, 1997, p. 226). Ethical encounters with Otherness, in which learners momentarily suspend their excess of difference, live on receptivity. Writing outside the CME framework, political theorist Beausoleil (2014) offers useful insights into the significant role affect and receptivity play in upholding democracies. Beausoleil (2014) defines receptivity as the affective state of openness to new and different conceptions and standpoints. While scholars such as Hall (1997), Sleeter (1995), McShay (2010), and Hanley (2010) point towards the crucial role affect plays in CME learning, none of these writings take a deeper look into the neuroscientific background to explicitly investigate the philosophical, pedagogical, and political potential of affect, emotion, and affective investments.

Affect can be understood as “a non-conscious bodily intensity” caused by a stimulus striking the body before it is processed cognitively (Kluitenber, 2015, p. 2). On average, half a second passes between the strike of a stimulus and the cognitive registration of it. Moving twice as fast as consciousness, affect is a key player in how we respond to the representations and discourses we encounter, and thus in the very workings of politics. Continuously creating feedback loops between each other, affect and political

thought and action are complexly intertwined (Massumi, 2015). It is our very own interpretations of our affective experiences that form and perpetuate the political status quo within social interactions of the everyday (Ahmed, 2004). Permanently submerged in endless floods of stimuli triggered by events, images, encounters, and narratives, we do not notice those half seconds, those “delay[s] between encounter and perception” (Beausoleil, 2014, p. 21) that Connolly (2002) names “fugitive passages from unthought to thought” (p. 112). A space overfilled with potential rather than an inconsequential vacuum, this fleeting fissure of possibility is the threshold of consciousness where thus far unconnected experiences, thoughts, and judgments meet (Kluitenberg, 2015).

As every person’s viewpoint is engrained within lived experience, perceiving and reflecting upon events, behaviours, and representations through minority position perspectives requires more than the work of the intellect (Sleeter, 1995). “[G]raphic emotionally-charged portrayals of inequality” (p. 423) can catalyse experiences with marginalised groups that are concurrently “real” and “vicarious” (p. 424). These points of intersection, where one’s taken-for-granted majoritarian everyday reality and empathetic identification with a minority position perspective collide, can elicit “emotional jolt[s]” (p. 425), moments of affective experience that startle learners out of the dominant perspectives they have learned, internalised, and since taken as read. Analytical approaches alone cannot harness those precognitive and embodied ephemeral moments of encountering Otherness, moments in which fear compels us to retreat into the comfort and safety of familiarity, or empathy, passion, and courage allow us to take a leap of faith onto the unknown path of ambiguity (Beausoleil, 2014).

As the “passion within which one’s investments in, or commitments to, the world are made possible” (Grossberg, 1988, p. 285), affect not only regulates and comprises what is important to us and what we care about. It also impels the generation, deployment, propagation, and performance of power among individuals, propelling and enacting power relations both between individuals and between individuals and the social circumstances and forces that regulate their behaviours. Emotions, here understood as our interpretations of affective responses, and our articulation of them can uphold or disturb unequal power relations by creating distinct, historically contingent subjectivities (Harding & Pribram, 2004). In this way, “affective investments” internalise and naturalise or challenge ideologies (Grossberg, 1992, pp. 82-83). Power relations played out in the everyday, from this point of view, are productive emotional

relations that “not only subordinate, they create” (Harding & Pribram, 2004, p. 881). An embodied creative, and thus potentially disruptive force, affect is crucial in countering “the racism embodied in disinterest” (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 25). After all, it takes “emotional investment and commitment to engage in social action” (McShay, 2010, p. 147).

To harness the creative power of affect to effect social justice as part of small meaning interventions and acts of moral courage within the everyday, it is important to note that affective responses do not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, implicit memories shape such responses. Always attached to particularly pronounced emotions, implicit memories are cached in the body but not able to be consciously called to mind. The embodiment of implicit memories permanently alters our nervous system, a network of nerve cells communicating signals between different parts of the body. The nervous system serves as a perpetual gauge, or filter bubble, that sieves and thus forms how we discern and interpret experiences in the here-and-now. Responses to ideas and images are, then, framed and formed by past experiences that we do not explicitly and consciously remember. Certain triggers – feelings of anxiety, insecurity, shame, lack of safety – cause the nervous system to produce and release stress hormones which trigger the body's fight-or-flight response (Beausoleil, 2014). As blood is re-directed to the most important muscle groups of the body, such triggers restrict blood flow to the frontal lobes, the parts of the brain managing crucial cognitive processes, such as memory, flexible thinking, inhibitory control⁴, language production, communication, attention, the expression of emotions, social and moral reasoning, problem solving, and, crucially, empathy (Chayer & Freedman, 2001). In other words, these triggers circumvent people's ability to reflect on their perceptions and interpretations formed out of past non-conscious experiences, as well as their ability to open themselves up to the unknown and purportedly different in order to try out new patterns of thinking and behaving (LeDoux, 1998; Porges, 2004, 2009). Triggers suggesting security and safety, however, enable the nervous system to remain in a condition of receptivity, a state crucial for the potential formation of new understandings and new emotional reactions (Beausoleil, 2014). Ethical encounters with Otherness, then, require visceral experiences that disrupt habitual patterns of thought and behaviour through the senses (Beausoleil, 2014). In this way, referents – the first distinct examples that signs points to, influencing people how

⁴ Inhibitory control is the ability to inhibit, in the present moment, interfering information, that is, cognitive processes activated in the past. In this way, inhibitory control works as a mechanism of self-control allowing individuals to focus their attention on the current situation to discern by inhibiting their habitual behavioural responses to stimuli (Anderson & Weaver, 2009).

they may construct meanings in the future – do not blindly and rigidly determine how individuals encounter, interpret, and act upon reoccurring or familiar signs. If people pay attention to physical sensations, their nervous systems remain calm as the cells of the latter are made less sensitive to stress hormones. In this way, movement and embodied processes provide people with a level of safety and security (Berroll, 2006; Homann, 2010). Movement can also bring to consciousness implicit memories stored in the body and thus the emotions attached to them. Such access can alter the nature of these emotions and, hence, the lens through which individuals perceive and interpret present experiences (Wyman-McGinty, 2005). Changes in how we hold and move our bodies can, then, influence our affective responses. Taking on an Other's body position and posture – walking in their shoes, so to speak – helps us recognise the affective state of Others – the very precondition for empathy (Barsalou et al., 2003; Duclos et al., 1989; Riskind & Gotay, 1982).

Communal Participation in Aesthetic Experiences: Transmuting the Politically Muted

As discussed so far, cognition and affect work in a complex interrelationship, shaping how we perceive and interpret the world. Embodied practices that engage the senses are vital to evoking empathy by challenging deep-seated but often dormant, silent, or hidden attitudes, habits, and beliefs. Reasoned argument alone, as proposed by traditional educational strategies, cannot challenge the autonomous workings of affect. By harnessing creativity and the imagination, CME can provide visceral experiences that demand our full attention in the here-and-now (Hanley, 2010). Communal aesthetic experiences, the collaborative embodied reframing of the everyday through the imagination, creation, and appreciation of beauty, can jolt us into new perspectives, evoking the development of not only interest in, but also passion for acting out of moral courage, which sits at the heart of CME (Beausoleil, 2014; Shor, 1982). Aesthetic movement-based engagement not only acknowledges the intellectual, physical, and emotional dimensions of human existence, it also responds to the ways new communication technologies have transformed meaning-making into a multimodal affair in which representations of the world emerge from the relationships between word-based texts and “visual, audio, gestural and spatial patterns of meaning” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999, p. 470).

Aesthetic experiences can intermittently provoke the “reflexive self-critical distancing from [one's] own cultural discourses [...] to recognize the potential validity of other discourses/communities” that Werbner

(1997b, p. 14) regards as a central component of CME. In acknowledging and mobilising affect, aesthetic experiences can invoke moments of productive alienation that “defamiliarize and make remarkable what is often passed off as the ordinary, the mundane, the routine, and the banal” (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 7). These moments occur in instances where we “identify with the “other” precisely at those points at which he or she is least likes us” (p. 22). Exploring the production, perception, and interpretation of their realities critically by creating and construing them performatively instead of mimetically, learners give each other the chance to refrain from merely imitating experiences of imagined Others on the basis of what they are told to learn about them. Critical reflection allows education initiatives to transcend politically muted discourses of cultural recognition. It transmutes learning experiences into devising processes able to provoke the discovery of alternative ways of living within a hierarchically structured social matrix (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Able to amplify the tension between signifier and signified, the employment of allegory can momentarily impede empathy to create the distance necessary for such critical reflection (San Juan Jr, 1988). Constructing identities and reflecting on these constructions allegorically in relation and comparison to other narratives can not only facilitate the exploration of how one’s own experiences – that is, meaning coming into being through perception and interpretation - are distinctly located historically and culturally. It eventually catalyses “cathartic action” (San Juan Jr, 1988, p. 46), the open expression of emotions that inspires subsequent action.

Ultimately, it is such action based on solidarity, empathy, critical thinking, and passion for equality that CME aspires to encourage, since upholding any democratic system necessitates active participation (Banks, 1990; McShay, 2010; Sleeter, 1995). As oppression and inequity are collective “human creations” (Gay, 1995, p. 163), it is important that CME initiatives include the potential for translating the discoveries in meaning-making practice made during learning engagements into learner’s own life worlds. In this way, learners may change their social realities “even in the smallest of meaning-interventions” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999, p. 272) in the cultural sites they occupy, challenging themselves and their peers to question alleged normalcies and devise alternative representations and interpretations of reality, and new ways to engage with and within it (Hanley, 2010).

Adhering to the idea that our world is either a mosaic tessellated of rigidly separated cultures or discursively constructed in a context-free vacuum, benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, anti-racism, and postmodern theory fail to achieve the aim they have set out to achieve: to foster inclusivity, democracy, and equality in multicultural societies. Based on the twofold recognition of (1) the discursive nature of cultural representation, and (2) the distinct social, political, economic, and historical contexts in which acts of signification occur, CME can offer vital guidelines for pedagogical practices fit to accomplish the objectives of its precursors. Emphasising the importance of the role of self-recognition in catalysing social change, the provocation of experiences of minority positions perspectives that challenge the invisibility of dominant cultures, and the creation of ethical encounters with Otherness through the momentary suspension of learners' excess of difference, CME provides useful pointers towards a pedagogy that can adequately respond to postnormal times. If CME acknowledges affect as fleeting fissures of possibility that can afford safety and open receptiveness through collaborative and embodied aesthetic experiences based on active participation, it can, "even in the smallest of meaning-interventions" (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999, p. 272) within the everyday, constitute a crucial challenge to the new wave of right-wing populism that has been flooding the global north.

In this chapter, I have explored benevolent multiculturalism, interculturalism, anti-racism, and postmodern theory as existing conceptual approaches to understanding multicultural societies and fostering equality and social cohesion. I have discussed how a CP-inspired critique of these approaches has led to the development of CME, a fragmentary but fruitful theoretical framework aiming to strengthen inclusive democratic societies. I have argued that CME-based pedagogies can adequately respond to right-wing populism in postnormal times. CME is an appropriate framework because it promotes the engagement of people who identify as belonging to the cultural majority of a society, and because CME highlights the importance of self-recognition as the catalyst for social change. CME aims to make visible positions and patterns of dominance in the social matrix and moves marginalised perspectives to the centre of educational endeavours. CME underlines that collaborative learning environments are crucial if we want learners to explore the process of signification as active and inherently political. CME also suggests that we need to facilitate ethical encounters with Otherness through moments of suspending learners' excess of difference. CME points to the importance of acknowledging affect as fleeting fissures of possibility for critical explorations through embodiment,

safety, and open receptiveness. In the next chapter, I will begin the search for a creative, collaborative, and embodied pedagogy able to facilitate the critical explorations CME proposes. More specifically, I will examine the history, pedagogies, and principles of socially engaged theatre practices concerned with development and learning, subsumed here under the umbrella term Applied Theatre (AT).

CHAPTER 3

APPLIED THEATRE

In the previous chapter, I explored CME as a fragmentary but fruitful theoretical framework aiming to inform social justice-oriented educational practice within multicultural societies. In this chapter, I will begin the search for a creative, collaborative, and embodied pedagogy capable of putting CME into practice. I will explore the history, pedagogies, and principles underpinning various approaches to theatre-making concerned with development and learning. I will subsume such practices under the umbrella term Applied Theatre (AT). I will examine several examples of existing AT practice from Germany and other countries in the global north that seek to grapple with the refugee crisis. I will explore how such practices relate to CME and consider their potential to respond to right-wing populism in postnormal times.

Before I turn to AT, let me clarify my understanding of social justice, equality, and cohesion, as I use these terms repeatedly throughout this thesis. As a CME researcher, I understand these interrelated and interdependent notions to encompass reciprocal respect, an ethics of care, a sense of solidarity, and a willingness to engage in critical reflection. I acknowledge the need for material change in a neoliberal world and the existence of wider structural contexts and forces that create injustice and inequality. I recognise that ephemeral shifts in a person's perspective, or evanescent states of empathy with purported Others, cannot bring about social justice per se. At the same time, I propose that the most fleeting of moments of open receptiveness, respectful dis/agreement, and critical compassion that occur within people's personal everyday interactions and encounters with alleged Others (in the virtual and non-virtual world) can be small but significant contributions to establishing more just, equal, and socially cohesive local communities. As an AT practitioner, I believe that achieving glimpses of social justice, equality, and cohesion is, at best, a matter of provoking "theatre[s] of 'little changes'" (Balfour, 2009, p. 356) whose elusive outcomes are as chaotic, complex, contradictory, and uncertain as the postnormal times in which they occur.

Like the notions of social justice, equality, and cohesion, AT is a contested concept. While there is no singular definition of the term or its history, I am now attempting to trace the historical development of

AT from Ancient Greece to the present day. As a distinct term, AT emerged in Anglo-Saxon speaking countries, predominantly the UK, during the late 1980s. AT represents types of dramatic activity that happen outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions and actively involves people who are not trained as theatre professionals. AT encompasses a wide variety of participatory theatre practices. For example, practices may exist of participatory workshop elements and pre-existing performances prepared by professional actors or facilitators, as is the case for Theatre-in-Education programmes. Other practices may be entirely based on participants' improvisations, such as Process Drama. Another strand of AT, Theatre for Development, aims to aid development in so-called third world countries. Other practices take place in a variety of education, community development, criminal justice, health, and museum contexts (Nicholson, 2005). Some practitioners highlight the distinction between applied drama and applied theatre, arguing that applied drama is process-based and applied theatre is performance- or product-based (Grady, 2003). However, the two terms are mostly used interchangeably (Nicholson, 2005). I will use the term AT henceforth to refer to socially engaged theatre practice in general, including practice that some might classify as applied drama due to its emphasis on process over product.

Central tenets of AT are intentionality and the argument that theatre can facilitate embodied enquiries about something beyond its own form (Ackroyd, 2000, as quoted in Balfour, 2009). AT's overarching objective is to improve the lives of individuals, communities, and societies by catalysing learning and development, and fostering well-being, social cohesion, and active citizenship. AT seeks to provoke alternate perspectives on society and explorations of new ways to ethically encounter and act with and within the world. AT purposely blends the roles of actor and spectator into the hybrid participant. Participants not only experience theatre by watching. They actively partake in framed fictional worlds and reflect on these embodied experiences. By engaging participants in dramatic encounters, AT bears the potential to engage participants in critical and creative engagement with pivotal social issues in the real world (Anderson & O'Connor, 2015).

From Ancient Greece to Romanticism: Theatre through the Centuries

Proponent and practitioner of socially engaged participatory theatre Boal (1979) argues that the act of theatre-making was originally "a celebration in which all could participate freely," created "by and for the

people" (Foreword). He posits that a poetics of oppression has dominated Western theatre as early as the fifth century BC. In Ancient Greece, philosopher Aristotle was very well aware of the powerful educative potential that theatre carries. In his *Poetics* (1997, originally published c. 335 BC), he emphasises the educational value of mimesis and catharsis. As imitation and the purging of pity and fear, mimesis and catharsis were convenient tools for the transmission of cultural and political norms. In Ancient Greek theatre, active theatre-making was owned by the few, chosen by those in a position of power. The wealthy upper class was able to use the theatre to control the public. Classical tragedy introduced a chorus, a passive audience of spectators, and finally a protagonist to the dramatic world. Not only was one person deemed more important than all others within the dramatic world, the fate of this newly introduced protagonist was also presented as unchangeable. When spectators watched his downfall, they learned that unquestionably obeying established laws and uncritically conforming to dominant norms was the right choice (Boal, 1979).

During the Middle Ages, the priesthood and the aristocracy perpetuated this theatre tradition. They too appropriated the theatre as a functional, didactic tool to dominate the common people in order to maintain their position of power. As a means of social and moral control, medieval drama upheld the status quo of the feudal system (Babbage, 2004). The clergy and the nobility used passion plays as an instrument to alter and keep in line thoughts and behaviours by imparting cultural and religious norms (P. Taylor, 2000). Passion and morality plays ensured that Christianity was the only lens through which people interpreted life and judged the morality of ideas and actions (O'Connor, 2003). Medieval drama presented characters as objects of the dramatic action. They were determined by lifelines predetermined by the Christian god, or were mere representations of religious principles, serving as god's tools in the war between good and evil.

During the Renaissance of the 16th and 17th centuries, capitalism replaced the feudal system. Commerce and the idea of profit increasingly dominated the social order (Marx & Engels, 1992). Meanwhile, the Reformation movement disputed the axioms of the medieval church and the fixed moral truths it proclaimed. New concepts emanated as dominant social values: individualism, self-interest and –reliance, freedom of choice, and personal achievement. Between peasantry and aristocracy, the bourgeoisie emerged as a new powerful middle class. Renaissance theatre reflected this liberal

humanist turn. It exhibited these new bourgeois values by presenting audiences with individual protagonists who successfully strived towards personal freedom (Babbage, 2004). As can be seen in the work of William Shakespeare and Niccolò Machiavelli, characters no longer merely represented values approved by the clergy. Instead, they became multidimensional personalities primarily interested in their own lives. They became subjects of the dramatic action. However, Boal (1979) argues that the glorified dramatic subject who can claim power through individual effort and choice is an exclusive bourgeois conception. This conception legitimises the existence of the lower class as non-descript masses, subjugated by the rightfully powerful few.

Bolton (1984) traces the predecessors of AT back to the Enlightenment era and Romanticist movement of the 18th and the early 19th centuries. Rousseau's (1969, originally published 1762) conviction "that first impulses of nature are always right" (p. 56) would soon grow into heated debates among AT practitioners on the merits of child-centred progressive education. In the pursuit of a socially engaged theatre practice, Boal (1979) critiques Romanticist and Idealist philosophies of this time for conceptualising the dramatic character as a self-determined and free subject. Such conceptualisations, Boal argues, fail to acknowledge the material conditions and economic inequalities that influence people's positions in the social matrix. Bolton (1984), however, points out that drama education is rooted in a long tradition of moral education catalysed by playwrights and poets such as Schiller (2016, originally published 1794), whose philosophies on aesthetic education emphasise the potent interconnectedness of play, art, beauty, pedagogy, and politics.

The 20th Century: Progressive Education, Critical Pedagogy & Theatre-Making

Nicholson (2005) suggests that the twentieth century saw two parallel developments advance the development of AT. One consists of the radical theatre practices of the political left and community theatre. The other comprises two conceptually related strands in critical education. These two strands are European approaches to the child-centred progressive education mentioned above, and the praxis of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Critical Pedagogy (CP). Progressive education and CP aim to transform hitherto authoritarian processes of learning into democratic and equalitarian educational practices. At the heart of such endeavours sit attempts to subvert the hierarchy between teacher and learner and to validate knowledges previously subjugated. These developments in both theatre and

education interlink the notions of social change and dramatic and educational practice respectively. They aim to employ theatre and education as means to disrupt social hierarchies and divisions.

Progressive Education: The Learner as Subject of Personal Discovery

The child-centred progressive education movement gains momentum in the late 1960s and '70s. Researchers such as Britton (1970), Bruner (1979), Moffett (1968), and Vygotsky (1976, 1978a, 1978b) began to highlight the significance of play for children's learning and development and spark educators' interest in engaging young people in dramatic play (P. Taylor, 2000). Progressive education rejects the traditionalist view of knowledge-centred education. This traditional approach to pedagogy proposes that the purpose of education is the transmission of knowledge in the form of static facts and skills of which children are naturally devoid (Bolton, 1984). The Western education system privileges this "empty pitcher" (Bolton, 1984, p. 3) model. It regards learners as empty vacua in need to be filled with objective knowledge. Such instrumental approach to education purports that personal experience is divorced from teaching and learning. Learners do not create knowledge but classify and absorb information verified as scientifically correct by authorities. In contrast, progressive education underlines the importance of learning by doing. Its principle tenet is the assumption that knowledge is innate to every child. Progressive education shifts the focus onto the learner as the subject of active inquiries and personal discovery (Dewey, 1921). From this perspective, playing and creating are essential to learning and development. Fröbel (1912) highlights play as "the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul" (pp. 50-51). The process of learning rather than the expected outcome of acquired pre-determined knowledge claims centre stage. As Quick (1902) notes, "The success of the education is not determined by what the educated know, but by what they do and what they are." (p. 525) Progressive education emphasises individualism and self-expression. The learner, specifically the child, is regarded as a seed filled with immanent knowledge and potential. Educators are to wait for the child's innate knowledge to ripen, grow, and unfold naturally. The task of the educator is to protect this process from being tainted by adult claims to logic and authority.

Critical Pedagogy: Conscientização as a Practice of Freedom

Freire's (1972) Critical Pedagogy (CP) similarly opposes such an authoritarian 'banking' model approach to education and its inherent hierarchy of power. Grounded in dialogic exchange, his concept of *conscientização* (conscientisation) acknowledges the distinct and legitimate forms of knowledge that both learners and educators hold without regarding one as more valid or valuable than the other. Freire makes a case for a Pedagogy of the Oppressed based on critique and hope that empowers those subjugated to recognise, name, criticise, and transform their circumstances. Knowledge emerges from the process of training to observe and denote contradictory dominant socio-economic narratives and from a growing sense of agency and ability to act against oppression (McCoy, 1995). CP posits that knowledge is never politically neutral. Education is a political act, and social justice and democracy are always intertwined in the process of teaching and learning (Giroux, 2007). Freire (1972) insists that education is either a "practice of domination" that intends to encourage conformity into an existing knowledge system, or a "practice of freedom" (p. 54). As the latter, education provides students with the means of learning so that they construct new knowledges and recognise their capability of self-conscious political action towards social justice and change.

Finlay-Johnson: Introducing a Dramatic Method of Teaching

In the early 20th century in the UK, educators Finlay-Johnson, Caldwell Cook, and the so-called Speech and Drama experts developed distinct approaches to pedagogy specifically in relation to drama. In her book *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (1912), Finlay-Johnson proposes that dramatic processes can make school lessons and academic subjects more engaging. As she reflects on her own teaching practice, she suggests that dramatic engagement increases students' interest in factual information and subject matters. Finlay-Johnson emphasises children's inherent instinct to engage in dramatic play, the importance of the process of play over the output of theatrical products, and the value of both improvised and scripted drama. She highlights that performing for an external audience is not a prerequisite for learning and proposes that teachers should encourage children to structure their own drama. While Finlay-Johnson focuses on effectively arresting students' attention towards the content of a variety of

subjects, she also reflects that the process of experimental learning through dramatic engagement is of high educational value in and by itself, not just factual knowledge.

Caldwell Cook: Dramatic Craftsmanship & Literary Appreciation

Caldwell Cook enhanced the teaching of dramatic literature by regarding the experience of play as a legitimate basis for learning. By experiencing classic English literature through dramatic engagement, learners were to develop interest in and enjoyment of artistic form. For Cook, the drama process itself is an instrument to develop dramatic craftsmanship and literary appreciation (Bolton, 1984). Unlike Finlay-Johnson, Cook (1966) was not interested in engaging learners in personal interpretations of scenes. While he does highlight the importance of play as “one of the fundamentals of life”, he also alleges that it is “capable of anything but a further explanation” (p. 8). From this perspective, the sole aesthetic experience does not require any added structure that promotes reflection and analysis (Bolton, 1984). Unlike Finlay-Johnson, Cook’s approach proposes that performing literature in front of an audience is vital for learning about the artistry of dramatic literature.

The Speech & Drama Experts: Skill Development or Empty Mimesis?

While coaching students in acting skills was of no interest to Cook, the so-called Speech and Drama experts saw the principle pedagogical reason for engaging children in drama in and outside of the classroom for the training of speech and performance skills. Active from around the 1920s to the 1940s, they proposed that their acting training provided children with cultural and linguistic development. Like Cook, the Speech and Drama experts did not deem the content of personal experiences evoked by dramatic activities as important. Rather, their approach emphasised the very acts of engaging in theatre-based exercises. Disguised as child-centred progressive education, such training initiatives imposed allegedly proper speech and behaviour styles onto children. The benchmark for children’s purported development was naturalist theatre. In this way, Bolton (1984) argues, the Speech and Drama experts misunderstood the very art form of theatre. They deprived theatre of its powerful potential to provoke ambiguous plays with signs and symbols. They denied open spaces for personal connection and possibilities for interpretation and reflection. In this way, theatre becomes nothing but monotonous acts of empty mimesis.

Ward: Creative Drama for Competence & Conformity

From the 1930s onwards, Ward (1957) developed her approach Creative Drama, which became the predominant drama pedagogy in the US. Its premise is the re-enactment of storylines predetermined by the facilitator. Ward's approach does not focus on the reflection of the experiences gained during the drama, but on the acquisition and reciprocal assessment external skills such as characterisation and diction. Ward (1957) asserts that Creative Drama provokes children's "creative imagination" by facilitating "a controlled emotional outlet" (p. 4). By improving communication, concentration, and co-operation skills, Creative Drama works to enable children to conform to productively mainstream society (P. Taylor, 2000).

Slade: Child Drama as Free Expression & Child-Centredness?

Slade (1954) was adamant that his Child Drama follows the Romanticist child-centred education paradigm à la Rousseau. He regarded dramatic play as an end in itself. From this perspective, play is "the child's way of thinking, proving, relaxing, working, remembering, daring, testing, creating and absorbing." (p. 1) Not only did Slade regard play as the essence of the child's life. He also viewed the free play that characterises his approach as a form of art in its own right. Any structuring of dramatic activity according to learning objectives is to be banned. Dramatic activity in childhood should be free from traditional theatre spaces, public performances, external audiences, school productions, and pre-written manuscripts, and the teaching of theatre arts and performance skills (Slade, 1995). From a Sladian point of view, all such alleged adult inventions do nothing but encroach on and endanger the purity, creativity, and freedom of children's absorption into dramatic worlds and the natural and innate impulse of the child to play. As "loving all[ies]" (Bolton, 1984, p. 34), educators are not to interfere, but to merely offer impulses for play from outside the dramatic frame.

Slade reproached the Speech and Drama experts for erringly assuming that they pioneered progressive education. He vehemently sought to steer them away from their training approach. The experts, however, viewed themselves as combating the traditionalists, who, in turn, regarded drama as nothing but futile amusement. The experts considered themselves revolutionary fighters against the traditionalists' empty pitcher model, as cultural mediators who, at long last, brought high art and proper

elocution to children who were, from their point of view, culturally impoverished. They too claimed to advocate drama as a means to facilitate progressive child-centred education in the pursuit of fostering learners' personal, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Slade's insistence on the distinction between drama and theatre epitomises two antagonising views on AT practice. They create an artificial dichotomy between natural, untouched expression of the child's soul through free play and refined expression mediated through acquisition of performance skills. Regarding Slade's Child Drama as the re-enactment of storylines, Bolton (1984) argues that Child Drama does not actually have much to do with free expression and child-centredness. Since teachers narrate stories after which children merely enact the actions occurring in them, Child Drama places significant emphasis on the achievement of a product, not on the engagement in a process of self-expression in the present moment. Learners do not explore the complexities of dramatic situations. They show and describe events according to pre-determined narratives. The focus is on linear plots determined by the educator. While this eventually leads to free play, Child Drama forthrightly ignores the essence of art and perpetuates the very output-driven practice Slade so fiercely deplored. It disregards the very self-expression it proclaims to ignite (Bolton, 1984).

Way: Development through Drama by Transcending Knowledge?

Way (1967) developed Child Drama further by emphasising short term tasks, individuality, and intuition. Way's (1967) Development Through Drama approach consists of activities and exercises that foster skills related to sensitivity, concentration, and perceptivity. Way's Child Drama is a stable predetermined groundwork that asks the teacher to dictate and control student engagement (Bolton, 1984). The teacher serves as a facilitator of sensory exercises and as a detached narrator who reads out stories from outside the frame of dramatic representation. Children enact these and reproduce associated emotions from memory. In this way, Development Through Drama is output-oriented, although Way claims that he disregards the notion of drama as a significant product in itself (P. Taylor, 2000). When teachers instruct children to execute pre-planned progressions of set exercises, they provoke sensory experiences but not acts of symbolic representation. Bolton (1984) argues that this has little to do with theatre.

A crucial feature of Way's (1967) approach is his differentiation between intellect and intuition. From this perspective, understanding and thinking are disconnected from imagination, emotion, and immersion in enjoyment. Affect and knowledge are regarded as naturally divorced from each other. Way seems to ban knowledge to the realm of scientific fact. In fact, he was proud to proclaim that his Development through Drama achieves to "transcend knowledge" (Bolton, 1984, p. 55) by focusing on emotion and "the uniqueness of each human essence" (Way, 1967, p. 3). Development through Drama is based on the individual child's innermost sensitivities, her uniqueness, and thus her solitary experience. Consequently, Way not only has a limited conceptualisation of knowledge but also fails to recognise that drama is a collective experience, a social event (Bolton, 1984).

Brecht: Epic Theatre, *Lehrstücke* & the Fight against Empathy

Across the North Sea in Germany, playwright and director Brecht sought to provoke audiences to understand their experiences of theatre as a social event. In the 1920s, Brecht embarked upon an almost four decade-long journey of developing his innovative theatre practice and theory. Brecht defined the purpose of his art as inherently political. His aim was to engage people generally excluded from theatre performances to critically explore their social realities and the structural forces that uphold it. Like Freire (1972), he intended to provoke audiences to take political action and affect social justice by demanding material change. The theoretical framework of Brecht's practice is Marxist theory, specifically dialectical materialism (Brooker, 2006). As a dialectical materialist, Brecht did not regard the material world as a fixed essence, but as dynamic and alterable. From this point of view, societal structures are not permanent, but constantly in flux, subject to a perpetual process of change through interaction and dialogue. In consequence, conscious, critical, and active citizens can change the course of history (Mueller, 2006). Crucial to Brecht's practice was the desire that audiences transfer the insights made in the realm of the theatre to their everyday world. He aimed to encourage ordinary people to become critical agents conscious of their position in the social narrative and the capitalist matrix of power and resources. Ultimately, communal action based on dissent and protest is to overthrow the capitalist order and abolish social inequalities.

Brechtian aesthetics oppose traditional representational naturalist and realist theatre. The latter claims to truthfully reflect social reality. Audiences are absorbed entirely in immersive identification with the

illusion offered on stage. They concentrate fully on the emotional process of empathising with the fate of individual protagonists. From a Brechtian perspective, such theatre fosters passive spectatorship and the belief that life and society cannot be changed. From this point of view, naturalist and realist theatre encourages the audience to abandon their analytical capacity to criticise dramatic events and characters. Theatre purely living on mimesis and catharsis, as put forth by Aristotle's *Poetics*, is illusionistic and individualistic and no more than "a reactionary prop to petty-bourgeois morality" (Brooker, 2006, p. 212).

His critique of naturalist and realist theatre led Brecht to develop a new model of theatre. Epic Theatre sought to respond to the unparalleled social and economic change characterising 1920s Germany, in terms of both significant headway in science and technology and the rise of corporate capitalism (Brecht, 2001). The tales of Epic Theatre plays serve as fictional frames, or "historically distant parallels to contemporary issues and events" (Brooker, 2006, p. 214). Through the distancing properties that the analogy of story and fable affords, Brecht aimed to reach audiences who might otherwise refuse to engage with sensitive social issues directly. Epic Theatre aims to depict social conditions, events, situations, and characters as socially constructed, always resulting of and contingent on history and politics and hence as capable of change. It seeks to critique the glorification of individualism and to uncover the myth that the distribution of power and resources are a natural given (Brooker, 2006). Brecht wanted his audiences to critically examine the characters and events they encounter on stage. While he dreaded the threat of drowning spectators in empathy, Brecht (2001) emphasised that reason and emotion are complexly intertwined. He was aware that his educative practice had to speak to the affective state of pleasure and enjoyment if it was to awaken his audience's willingness to critically grapple with societal issues. Brecht's demand for detached analytic engagement, then, goes hand in hand with a perhaps unintended call for a certain degree of intermittent emotional engagement elicited by the very processes of mimesis and catharsis that Brecht so determinedly despised. Babbage (2004) goes so far as to note that in Brecht's theatre, "[e]mpathy is not eroded altogether but its free flow is inhibited to permit a more detached position from which critical speculation is possible." (p. 45)

Brecht developed *Verfremdungseffekte* (alienation effects) as theatrical strategies. He not only built them into the texts and structures of his plays, he also implemented them via the particular fashion in which he transformed his written plays from the page onto the stage. *Verfremdungseffekte* include explicit features such as a stylised manner of acting, narrators, visible stage machinery, film montages of real events, projections depicting statistic information, placards, pictures, songs, non-naturalistic set designs, masks, choruses, emblematic props, and tableaux (Brecht, 2001). By means of *Verfremdungseffekte*, Brechtian theatre makes the mode of storytelling and theatre production ostensibly visible. Rather than creating the conventional neatly synthesised *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Verfremdungseffekte* work to disjoin the theatrical performance demonstratively and deliberately. They lay bare the function of the narrative and its manner of functioning. The nature of narrative in Epic Theatre can be considered a *Verfremdungseffekt* in itself. A nonlinear episodic montage connects scenic units in a way that allows audiences to recognise the mode of production of both the 'external' and 'internal' status quo inhabiting the dramatic world. It points to internal psychological structures that make characters behave in certain ways, and to external social structures that influence them and cause distinct social situations and events. *Verfremdungseffekte* take an active part in the telling of the story by talking back to and commenting on dramatic events. In this way, they provide the taken for granted with the power of what is bewildering (Brecht, 2001). They stimulate understandings of social conditions as actively created by human beings in distinct historical and ideological contexts and as possible to be transformed in reality. Epic Theatre exhibits that it is a product of its time and place, and hopes to show that social conditions in the people's everyday lives are too (Brooker, 2006). *Verfremdungseffekte* contextualise and rebut the conditions of the status quo taken for granted, throw light on social injustices and ideological inconsistencies, and make audiences aware of their positionality in the social matrix.

Still practiced today, Epic Theatre seeks to affect change in the material world by shifting and re-modelling existent habitual interpretations of the real world. In order to support this endeavour, the task of the Brechtian actor is to show a "character in the process of change and growth, as open to comment and alteration." (Brooker, 2006, p. 220). Therefore, acting in Epic Theatre is stylised. Actors do not wholly immerse themselves into empathetic identification with fictional characters. Rather, they exhibit the artifice of role by intermittently quoting and commenting on their own lines and exhibiting patterns of distinct *Gesti*. A *Gestus* consists of a gesture, a facial expression, or a sound or verbal statement. A

Gestus epitomises and physicalises the gist of an attitude that a character holds. It disrupts the audience's empathetic absorption and points to wider social historical circumstances in which behaviours are embedded and to social alternatives (Brecht, 2001). It exposes the social bearings contained and implied in a dramatic action or event in order to encourage the audience to locate and historicise characters' complex feelings and motives. Like all *Verfremdungseffekte*, Brechtian acting replaces familiarity with astonishment, puzzlement, and curiosity. Existent social orders, events, characters, behaviours, and assumptions unveil themselves as actively staged and shatter into disjointed pieces their own unquestioned normalcy and legitimacy to exist. As Brecht (1973) puts it, "the puzzles of the world are not solved but shown" (p. 216).

An innovative type of play distinct from Brecht's epic plays, *Lehrstücke* (teaching plays) constitute the core of his most avant-garde work. Writing *Lehrstücke* for the growing working-class of 1920s Germany, Brecht did not intend to act as a cultural mediator who brings existent middle-class theatre to the proletariat. Such theatre, Brecht (1967) argues, cause audiences to "absorb[s] what it needs in order to reproduce itself" (p. 1006). In this way, it sustains the political and socio-economic status quo. Instead, he wanted to make theatre available to the common people to enable them to become aware of, denote, and critically discern the bourgeoisie's position of power and their own role within the dominant social narrative. This way, they were to recognise social standards regulating action and behaviour and the social order emanating from them as historically constructed (Mueller, 2006). Brecht intended *Lehrstücke* to reorganise the relationship between the audience, the stage, and the playwright in order to achieve a democratic conversation and exchange in the theatre. Audiences should not just consume theatre but co-produce it. The audience was to play a new, active role within the theatre space (Wohrle, 1988). *Lehrstücke* tried to abolish a clear-cut division between actors and spectators. There was no fixed performance text. Everyone in the theatre space was to become active producers, directors, actors, and critics of art and of the social order emerging on the stage. The audience transformed into characters implied in the dramatic action or they assume the role of producers or critics of the performance, and, sometimes, participate in preparatory exercises before the theatre event (Mueller, 2006).

Heathcote & Bolton: Drama for Learning through Thematic Exploration

British educator Heathcote (1984) echoes Brecht in her call to recognise theatre as a powerful educative means to “shatter[ing] the human experience into new understanding.” (p. 120) In the early 1950s, Heathcote and her collaborator Bolton (1979, 1985, 1998) began to develop their perspectives on teaching approaches based on dramatic inquiry. Drama for Learning emphasises the multiplicities of meaning inherent in drama (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). It is based on a combination of immersion in dramatic improvisation in role and personal reflection that connects the experiences made during the drama to the real world. As Heathcote (1984) notes, by “putting yourself into other people’s shoes and, by using personal experience to help you to understand their point of view, you may discover more than you knew when you started.” (p. 44) Initially, Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explored Living through Drama, durational immersion in fictional worlds and make-believe play. However, Heathcotian practice opposes entirely unstructured free play. Rather, thematic planning is to enable children to access and explore unfamiliar socio-historical contexts. The more Heathcote and Bolton moved away from Living through Drama, the more they highlighted the importance of structuring for participant reflection on the dramatic experiences at hand and, by extension, children’s own worldviews and attitudes (Heathcote, 1982; O’Neill, 1990).

Heathcotian drama experiences provide learners with frames. Frames are not necessarily fictional narratives. For example, the structural strategy Mantle of the Expert (MoE) can be considered a frame in itself. MoE casts learners as experts of the themes explored in the dramatic engagement (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Frames allow participants to take a step back from their own perspective and view issues from another standpoint. This distance allows framing to catalyse genuine, affective, and bold engagement with sensitive issues (Bolton, 1984). As no penalty zones, frames afforded by participation in structured dramatic play enable children to experiment with attitudes and behaviours without fearing consequences and judgement in the real world. Another structural strategy to uphold frames is Teacher in Role (TiR). TiR allows teachers to actively participate in the drama by adopting roles alongside children. Learning experiences are no longer didactic lessons determined by educators as teachers join learners in the realm of dramatic representation. Communally, they structure the progressively unfolding drama experience (O’Neill, 1991, as cited in P. Taylor, 2000). By acknowledging that theatre is a collaborative art form, Heathcotian practice encourages teachers and pupils to act as on par with each

other as they negotiate and co-create imaginary worlds and opportunities for critical reflection (P. Taylor, 2000). Ambiguity, uncertainty, spontaneity, and open-endedness replace the re-enactment of predetermined plots and fixed series of skill development exercises (Heathcote, 1984; O'Neill, 1991, as cited in P. Taylor, 2000). The thematic explorations Heathcote proposes engage both intellect and emotion. Intuition and awareness work together to catalyse reflection on dramatic experiences both during and after them (Bolton, 1984).

Boal: Oppression, Desire & the Promise of Metaxis

In late 1960s Brazil, director and playwright Boal began to develop his approach of socially engaged theatre. In his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal (1979) claims that all theatre is inherently political. His approach proposes that everyone has the capability and the right to actively create art. Boal asserts that empathy is a powerful means capable of both oppressing and liberating people. The audience must turn into active participants if theatre is to affect social change by subverting dominant ideologies (Babbage, 2004). The basis of Boal's approach is Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Like Freire, Boal aimed to provoke people to engage in *conscientização* rather than depositing knowledge about the art form of theatre into allegedly empty pitchers. He intended to make the creative process of theatre-making available to all people as a means to explore and express their own exigencies and wishes (Babbage, 2004). Simultaneous Dramaturgy, for example, enables audiences to suggest possible actions that actors then improvise on stage. In Image Theatre, all participants jointly investigate an issue of common concern by creating sculptures with each other's and their own bodies to throw light on their manifold meanings, implications, and possible solutions. In Forum Theatre, spectators perform their own suggested actions by directly immersing themselves in dramatic events as protagonists of the drama. To facilitate this process, Forum Theatre features a *coringa*, or Joker, who encourages acts of interference, helps spectators to enter dramatic worlds, and animates participants to analyse the dramatic action while it is unfolding (Boal, 1979).

Following his immigration to Europe in the 1970s, Boal began to adapt his *Theatre of the Oppressed* techniques. He no longer found himself in a third world country whose inhabitants struggle with tangible oppression. Boal's revised approach, *The Cop in the Head* (Boal & Epstein, 1990), responds to

capitalism and the social inequalities it effects on personal livelihoods (Pellarolo, 1994). This approach shifts the focus from public performances to intimate explorations of participants' individual internalised oppressions. While vague and intangible in nature, these oppressions severely limit personal freedom and often lead to mental and physical illness (Babbage, 2004). Boal (1995) soon renamed this approach as Rainbow of Desire. Upon his return to Brazil in the 1980s, Boal developed Legislative Theatre. Now a politician, he created nineteen theatre groups in Rio. As a direct connection to the legislative council, he was able to communicate the findings generated through Theatre of the Oppressed work and achieved that thirteen laws were passed on their basis (Boal, 1998).

Boal-based practice simultaneously engages and distances participants from the issues explored (Collier, 2015). If participants experience themselves simultaneously occupying the realms of reality and fiction, they can find themselves in a heightened state of "double awareness" (Gjærum & Ramsdal, 2015, p. 188). Boal (1995) defines this liminal state as metaxis, "the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image." (p. 43) When "the fictional world overlaps or collides with lived experience" (Chinyowa, 2015, p. 170), participants experience themselves concurrently as protagonists and spectators of their own actions. In such moments, the interplay of memory and imagination opens up possibilities to reinterpret the past and picture alternate ideas of the future (Boal, 1998). As Vygotsky's (1976) "dual affect" describes how playing can cause children to "simultaneously weep as a patient and revel as a player" (p. 549), metaxis describes the dual experience of empathising with a role while reflecting on the self (Chinyowa, 2015). Metaxis enables participants to listen to and use their bodies as "generative sites of knowing" (Linds, 2006, p. 115) in the present moment (Linds & Vettraino, 2015).

Theatre critic Gassner (1956) suggests that theatre should synthesise the realms of illusion and anti-illusion since the power of theatre lies in the audience's capability to experiences "something as simultaneously 'theatrical' and 'real'" (Babbage, 2004, p. 8). Inspired by Gassner, Boal (1979) makes clear that he does not ban all principles of realism. Rather, Boal favours "selective realism" (p. 10). While Boal deems realist acting a la Stanislavski as a potent means to critically interrogate human existence, he also approves of Brecht's anti-illusionist theatre because it encourages people's capacity

to think critically. However, Boal (1979) proposes that Brecht only started the theatrical revolution in the service of social change. He insists that the audience must transform from seated and passive spectators, at best implied in dramatic action, into actors empowered to think and act autonomously. They ought to free themselves from being bare witnesses of narratives already written to become creators of meaning and realities. Audiences must seize the means of theatrical production to rehearse political action towards social justice. Boal does not entirely ban the spectator. Instead, he conceptualises the audience member as a spect-actor who knowingly spectates and acts (Boal, 1992). The spect-actor intermittently engages in realist acting and immersive empathy to catalyse critical reflection on both her dramatic and real worlds. While Brecht's spectators sit and think, Boal's spect-actors stand up and act. Both Boal and Brecht's perspectives on theatre-making suggest that the audience should experience simultaneously being inside and outside the drama. At all times, they should experience themselves as social beings. Practitioners facilitating theatrical experiences must ensure empathy does not overpower participants' desire and capability to critique and reflect (Babbage, 2004).

O'Neill: Action, Reflection & Aesthetics

British educator O'Neill shares Boal's emphasis on the interplay between immersive empathetic identification and detached analytic reflection. She began to develop her approach to drama education in the late 20th century. While the term Process Drama (PD) is often associated with Heathcote's conceptualisation of drama and learning, PD is now generally accepted as a synonym for O'Neill's practice. Hereafter, I will use the term PD to describe O'Neill's approach. O'Neill enriched Heathcote's approach by responding to Hornbrook's (1991, 1998) critique that educational drama lacks aesthetic significance and quality (P. Taylor, 2000). O'Neill's insistence on PD as a legitimate, artistic form of theatre in its own right demands from educators a thorough understanding of theatre form, aesthetics, structure, and dramaturgy (Bolton, 1998; O'Neill, 1995). In group improvisational activity, learners intermittently identify with fictional roles to engage in complex and morally difficult situations within dramatic frames. They do not remain in the same fictional role over a lengthy period of time. In this way, they can access a multiplicity of roles and perspectives in order to explore a variety of values and identities. In and out of role, learners engage in non-dramatic activities such as writing and drawing.

This provokes them to reflect on how the dramatic world they construct can throw light on their experiences of and perspectives within the real world (Bolton, 1998; O'Neill, 2006b).

A pre-text sparks the improvisation and thus the emergence of the drama (O'Neill, 1995). A pre-text can be a snippet of fictional or non-fictional text, a poem, a photo, painting or object, or a beginning of a story. As the seed of thematic exploration, a pre-text frames learners in roles with specific purposes rich in potential for dramatic action. Leaders structure the dramatic material both in preparation before the workshop and on their feet during the session. They work both within and outside the fictional world, both in and out of role. In this way, learners and leaders work collaboratively as creative teams⁵ to co-create provocative imagined worlds. They do not generate these experiences for an external audience, but for their own aesthetic enjoyment and learning (O'Neill & Lambert, 2006). As a communal art form, PD can expand learners' zones of proximal development (ZPD), the distances between their ability to meet a challenge under guidance and their ability to grapple with it on their own (Vygotsky, 1978a, 1978b). A special ZPD opens up between participants' past real-life experiences and the meanings embodied in the presence of dramatic engagement. By refusing the provision of ready-made narratives and answers, PD allows memory and imagination to throw light on a variety of alternative worldviews, attitudes, behaviours within and outside the dramatic frame. PD challenges familiar perspectives and provokes creative teams to grapple with ambiguity and uncertainty (O'Neill, 1989, 1991, 2006b; O'Neill & Lambert, 2006).

PD's non-linear episodic structure of distinct scenic units of action means that creative teams do not work towards plot. Rather, they move beyond simplistic chronological cause and effect narratives by generating complex webs of meaning (O'Neill, 1989; O'Neill & Lambert, 2006). The purposeful manipulation of dramatic events out of their chronology manifolds the points of view from which creative teams can perceive and examine dramatic events (Bolton, 1998). The safety of fictional frames allows participants to step out of dramatic engagement at any time. Since a pre-text catalyses acts of a specific form of symbolisation, that of physicalisation, it provokes creative teams to shape their inner, private

⁵ I am using the term 'leader' instead of 'teacher', suggesting that the PD facilitator is, rather than a knowledgeable pedagogue who instructs learners to enact a story on the basis of dramatic skills that she teaches them, a co-artist that leads the learners through the drama experience depending on their needs and interests in order to co-create a satisfying and significant aesthetic learning experience. I am using the term 'creative team' to denote the community of learners and leader(s).

ideas into public display, offering possibilities of multiple readings and understandings (Taylor & Warner, 2006b). Participants give form and voice to their personal perceptions and their changing awareness in the public of the workshop community. PD's dialogic nature engage learners as autonomous agents that can communally and independently grapple with human dilemmas on a personal, emotional, and intellectually challenging level (O'Neill, 2006a). Simultaneously experiencing fiction and deciding about its course, creative teams come to develop an understanding of their own agency and power in constructing (imagined) social realities (Bolton, 1998). In this way, PD lends itself to safely explore challenging issues such as prejudice, racism, and oppression (Taylor & Warner, 2006a)

Neelands: A Brecht-Inspired Conventions Approach to Drama & Learning

The Conventions Approach (CA) developed by British educator Neelands enriches O'Neill's PD. CA anchors PD in an explicitly Brechtian philosophy by imbuing it with alienation strategies. Neelands defines and systemises dramatic conventions that contain the impetus for dramatic improvisations. By setting students scenic tasks, they lay the groundwork for theatrical explorations in distinct units of dramatic action. CA relies on montage, the distinct non-linear assembly of form and content that juxtaposes images, scenes, and sounds (Neelands, 1997). Educators sequence conventions into coherent yet alienating significant participatory art. The objective of CA is to shatter familiar perspectives and attitudes into provocative strangeness and turn ideas and identities perceived as foreign into shocking familiarity (Neelands, 1997). Learners take on different roles in different situations to reflect on behaviours from new perspectives on both a cognitive and an emotional level (Neelands, 1992). Participants develop an awareness of how both dramatic and real world are socially constructed within distinct historical, political, and socio-economic circumstances (Neelands, 1994, 2000a, 2000b). Educators actively structure experiences both within and outside the drama. These experiences allow learners to explore intangible theoretical concepts through the tangible nature of direct human experience (Neelands, 1992). Neelands (2010b) stresses that learners can develop a certain degree of understanding and empathy by pretending to be others, but they can never actually become them in all their complexity. The only way we can learn is by imagining ourselves in different situations and roles while being conscious, critical, and reflective of our acts of imagination.

CA integrates the representational theatre as proposed by naturalist and realist playwrights and presentational theatre as proposed by Brecht. In this way, CA frequently disrupts and challenges the normalisation of the realities experienced within representational frames. Learners do not imitate life-like situations realistically in real time allegedly able to explore truthful human existences (Neelands, 2010b). Rather, CA often interrupts learners' acts of attempting to walk in the shoes of others who are culturally, socio-economically, or historically located differently from themselves. Learners become directors, writers, actors, and audiences to practice acts of empathy while rehearsing active, creative and critical democratic citizenship. Like presentational theatre, CA is stylised and self-reflexive. Learners not only take into view isolated psychological phenomena of individuals but also reflect on how realities and characters are constructed socially, politically, economically, or historically as specific interpretations of reality (Neelands, 2010b). CA encourages learners to consider how dramatic and real worlds are socially constructed within complex power relations. These constructions are changeable through individual and communal agency (Neelands, 2010b). CA features an explicitly present and addressed audience, which is conscious that the dramatic world is artificially constructed. The exploration of personal feelings and individual experiences meets public dialogue and critical discussion (Neelands, 2000a). Critical audienceship and the provocation of multiple dramatic worlds through simultaneous small group work generates a variety of responses and stimulates learners to investigate public and private dimensions of the realities imagined (Neelands, 2000b). By rendering the familiar strange and bringing the unknown close to home, CA can expand young people's conceptions of self and other, and challenge prejudice, stereotypes, and distorted representations (Neelands, 2010a).

The 21st Century: Applied Theatre in Germany and beyond

While the education departments of German state theatres enjoy amounts of state funding of which theatre companies in other countries can only dream, the ongoing practice-based research that has evolved in the rich academic field of AT over the last decades in English-speaking countries has hardly found its way into theatre practice in Germany. *Theaterpädagogik* (TP), Theatre Pedagogy, predominantly focuses on *Kulturvermittlung*, literally the 'transmission' of 'culture'. TP focuses on educating people regarded as laypersons, especially young people about Western, predominantly German theatre form, history, acting, and direction through practical engagement. State funded theatres use TP to engage the public with their productions and nurture future audiences or to recruit laypersons

to be directed in so-called professional 'inclusive' theatre productions with 'ordinary non-artists'. Other strands of TP practice, especially practice undertaken outside of state theatres, also uses processes of theatre-making to foster self-confidence and community-building. TP runs the risk of being neither far from Hornbrook's (1998) proposed "cultural induction" (p. 15) nor the 'banking' model approach to education that Freire (1972) so determinedly sought to fight. Indeed, I suggest that there is a pronounced tendency of TP to bolster the allegedly existent dichotomy between everyday life and the theatre: knowledgeable professionals educate the ordinary public. Talented directors quite literally use the 'common people' to enhance their professional productions.

Theatre & the Refugee Crisis

In recent years, a "migration hype in the theatre" (Dossel, 2015, n. p.) has taken hold of both state theatres and independent companies. For example, Patati Theater works with a team of TP practitioners, musicians, visual artists, and media pedagogues who visit local refugee camps to implement participatory drama sessions. Their aim is to facilitate refugees' arrival, to familiarise children, youth and their families playfully with their new surroundings, to improve their German language skills, and to create an atmosphere of fun, trust, and a sense of belonging (Theater Patati, 2017). For the state theatre, Theater Mannheim, a professional theatre director (white, male, German) produced a professional theatre production with professional actors that a professional (white, male, German) journalist wrote on the basis of interviews he had conducted with refugees in order to gather their personal stories of seeking refuge. In the presence of these refugees, the actors performed the journalist's script. The refugees themselves were instructed to act as a choir and to intermittently contribute African music during the performance (Becker, 2015). The project called 'Integration through Cultural Participation' purported to strengthen the self-worth and a sense of belonging among the refugees (Michalzik & Kosminski, 2016, n. p.). Another example of practice is a piece of immersive theatre by the theatre company machina eX. Their interactive installation 'Right of Passage' turned being a refugee into a purportedly family-friendly adventure game. The audience is asked to take on the roles of different refugees within a fictional parkour-like refugee camp where they then experience what it is like to be stuck in transit and incarcerated (Fries & Ehrenwerth, 2018). They have to solve mysteries to find travel documents or succeed to type an application for asylum on a malfunctioning typewriter before the border is closed (Wildermann, 2015). State theatre Thalia Theater put on a

production in which refugee youth tell the audience what it is like to be an unaccompanied minor refugee in Germany (Dossel, 2015). In an independently run theatre project called 'Szol Ha', refugees deal with their experiences of seeking refuge on stage to deal with their trauma. It is not uncommon that the directors of such projects are adamant that they are artists and their projects are nothing but art (Raschke, 2015). Grappling with emotional trauma is regarded as a positive side effect (Ansorge, 2016). Another example of practice is a project that formed part of the Ruhr Triennale art festival. Here, refugee and non-refugee teenagers would go camping together to generate stories about everyday life in Germany to get to know each other and make friends, to find commonalities amongst each other, and to turn these encounters into one final theatrical product, polished and memorised to be presented to an audience (Rothenberg, 2015).

Outside of Germany, pertinent AT practice includes participatory forum theatre workshops in secondary schools for young teenagers in the UK. Engagement in these workshops is to provoke empathy for refugees and interest in 'real' refugees' lives, and to encourage moral reasoning (Day, 2002). Another example of practice from the UK is a Theatre-in-Education programme. Here, 10 to 16-year-old young people meet an Eastern European Roma refugee character and find out about her troubles resulting from the 1990 refugee crisis during the Yugoslav Wars (Robinson, 2016). In another programme, they meet two professional actors in role as refugee parents from Iran who look for a welcoming school for their young son (Robinson, 2016). The performance's playtext was adapted during the Syrian refugee crisis and toured Germany in 2016. In Oceania, AT projects addressing forced migration have been carried out as well. An example from Australia is a participatory drama programme in secondary schools for teenagers with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds involved playmaking on the basis of their own emotions. It aimed at assisting their successful settlement by fostering resilience, hope, trust, joy, and belonging. As Bundy (2017) reports, this was achieved by forging new friendships among the young refugees, and by nurturing a positive sense of their own capabilities. Another example of practice from Australia is a playback theatre performance with a refugee and asylum seeker audience and some non-refugee spectators (Dennis, 2007, 2008). During the performance, the 'resettled' people told their life stories and professional non-refugee actors played them back to the audience to provoke awareness, empathy and understanding of their situation in order to stage personal stories as "evidence, [...] proof, [...] justification that someone is worthy of refuge" (Dennis, 2007, p. 367). Similarly, Dunn et al. (2012)

developed series of drama lessons aimed at playfully developing resilience in newly arrived refugee non-English-speaking primary school children. They integrated digital technologies in drama processes to foster English language skills. Both in Australia and New Zealand, the storyline of Marsden's and Ottley's (2008) picture book *Home & Away* was used to create process drama workshops to challenge young people to develop empathy for refugees and stimulate interest in social equality in the real world (Ewing & Saunders, 2009; O'Connor, 2018).

A Sufficient Response to Postnormality?

The examples of practice outlined above suggest that certain trends dominate contemporary AT and TP practice concerned with forced migration. The predominant tendency is to engage those deemed Other. Fostering an understanding of the majority culture and language, as well as resilience, self-worth, and belonging is to lead these Others to integrate into the majority culture and values more smoothly. Another strand of practice aims to evoke empathy for refugees in non-refugees, provide the latter with justifications for refugees' right to be granted refuge or with factual information about refugees. Another trend is using refugees as raw material for professional theatre productions and using the topic of seeking refuge as entertainment. There is also a current of practice that aims to create bonds among refugees and non-refugees so that they can find commonalities and exhibit them to an audience.

Supporting refugees by nurturing refugees' sense of belonging, confidence, and language skills is important work. Jeffers (2008) has pointed out the pitfalls of 'giving voice' to refugees and the dangers of victimising refugees through practices such as playback theatre or performances in which refugees tell personal stories of their escape on stage. Clearly problematic are practices when Others have to integrate under the direction of a representative of the majority culture into the West's theatre tradition and, by extension, the Western way of living, knowing, and being creative. While asking refugees to exhibit their traumata, using refugees as raw material for ostensibly cutting-edge professional productions or setting up fictional refugee camps as 'fun' theme parks are highly questionable endeavours, evoking empathy, providing facts about why people seek refuge, encouraging an activist stance in the name of social justice, and encouraging friendship among refugee and non-refugee youth is certainly an urgently required, productive step towards CME-informed practice. However, this step alone does not transcend the obsolete multicultural, intercultural, anti-racism education paradigms still

so prevalent in educational practice. While an important part of encouraging critical-democratic citizenship in a postnormal world, these theatre practices are only one thread of many in a complex web of missing initiatives yet to be developed to bring underway CME-inspired alternatives. Mapping the evolution of AT throws light on the powerful potential inherent in this creative and embodied approach to development and learning. Yet, this potential has not been harnessed in much recent participatory theatre practice grappling with the effects of postnormality, especially right-wing populism.

In this chapter, I have explored the history, pedagogies, and principles underpinning AT. I have discussed the potential of a variety of approaches to drama-based learning and development. I have examined several examples of existing AT practice from Germany and other countries in the global north that seek to grapple the refugee crisis. I have suggested that much AT practice, especially in Germany, does not harness AT's potential despite the critical nature of the rich, practice-based research that the academic field of AT offers in the English-speaking world. I have argued that, in isolation, much of the existing practice does not align with the critical paradigm of CME. Neither does such practice alone suffice to respond to right-wing populism in postnormal times. Therefore, I will dedicate the next chapter to highlighting the potential for AT to facilitate CME-inspired initiatives fit to counter right-wing populism. More specifically, I will make a case for Drama Education (DE), which I will define as a productive interweaving of O'Neill's PD and Neelands' CA. I will also discuss the rationale and nature of the DE workshop I conceptualised, implemented, and analysed as part of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING A CASE FOR DRAMA EDUCATION

In the previous chapter, I explored the history, pedagogies, and principles underpinning AT and pointed out the rich potential inherent in this multi-faceted approach to education and learning. I have suggested that, on their own, much of the existing AT practice seeking to grapple with the refugee crisis neither aligns with the critical paradigm of CME, nor does it challenge right-wing populism. In this chapter, I will call attention to the potential of AT, specifically Drama Education (DE), to facilitate CME-inspired initiatives fit to counter right-wing populism. I will discuss the rationale and nature of the DE workshop I conceptualised, implemented, and analysed in order to explore DE's potential to implement CME-inspired learning.

Background

Like AT, DE is a contested term. DE does not have a clear-cut definition that all AT researchers and practitioners share. In this thesis, I understand DE as sitting under the umbrella term of AT. I use the term DE to describe a fusion of the overlapping practices of Neelands' CA and O'Neill's PD, which synergise the insights made by previous and concurrent approaches to socially engaged participatory theatre practice. To explore how DE can offer CME-inspired learning experiences in postnormal times, I conceptualised and implemented a DE workshop for young people in middle childhood and early adolescence. The duration of the two workshops analysed in this thesis are five hours (Workshop One) and three and a half hours (Workshop Two) respectively. I conceptualised the workshop structure specifically for this thesis and had never facilitated it before. Marsden and Ottley's (2008) picture book *Home & Away* served as the workshop's pre-text. The book depicts a fragmented and open-ended story of a fictional family. In the story, the outbreak of a war forces this ordinary family to flee from their home country and seek refuge in another. The data created during two implementations of the workshop forms the basis of the analyses and findings offered in this thesis.

Germany & Aotearoa New Zealand

In mid-2019, I facilitated the workshop. I travelled from Aotearoa New Zealand, my home of two years at the time, to Germany, the country in which I was born, raised, and spent several years of my early adulthood. I was born in West Germany only a couple of years before the Berlin Wall fell. Both implementations of the workshop took place in a city in the former East Germany, the totalitarian communist state of the so-called German Democratic Republic (GDR). Since 1990, the GDR is officially reunited with West Germany into the democratic Federal Republic of Germany. Today, Germany is both a nation of immigration and a breeding ground for right-wing populist politics. The country has welcomed a remarkable number of refugees in response to the so-called Syrian refugee crisis peaking between 2015 and 2017. While Germany has welcomed many refugees throughout the past five years, this time has also seen an increase in large parts of German society openly express startlingly point-blank right-wing populist *ressentiments* toward who they consider non-Germans, especially those seeking refuge in Germany who hold Muslim beliefs. This development has been specifically pronounced in the former GDR.

Originally, I planned to embark upon a comparative study to examine how the DE workshop I had conceptualised would play out in various settings. I planned to facilitate the workshop in Oceania (Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia), the UK (where I had previously lived), and Germany. I wanted to explore how the specific representations that dominate discourses regarding the refugee crisis in these distinct contexts would play out in the workshops. A lack of feasibility led me to plan two implementations of the workshop in Aotearoa New Zealand and two in Germany. I intended to facilitate the workshops in Aotearoa in March 2019.

It was all set up. For weeks, my only worry was the smooth facilitation of the workshops and the quality of my video camera. My only anxiety was how I had structured a handful of dramatic conventions.

I only cared about myself.

Two mass shootings took place at mosques in a terrorist attack in Christchurch during Friday Prayer
on March 15, 2019.

(one day before my planned first workshop in New Zealand)

Aotearoa was in mourning.

we stood in front of the green gates of Napier Islamic Centre and cried
neither home nor away like me
the woman stood next to me

in between

we stood still

in an embrace

the fabric of her hijab
gently touched my temple

the world stood still

we told each other
'I love you'
but

it wasn't enough.
the world had changed.

I cancelled the workshops in New Zealand.

And soon most of us carried on.

I had booked my flight tickets to Germany long in advance. In April 2019, I landed in Frankfurt as planned. I facilitated the workshops that sit at the heart of this thesis.

The workshops took place in East Germany for two reasons. It is here that the implementations actually occurred. Enough co-researchers showed up, all parents had signed the appropriate forms, and all elements of the recording equipment worked from the beginning until the end. I was also passionate to visit East Germany and work with local young people there because I knew the AfD has got many supporters there.

In the end, my field work opened up many explorations that were only possible due to my return to Germany. It challenged my understanding of what it may mean to be home and away, to be a majority in a 'home country' and to be a privileged migrant in another. My fieldwork in Germany forced me to grapple with my own connection to my (hi)story and its relation to my research.

As I boarded my flight back to Aotearoa, I felt a sense of both bewilderment and closure. Grief and relief merged into a deep sense of acceptance. I knew the fieldwork for this research project was complete. I knew my memory of home rested on those lands, but home no longer was alive there. My thesis no longer was a detached comparative study about other people in different countries, but about the communal work I undertook with young people who share a piece of home with me, a home in which scary and inhumane ideas and behaviours had begun to unfold. My simultaneous estrangement from and longing for this home became as much a strand of data as these young people's engagement in the workshops.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to talk about Christchurch and why I have not facilitated my workshop in New Zealand to this day. I do wonder how the workshop would have played out if the attacks had never happened. What would the workshop look like in Aotearoa today? If fifty-one people had never been killed while they were on their knees praying, would so many Kiwis still claim that racism and islamophobia do not exist in clean, green New Zealand?

Co-Researchers

As I revise my thesis in December 2020, I find out that a young man in Germany faces court (NDR, 2020). He threatened to kill a Muslim family. He made explicit plans to murder at least twenty people. He had already collected several weapons. The Christchurch attacks had awoken his passion for right-wing ideas. I read that he seemed emotionally detached as he talked to the judge. I read that he wants to be as 'meaningful' a 'legend' as the Christchurch mass murderer. I read that he is only twenty-two.

The young people who participated in the workshops in Germany are only a few years younger than this young man. Maybe they too dream of being meaningful legends one day.

Participants, who I will soon call co-researchers⁶, were recruited by local arts organisations in Germany. I created a workshop flyer, which the arts organisations distributed to potential co-participants. They shared the flyer among children who attended their various groups, courses, and activities, and distributed it via their newsletters. The flyer specified that anyone between ten and twelve who identified as German and who did not have any personal experience of fleeing and seeking refuge could take part.

Co-researchers were in middle childhood and early adolescence when they took part in the workshop. Ten young people aged between ten and twelve participated in the first workshop session. Eight young people aged between eleven and fourteen took part in the second session. Vygotsky, Erikson, and Piaget argue that middle childhood and early adolescence are crucial phases for social development and learning. Erikson (1993, 1994) proposes that children between six and twelve years of age are at the height of developing a variety of new skills and knowledge. If they do not have enough learning opportunities to grapple with actual feelings or dormant fears of inferiority or inadequacy amongst peers, they are likely to encounter difficulties developing self-esteem and social competences. Erikson also argues that young people between twelve and eighteen years of age struggle to develop their identities, master social interactions, and find their place and acceptance in society. Role confusion and withdrawal from the new responsibilities brought about by adolescence may occur. Young people start to develop an awareness of moral questions. They crave and establish allegiances to peers, ideals, and

⁶ I will discuss my rationale for the decision to change terminology shortly, in the chapter entitled 'Methods & Methodology'.

convictions. Parents cease to be the sole authority. Relationships with peers, school, and neighbourhood become increasingly important in terms of identity and value formation.

Piaget (1952, 1959, 1976) suggests that young people learn through assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process of taking in and systemising information into existent schemata. Accommodation is the process of modifying existent schemata in order to accommodate new information that does not fit into already present ones. As young people from seven to eleven gain more experiences, they increasingly engage in processes of accommodation. To make sense of their new experiences, they start to think abstractly and conceptualise by generating logical frameworks. From ages eleven to fifteen, young people increasingly engage in abstract thinking and deductive and hypothetical reasoning. In other words, young people begin to make rational judgements without the trigger of actual experiences and factual information. Vygotsky (1978a, 1978b) subsumes that psychosocial development emerges from social interaction. Socialisation allows young people in middle childhood and early adolescence to develop their consciousness and cognition amidst the age-specific challenges they face.

Drama Education as Critical Multicultural Education in Postnormal Times

Postnormal times put special demand on educators to engage young people in middle childhood and early adolescence with collaborative and interactive learning experiences that foster consciousness and cognition. Postnormality is characterised by rapidly advancing mass communication technology and new media that purport to truthfully reflect the lives of Others. A pervasive attention economy dominates the intricately interwoven private and public spheres of the politics of the everyday, abetting populist sentiment to spread in the rate and magnitude that it does. Distorted representations magnified by profit producing algorithms create image bombardments in online echo chambers and filter bubbles that dominate the ways in which young people perceive, know, and encounter the world (Beheshti & Large, 2013; Bowler & Nasset, 2013; Ives, 2012; Mikos, 1999; Shenton, 2013; Vollbrecht et al., 1997). New technologies and online platforms have led to the construction, conservation, and communication of new forms of image-based texts (Leavy, 2009; Neelands, 1994). An extreme “theatricalisation of news” (Williams, 1976, as quoted in Neelands, 1994, p. 91) dramatises and shapes our perceptions of the world. Writing a quarter of a century before the term ‘fake news’ became an all too familiar catch cry

around the globe, Willis (1990a, 1990b) laments that the greed for economic profit of the powerful few has led to the explosion of mass media in the late 20th century. It has resulted in infectious complacency about the messages communicated. If active, critical, and creative citizens are the prerequisite for social change, young people must develop the skills to critically respond to word-based and non-word-based texts and challenge the contexts and motives of the texts they are bombarded with (Anderson, 2011; Daley, 2003).

DE can provoke learners to explore how form and content, means and meaning operate as they simultaneously construct and deconstruct their own images, worlds, and experiences. Young people can explore how the ownership of the means and processes of representation both in dramatic and real worlds are negotiated, and how certain points of view are dramatised, normalised, and naturalised. In this way, DE can foster what Bruner (1960) terms “an active autonomy of attention that is the antithesis of the spectator’s passivity” (p. 72). DE challenges uncritical passive consumption and DE demands responsibility and ownership over opinions and decisions (O’Neill, 1989). Young people attend to the present moment and to critically express and never be entirely certain of their interpretations. DE reconnects young people to their own affective responses to images, encounters, and narratives. The complex social interactions that DE elicits can bring to the fore, juxtaposes, and opens up for exploration young people’s own ideologies and the power relations that uphold them (Medina et al., 2007). As an open dialogue perpetually in the making, DE develops and challenges understandings entangled in complex webs of meaning that appropriately respond to the ambiguous and inconclusive nature of postnormality (Anderson & O’Connor, 2015; O’Neill & Lambert, 2006). Young people encounter art- and meaning-making as personal, active processes of possibility and agency rather than “as something out there that has been defined by official others to be perceived, read or heard as those others decide” (P. Taylor, 2000, p. 30).

As dramatic worlds only come into existence if young people take action by making decisions, they are compelled to take an active stance on the issue explored and participate. In so doing, they experience through their minds and bodies, their intellect and their affect, that they indeed “can make interpretive choices in the wider world as well, including choices about who they might become or how the world might be re-imagined” (Neelands, 2010c, p. 138; Neelands, 1992). Learners recognise their ability to

revisit the past, critique the present, and imagine a more ethical future (Neelands, 1992, 2010c). In this way, DE stands in opposition not only to many TP and even AT practices dealing with the so-called refugee crisis, but also to populist rhetoric tactics bolstered by digital communication technologies. While the latter hold on to fixed positions, the nature of the small group work in DE recurrently challenges young people to cooperate in scrutinising and often abandoning the snippets of dramatic reality they have created in order to consider alternative scenarios and points of view (Bolton, 1998). With first-hand experiences of how representations are socially and discursively constructed, young people may “transcend the narrow confines of their personal identity and allow[ing] them to participate in other forms of existence” (O’Neill, 2006, p. 85). By questioning ubiquitously accepted norms, DE disturbs convenient perceptions and complacent thinking habits (O’Neill, 1989, 2006a). Learners experience themselves as simultaneous constructors and decoders of imagined world orders, as able and active partakers in the social production of meaning. They scrutinise, comment on, and challenge their own perceptions and understandings (Neelands, 1994). Identities and worldviews present themselves as constructs able to be reconceptualised. As an ensemble-based pedagogy, DE offers an about-face in normative power relations in the learning process, which acknowledges the multiplicity of cultures and knowledges that creative teams bring into the theatre space. As a creative pedagogy of genuine collaboration, DE can enable us “to imagine ourselves out of postnormal times and into a new age of normalcy—with an ethical compass and a broad spectrum of imaginations from the rich diversity of human cultures.” (Sardar, 2010, p. 435)

A CME-informed DE practice can assist young people in developing self-esteem and social competences to become autonomous and confident critical thinkers. DE can provoke them to want to become responsible empathetic agents for social change and not passive bystanders who fulfil their needs to blindly fit in and conform. DE can encourage deductive and hypothetical reasoning to be based on critical thinking and empathy. It can inspire interest in ethics and social justice over blind allegiances to peers, ideals, and convictions and question authority, even their own. Facilitating the rehearsal of comfort within confusion and uncertainty and extending young people’s frames of reference is especially crucial in postnormal times.

In this chapter, I have defined DE as a fusion of the overlapping practices of Neelands' CA and O'Neill's PD. I have argued that DE is well-equipped to facilitate CME-inspired initiatives fit to counter right-wing populism. I have discussed the rationale and nature of the DE workshop I conceptualised, implemented, and analysed in order to explore how DE can catalyse such CME-inspired learning experiences. In the next chapter, I will explain the research methods and the methodology I employed to undertake this exploration. I will outline the Multiple Case Study (MCS) approach underpinning my research design. I will explore Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR) as a set of methods used to generate qualitative data. I will explore the tenets of Critical Theory (CT) and Poststructuralism (PS) to make a case for a Critical Poststructuralism (CPS) as an ontological and epistemological anchor underpinning my work. I will explore the quadruple hermeneutics of my chosen methodology, Reflexive Interpretation (RI), and make a case for Benjamin's notion of Translation as Art (TA) to inform my methodology. I will also discuss the ethical implications of my research.

CHAPTER 5

METHODS & METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I argued that DE has the potential to facilitate CME-inspired initiatives and is able to adequately respond to right-wing populism in postnormal times. I have discussed the rationale and nature of the DE workshop I conceptualised, implemented, and analysed in order to explore how DE can catalyse such learning experiences. In this chapter, I will explore the qualitative research approach Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR). ATAR provides me with both methods for data generation and tools for catalysing the first stage of data analysis. I will then describe my chosen methodology for the second stage of data analysis, Reflexive Interpretation (RI). RI is a quadruple hermeneutics that encourages reflection across the empirical, hermeneutic, critical-theoretical, and linguistic levels of interpretation. In order to do so, I will define my understanding of a Critical Poststructuralist (CPS) research paradigm by throwing light on the tenets of Poststructuralism (PS) and Critical Theory (CT). After discussing how these two modes of thought may fruitfully supplement each other to serve as an epistemological and ontological anchor for my research, I will explain how I am transposing Benjamin's conceptualisation of translation as art (TA) into a practical implement enabling me to engage in Reflexive Interpretation (RI). I will begin by discussing the ethical considerations underpinning my research.

Ethical Considerations

I encountered several potential ethical issues designing and conducting this research project. To seek fully informed and free consent from the underage participants and their parents or legal guardians, I prepared, distributed, explained and collected a Participant Information Sheets (PIS) and a Consent Form (CF) for young people and for parents/guardians.

The PIS explains the nature of the research project, the drama workshop, and the scope of participants' engagement in both. It describes in simple terms that participants and I create data together that I will subsequently analyse and publish as part of my PhD and potentially other work. Specifically, I clarify that I will observe participants' behaviour, film their engagement during the workshop, transcribe and

translate what they say and do, and take photos of their creative writing. It explains that any participant can stop participating at any time. The CF summarises the key points of the PIS into short statements. It gives participants and their parents/legal guardians the opportunity to consent to these statements if they wish. Both the PIS and CF for the young people are written in age-appropriate language to ensure they understand the nature and scope of their consent.

Representatives of the German Arts Organisations who advertised the drama workshop among potential participants, invited them to take part, and offered their rehearsal spaces received a PIS and a CF as well. These documents outline the research project, the workshop, and their role in both. Any representative of the arts organisation in question who was directly involved in assisting to manage the workshop proceedings signed a Confidentiality Agreements (CA). The CA succinctly states that representatives of the respective arts organisation will not disclose to anyone who participated in the workshop and what the young people participating did and said.

The contents of all PISs, CFs, and CAs were agreed upon prior to any data generation taking place. Below I offer more detail about how the considerations underlying these documents respond to potential ethical issues of my research project.

The drama workshops had the potential to raise sensitive issues. Taking part in the workshop could have been disadvantageous to the participants, as they publicly expressed opinions or sentiments that could have exposed them to discrimination. I established a respectful and safe work ethic of care agreed upon by the entire research team prior to the beginning of each workshop. To avoid instances of deception and concealment, I made clear that I would be observing and recording the participants while they were grappling with both the fictional and the real conflicts that the drama processes provoked.

Participants were not offered the opportunity to edit the translated transcripts of the recordings, nor were they offered the digital files of their recording or a copy thereof since the whole workshop group are identifiable on those files. My chosen methodological approach asks me to critically consider the issue of pluralism within the data and the research text, and the challenge that my authority over and authorship of the research text poses. Making the participants and their parents/legal guardians aware

of this, I sought their agreement to storing the recordings in a secure manner, emphasising that I am happy to destroy them upon request.

Participants remain the owners of the pieces of creative writing they created during as part of the workshop. I returned these to them upon the completion of their workshop, keeping digital copies of them. Signing the PIS and CF, participants and their parents/legal guardians allowed me to publish, anonymously, pieces of such writing. I clarified that my analysis of the data is used and published in my dissertation, and potentially in future journal publications and conference presentations. I offered participants themselves an accessible electronic report on the research upon completion of the thesis.

In my PIS and CF, I explained that I keep all research data securely in digital formats and that I can dispose of them upon their request, and that I neither identify any research participants by name in any publication or research report, nor publish or share any photos, videos, or audio recordings. I also clarified that participants have the right to withdraw from the research process without giving any reason.

My field work could have placed me at risk of harm, since young people and/or parents/legal guardians and/or community members might have been unhappy with the intent, content, and implications of the drama workshops. My research might also have caused participants to experience emotions generally perceived as negative, such as embarrassment, irritation, anger or sadness. A brochure I created and gave to each participant contained the number of a telephone helpline for young people. I explained the content and intent of the brochure and the helpline to the young people accordingly after the workshop.

Due to the reflective nature of the drama workshop and its focus on emotional engagement, my research could have given rise to incidental findings that would have been unexpected and unrelated to the original purpose of the research but may have compromised the participants' mental wellbeing. Again, I was aware of how to contact local counselling support as well as parents/guardians. I identified and explained all these potential harms and risks and appropriate provisions in my PIS and CF. In these documents I also made clear that participants and/or parents/legal guardian may raise any matter of

concern or complaints about my research by contacting myself, my supervisors, or the Chair of the Human Participants Ethics Committee.

Applied Theatre as Research: Data Generation & First Stage Analysis

Dominant social science is based on a traditional positivist research paradigm. It assumes that we can observe, analyse, and represent our world objectively on the basis of a straightforward cause-and-effect logic. Such logic of an ostensibly existent linear normality propagates the rational aggravation and arrangement of digits and letters that synthesise the intricacies of human experience into codes, reducing the latter into themes and findings ought to objectively serve up some explicable social reality. However, such a normality paradigm is unable to make critical inquiry into the complexities of lived experiences in postnormal times possible (Funcowitz & Ravetz, 1993). ATAR provides a holistic research approach that responds to the challenges of postnormality by encouraging academics to engage in research initiatives that are explicitly participatory and overtly confront the neoliberal world order by catering for the interests of those who are least listened to and most marginalised (Anderson & O'Connor, 2015).

A Brief History of Applied Theatre as Research

Rooted in the Drama Education tradition and Brechtian theatre, ATAR's conception was inspired by an array of qualitative sociological research approaches. Most notably, Participatory Action Research, Community-Based Participatory Research, Arts-Based Research, and Performance Ethnography have paved the way for the development of ATAR.

Echoing Freirean pedagogy, Participatory Action Research and Community-Based Participatory Research only see social change possible if people themselves engage in conscious acts of noticing and naming their perceptions and experiences to subsequently denote these observations and labels critically (Freire, 1972). Aiming to democratise research models in order to help those 'researched' to imagine their worlds in alternative ways and to provide platforms allowing such visions to be seen and heard, Participatory Action Research and Community-Based Participatory Research replace the

traditional researcher-researched dichotomy and its inherent unequal power relations with collaborative research partnerships (Israel et al., 2003).

Similarly, Arts-Based Research aims to render the research process participatory and democratic. Employing multiple art forms to harness the process of artistic expression, Arts-Based Research provides different perspectives on the themes explored by engaging not only the intellect but also elicit emotional responses (Dixon & Senior, 2009; McNiff, 1998). The creative process of engaging in the arts, employed during data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation, can bring about new understandings when everyday behavioural and cognitive patterns inhibit participants from challenging deep-seated attitudes and assumptions (Eisner, 2006). At the heart of Arts-Based Research sit self-reflection and the acknowledgment that people experience, know, and represent the world not only through their minds, but also their bodies (Haseman & Mafe, 2009).

Performance Ethnography too considers the significant role the body plays in the perception, interpretation, and communication of events and people's experiences and evaluations thereof. Performance Ethnography employs the specific art form of theatre to communicate data previously collected through qualitative methods. Acts of performing data transform research outputs into visceral and immediate encounters with the human experiences and political ideas explored during the data generation phase. These encounters, in turn, constitute a form of public pedagogy in which performers and audiences come into contact with these critical investigations both intellectually and emotionally. On the basis of these embodied experiences offered by the performative act, Performance Ethnography can create interventions that provoke the political to engage in direct dialogue with the personal, challenging any distinct separation between the two (Denzin, 2003). The sensuous intimacy inherent in experiencing theatrical performances may provoke people to talk with and about individuals and groups perceived as Other empathetically as living human subjects, rather than predetermined snippets of objective data (Conquergood, 1985).

Applied Theatre as Method & Methodology

It follows that the art of participatory theatre-making processes can be a fruitful method to generate and analyse data as these processes bear the potential to provide intricate and multifaceted means to

examine and represent people's complex, emotion-laden experiences of the postnormal world they inhabit. Termed Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR) by Anderson and O'Connor (2015), theatre-making processes as a method of data generation, analysis, and dissemination transform researched populations, objects investigated in ways the 'professional researcher' deems appropriate, into active co-researchers, subjects actively exploring each other's perceived realities, generating new knowledges and insights on their own terms (Gallagher, 2011; J. Thompson, 2003). ATAR offers possibilities for researchers and co-researchers to form research teams⁷ who collaboratively explore and question the status quo of their worlds within and around them critically. Oriented towards possibilities for social change, such processes provide research teams with the means for dialogic action and reflection. These, in turn, provoke research teams to play with the potential to creatively imagine and critically devise alternative ways of living together (Cahill, 2016; Conrad, 2004). My future use of the term 'co-researcher' acknowledges the perspectival shift from conceptualising the young people who worked with me during the workshops as 'participants' to acknowledging them as 'co-researchers.'

More specifically, the reflexive distancing properties - that the metaxes occurring within fictional dramatic frames elicit - allow research teams to grapple with sensitive real-world issues and complex research questions (Carroll, 2009; MacNeill, 2015). Based on the imagination, embodiment, and dramatic representation of narratives, images, ideas, thoughts, and feelings, ATAR acknowledges the role of the body in stor(y)ing, articulating, and creating knowledges about the manifold facets of human experience, enabling both ratio and emotion to engage with the subject matter in question (Anderson & O'Connor, 2015; Chilton, 2013). Provoking the observation, disruption, juxtaposition, analysis, and playful transformation of the emerging pieces of theatre that research teams devise on the basis of their real-world experiences of postnormality, ATAR enables collaborative investigations into how relations of power are constructed and performed within the fiction and the real (Anderson & O'Connor, 2015). The different shades of light and focus that critical reflection in-, out-of-, and between-role(s) provide allows gifts the fictional the potential to carefully illuminate strands of the real, which are delicately interwoven into the former. This research project, then, explores how ATAR works in its double role as

⁷ Analogous to the term 'creative teams', I will use the term 'research teams' to denote both principal researchers (academics who initiate/offer a research project) and co-researchers (traditionally labelled 'researched populations' or 'participants').

(1) a pedagogical framework for the case studies constituting the basis of this research and (2) a multifaceted tool for data generation and first-stage data analysis carried out by co-researchers and myself as we engaged in theatre processes that provoked us to critically interpret our own acts of constructing empirical material.

Applied Theatre-Based Multiple Case Study Research

Data generation and first-stage data analysis occurred during two implementations of a DE workshops I developed on the basis of the picture book *Home & Away* (Marsden & Ottley, 2008). These two workshops constitute two cases that, together, form the basis of a qualitative Multiple Case Study (MCS). I am treating my cases as separate instances of DE as CME in practice. Each case within my MCS research is a strand of empirical inquiry that examines in-depth phenomena within a real-life context. In this research project, I use MSC to investigate and analyse descriptively and exploratively how a specifically framed event, a DE workshop, can provoke young people to critically explore processes of Othering. In so doing, this research not only explores the very nature and inner workings of the ATAR process but also the modus operandi of right-wing populism itself. The multiple cases enable me to examine emerging patterns and incongruities, throw light on complementary facets of the drama process, and to, in the analysis phase, generate preliminary frameworks from some cases to then examine them in and through others (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this way, MCS allows me to substantiate, supplement, and scrutinise existing theory (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2011), and to offer pragmatic suggestions for future DE practice and ATAR-based MSC research.

Engaging in MCS research, I do not offer a longitudinal study. As Yin (1984) notes, a concern often voiced about case studies is that it is not possible to generalise from a handful of cases. Case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions but not to populations and will thus not constitute samples that allow for statistical generalisation, but the ground on which researchers can contribute to the development and extension of theory (Yin, 1984). Within the framework of my research project, I am seeking to explore and enrich theorisations as regards DE, ATAR, right-wing populism, CME, and, as I will discuss shortly, the qualitative methodology of Reflexive Interpretation (RI). This exploration entails an investigation of how Benjamin's Theory of Translation as Art (TA) can serve as a methodological tool to engage in RI.

RI on the basis of TA also enables me to grapple with another potential pitfall of the MCS approach. As (Yin, 1984) reminds us, the MCS researcher may, consciously or unconsciously, steer the direction of the fieldwork process and the research findings into the direction of her own biased views. Alongside ATAR, RI provides me with the methodological means to engage in two simultaneous processes: (1) explicitly positioning myself politically and pedagogically as a researcher in postnormal times, as called for by Anderson and O'Connor (2015), and (2) counteracting the potential imposition of my own political views onto co-researchers both in the field (the drama workshop) and on paper (in the analysis and representation phases) onto future readers (second-level co-researchers, so to speak). In other words, RI offers promising methodological suggestions pointing toward ways that allow researchers to navigate the intricate balancing act between acknowledging, as legitimate and significant dynamic constituents of the research, (a) their own voice(s) and assumptions contingent upon socio-cultural contexts and past and present personal experiences, (b) the power dynamics at play in the data generation, analysis, representation, and reception phases, and (c) the manifold and multifaceted voices of co-researchers, equally bound in and influenced by time and place.

As my co-researchers and I engaged in the versatile ATAR approach, we employed multiple methods to create data. During the two workshops, co-researcher observation, digital video recordings of co-researchers' engagement in- and outside of dramatic frames, personal researcher reflections, and co-researchers' pieces of creative writing were means of data generation. Personal reflection on my entire research trip to Germany constitutes another strand of data.

Reflexive Interpretation: Second Stage Analysis

The qualitative methodology I am employing to engage in the second stage of my data analysis is Reflexive Interpretation (RI) as defined by Alvesson and Sköldböck (2000). This second stage took place after I had travelled to Germany to facilitate two workshops and had returned to NZ. During this stage, I watched the video recordings, transcribed, translated, and analysed them along with co-researchers' pieces of creative writing, and critically reflected upon the aforementioned processes.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) conceptualise RI as a compound research position that considers four levels of interpretation. Firstly, it asks researchers to reflect on how they handle empirical material, secondly, on how they make their acts of interpretation conscious to themselves and their reader(s), thirdly, how socio-political and ideological contexts shape the research endeavour, and, finally, how authority is at play in the representation of data and findings and in the writing of the final research output. RI urges researchers not to adhere to one single epistemological and ontological position, that is, one single theory of knowledge and view of reality. Rather, reflection on one's own theoretical standpoints and the consequences on the analysis of empirical material and representation of findings they effect allow for critical engagement with generated data and for novel insights into the research questions posed.

Yet, before defining the tenets of RI and discussing its implications for data analysis, it is useful to define Critical Poststructuralism (CPS) as the theoretical perspective that will anchor my reflective interpretations in the ocean of philosophical stances, RI asks me to consider in order to critically reflect on the construction and deconstruction of not only mine and my co-researchers' empirical material, but also the process of data analysis itself. Conceptualising CPS, I am attempting to offer a fruitful composite framework that allows Poststructuralism (PS) and Critical Theory (CT) to complement and cross-fertilise each other's philosophical premises and implied practical suggestions for data analysis. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) note, PS and CT can supplement each other productively, providing pointers towards a reflective and flexible social science.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism (PS) originated as a strand of literary criticism and philosophy in France in the 1960s. PS critiques the idea of structuralism, which assumes that researchers can interpret texts, including 'social texts', understood here as social phenomena, by examining the fixed linguistic structures underlying them. More specifically, PS rejects the idea of grand narratives, rational and universally valid explanations of social phenomena. Rather, some discourses – social texts conveying statements, ideas, arguments – dominate others. Such relations of domination do not play out in an empty vacuum, but in particular historical periods and socio-political and -cultural contexts. Challenging the notion of grand narratives, PS calls for researchers to seek to understand the world through local and partial

microhistories. These are narratives conscious of their own subjection to the discourses that their own respective cultural situatedness creates, and the complex power relations they produce and reproduce. Emphasising the patterns that the discourses under investigation take, PS underlines the significance of language in the construction of what we perceive as reality. Specifically, PS is interested in how language generates subjectivities and identities by giving form to discourses (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

Subjectivity as a Creative Process: Language, Discourse & Identity

Subjectivity here is understood as the assemblage of a person's perceptions and judgements of experiences. PS challenges the notion of one static, consistent, and complete subjectivity that exists outside of its social context. Rather, PS stresses how language constructs discursive frameworks, which, in turn, create perceptions, feelings, thoughts, actions, and hence experiences of the world and expressions thereof. Rather than regarding language as an entirely free-floating playground of random signifiers and signifieds, PS contends that socio-cultural and historio-political contexts shape its form and existence. It follows that the interplay between the language(s), discourses and subjectivities accessible to us determine how we think and act. A PS conceptualisation of subjectivity, then, regards language as not merely expressing subjectivity, but creating it, and subjectivity itself as an unpredictable and ambiguous process of unconscious yet active creation rather than a rigid, unswerving structure reliably predicting a certain output (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

The Politics of Representation: Performances of the Everyday as Possibilities for Change

Consequently, it is each of our acts of expression - speaking, writing, gesturing, interpreting - that incessantly creates, and hence either reiterates or disrupts, and reconceptualises our own and each other's subjectivities. It follows then, that we, in a kind of continuous self-actualising feedback loop, create, perform, and interpret narratives constituting our own identities and those of Others. Our performances and the resources at our disposal for the latter are contingent upon and limited by a distinct time and space. In other words, the identities we ascribe to ourselves and to Others are, in a sense, pieces of theatre devised and played out on a specific stage, locating us historically, politically, culturally, and economically. While we cannot simply rip out the floorboards and dismantle the stage

machinery around us, we can, if provoked, question the ground we stand on and the light that gives us certain shades and shapes to play with. And with that awareness, we can take a chance and change the script.

Despite viewing the human subject as an effect of discourse, the social change-oriented reading of PS offered above can provide the potential for individual and communal agency. If we become conscious that such performances and our interpretations thereof present us with particular truths about the world, we open the door to further explorations. We can then investigate how these performances are rooted in socio-historically and thus economically and politically contingent forms of language and discourse (Weedon, 1987). Representation here is understood as the act of employing signs to construct and (re)produce specific versions of reality. Examining these small but constant acts of theatre of the everyday, we can explore the power relations at play within the discourses that constitute what we regard as true. Following the tenets of PS, we can then question what we take for granted as authentic and natural, provoked to experiment with alternative ways of encountering, representing, and acting within the postnormality we find ourselves in.

Authoring Political Fiction: Navigating the Quandary of Authority

With its focus on how language operates by creating discourse, subjectivities, and identities, PS undermines the positivist idea that people can communicate experiences of and ideas about the world by means of an allegedly 'truthful' representation. More specifically, PS posits that the sign system of language can neither hold a mirror up to and portray any external reality nor unproblematically convey any content – meaning - to which, it, according to the positivist view, gives form.

Consequently, PS questions the authority with which social science researchers are purportedly able to represent their data and their analysis thereof (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). Notions of 'reality', 'truth', 'concealed and revealed meaning', 'the right interpretation', and 'the most appropriate analysis' give way to the idea that texts are always incomplete, fragmented, even unreliable, always carrying within them the potential of multiple interpretations. In the words of poststructuralist thinker Derrida

(1988), *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*⁸ (p. 144); human experience, discursively constructed, only ever exists in text, in language, rather than outside it. The way we write, speak, even the way we engage in performative acts such as gestures or facial expression, is interpreted - by both the 'performer' of the communicative act herself and its 'audience' - textually, or, by means of language. Since neither pure signifiers nor pure signifieds exist, texts, including social and performative ones, become temporary homes to signs and their constituents, and the latter become *Spielräume*⁹ for the endless multiplicities of potential interpretations of the world. In fact, it is *homo ludens*¹⁰ who Derrida urges researchers to become (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

Emphasising the unavoidable subjectivity of the researcher, PS regards all research as authorship. Every researcher is an author creating literary works that constitute highly political fiction, as it favours certain interests and ideologies over others. Ideologies are understood here as closed systems of viewpoints, judgements, and ideals functioning as the basis for a society's political and economic agenda in the interest of certain group(s). As the author edits and selects certain elements of data for interpretation, chooses certain elements of the interpretation for publication, and, consciously or unconsciously, prefers certain manners of writing and representing over others, her "voice implies silencing the voices of others." (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 168)

It is here that *Spiel*¹¹ becomes another avenue to engage in a methodology that is 'poststructurally aware', so to speak. More specifically, it is the researcher's experimentation with style, play with text production, and unorthodox and *verfremdende*¹² use of language in the representations of her own interpretations that may acknowledge and somewhat challenge the implications of authorship by providing the potential "to strip a text, any text, of its external claim to authority" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 579). PS, like ATAR, echoes CME in its regard of research and knowledge as dynamic, active

⁸ *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*. (French) ≈ literally: There is no outside-text.

⁹ *der Spielraum* (German, noun) ≈ literally: the play(ing) room / & space; plural: *die Spielräume*; conceptual translation: the latitude

¹⁰ *Homo ludens* (Latin, noun) ≈ literally: human playing; conceptual translation: the playing human

¹¹ *das Spiel* (German, noun) ≈ literally: the play / & the game / & the act(ing); conceptual translation: the game

¹² *verfremdende* (German, adjective, active) ≈ literally: comes from the verb *verfremden*:

ver + *fremd* + *en* ≈ make + foreign / & Other / & strange / & alien + verb signifier; here the verb signifier *en* is transformed into *ende* to grammatically agree with the subsequent noun, > and coincidentally: *das Ende* (German, noun) ≈ the end; conceptual translation: a lie nating

creative processes that generates what is researched and known, rather than as mirrors made from inanimate matter able to portray equally inert, predictable, and hence objectively explicable human beings. Consequently, PS advocates expressive forms such as rhetoric, fiction, and subjectivity to be part of the researcher's writing repertoire. The researcher must both employ and reflect upon these expressive forms by engaging in concurrent cyclical action and reflection of her own writing processes (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

Reading as Creative Collaboration: A New Contingent of Co-Researchers Emerges

Emphasising the notion of authorship by challenging any clear distinction between fact and fiction (notions the normality paradigm of the positivist research tradition adamantly upholds), PS renders scientific texts into historical constructions, truth claims into rhetorical expressions, and the myth of some unquestionable validity of academic expertise into the possibility for multiplicities of different readings and alternative interpretations. Here, the reader transforms from a passive "consumer of correct results" (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 171) into an active co-creator of insights and knowledges, stepping into open dialogue with research teams offering her provocations to explore.

As discussed above, a PS-inspired style of writing research texts is different to conventional realistic styles of representation, just as ATAR and DE move away from exclusively employing traditional representational forms of theatre such as realism and naturalism. A PS-based perspective on academic writing promotes experimentation with form and content. The fissures that the juxtaposition, montage, and fragmentation of texts, images, and ideas create can open up spaces for active co-creation and the emergence of yet another research team. This is the research team of the primary researcher(s), the author(s), present in the placement and displacement of their own words, and the reader(s), making sense of this arrangement on their own terms.

While the research team during the first stage of 'my' ATAR data analysis consists of co-researchers and myself, prospective reader(s) and myself comprise the research team during the second stage of data analysis. In a sense, however, co-researchers are of course still present during the second stage, speaking within, through, and with the research text and the interpretation the rest of the research team offers. This notion of reading as collaborative co-creation of meaning and knowledge on the basis of

the productive ambiguity that the open spaces textual experimentation creates negates the idea of any innate one 'truth' and is, in a sense, similar to ATAR's Brechtian provocation to engage in engagement with and detachment with narratives and roles. This process enables critical exploration of and commentary on the constructions, performances, and interpretations of discourses, subjectivities, and identities. As PS regards 'truth' as nothing essential to be revealed from within the data or the researcher's analysis thereof, it

becomes an open experiment conducted by actors, rather than something concealed beneath the surface; it is the surface itself, in a state of continually interrupted and fragmented construction, that is the truth; and the actors create the surface by rendering their own representations while at the same time commenting upon this

(Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, pp. 173-174)

The 'surface' is understood here as processes of representation and the contexts they occur within and are thus contingent upon. This context, as PS highlights, includes the language(s) available to individuals as the former influence the way they may engage in processes of representation.

Truth as an Open Experiment: Derrida's Deconstruction

This notion of the surface as a source for understandings and knowledges sits at the heart of deconstruction, a method of textual analysis termed and developed by the poststructuralist thinker Derrida (1988). The basis of this approach is Derrida's notion of *différance*, which can be translated from French into English as both/either *difference* and/or *deferral of meaning*. Deconstruction presumes that different people – speakers, readers, writers, performers, audiences of the everyday – make different meanings in the *Spielräume* between signs and within them. Consequently, it is impossible that one truth exists that is accessible through one school of thought or theory.

Derrida's deconstruction comprises two steps. In the first, the researcher lets the oppressed elements of a text take on the role of the dominant ones. Researchers destroy the dominating image into that which has been dominated, that is, the thus far unseen, unheard, unvoiced. Yet, this first step calls for

more than the sheer reversion of hierarchies between counterparts. Therefore, the second step of deconstruction demands that researchers demolish both counterimages. This obliteration displaces the constituents of the now non-existent counterparts (Krupnick, 1983). Consequently, researchers are forced to question the normality of the original counterimages and their hierarchical relationship of dominance and submission. In this way, we can create new ideas, insights, interpretations and thus knowledges about the world. Deconstruction, then, bears the potential for *aporia*¹³. I understand *aporia* as *verfremdend* puzzlement evoked by the discovery of logical disjunctions in a text. It is a state Derrida favours over the ostensible consistency of logic, reason, and logocentrism, the notion that there is an autonomously existing truth independent of human representation through linguistic signs.

Of Sacred Cows & Uncanny Spectres: New Perspectives through Dramatisation

Perspectivisation and dramatisation (Ehn & Löfgren, 1982) can serve as a methodological tool to put Derrida's theory of deconstruction into research practice. Employing these strategies can avoid mere categorisation and simplistic synthesis of data by ensuring the researcher equally considers patterns, connections and contexts, and the multiplicity and variations of voices constituting the data, its incongruities and divergences, even variations *within* one utterance, expressing a certain subjectivity. Corresponding to Brechtian theatre, DE and ATAR, perspectivisation provokes the researcher to see familiar phenomena as strange by repeatedly transitioning back and forth between different modes of thought by, for example, thinking in different metaphors. More specifically, dramatisation asks researchers to

[c]ombine (in your mind) objects and incidents that seem to be incompatible. Turn social hierarchies upside down; let individuals switch roles, interests and language. Play and experiment with the empirical material as if it were a stage prop or paper doll. Confront taboos, category divisions and sacred cows with everyday practice.

(Ehn & Löfgren, 1982, p. 113)

¹³ *aporia* (Greek, noun, originally ἀπορία) ≈ literally: a state of being at a loss; conceptual translation: puzzlement, confusion

As tools for data analysis, dramatisation and perspectivisation provide researchers and readers with dramatic frames. These frames can create a variety of different lenses through which the empirical material and reflections thereon can be explored. These lenses allow researchers to momentarily take a step back from their own point of view, their own identity, their own subjectivity. Hence, they can offer an ephemeral distance to internalised implicit prohibitions and long respected beliefs engendered by culturally determined values and meanings. Through those frames, manifold possible perspectives can be expressed and explored, even those that are uncomfortable, generally chosen to remain unvoiced, unheard, unseen, but are nevertheless existent in everyday life. In the case of right-wing *ressentiment*¹⁴ in Germany, it seems to me, German history has banned them, until the 'refugee crises', to niches in which people felt 'safe' enough to express them. Since the rise of right-wing populism, they seem to have reached everyday speech as socially acceptable realities to some, but unwelcome ghosts of the past to those who disagree with such rhetoric. But they are uncanny spectres, concomitant explicit reminders and implicit reminders of an undying guilt that must be demonised and banned – or ignored and suppressed - rather than critically explored in all their disturbingly haunting complexities of which we all have a part to play.

Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000) explicitly state that a PS-inspired methodology must allow for “multiple selves” (p. 187) and perspectives to speak with/in, through/out (of) the research text so that the researcher does not conceptually lock any co-researcher into a fixed identity, not herself, not those once labelled 'participants', not future readers. In order to enable both dominant and marginal voices to be heard, researchers must, at least intermittently, suspend the dichotomy between the typical and the aberrant, the rational and the absurd, the normal and grotesque, the moral and bad, the us and the them. In practical terms, this means that it is likely that the researcher must select only sections of (or moments from) the empirical material for analysis to then critically explore thoroughly those multiple perspectives expressing multiple discursive constructions, giving them the time and space on the page they demand and deserve (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

¹⁴ le *ressentiment* (French, noun) ≈ literally: the resentment; conceptual translation: a “deep-seated resentment, frustration, and hostility accompanied by a sense of being powerless to express these feelings directly” (Merriam-Webster, 2020, n. p.); “the deep grievance produced by feelings of both envy and humiliation” (Tharoor, 2018, n. p.)

Plays of Metaphors as Spaces for Alternatives: The Possibility of Bold Readings

As Anderson and O'Connor (2015) assert, ATAR demands more than multiplicities of voices to be heard. Researchers must position themselves clearly and explicitly in political terms as well. PS's consideration of the authorship/authority dilemma complicates this endeavour. However, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) maintain that PS-inspired researchers can offer "bold readings" (p. 188) of data as called for by ATAR if they engage in two steps. One is to either provide alternative readings as part of their text or to craft their text in such a way that cracks in its very own construction have the potential to open up spaces that provoke readers to critically create alternative readings. The other step is to ensure that they treat – and encourage future readers/co-researchers to treat - their analyses and interpretations as supplements to what arises from the empirical data and not as singular, universally valid explications of the data.

In my research, an interweaving of excerpts from the original playtexts constructed as part of the dramatic explorations occurring within the workshops, transcriptions of co-researchers' reflections, co-researchers' creative writing may enable me to remain conscious of what my own analyses mask and silence. Another practical strategy consistent with the theoretical tenets of PS is to repeatedly employ a "play of metaphors" (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 191) that frames and reframes aspects of data by interpreting an initial metaphor by means of another one, and so on. In this way, researchers can explore different frames of reference and challenge their own habitual patterns of thinking.

Algorithms in the Head: Avoiding Linguistic Reductionism

Critical exploration of how language produces meanings must permeate the processes and products of interpretation and writing. PS promotes language - how it is employed during fieldwork and analysis - from a sheer means of communicating findings into an object of study in its own right. A critical approach to PS can counteract a potential pitfall and a simplistic understanding of PS may entail. This latent drawback is linguistic and self-reflective reductionism, that is, regarding people as sheer subordinate linguistic by-products detached from any referents, material conditions, and historio-cultural contexts (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). Rather than subscribing to such bottomless relativism by seeing reality as a mere matter of rhetoric, a critical reading of poststructuralist theorisations such as those of Derrida

(1988) asks us to consider the framework of any text – written, spoken, performed - in linguistic, socio-cultural, and historical terms. Such an approach acknowledges that languages do not float freely in a vacuum devoid of time and space but are and have always been in the process of *becoming* manifest within distinct social, cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts. The *homo ludens* Derrida advocates must not get lost in her play with and within signs, entirely starstruck by the fleeting differences and opposites they create, but take up her “external responsibility for referents” that her *Spiel* entails (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 157).

Consequently, research teams’ – now consisting of principal researchers and two types of co-researchers (‘participants’ and ‘readers’) must avoid shutting themselves off hermetically from and to the world in hermeneutic echo chambers keeping them from referring to anything but their theoretical micro-discoveries and self-reflections. Free play, so called for by poststructuralist thinkers like Derrida, must be complemented, if not imbued, by strategies for critical reflection through intermittent distance to one’s own theoretical filter bubble (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Research teams can then make crucial connections and references to social and political events that take place outside their own analytical experiments but have significant implications to their own and each other’s lives. In this way, research teams can take the appeal for the social change that postnormality demands beyond their office chairs and rehearsal rooms.

Able to help circumvent the drawbacks that narrow readings of PS entail, Critical Theory (CT) can unhinge, dislocate, and productively disrupt the walls of such potential analytical echo chambers by provoking researchers to connect PS’s highly theoretical play with the inner workings of linguistics and the politics of representation with people’s lived experiences of the palpable effects of socio-political circumstances and material conditions. In this way, CT can serve as a complementary frame of reference that supplements and enriches PS, suggesting what a Critical Poststructuralism (CPS) might have to offer social science research in postnormal times, and how it may be put into methodological practice.

Critical Theory

Critical Theory (CT) emerged as part of the Frankfurter Schule, a school of social theory and critical philosophy established in Germany in the 1920s. In a similar fashion to PS, CT does not view any one universal explanation leading to the resolution of social issues, or any one frame of reference from which social problems may be investigated (Morrow, 1994). CT's view of society is dialectical and its research approach interpretive in that it aims to explore social phenomena by throwing light on the construction of meaning taking place within distinct historical contexts and thus economic circumstances. More specifically, CT assumes that, over time, socio-political, cultural, and economic settings become manifest, leading to specific material conditions. CT posits that these contexts and conditions can be observed and treated as existent reality. CT regards every social phenomenon as inherently political, intricately intertwined in ideology. Any research endeavour, then, must examine social phenomena within and as part of their historical contexts. Rather than viewing the social order and the constituents and processes enabling and maintaining it as natural and normal, CT contends that researchers must consider how unequal power relations, constructed throughout history, produce the societal status quo. It follows that, like ATAR and PS, CT challenges the positivist assumption that allegedly objective researchers can neutrally describe and depict society as an equally objective natural and stable given (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

From Personal Emancipation to Social Change: The Rationalisation of the Lifeworld

CT is particularly interested in how capitalist and technocratic ideologies produce far-reaching social injustices. The latter render individuals, always potentially able to critically create and autonomously act upon their own political and ethical convictions, into masses of uncritical, passive, and predictable consumers, well-adapted to keeping the capitalist profit-making machinery, running on mass production, mass media, and mass consumption, oiled and operating for the benefit of the few (J. Habermas, 1971b). When people become conscious of the asymmetrical power relations that uphold existent conditions and start to engage in critical thinking and subsequent action, they may, communally and over time, change these conditions and thus the reality they sustain. As does PS, CT urges researchers to provoke their co-researchers and themselves to critically reflect upon the ways they are preserving the state of affairs in the society they identify with, and how this preservation constitutes active engagements in political acts of producing and reproducing certain discourses and

representations. Research, then, always reinforces or disrupts dominant modes of thought (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

The aim of a CT-based social science is social change, or emancipation from oppressive ideologies. Calling for researchers to engage in socially and politically committed research, CT urges academics and non-academic alike to engage in reciprocal communication, or dialogue in order to achieve 'rationalisations of their lifeworlds'. These, according to CT sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1971a), are the conscious explorations of the interpretive frameworks individuals unconsciously employ to interpret and make sense of the situations, environments, and events that they are confronted with. Cultural values, norms, and language shape such frames of reference.

The dynamo for social change, then, is productive *Verfremdung*¹⁵ and creative *aporia* that lead people to produce and create social action. In other words, it is the estrangement and puzzlement evoked by people's very own critical reflection on how power relations and ideological dominance permeate their every communicative action, that catalyses and propels emancipation. CT advises people to become conscious of how statements carry traces of ideologies and thus consist of, articulate, and create power, and how these processes limit our possible understandings of society. Such limitations may lead to communicative distortion that inhibits dialogue and solidifies oppressive worldviews (Habermas, 1971a).

CT asks researchers to explore both the form (structures and processes) creating distorted, oppressive ideas and the content of the latter. Once blind acceptance within the intra- and interpersonal realm has given way to critical thought, the legitimacy of institutionalised dominance may be seen in a new, critical light as well (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). CT's endeavour to challenge assumptions thus far taken for granted and regarded as 'normal' is not dissimilar to that of ATAR, aiming to shed light on not only what research teams express, but also on how the conceptualisations expressed are constructed sub/consciously within certain ideological and political conditions.

¹⁵ die *Verfremdung* (German, noun) ≈ noun equivalent in meaning to the adjectives *verfremdend* and *verfremdet*

The People as Researchers: Decentralising Social Criticism

CT also shares with ATAR the way it regards researchers of the everyday, or non-academics. As indicated above, CT urges not only researchers, but all citizens of a society to engage in critical inquiry. CT, then, propagates a decentralisation of social criticism from alleged experts – academic researchers - to everyone (Bubner, 1982). This shift towards the individual's potential for authority and autonomy and the democratic process is also analogous to PS, at least to a certain degree, in that PS calls for the critical scrutinisation of the researcher's authority and authorship alongside the inclusion of the multiplicity of voices constituting any research process.

Closeness and Distance: Counter-Images as Catalysts for Critical Inquiry

As ATAR provokes in-role engagement in and out-of-role reflection on dramatic worlds, in CT-based research "attention swings between closeness and distance" to both empirical material and researchers' own waves of interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 136). In this way, researchers encourage themselves and each other to take into account the political-ideological dimensions of the research process and the constructed realities expressed in the data. Engagement and detachment can evoke the *Verfremdung* necessary to incite researchers to search for "counter-images" (p. 139) that create tension and contrast between initial interpretations and alternative analyses. Seeking potential counter-images within one's own interpretations is profoundly Brechtian:

It is about making the familiar foreign (*Entfremdung*¹⁶, estrangement), about problematizing the self-evident and pointing out that future realities need not be a reproduction of what exists today. A touch of imagination is required."

(Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 139)

¹⁶ *die Entfremdung* (German, noun) ≈ similar in meaning to *die Verfremdung*; however, the prefix *ent-* very subtly implies removing something: away from, off. The prefix I prefer is *ver-*, implying movement and/or change, transition, transformation. On the surface, *Entfremdung* and *Verfremdung* mean the same; only upon careful deconstruction and exploration of these words' respective constituents have I become aware of these subtle differences in meaning and my own unconscious preference of one over the other.

Here, CT's call for estrangement from alleged normalities could find a response in PS's imaginative and playful experimentation with the form and content of the research text, employed to address the authorship/authority dilemma by opening up *Spielräume* for the creation of alternative readings through deconstruction, perspectivalisation, and dramatisation. Such an approach may be further complemented by ATAR's imaginative investigation of embodied images and its exploration of the multiplicities of potential for movement and transition between and beyond them.

Moment Work: Potential for Intensive Critical Interpretations

CT provides us with two further pointers useful to put in practice a reflexive methodology able to adequately respond to life in postnormal times. Similarly to PS-oriented research, which selects only sections of empirical material to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented and examined, a CT-inspired approach may mean that researchers engage in comprehensive empirical work to then choose distinct moments from this work to analyse in-depth. In this way, she engages in a small number of "intensive critical interpretation[s], or close reading[s]" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 141), describing and interpreting only a limited amount of empirical data to ensure she engages in critical investigation that offers depth and detail in terms of content and context. The remainder of the empirical work then serves as a tool for expanding the researcher's understanding, which will enrich the descriptions and interpretations of the chosen moments.

The second CT-inspired strategy is to consider the wider contexts in which research is carried out. This consideration can be achieved if the researcher includes additional empirical material as part of the data. Such material, in the form of observations and interpretations of the social context in which the research takes place, appears rather out of left field, as they are a matter of "absorbing interesting impulses from empirical material" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 136). Personal recollections of and reflections on significant moments during my field work and my time in Germany are an essential aspect of the two reflective-analytic accounts I offer in the following two chapters.

Critical Poststructuralism

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) explicitly urge researchers to employ CT to enrich other theories so that they become more critical, even if they are in part incongruous to CT. The productive tension that dialogue between different frames of reference evokes can inspire researchers to question their initial interpretations, inevitably limited by their own cultural context. As discussed above, provoking one mode of thought to encounter and clash with another, such play with contrast can avoid a “house of mirrors” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 246) that reduces research projects to linguistic and self-reflective echo chambers.

A methodology based on fruitful dialogue between PS and CT, hereafter called Critical Poststructuralism (CPS), stimulates researchers to contemplate the multiplicity and inconsistency of meanings without blindly and rigidly favouring such an epistemological and ontological position. A philosophical stance able to move freely, by means of critical reflection, between CT’s representational and PS’s presentational conceptualisations of language offers researchers “perspectivist mirroring” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 257) as a methodological strategy. In other words, CPS suggests employing as a methodological tool the tension elicited by the interplay between a) researchers’ engagement in CT’s acknowledgement of historio-cultural contexts and material conditions able to be experienced and expressed through language as existent reality ‘out there’, and b) researchers’ detachment from this “‘mirroring’ view of language” (p. 256) as advocated by PS.

The ontological anchor of the methodology underpinning my research is a dynamic interchange between two positions, namely CT’s historical realism and the kind of critical relativism PS puts forth. As we have seen, the first proposes that historically situated structures shape social, political, cultural, and economic values that manifest over time and constitute a perceivable and understandable subjective reality. Without critical awareness of the structures upholding it, this reality is restricting as if it were ‘naturally given.’ The latter position assumes that human beings construct, contingent upon the specific local discourses and modes of language available, a multiplicity of observable and understandable but often contradictory social realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Epistemologically, the basis of my methodology is a compound view comprising the PS-based notion that the nature of knowledge is transactional and subjectivist and the CT-inspired stance that it is also

value-mediated. In other words, knowledges are created within and by inquiry through dynamic interactions between individuals, and between individuals and their environments. Individual's own cultural contexts and the habitual assumptions these have so far formed are understood as inevitably shaping the construction, consolidation, and potential deconstruction and transmutation of knowledges. Knowledges are entrenched in beliefs that are engrained historically and culturally.

A CPS methodology regards research as a creative process. The Critical Poststructuralist interplay between dialogic-dialectical and dialectical-hermeneutic approaches seek to deconstruct existent versions of social reality and creatively reconstruct alternative possibilities. Acts of re-interpreting and thus challenging one's own earlier interpretations generate unconventional offers of meanings, and it is here that further engagement in creativity can prompt new insights. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000) deliberately call for researchers to harness creativity as a much-needed distance from traditional research approaches dominating the social sciences. PS and CT can, they propose, catalyse methodological departures that are grounded in creative interactions with empirical material and the multiple emerging (re-) interpretations thereof. At the point of intersection where data and interpretation bear the potential to produce new insights, CT and PS can elicit creativity and stimulate the imagination in two ways (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). Firstly, they can encourage the researcher to question her own initial interpretations and their relationships to dominant discourses and ideologies. Secondly, they offer alternate springboards for encountering and examining empirical material by stressing the potential for counter-images and different representations, emphasising, reflecting, and thus forcing research teams to grapple with the incongruity and ambiguity characterising postnormal times.

A CPS, then, challenges research teams to engage in active creative processes of intermittent engagement with and distance to (and thus reflection upon) the data, their construction and interpretation thereof, and the research text. Active readership transforms the latter into a dynamic, open-ended playtext, a co-production, devised, performed and re-devised in every act of engagement with it. In this way, the unread academic text becomes nothing more than a pre-text simultaneously full and open: full of carefully crafted but forever fragmented and unfinished provocations waiting to be played with, open to the multiplicities of potential meanings and puzzling insights in which the personal illuminates the political, and the political shows its possibility of change.

Rejecting the positivist idea of a linear “normal puzzle-solving” research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 133), the theoretical tenets of CPS respond to Anderson and O’Connor (2015) call for research able to respond to postnormal times, offering the potential to methodologically complement their drama-based, participatory ATAR approach to social science research. CPS can guide researchers into and through non-linear creative processes of engaging in the puzzlement of representation that deconstructs pieces of empirical material and initial interpretations - pieces allegedly able to truthfully depict society and solutions to all its problems if only an academic expert matches colours and shapes and puts them together the right way - into and out of their own constituents, providing them with the *Spielraum* to interpret and re-interpret each other in multiplicities of *verfremdende* montages that never lose sight of the socio-historical context they and their manifold levels of construction are embedded in.

The Quadruple Hermeneutics of Reflexive Interpretation

As I have discussed so far, a Critical Poststructuralist (CPS) research paradigm informs Reflexive Interpretation (RI), the qualitative methodology underpinning my research. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) define RI as “quadruple hermeneutics” (p. 248). Simple hermeneutics involve individuals interpreting themselves and their perceptions of reality. Academics engaging in social science research by interpreting these individuals and their interpretations undertake double hermeneutics. As triple hermeneutics, CT adds to the double hermeneutics a political-ideological dimension, as it aims to achieve social change by developing political awareness and ultimately emancipation from oppressive ideologies. As we have explored above, such triple hermeneutics enhances the double hermeneutics by critically interpreting articulations of dominance that favour certain interests over others and that, at first sight, seem natural and normal. These include unconscious, taken-for-granted assumptions that create and are created by communicative actions. The latter reproduce or, potentially, disrupt dominant ideologies, which are, in turn, embedded in unequal relations of power. The quadruple hermeneutics of RI incorporates PS’s focus on language/discourse, authority/authorship, and pluralism/ambiguity.

RI describes an “open play of reflection” across these four levels of interpretation: empirical, hermeneutic, critical-theoretical, and linguistic (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 248). On the first level, the researcher focuses on the specific empirical data constructed, collected, and selected and her

interaction with it. The second level attempts a deeper understanding of the social phenomena observed and experienced. Here, the researcher undertakes initial interpretations of the data, emphasising symbols she finds and interprets in the 'social text' that constitutes the empirical material. The third level, based on CT, calls on the researcher to critically scrutinise how political contexts, ideologies, and power relations are at play in the construction of the lifeworlds of research teams, in data-construction (level one) and initial interpretation (level two), and within RI's fourth level of interpretation. Drawing on PS, this fourth level asks the researcher to engage in self-critical and linguistic-rhetorical analyses of her own text production, her claims to authority, and the effects and limitations of her own authorship. How can these explorations enrich the analyses undertaken as part of the researcher's engagement in the other three levels?

This question indicates that, rather than adhering to a linear process, hierarchical structure or monolithic logic that the numbered levels may seem to indicate, researchers must let their interpretive work on these levels, and the ontological and epistemological positions they are rooted in, play with, against, in-between, and within each other in an open, even *Spielraum* of possibility (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). In this way, these works can simultaneously illuminate and obscure, clarify and complicate each other's forever-unfinished fragments of findings in fleeting moments of *Entfremdung* and *aporia* in which the performance of co-construction between the voices of co-researchers from the field, the researcher-as-author, and the reader-as-co-researcher occurs. As these players share power in the creation of meanings and knowledges, "the number of interpretations (or theoretical possibilities) generated by the research is expanded rather than frozen" (Gergen & Gergen, 1991, p. 86).

RI does not support the positivist idea that empirical material is a definite output emerging from a static, singular reflection of a clearly defined reality that exists independently. Rather, RI puts forth the notion that that data is "a picture in a hall lined with convex and concave mirrors" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 276). RI posits that the specificities of research teams, theoretical underpinnings, historical contexts, and language(s) are at play in the construction and interpretation of empirical material. In this way, RI acknowledges that researchers should not and in fact cannot mimetically reflect perceived realities via plain, emotionally detached descriptions of events in ahistorical vacua. RI endeavours to create encounters with data that throw into sharp relief (and productively distort) our perceptions of social

phenomena. Through closeness and distance, concentration and magnification, it aims to provide glimpses into the silent cracks and invisible fissures within the different shapes, shades, and colours of our observations and interpretations. RI asks us to become conscious of how we may be drawn to perceive, transcribe, and paint our data as if it were a finished object ready to be hung up, to be exhibited, to reveal the meaning inhering under its crusts of paint. If, as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) and Derrida (1988) suggest, the surface is the source for understandings and knowledges, we must ask: who painted the picture? Where did they paint it and when? Who laboured to harness, to blend the paints, to craft the brushes, and at what cost? What ingredients give the paints those compelling tones? And why did it take the time it took for the latter to become that one unyielding coat it is now?

The very acts of translating such pictures from one language into another can constitute the complicating looking glasses for reflection Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) propose, arching inwards and outwards in intermittent call-and-response acts of inflecting, inflating, and inverting allegedly self-evident meanings, bending layers and layers of complex interpretations and their constituents, initially disguised as common-sense logic, to their breaking points and beyond.

Benjamin's Translation as Art

My engagement in RI involves transposing, and subsequently employing, Benjamin's theory of Translation as Art (TA) into practical guidelines for data analysis in accordance with a CPS research paradigm. Written in 1921, Benjamin's (1996) essay *The Task of the Translator* proposes that, like poetry, translation is a form of art in its own right. From this perspective, a rich translation is "transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light" (p. 260). Art as a mere means of communicating information equals the "inaccurate transmission of an inessential content" (Benjamin, 1996, p. 253). Rather than communicating the meaning expressed in the original language into the receiving language as accurately as possible, the task of the translator is to show how words 'mean differently' in different languages.

Benjamin calls the ways in which words mean differently in different languages *die Art des Meinens*¹⁷. Instances of “sonic metamorphosis” (Nabugodi, 2014) that occur in the act of translation – finding, on the basis of phonetic similarities and differences, new relationships between words translated back and forth between languages – transform processes of translation into creative endeavours of a poetic nature. The task of the translator, then, is to focus on the form, *die Art des Meinens*, rather than *das Gemeinte*¹⁸, the content. *Die Art des Meinens* is distinctive about the respective Other language while *das Gemeinte*, in the long run, is the same in all languages. If translations should be transparent to avoid burying the original by impeding its potential poetry and richness in meaning and potential new understandings, the task of the translator is not to somehow reveal *das Gemeinte* of the original but throw light on its *Arts des Meinens*. More specifically, the translator can achieve this transparency if she regards

a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade

(Benjamin, 1996)

The linear sequence of words that constitutes a sentence to communicate information obstructs the active, creative process that constitutes *die Art des Meines*. Translators, then, must not reproduce some kind of allegedly fixed meaning inherent in the original as naturalistically as possible, but rather deconstruct sentences into their constituents – words, grammatical and syntactical relations – to subsequently let these Other *Arten des Meinens* play with and against the respective Other, receiving language.

¹⁷ *die Art des Meinens* (German, definite article + noun + definite article + noun) ≈ literally: the manner of thinking / & deeming / & believing / & guessing / & meaning, so there is a nominalisation of the verb “meinen” at play here, indicating the of an active, creative process; conceptual translation: the manner of meaning (“meaning” read in English as simply a noun (which actually translates back into German as a whole other word: *die Bedeutung*, originating in the verb *deuten*: to interpret, to construe), not as a nominalised verb, effects that the implied active, creative process of the original German expression gets lost in translation)

¹⁸ *das Gemeinte* ≈ literally: the meant; comes from the verb *meinen* (see above), a verb nominalised in the passive mode, so again the original language implies an active process of creation; conceptual translation: that which is meant > and coincidentally: *gemein* ≈ common & / cruel

The instant human impulse to automatically engage in hermeneutics, to interpret what she reads, hears, sees, and communicates in response as a translation, must give way to considering the original in ways that explore the meaning of single words and the syntactical relations between them (Nabugodi, 2014). While linear processes of translation based on a monolithic logic separate the imagination from acts of translation by blocking creative entries and responses to a text, Benjamin's literal rendering can serve as an arcade, a protected passageway leading to the entrance of pre-texts that invite translators and readers to play with the possibility of a plethora of potential meanings. In these fragmented spaces, we cannot but insert ourselves as we co-create new knowledges, discovering ourselves as part of the text and the social phenomena under exploration, protected by the pillars of intermittent distance through the *Verfremdung* that poetic works provoke.

The art of translation, then, allows for difference, deferral of meaning, and ultimately deconstruction in a Derridean sense, the construction of images and their counter-images and the subsequent destruction of a hierarchical, binary relationship between the two. If the translator lets interpretive engagement of a hermeneutic kind in the newly created text(s) follow such distance, they may create new meanings and knowledges. As emancipation from seemingly self-evident meaning, the art of translation estranges the taken-for-granted meanings that the translator and/or reader may blindly consider the original to communicate, evoking jolts of *aporia* that stimulate new ways of thinking and re-interpreting empirical material.

Following Benjamin's proposition to literally reproduce syntaxes and literally translate words found in the original may "plunge[s] us into the depths of language where meaning is lost" (Nabugodi, 2014, n. p.). Bearing this loss of meaning – *aporia* -, we can find in these depths those fissures that open up *Spielräume* carrying the possibility of alternative interpretations and insights. Bringing two languages into dialogue, letting them translate each other's sentences and their multiple interleaved levels of constituents – word pairs, words, syllables - back and forth, the translator provokes them "to touch and inflect one another" (Nabugodi, 2014, n. p.), setting them free to bend each other inwards and outwards to the point of breaking so that cracks can let into the depths of loss the light of possibility.

Once I had returned to Aotearoa New Zealand, many cycles of translation created unexpected moments of *aporia* that form part of the heart of this thesis. I watched the video recordings numerous times in order to transcribe co-researchers' and my own utterances, actions, gestures, and movements. I structured each transcription into two columns. The left column depicts descriptions of the unfolding action. The right column exhibits initial points of departure for analysis, questions emerging from viewing and revisiting the recordings, and personal memories of distinct moments that emerged as I reexperienced them by watching us on screen. I then translated the transcripts from German into English. During the translation process, I enriched the right-hand column with reflections on the difficulties I encountered in my attempts to translate the events accurately and truthfully.

I revisited many passages several times to grapple with the ultimately impossible pursuit of a truthful translation, of an official representation of reality. It became clear that accuracy and truthfulness was impossible. Many German words did not have any singular clear-cut translation into English. Whatever I could offer in my thesis was entirely mediated via my own mind, my own past, my own present. Often, the dissonance between the conceptual and the literal translation of a word or expression provoked me to reconsider possible meanings of utterances and even descriptions of mere moments, movements, moods. I also had to deconstruct those initial reflections and ideas for analysis in the right-hand column of my transcripts that I had written in German. The process of translation challenged me to question meanings I usually take for granted in my mother tongue. Once this querying began, words in English too started to lose their unquestioned state of normalcy. The expected pictures of the data, painted by my affect-laden memories of the workshop events before I had even begun to consciously analyse them, collided head-on with an unrelentingly sharp and increasingly passionate analytic rigour. There was so much more than meets the eye.

In the disruptive space of translation, creation occurred. The more I consulted the dictionary, the more ambiguous meanings became. This equivocacy forced me to carefully dissect words, syllables, and sounds in both German and English. Syllables hidden in existing terms, which I had never truly seen in the past three decades of my life, began to shine a light on their own existences. Especially in German, words are often compound, and syllables themselves carry distinct meanings concealed within the entirety of a word. Often, such covert fragments of possible meaning stuck deep inside a word point

towards a reality completely divorced from that which the original word intends to depict. As the language of 'home' and that of 'away' came into active dialogue with each other, a new space opened up that was neither one nor the other but a confusing and *verfremdend* realm of uncertainty. As I was forced to make sense of the data and thus bear this bewilderment, I soon recognised that instability and possibility were two sides of the same coin. As I was forced to make sense of the data, I was forced to make sense of myself. My own (hi)story, however much I wanted to ban its remaining fragments into the depths of speechlessness, demanded to be acknowledged as a central player in the construction of my argument.

Like ATAR and RI, TA is a disruptingly *verfremdend* and creative processes of inquiry that forces researchers to reflect not only on the data in question, but also their initial engagement with and induced estrangement from that data. TA aligns with ATAR's call for creative inquiry and critical reflexivity and possesses the potential to inform a CPS-based research approach to analysing ATAR-generated findings through RI.

I have begun this chapter by discussing the ethical considerations underpinning my research. I have then explored the qualitative research approach Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR), which provides me with both methods for data generation and tools for catalysing the first stage of data analysis. I have described my chosen methodology for the second stage of data analysis, Reflexive Interpretation (RI), a quadruple hermeneutics that encourages reflection across the empirical, hermeneutic, critical-theoretical, and linguistic levels of interpretation. I have defined my understanding of a Critical Poststructuralist (CPS) research paradigm by throwing light on the tenets of Poststructuralism (PS) and Critical Theory (CT). I have discussed how these two modes of thought may fruitfully supplement each other to serve as an epistemological and ontological anchor for my research. I have also explained how Benjamin's conceptualisation of translation as art (TA) informs my engagement in Reflexive Interpretation (RI). In the next two chapters, I will both juxtapose and fuse several elements into RI-based and TA-informed reflective-analytic accounts of two implementations of my DE workshop. More specifically, I will interweave the elements of co-researcher observation, co-researchers' creative writing in and out of role, descriptions of their embodied explorations in and outside of dramatic frames, and my personal memories of and reflections on the workshops, my field trip to my 'home country', and the memories and impulses for critical (re-)thinking they evoked in me with fragments of critical meta-

analysis of the above elements. The subsequent chapter will discuss the findings emerging from this engagement. I have left all grammatical inconsistencies, syntax irregularities, and repetition and omission of words in co-researchers' speech and writing untouched. You might encounter some expressions that sound unfamiliar or odd to you. This is due to my attempts to offer a holistic translation.

CHAPTER 6

WAKING UP OUR WALLS OF THOUGHT: WORKSHOP ONE

The rolling wheels underneath me are ringing in my ears. I made it. Made it through the pouring rain. Made it from a hostel in this grey bleak town somewhere close to the Polish border into a cold, dark but strangely sterile station. On the train, I wiggle my fingers. Well, I try. My arm still hurts from heaving my bright green suitcase all the way onto that endless empty moving staircase. I had to go down, further down, and it just would not stop. Almost plummeted down a few steps. Then the roaring to my right, but I was only halfway there. I am cold. Wait. I shouted something at the conductor as politely as one could possibly shout. Couldn't take another bleak reply in a language that is mine but barks at me every time I try to reconnect with it. I am soaked. He shouted back, and I think it meant something like yes, that's the direction, but I have to hurry up. Really. Big news. I remember the yellow coat, the eyeless masks, the metres and metres of plastic veils, half translucent, half opaque protest in the darkness of the suitcase. Quite an old companion now. Always unfazed. Always bright, present, patient. Just a bit worn and torn, I guess. Did I zip it up properly? I cannot get this book all soaking wet. I need this (hi)story. This is why I am here. Wait. How are a few plastic sheets so heavy? Great start to the day, I congratulate myself with rolling eyes. How on earth am I going to get this off the moving stairs? Slow down. Wasn't there a hole in the zip on the bottom right? Hurry up! Two years ago, I carried my whole world from Germany to New Zealand in this very suitcase. Well, that which was left of it. Did I lose some on the way? I reached the platform. Just don't fall apart, okay. A couple more trips, I must have mumbled over my shoulder. Frustration must have filled the conductor's face. Why don't you just get off the train and help me? He must have checked his watch. It felt like his countenance distorted itself into a grimace of irritation as the seconds passed by. Well, if I did, then where is it now? My mum always said things don't just disappear. They're always somewhere and one day you will find them again. And she always retrieved everything, believe it or not. Keys, glasses, stinky old socks. 'A couple more trips. You can do this, can't you?'

The roaring of the wheels pulls me back into my seat. Keep it together, I am thinking, we don't have time for this. No nostalgia. No grief. No regrets. Check your phone. Check the time. Punctuality in Germany means being fifteen minutes early, doesn't it? I should be okay. I watch dozens and dozens

of grey squares pass me by, millisecond after millisecond, and I can't help but picture the thousands of people whose lives are safely tucked away behind these colourless concrete blocks. I am shivering. There isn't even any snow and I'm like this? How did I survive all those winter months through all those years? I am trying to feel my big toes, but I don't think I can. A lady's voice bursts out of a speaker above me in a dialect I cannot quite make sense of. Just like the voice of that nice woman who rest her head in the same room as me last night. She was in her fifties maybe, and she just wouldn't let me sleep. I can see her now just outside my window, on the vanishing surfaces of all those concrete walls blurring away their own existences. I can see her smile and feel her kindness touch my face. I rub my cheeks. The search for solidarity in her eyes pierced mine. I can feel her urge for my confirmation, just as I hear her try to convince me that Cologne used to be such a beautiful, free, colourful, queer city but since all those refugees came over, masses of women are being sexually assaulted all the time, we've all seen what happened on New Year's eve, when all those foreign men from Syria or Africa or what not raped all those German girls, and she won't go back to Cologne ever, that's for sure, even though she used to live there, even though she used to call it home, obviously they cannot handle German women wearing short skirts, and obviously they all hate gay people. The genuine grief in her voice wrapped itself around this uncannily gentle cascade of words. I feel sick. Feel the back of my cold fingers press against my lips. Keep it together, I think, we don't have time for this. One more stop. Wiggle your feet. Rub your hands. Smile.

At the other end, this platform too seems deserted. It is still early. Still rainy. Still Saturday, I guess. My phone navigates me away from the bushes onto a walkway. I fix my gaze onto the path. Puddles everywhere. Behind me, the green suitcase's wheels protest. I know. Does it look like I'm having fun? My shoulder aches. The book, I'm thinking, the (hi)story must make it to the youth centre. I'm hoping the hole in the zip is smaller than I remember. One more inhale. And then ---

a different world. As I lift my gaze up from my feet, I find myself in a maze of dirty grey industrialised apartment blocks. Precast concrete slabs, monstrous faceless cubes from another era stare down at me, unrelentingly coalescing with these endless layers of thick grey cloud. I turn around. Opposite one of the blocks, a concrete box with large glass doors hits my field of vision. THEATER someone had lovingly stuck to the glass in colourful cut-out cardboard letters from the inside. There are photos of

dancing children and colourful costumes. As I take a step back, a huge mural covering the rest of the concrete greets me: WILLKOMMEN. Cartoon figurines of different people standing shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, look back at me. All sorts of shapes, heights, styles, colours greet me with big smiles. I cannot but smile back.

The stillness of the mural becomes disturbing. I take another step back. Is there anybody here? Nothing moves. Nothing seems to exist but the concrete desert steeped in rain. I wrap my fingers around my suitcase's wobbly handle and set out for another lap around the block. Nothing is breathing, or so it seems. Maybe being on German time on a Saturday is just a bit much. Fair enough. I look up, I look down, I close my eyes. And then, yes, a quick glance around the concrete corner lets me discern a silhouette moving towards me. I step out of the corner, onto the path; I show myself and the baggage I brought. The dark figure keeps walking. I start moving. The closer we draw towards each other, the more I can recognise a fragment of face under the wet black hood. A cautious smile fills my face and I think, I hope, one fills hers. Right in front of each other in the pouring rain, we just stand there for a second. She's so young, she seems so familiar. I can tell by the thickness of her glasses she must be short-sighted too. Her Jack Wolfskin rain jacket matches mine. "I'm Nina," she smiles as big round drops drip from her hood. She sounds like me. Does she even know my Kiwi nickname? "Moe..." It sounds alien to me now. I stutter. "Moema. Good to finally meet you." Was it appropriate in this country to give a stranger a hug?

Nina made all of this possible. She circulated my workshop flyer among the young people who, more or less, regularly visit her youth centre. Nina was able to recruit ten young people to take part in this workshop, three boys and seven girls, all between the ages of ten and twelve. A small corridor leads into a big open space that looks more like a living room than a drama studio. Dozens of cosy chairs are set up around round wooden tables, standing lamps lurk in every other corner and their beige and olive shades remind me of my Oma and Opa's lounge. She won't be there during the workshop, and her colleague who has just come in won't either, but the intern will be, Charlotte. They've just got other work to do. They'll be right next door, so all good. I am trying to swallow my disappointment but it gets stuck in my throat. I cough. "It's cold out there," I smile.

I set up the space. It is not long until I can hear children's voices. Shouting. Screaming. Shrieking. Wet boots squeak on laminate flooring. One by one, Leonie, Kati, Friederike, Anna, Jonas, Ronja, Elisa, and Sina arrive. Basti and Max storm in together. Cut loose. Gone wild. A trace of panic sweeps past my chest. I must have forgotten how young you can be when you are ten. How will these children respond to my provocations? Am I asking for too much?

We begin by walking around the space. Even this is a huge challenge for some. At times, walking on their own and not talking or distracting one another seems impossible. I try to encourage my co-researchers to grow their awareness of their own and each other's bodies in the space. We attempt to fill the room evenly at all times. We pretend that the whole floor is a raft on the ocean, and it is our joint responsibility to keep it afloat by spreading our bodies throughout the whole room. I ask co-researchers to stop and start walking and then to clap and jump on my command. After a few minutes, I invert the signifieds of the signifiers I offer. Now, "Go!" means "Stop!" and "Clap!" means "Jump!" and vice versa. While this inversion creates a sense of amazed confusion, excitement, and puzzlement, it also introduces the idea that signs can be actively manipulated and re-interpreted, their meanings determined by whoever is in a position of power at any given moment.

I call out one number at a time and ask co-researchers to together in small groups as quickly as they can. The size of each group must correspond to the respective number. Co-researchers work together in different constellations. Boys and girls lose their initial objection to be physically close to each other. I then add a word to each number. Each word represents a distinct concept. Co-researchers are now working in an embodied way with ideas they will soon explore in the workshop. They collectively use their bodies to represent 'Friends', 'Family', 'Fear', 'Freedom' and 'Different' by using just their bodies and faces. In this way, co-researchers practice creating freeze frames. I encourage co-researchers to play close attention and play with different levels, with distance and proximity, and with contrast. I invite co-researchers to integrate two materials into their freeze frames: large semi-transparent plastic sheets and white half-masks. With these options, co-researchers create still images depicting the notions of 'Border/Boundary' and 'Facebook.' To depict 'Border/Boundary,' some co-researchers decide to hide under a sheet. Others roll a sheet in a solid long line on the ground. To embody 'Facebook,' many co-

researchers put white half-masks onto their faces. Co-researchers then devise a freeze frame of 'Power.' Co-researchers create these images on their own.

Elisa seems reserved. Yet, as she walks around the frozen statues of power, she is happy to share her observations. "Well..." Elisa whispers, "for most people the sheet is like a mantle..." Jonas responds, "Maybe it is, dunno, just that one transforms the power with that or that it has the power. That like the power comes from that or something." To Anna, social media can be the mantle that renders people powerful; "A lot of influencers on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube also have much influence, power over so many different people because they are a role model, like, who film videos or post photos and therefore I would label that power as well because they have like power over thousands of people." Encouraged to reflect on her own freeze frame, Leonie, who chooses to wear a mask, points out that for there to be someone in power, there must be powerlessness; "Well in most movies one distinct person has power over someone or the world." Asked about why her immediate response to the provocation was to put on a mask and render her face unrecognisable, Leonie recognises the role of invisibility of those in power. She notes; "Well it is like this in most movies too, so that one cannot recognise the one who is there." As she looks around herself at the various frozen moments, Anna notes; "Most of them have this clenched fist, basically: I am strong, I have power or maybe different fortresses, castles, objects, people." I am stunned. Co-researchers are engaged in discussing the roles that invisibility, anonymity, inequality, and material conditions play in the distribution and maintenance of power.

Co-researchers individually devise a freeze frame of powerlessness. Still on their own, they then create a silent five-second scene that starts with the freeze frame of power and ends with the freeze frame of powerlessness. Curious to see what will happen next, I do not give them any further parameters. Co-researchers decide to move from the first to the second freeze frame in slow motion. A chill runs down my spine as I witness rigid, upright bodies and tense, clenched fists reach upward. Stern, masked cold-eyed faces of emotionless pride seem to unite into an army of strength and certainty. Boisterous, hissing mantles reminiscent of majestic superman capes melt into the floor. Eerily slowly, this unbudgeable surety transforms into scattered, rolled up bodies on the bare ground. Limbs hug each other in despair. Eyeless masks are dispersed in-between. Fragile layers of torn diaphanous matter covers the scene.

Asked what she felt happened when power transformed into powerlessness, Leonie clearly connects power with anonymity; “When ones wants to remain anonymous, then, when one takes off the mask, then one knows, then everyone knows who one is, and that is probably why one has no more power.” Anna acknowledges people’s social contexts and external circumstances as she suggests,

Between power and powerlessness, maybe it just is a totally normal person, who gets sick somehow maybe, or leaves the straight and narrow getting involved in some delinquency, maybe getting drunk or alcoholics or takes drugs and then leaves the straight and narrow and has to go begging to even get something to eat still. Or one has divorced from one’s husband, or one’s boyfriend, or much older ones, they are maybe kicked out of their flat, or the company in which they worked suddenly stops to exist because the employer died and has no descendants or something.

Anna is quick and clear to note that “stuff like this also exists in reality”.

We sit down in a circle. I introduce *Home & Away* to co-researchers. Co-researchers discuss what it means to them to be home and what ‘away’ might mean. Home, to them, is a feeling of being completely safe and comfortable. Home is where their loved ones are. We look at the first page of the book. It shows a photo of the protagonists of the (hi)story, a family: Mama, Papa, Oma, and three children. Tobi is the youngest, Clara is the middle child, and the first-person narrator called ‘Me’ is the oldest. Drawing on their freshly acquired freeze frame skills, co-researchers split into two groups of five. Each group¹⁹ devise a freeze frame that depicts the family when they take this photo. Co-researchers are invested in becoming the character of their preferred choice. The boys, especially Max and Basti, have been finding it difficult to concentrate and not distract each other. Now, they are determined to be Tobi. We view each group’s family selfie and describe what we see. I am trying to encourage co-researchers to find personal connections with the characters. We share stories of annoying siblings, pulling silly faces, and grumpy times during family photo shootings. All the more sobering it is to turn the page and discover that a war is breaking out where the family lives.

¹⁹ I use the word ‘group’ in the singular in conjunction with the third personal plural of a verb to acknowledge the individuality of the respective group members.

I pull a piece of fabric into the middle of our circle. On it, I put scrunched up pieces of paper. They are copies of my translation of Me's diary entries. The originals are stuck onto the pages. As co-researchers draw snippet after snippet from the scarf, they read them aloud. Together, we try to make sense of what is now happening in the (hi)story. The snippets tell us how war affects the most mundane aspects of the family's everyday life. We find out that there is no more school, no more food, no more safety. We find out that some family members get sick, that it is normal to see, hear, feel bombs drop from the sky. We discover that Papa and Me are building a rain water collection system out of old pipes. We discover they eat even squirrels to survive. We talk about what co-researchers know about war. It is mostly about power, wealth, money, or religion, they tell me. It is about one wanting to be the ruler over another. Anna sounds fed up as she suddenly blurts out, "Can't we just give Me a name?!" We carefully discuss what name might suit Me. We call Me Luka and give her a sense of identity dignity, and legitimacy.

My plan is to engage co-researchers in creating a soundscape of imagined impressions of the war-torn city. What might it look like? What might it sound, smell, feel like? "No, we don't want to imagine that," Anna monotonously spits out in quite a stern manner. "It's not about not wanting to," she explains, "but it's just super sad when one imagines that one lives in an area where there is war, and where one could be shot at any time and that still happens to so many thousands of people every day." Max, who frequently gets distracted and disruptive during the workshop, whispers to me with an uncanny sense of certainty and genuine worry, "So many people die there." "One just doesn't want to imagine how legs and arms lay around there and stuff." Anna adds. Max' eyes seem even bigger than before and his whisper even more piercing as he murmurs, "I don't want to imagine that."

Anna and Max are catalysing a soundscape of its own. This soundscape starts with Anna's description of scattered severed limbs and the terror expressed in the fear Max's soft words timidly exhale. Fears faced by co-researchers' own family members and friends who are in the army interweave with vicarious remembrance of the Second World War through the eyes of co-researchers' grandparents and the stories of hunger and flight they have passed on. These fears include rational fears of being sent to a war zone themselves, and even irrational fears of facing war within Germany in the near future. This emerging soundscape fuses the past with the present and a vague possibility of an uncertain future. As

the remembered, imagined, and fictional comes into dialogue with the present, war is not so far away from us anymore. In this light, Anna's initial refusal of emotional engagement and Max' timid whispers are not divorced from the crayon-blood stained picture staring at us from the middle of our circle. Rather, they are a genuine expression of the lived realities of young people who call postnormality home, a postnormality in which fear and violence, experienced first-hand and mediated, dominate their willingness to engage with the world.

A moment of connection to the real occurs during the soundscape of war that emerges from this refusal to imagine the fictional war. Notre Dame in France burnt down only days before the workshop takes place. It burnt down as I was on the plane from New Zealand to Germany. Anna sees the remarkable widespread emotional responses to the fire and the immediate myriad monetary efforts to rebuild Notre Dame as a metaphor for systemic and structural inequality:

In France the Notre Dame burnt down the other day eh, and there was an influencer er who's probably thinking about this well anyway he like wrote that he doesn't understand why one ... people cry more for several old ... building, that it burnt down, that people cry more about a burnt down building than about thousands of refugees actually dying on the Mediterranean every day because ... er ... they have to flee and one just cries more about such an ancient building that is destroyed.

Anna's comment and the underlying thinking process it proposes suggests that social media not only creates filter bubbles that jeopardise empathy and critical thinking but that new technologies also constitute communication platforms that bear the potential to provoke thought processes and affective responses that catalyse these prerequisites for social justice. For the latter to occur, it seems to be crucial to challenge young people to look critically at the content and origin of information and images themselves. It seems to be vital for them to practice acts of deconstructing offered meanings as subjective constructions with distinct existent "backgrounds," as Anna calls social contexts throughout the workshop. Does an 'influencer' transparently state their own opinion, or do they claim to utter an absolute truth? What do I do with this imagery in my head and how do I express it to the world? Do I treat it as someone's opinion I have decided to share or do I regard it as the only one ultimate reality,

an unconditionally and eternally valid grand narrative? One way to engage in such critical deconstruction is the kind of work co-researchers and I engage in throughout the workshops: encountering right-wing populist rhetoric, transforming it into embodied representations, and juxtaposing the latter with living (hi)stories of fictional human beings.

As Anna talks about Notre Dame, her voice carries a tone of both sadness and outrage. She criticises that social and political institutions initiate international funding efforts to restore Notre Dame, a symbol of centuries of French power and of alleged superiority of Western culture and civilisation. International donors immediately pledged large sums of money to help rebuild Notre Dame over the next decade. The French Parliament passed a law stipulating that the building has to be rebuilt exactly as it was before the fire. Anna's comment suggests that she is moving from considering cultural inequality to taking into view structural and systemic inequality as well. She moves beyond looking at the individual decisions people make that classify groups of people into unequal categories. She also considers how the normalised and normalising proceedings and workings of dominant social institutions systemically produce inequalities. Anna exposes the absurdity of the assumption that to rebuild Notre Dame is to regain the best of civilisation, the yardstick for humanity. Anna throws a critical light on statements such as those of a senior curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Drake Boehm (as quoted in Noveck, 2019), who was quick to proclaim that "[f]or all humanity, it's one of the great monuments to the best of civilization" (n. p.). The best of civilisation? According to what? To whom? From whose perspective? At whose cost? Is it not alarming to hear that a large number of political parties and politically influential and affluent people come to realise when a historical building burns down that "[c]ivilization is just so fragile" (Drake Boehm quoted in Noveck, 2019, n. p.) while they consider ignoring the plight of millions of Othered fellow human beings as the crown of human social and cultural development, the best of civilisation? Why was the fire of Notre Dame the first thing my father spoke about, with consternation in his eyes, as he picked me up from Frankfurt Airport? Why did he not talk about the inhumane atrocities happening in front of our doorstep in this very moment? Anna's exploration, I come to realise, is an integral part of the soundscape of war. This is what war sounds like, in this place, on this day, at this time, to these young people. It is a war on humanity and empathy waged by a neoliberal system. It is a world order that favours the ego- and ethnocentrism, that

normalisation of certain values, truths, and *Vor(ur)teile* has unchallengedly rendered invisible for centuries.

We turn the page once again. Mama, Papa, Oma, Luka, Clara, and Tobi are sitting in the dark around a cloth or a table. We are not sure. Their bodies are emaciated, their faces are gaunt, and the dim candlelight that struggles to illuminate the scene is ominous and sombre. We decipher the date the page reveals. Fraught with unease and suspense, we draw scrunched up snippets of paper until we find the corresponding entry. We discover that Papa has heard of a boat that might get the family to a different country where there is peace. Big eyes move their gaze from the haggard figures onto my face. “Very soon we will hear what is said in this darkness,” I assure everyone. “What is said and what isn’t.” Co-researchers join their respective family groups and devise a soundscape of what it might be like in the basement. It takes them a while to transition from talking *about* the situation to transporting themselves *into* the situation. Eventually, they imagine themselves as the characters and speak in role. Once both groups have finished their explorations, we share our soundscapes. The respective performing group sit huddled together. The rest of us transform into an audience and sit in a circle around them. We close our eyes and listen.

we must!
get on that boat and leave!
we have nothing anymore, here

yes but it is real:
dangerous we are, crossing the w/hole open.

Mediterranean in a plastic rubber boat
for so much

money on the one hand---

but we would have still the odds
are
maybe thirty seventy maybe forty sixty t/w/o/o
that we survive, that we come to/o

GERMANY, either we
let ourselves be!
bombed to pieces
or we

save our life!
yes at least we try on the other hand

on the other side it is of course it is

dangerous on the other side
the legal way, that is, isn't it?
just the way out of the house is so:
dangerous that we will be.

bombed to/o

pieces I find

it so I find it so
dangerous and then in the end
so much can happen we can sink
maybe that boat has w/holes at least
we can fight for it

at least
then
we've tried

Anna reflects. She draws our attention to German model, television personality, and businesswoman Heidi Klum. To this day, Klum is a role model for many young girls growing up in Germany. Their view might frame Klum as having achieved it all. White, blonde, famous, and wealthy, Klum 'made it' to the United States and makes millions of dollars. Anna, however, considers that

one has to, or should, put themselves, to begin with, in that place, how one would feel oneself, if in one's own country was war and one would flee and then be accepted nowhere. That's the same thing as, for example it is totally unjust that a woman called Heidi Klum makes millions of Euros by having some girls walk over a catwalk and taking photos of them and she earns millions like that and can afford such expensive mansions, and everyone makes entertaining videos which millions of people watch and others have to fight daily that they are allowed to live, doesn't have to be just foreigners, it can just be someone who lays in hospital fighting to survive or generally foreigners, that they have something to eat and drink at all or homeless people, that is why the whole world is somehow real unfair.

Anna employs Klum as a metaphor for neoliberalism and the very real consequences it has for very real people. To Anna, the inability or unwillingness to imagine yourself as someone else who is suffering is a manifestation of the oppressive neoliberal system in which she lives and which she harshly criticises. Anna identifies that the real "whole world" is marked by equality, not just parts of it divorced from her own life, not just the fictional world. As she compares being regarded as 'foreign' in a certain

country to people whose life is shaped by outside factors - becoming severely ill, losing the roof over one's head – Anna suggests that being regarded as 'foreign' is a contextual condition, not an inherent trait from which illegality/criminality ensues.

Ronja reflects on her experience of the soundscape. Moved, she shakes her head; "The refugees can't defend themselves. They can't defend themselves. The people, who have to flee then. Who have to watch. They can't defend themselves. Because, there is war." Ronja is empathetic with those who are powerless in the face of war, who have to witness the destruction of their home, who fear for their lives. Interestingly, Anna responds by remarking that people who flee by boat via the Mediterranean are taking refuge "the illegal way" because human traffickers are engaged in illegal activity. Anna remarks:

But that is the illegal way actually eh, through the Mediterranean because those boat guys who are steering the boats and stuff, are actually those who get money from that so that they put the others on the boat, they are actually the illegal ones in this thing. If there, these legal ways to get like to Germany, and those actually are the illegal ways because in Germany one has to, or generally, one doesn't land directly in Germany isn't it, doesn't matter if in England or something, you are still staying in some country without permission so if you are staying in this country. And else, those who would actually somehow flee, then, first they would go to a ... I don't know what that's called ... these centres there, and register, and I think at the moment, in Germany too, probably in [name of the federal state in which the workshop takes place] too, several refugees are staying without permission.

Here, Anna suggests that some 'foreigners' are illegal and thus criminal, an idea that is at odds with her comments on Heidi Klum. Even though Anna exhibits a moment of recognition that traffickers "are actually the illegal ones in this thing," Anna still believes these refugees are "illegal." From the point of view that Anna exhibits here, they are "illegal" because they follow the traffickers. They are "illegal" because they do not "register" at the correct "centre" and "probably in [name of the federal state in which the workshop takes place] too, several refugees are staying without permission." Anna equates refugees with criminals. According to Anna, these allegedly illegitimate human beings do not only exist in the fiction. Anna makes an explicit reference to the federal state she lives in. She defines the

existence of some people as illicit, at least as long as they are located on German ground. Anna foreshadows the arguments that will be presented on the last two pages of *Home & Away*, that 'legitimate refugees' fill out the proper forms at a proper office and in a proper timely manner before they arrive in a safe country. Here, Anna holds the same views as the fictional Minister of Immigration who she will meet during the Hot Seating strategy at the end of the workshop. When Anna explicitly challenges the Minister's argumentation together with her peers, she impugns her very own line of reasoning. In this way, the Hot Seating strategy gives her the chance to safely question her own assertions.

As if encouraged by Anna's openness to expressing the ideas that some refugees can be put on the same level as people engaging in criminal activity for profit and that their existence can be considered illegal, Ronja feels confident and safe to share her dad's views on refugees coming to Germany. There is a genuine urgency in her voice. A sense of discomfort reverberates in the concern she expresses calmly but insistently. As she speaks, I can sense that she has at least in part internalised his ideas. Strikingly, it was Ronja who only minutes earlier expressed an empathetic awareness of the characters' plight. It was Ronja who hauntingly began our circle of vicarious remembering of the horrors of the Second World War. It was her sorrow-stricken voice that shared with us how the mother of an old family friend abandoned him in a hole in the ground when he was a baby so he would not be shot. Now, Ronja explains with a striking sense of certainty,

Er yeah well no idea but my dad said that the refugees can't all come to us because otherwise, that the refugees can't all come to us. Because otherwise, when most of them are, then, here, then the people who shoot them dead there could come here and then when have war here and that wouldn't be nice either. And at some point, it is too many, too much, too!

Basti explains, "Just behind here there is a refugee centre. So with accommodation, that one." Innocently, Max remarks, "They have to be monitored too!" These comments bring to the fore a notion co-researchers will encounter later in the workshop. This is the idea that refugees are somehow inherently dangerous, that too many of them will 'swamp' the 'true' people of the nation and change the 'new country' for the worse economically and culturally. Together with the other co-researchers, Max

and Anna question this very notion when they create and reflect upon embodied representations of right-wing populist quotes and when they speak to the fictional Minister of Immigration. Basti interjects. He jumps right back into the (hi)story, expressing concern whether there will even be enough space on the boat for everyone.

I cannot offer you a clear-cut translation of *Geschichte*. In German, *Geschichte* means both/either 'story' and/or 'history.' Can we separate history from story? Does history without story exist? Whenever co-researchers and I explore and expand the story of Home & Away, we simultaneously create history, both of the fiction and of the real. We create the history of the characters, and this creation generates our own history. The way we imagine, think, behave, experience, and express ourselves as we create fiction becomes part of our own history and thus our future acting in the real world. When we create stories about others outside the workshop space, when we represent them in our minds and share these representations with the world, we create histories of these others. How we encounter the world is embedded in our past and present making and re-making of (hi)story. Why don't we see ourselves as an active part of a history, an era, an age? How do we encounter our responsibility to disrupt stories of Others and share stories of human beings? Can we change history even in the smallest of meaning interventions? How can we actively engage in ethical story-making based on our own experiences of humanity to counteract representations that render others Other? Can I escape perspective? How can I encounter, create, question as many stories as possible in the quest to never settle, to never arrive, to always wander and wonder? What (hi)stories do I make visible, invisible, include, omit? Whose history influences my storying of the world? Why? What is fact? What is fiction? Whose story will be told as history?

Kati tells us of her friend who has moved with her family to Kati's block from a different country; "The other day someone on the farm said to her that she should go back to her country, to her city, and then he said because those are foreigners and we are foreigners for them too because we come from a different country too and it is just, it is just people, who maybe wanted to move somewhere else because of war or other things." Friederike reflects on our thoughts that the family cannot be certain if they will be accepted or not; "With accepted one can say as well, you know, if on the boat, but also in the country, the country – the government can say nah, we don't want you, go back. Then there is the same problem

again.” Still, Anna, who in the same breath expresses anger at economic injustices in the world and unequal circumstances and chances in life, responds by bringing back the idea that some human beings are illegal outside the country were born in; “I think those who flee by boat are those who most of the time stay in Germany without permission or in other countries.”

Once Charlotte has delivered a monologue on legal requirements that cause some refugees to be scared to officially register in Germany, Anna declares:

Well I find that generally totally daft because who wants to ... that is a human exactly like, I mean, that is a human being exactly like us all and who please want to, humans, ... the government wants to prohibit this one human or several humans, er for example to sit outside on the kerb, er to look at a tree, then they would have to downright and entirely strictly speaking actually prohibit me to do that too because I am a human just like the one who then sits out there, that is my problem.

Anna radically distances herself from her own Othering processes, which propose that some refugees are illegal. She proclaims a universal humanity. A violation of anyone’s human rights to exist, her comment suggests, is also a violation of hers. The denial of anyone’s human rights, Anna recognises, is not an act divorced from her own lifeworld. Rather, a shared humanity implies a sense of solidarity that fundamentally makes such denials her “problem.”

A deluge of stories floods our circle. Leonie tells us how she feels her teacher did not pick her at school once because her skin is darker than most other kids’, how her friend’s friend said that her skin colour made her look “shit” and that Leonie herself was to blame for it. Anna tells us about a bus driver who did not let a “foreigner” get on the bus. Max tells us about a mum and her child who a tram driver outright ignored. Max and Basti nod their heads at Leonie and share their stories of not getting picked at school. In these seconds, they seem to understand her feeling of exclusion. Kati goes on about a kind homeless person who lives next to her local supermarket, and Friederike tells us how she witnessed a man bump into a girl with “darker” skin so all her belongings fell to the ground. Friederike stares into our circle defeatedly and whispers; “Why? Why do they actually do it? They are evil no?” Friederike’s question

points to a critical assumption that CME asks us to challenge. Her question epitomises the notion of Othering. The idea that people who engage in Othering are somehow “evil” is in itself an act of Othering. Anna exhibits such assumptions throughout the workshop. Repeatedly, she convinces herself and the rest of the group that there are “no bad human beings.” At the same time, she frequently states with haunting assurance that there is something inherently bad “in people’s brains” if they utter populist remarks or refuse to reflect on their own acts of Othering. My five-hour experience of Anna’s engagement lets me sense that she genuinely means both her calls for humanity and the assumptions underlying her repeated acts of Othering. I have experienced her as a very engaged young person who is genuinely interested in, and increasingly vocal about, social justice and equality. How does someone like Anna seemingly effortlessly maintain concurrent proclamations of humanity and deterministic outlooks on inherently “bad” Others with innately flawed brains? The persistence of this incessant oscillation suggests that there is an overlap of thoughts and feelings at play. Not a duality, but a seemingly paradox simultaneity, a layered doubling, based on the concurrent craving for humanity and urge for a simple, clear-cut answer for inhumane thought processes and questionable behaviours. One does not exclude the other, but fragments of each superimpose each other onto one another.

Co-researchers’ growing urge and deep need to share their experiences strikes me. I wonder how many other opportunities they have to openly talk about their perceptions of the world in this way. Basti tells us about a fight he and Max once had with other young people from his school. After his friend had called the others “chocolate bar” in reference to their skin colour, they called Basti and his friend “potato. German potato.” Defeatedly and genuinely hurt, Basti expresses that being called a “potato” was “not nice.” Max, palpably upset, bursts out; “I’m not a potato, right!” Max looks around the circle, as if he needs us to confirm that he is much more than that’ and that he is just like us. Not a thing. Not just ‘a German.’

Anna responds:

When you say “Look the foreigner over there,” just because he maybe has dark skin, maybe he was even born in Germany, maybe, he has a German identity, maybe he can’t even speak another language, he just looks different, you say “The foreigner over there, he’s smoking,” do

you ever say “The German over there, look, he’s smoking!” One doesn’t say that, right. One says, “that dark-skinned [person], that foreigner,” some people also say, “that black [person] over there”, you will never say “that German over there,” well, in other countries, but never in Germany itself.

I suggest that Anna’s example is similar to that of the “German potato.” Someone has the power to say what another is or is not. Basti blurts out, and as he does, his voice carries a sense of astonishment, “The one who said it has the power!” Max chimes in, “Whoever said it is it themselves!” Charlotte immediately shuts Max’ idea down. She interrupts, “But do you think that is the right way?” I must have tried to hide my shaking head in despair. I am trying to summarise and give legitimacy to Max’ discovery, the connection he has made between his own lived experience and the process of Othering. I ask what you can do, when you are being the one labelled and defined, and Basti offers an interesting suggestion: “Say *Hör’ auf!*”, which conceptually means nothing other than “Stop!” in German, but each word literally translates into “Listen up!” Stopping Othering and the unconscious oppressive exertion of power over other people, Basti’s utterance suggests, requires listening – pausing, stepping back, being silent, listening. “Ask: “Why did you offend me; I didn’t do anything to you!” Basti continues. Anna is quick to chime in, extending and solidifying the majority position perspective expressed in Basti’s comment; “In my opinion, you aren’t powerless in that situation anymore too? Because you can still defend yourself, you can simply leave, that is what annoys people most, most of the time, I mean the people who say that are most annoyed when you aren’t triggered and that then takes the... piss out of them. That’s what annoys people most, I think.” Being free to move and having the power to speak is a normality for these young people.

We return to the (hi)story. I encourage co-researchers to travel back to their experiences of being in the basement, as a character or as invisible witnesses, as listening walls, so to speak. I pass a green cardboard leaf and a pen to each co-researcher and suggest that they are still sitting in the basement in role as their family character. They have the chance to write anything they hope for in this situation. Co-researchers eagerly write on their leaf.

We are having a break. The boys run outside into the concrete desert and let out more energy and volume I knew was possible for any human to hold. What hard work it must have been for them to remain so focussed. I lift the yellow coat out of my big green suitcase and lay it down in the middle of the space. The boys are screaming outside like there is no tomorrow. I turn around to look out the window. The reality of the grey concrete walls hits me in the heart. As if running for safety inside my own mind, I turn my head again, swimming onto the shore of this illuminated space. As I look at the yellow coat, I notice the brightness of all those little jackets and shoes and lunch boxes, and the oasis of liveliness we have created just by coming together and sharing our stories, our fears, our hopes. I look over to the girls. I overhear Anna; "Shame we can't do the workshop more often, I mean as a group. Just like that, as a hobby. Every week. Then we would grow together even more. I find it pretty awesome how we have discussed things now, how we went to [name of German supermarket chain] and I don't know, like, in a few hours." "Yeah," Leonie nods, and she sounds stunned. "Especially, before, we never talked at all, and now!" My heart sings as I hear the girls exchange contact details.

We come back together again. In our circle, we turn yet another page. A dated diary entry, a limp hand, sand, seagulls, and traces of stick figures provoking us to find the next snippet of scrunched up paper on the scarf. Oma has died. Co-researchers devise a short goodbye ritual for Oma. They incorporate their green leaves, covering Oma, signified by the yellow coat, with the hopes for a safe new life that they had written about in-role before the break.

I hope that there is no more war that everything stays the same

I hope everything will be alright and that we aren't shot dead and that everyone will make it
because we are a family because we all are just human beings

I hope that we arrive well and safely and that we are accepted on the boat
and when we are there that we are allowed to stay and don't have to go back

I hope ... hope, fear, sadness ... that all of us are happy afterwards, able to begin, for us, a new
chapter,
a hopefully beautiful new chapter of our life and feel comfortable there where we are going, that
people are nice and that we find a home.

I hope that we survive, from home to the boat, and also the boat trip.
I just imagine the boat to be beautiful so that I'm not that scared!!

I hope that we are better soon and we have food and drink. Hopefully we are accepted in the other
countries. And that we will all get and stay healthy.

I hope everything will go well we packed the things Tobi, Luca, Clara, Mama and I are quite well

only the supplies are getting scarce everyone was very hungry we ate the rest of the soup
and tomorrow we depart hopefully everything work out

I hope we are allowed to go onto the boat and come to another country where there is no war

I hope I arrive alive or at least one of us if someone receives this message
then I wish you that what happens in our country doesn't happen in yours good luck

I hope I survive the boat trip, if not then I tried all the same.

We share our rituals. Just as one group finishes their goodbye from Oma, the other group enters the (hi)story and farewells her. I am taken aback by the low degree of emotional investment they express. Their rituals seem rigidly rehearsed and repeated, and the group sharing their ritual second seems anxious to offer something that is as similar to the first group's ritual as possible. It is only when we gather around Oma *as ourselves* when I unexpectedly feel genuine emotional engagement unfold. Together, we stick our leaves onto the coat. I almost hear my voice break as I say; "So that it stays with Oma." I remember packing my mum her favourite orange basket, the one made out of Fanta bottle caps, with a handful of cassette tapes from my childhood. So that it stays with her. The funniest ones, of course, the ones about Alf, the obnoxious but good-hearted alien with no manners but a big heart whose UFO breaks full-flight. Alf crashes on earth, on this very normal human family's garage roof, and the adults finally accept and welcome this stranger into their home and they start leading a chaotic but joyful life together. In silence, we attach the last of our hopes to Oma. Finding part of herself in the fiction and half of herself in the here and now, Ronja, concernedly whispers in my direction; "Yes ... but..." Her eyebrows rise in concern; "Did they even have sticky tape there?"

We sit around a still but colourful Oma in silence. After a while, Ronja asks if we can read our hopes out loud. A soundscape emerges, a genuine and touching farewell. Co-researchers are speaking as themselves but through their writing created in role. Some co-researchers read out their hopes, others decide not to. Silent negotiation lets one hope flow into the next.

I hope
that there is no more war
and we
that all
that all
stays the same
I hope we all will be happy afterwards
and we can walk into

a new chapter
a truly wonderful chapter
of our lives
feel safe there where we will arrive
the other people are kind and we will find
a home
I hope I will
arrive
alive
or
at least one of us
If someone receives this message
then I wish you
that in your country the same does not happen
as in ours
good luck

Leonie's writing in role includes the lines; "If someone receives this message then I wish you that in your country the same does not happen as in ours good luck." It is an example of how co-researchers repeatedly think beyond themselves, beyond the fictional (hi)story, and beyond the time and space of the workshop. Within the fiction, Leonie expresses benevolence, compassion, and concern for imagined others. She thinks beyond the immediate fictional situation and the plight she personally faces in role. She directs her primary concern at other people who might occupy the fictional (hi)story, no matter which country they may come from. Leonie is one of the co-researchers who chooses to read their writing aloud as we say goodbye to Oma as ourselves. It seems to be important to her that she voices her care.

Despite my own sceptical observations of the initial rituals, Anna states that she was emotionally engaged when her group bid farewell to grandma;

One felt something, so, it wasn't like, yeah we lay something on there and then: done, but one has somehow... like, so, so I did feel something, so, it was sad, and beautiful too, somehow. ... one didn't even realise that actually, there's just a yellow coat laying there, but one thought, there definitely lays something that still has a soul inside it, that, if it was Oma, would probably have been a wonderful human being, and one somehow definitely has some kind of compassion, one didn't feel that that isn't a real human, but one still didn't realise, that it is just a coat.

Despite the sadness of the scene, Kati shares that identifying with the grieving family felt very good;

Yeah so like it like felt very, very like very good, with the music too, where you, like, play the (hi)story and it's just, when one, although it is no, just a coat, one doesn't feel that at all, one simply feels that, er, that that maybe now would be a real Oma, that someone just jokes about that, that someone dies and that person should imagine when it happened in their family, the Oma or the Mama dies, for example, er, yeah.

Reporting feelings of both beauty and the pain of grief, both Anna and Kati seem to experience a dual affect, which allows them to “weep[s] in play [...] but revel[s] as a player” (Vygotsky, 1976, p. 549). They are engaged in “emotional responses which may contradict each other” (Bolton, 1984, p. 122). The real experience of the beauty of raw emotion towards a fictional event protects them into the feeling of sadness which they experience both in role and as themselves. Experiencing and even enjoying an emotion that is generally ascribed negative attributes and associated with negative experiences may create a state of open receptiveness towards the feelings of confusion, uncertainty, disappointment, and discomfort that the upcoming strategies are likely to evoke.

I scatter A4 pieces of paper all over the ground. They are white on one side. The other side is covered in one of two shades of blue. It is either the typical Facebook or Twitter blue with a huge Facebook or Twitter logo embedded. On the blue side, quotes are displayed in big, bold, black ink. Little do co-researchers know that I had found each quote on the internet and the news. These are the actual words of real politicians. As I scatter these quotes around the space, I start to suggest that, in the (hi)story, people live in the new country already. Suddenly, Anna blurts out, disrupting me with an urgency that indicates she is only now fully coming to the realisation she is about to express; “But one has to imagine as well, they are different to us, right, but we are also different to them!” Anna is questioning the idea that a certain normalcy is universally valid. Difference depends on perspective. She underlines the importance of the imagination. In an attempt to prevent Anna from diving into yet another lengthy (hi)storytelling session, I ask her to hold her very interesting thought. I am hoping that our upcoming

work will transform Anna's monologues of personal discovery into dialogues in which her presence and engagement does not overpower the (potential) voices of others. As I speak, the floor becomes an ocean of blue waves. I invite co-researchers to enter the new country by walking around the space and reading the different posts that the people who already live there share online. I suggest that the people of the new country have since learned about the war, about people like our family seeking refuge in the new country. Co-researchers carefully tiptoe through the sea. They eventually pick up a post they find interesting in some way. As I release the last waves into the space, I clarify that the post they choose can be puzzling, that it can be something they understand or cannot or do not understand, that it can be something they have questions about. Confusedly, Leonie asks; "Can we also take one, one that isn't true at all?" and Jonas utters impulsively; "Eh? Do we have to think that is good?!" The confusion that fills the space reminds me how rarely we find spaces in which we actually encounter and grapple with certain rhetoric and statements without immediately judging them as invalid, false opinions of, as Anna would say; 'bad people.'

Co-researchers come together in their two respective family groups and sit down in two small circles. Each co-researcher has brought their chosen post with them. Anna expresses frustration to her group; "This is too, is, ... I just don't understand it ... I don't understand ALL of them." Under her breath, she mumbles angrily; "I don't understand how people think like this about some people." Co-researchers share their posts with their group. They think about what the statements uttered in these posts mean to them. What statements do the posts actually communicate? As I hear co-researchers exchange their ideas and mutter away, Oma catches my eye. She calmly sits on the cupboard behind everyone. Covered in green hopes, she is patiently listening, watching, waiting. I paint a picture of her face in my mind. As if knowing that we will soon deconstruct the statements that unapologetically tumble across the room, she does not seem to feel the horror and disgust that is filling me as I hear the children's voices utter these very real words:

These people are brutal knife stabbers.

Friends! Our continent has existed for so long! Our country has existed for so long! I won't give you away!

I don't just want our country to have a long past. I want that our country has a long future too.
Our country will have no future if these people come here.

Spongers and parasites who will gorge away everything are infesting our country.

The people who come here still have their countries. If these people come here, we lose our country.
When we have lost our country, we won't have a home anymore!

One of these terrorists pretended to be one of these people. That's how he came into our country.

We will be swamped by these people. They have their own culture and their own religion.
They will live together. They will exclude us.

We need more safety/security! We need a wall around our country!

These people now pour into our country. Who knows who they are. Some of them could be terrorists.

We must defend ourselves and strike back so that these people do not come here
if there still is to be a future for us.

We must fight against these people coming here.
This fight will determine whether we and our children will still have a future here.
If we will be well, if we will have enough money for us
or if our culture and our beloved people will sink into chaos.

We must make sure that our country continues to be safe! If these people try to come into our country,
we must shoot them if need be.

Their religion hates us. Many of them hate us.

I think our country can be better. But that doesn't work if all these people come here.

These people are trying to influence our children. They are trying to convince them of how awesome
terror and violence and their religion are.

These people don't want to work here but live here for free. They take away our money.

Nowadays one walks through our town and wonders, if we are still in our own country or in a different
one.

Soon we are ruled over, dominated, and controlled by these people.
It is time that we come first in our country.

If all these people come here, our country changes forever.
It won't take long until our country is unrecognisable.

These people won't make us rich.

These people are a risk for our country. Thousands of these people will come.
Their culture and their religion are completely different to ours.
If these people come here, there will be problems,
no matter how much these people try to live with us in peace.

Co-researchers now build on the skills they acquired when they devised their family portraits. I ask Group A to identify a common feeling that their posts express. I ask group B what kind of an image their chosen quotes paint of the family. Out of the two simultaneous discussions, Annas voice emerges; "They are simply scared, scared to lose something that they actually don't have at all." Group A is

struggling to make sense of the task, but finally come up with the image of “threat.” Group B identifies fear, covered up by anger and envy, as the primary underlying feelings that their posts share. Friederike notes that the authors or sharers of the posts are scared, but that they do not want to show their fears. Anna agrees; “Yeah like the people at the AfD, that they’ve got a really huge fear in them, that they are scared that they lose that which they have worked hard for, for so long. I am not saying, eh, that they are bad human beings. Because there are no bad human beings eh, in my opinion. But, er---” Friederike and Kati are not so sure. Their mums had their bikes stolen and the thieves, they consider, are pretty bad people. Anna is vehement and reiterates that there are no bad human beings. Leonie adds that she sees a lot of sadness underneath the posts. Anna notes how “there is this feeling, er, that some are doing well, and the others, who are supposedly weaker than them ---” “Schadenfreude!” Leonie exclaims. “Weaklings...” Friederike mutters. Anna nods; “To make those who are supposedly weak even weaker.”

Co-researchers now create embodied representations of their chosen concepts. I clarify that everyone should be in this second freeze frame, and that not everyone in it has to be a human being. Group B – Basti, Leonie, Kati, Friederike, and Anna - share their Freeze Frame first. Group A and I become the audience. We carefully look at the still image and describe what we can see. Group B’s Freeze Frame shows four people standing and one person sitting. Two people are standing in the back, one person is standing in the front, and one person is sitting in the front. All performers are standing on a spread out sheet. Another sheet is formed into a line positioned at the back of the performance space, parallel to the audience. The two performers at the back are standing behind this line. One of the performers in the back is about to punch what is in front her. The other has her arms crossed. Staring straight ahead, she has a look of rejection on her face. The person in the front on the left-hand side has her arms crossed in a protective manner. The front person on the right has her arms crossed. Her hands are moulded into guns. The right hand of the person sitting in the front has assumed the shape of a gun. The gun is pointing at her own head. A soundscape emerges from the audience’s verbalised perceptions:

Suicide
Ignorance
Boxing / Boxes
Kamikazes

Kamikazes
Boxing / Boxes
Boxing / Boxes
Suicide
Violence
Violence
Killing
Guns
Fear
Hate
Anger
Brutality
Hate

Outraged, performer Anna blurts out; “Eh?! That’s not supposed to be suicide! That’s supposed to be thoughts!” Anna cannot bear experiencing her image being read by the audience in a way other than she had intended. It is here, not in role as a family member and refugee, but as herself that she experiences a snippet of a minority position perspective, a glimpse of what it is to not have a voice to define herself. “Can we actually explain ourselves later on?!” Her tone of voice is half demanding, half defeated. Friederike, equally outraged by the offered readings, protests vociferously; “I was envy!” She too seems to feel the strong urge to correct the audience and, in an emotion-laden manner, clarify what she chose to represent in the image. The audience is reserved, maybe confused, about what they have just experienced. They do not wish to share any more observations. Anna, however, is burning to talk. She explains what her group is trying to depict:

a border/boundary, that are, like, three feelings: the biggest feeling, in my opin---, in our opinion, is fear. Fear to lose something, fear to lose one’s identity too, my mum said for example, with the AfD people, that they are just scared to lose what they have worked so hard for, so, er, just, ... the fear, and everyone is, er, expressed in hate, violence, brutality, their weapons, with anger and all that, and these small feelings which are alongside there still, so, such an area (shows a long distance with her hands) is fear and such an area (shows a very short distance with her hands) is, then, maybe envy, and such an area (shows a very short distance with her hands) is, yet, the, er, feeling, the feeling that one has when one, oneself, as stronger, as more powerful – supposedly -, er, running down the weak, so the really the supposedly weak foreigners so that one feels even stronger then.

“We haven’t written down fear,” I wonder aloud. The certainty in Anna’s voice is taking me by surprise. “Because it is hidden. I mean, it is really often also like that, especially when it’s about prejudice, that one expresses one’s feelings mostly with other weapons, for example, or hate, ... but actually one is scared of something, that’s how I we mean it. And that it always has, like, a background like that.” In this moment, Anna seems to challenge the idea she has previously expressed, that there is something fundamentally wrong in the brain of people who engage in processes of Othering.

Group A shares their freeze frame too. Jonas, Ronja, Elisa, Sina, and Max have chosen to make use of two sheets. They have rolled out one sheet all across the performance space so that all performers stand on a large semi-transparent square. If I do not focus my attention on it to intentionally examine it closely, the colour and condition of the ground that it upholds is hardly visible. Performers have sectioned our makeshift stage into three planes. Two performers are in the front, two in the middle, and one in the back. The two people in the front are standing in the front left and right corners of the space. Mirror images of each other, each of them is wearing a white half mask. They have turned their faces away from the audience towards the back of the stage. As an audience member, all I can see is a hint of their profiles. Both have one arm stretched out, and the corresponding hand forms a gun. The other arm supports and upholds this human limb that seamlessly transforms into an inanimate, lifeless weapon. It determinedly points at the centre back. The middle section starts behind these two performers. They are standing opposite each other, one on the left side of the space and one on the right side, just where the square borders with the bare ground. These two persons are a long distance apart, but they face each other. They are mirror images of each other just like the two performers in the front. Chest-high, each of them is holding up a corner of another sheet. In this way, they are creating and upholding a barrier that reaches down to the ground. It is a wall not quite opaque enough to prevent itself from adumbrating what it tries to conceal. Behind the barricade, a performer is crouching down in the centre. The two performers in the front point their guns at her. The two armed people inside the square and the audience outside the square can only vaguely discern the person behind the facade. There is no chance for us to make out her face, her expression. However, the slightest movement of the wall’s upholders – and movement is impossible to impede as long as there is life – affects tiny motions within the wall, producing ripples that incessantly remind us that there are living performers who sustain this screen actively. It is not of passive permanence.

The audience start to share what they have seen. I write down their observation on a large piece of paper that bridges the square and us. "Violence!" Basti shouts instantaneously. "Fear!" Friederike calls out. Anna remarks,

All against one. Well, it looks like that right now, somehow. The strong, who have the weapons, because they are only strong that they have weapons, because if they wouldn't have them they would actually be really small. Then there is one, probably a foreigner, I think that with the sheet is supposed depict that hiddenness, maybe a hidden feeling or well I'm not quite sure there, but in any case that sheet is supposed to depict a border/boundary or something.

Here, Anna explicitly recognises the existence of a majority in the image. She notes that the majority is characterised not only by a high number of 'members' but also the possession of means to control. I ask co-researchers if they can see who is behind the sheet. Kati's tone of voice carries a sense of innocent surprise as she, as if astonished by the discovery her own words express, gives voice to a gentle "Yes, a girl!" It sounds, it *feels* as if Kati has just seen the performer Elisa – the girl crouching behind the wall - for the very first time. Anna interjects bluntly; "You can't see that." Basti rebuts; "Looks like a girl." His tone of voice is not aggressive, but gentle and full of amazement, like Kati's. Basti and Kati seem to momentarily suspend their disbelief and see Elisa as the unknown girl behind the wall 'for the first time.' I wonder aloud what it might be like to be the minority behind the sheet. "It's like a wall!" Friederike responds, "And she is behind it!" Anna suggests that the image hides a lot of "unsafety/insecurity, maybe. Because you are not sure, what is behind it, what is behind it." It strikes me that the armed performers in the front section, portrayed by Sina and Jonas, cannot see Elisa, but the wall upholders can. I wonder aloud if those in front of the wall experience unsafety/insecurity because they cannot see. Leonie nods confidently, suggesting that, in contrast to those pointing the guns, the wall upholders feel a sense of safety/security.

Anna suggests that the image hides a lot of insecurity because those who point their weapons at Elisa in role as Clara cannot see what, or who, is behind the wall of thoughts. The wall upholders, however, have something to hold on to. They have a sense of safety/security, as Leonie puts it. They could, in

theory, peek over the wall and recognise that Elisa/Clara is much more than a dark blurry patch. But who would let that sense of protection and stability slip in a crumbling world in which chaos, contradictions, and complexity reign? Anna considers the scene as imbued with layers of distinct relations of power. Those with the weapons influence those who consequently uphold the wall of thoughts. The Freeze Frame provokes Anna to explicitly compare this dynamic of fear, compliance, and belonging to Nazi Germany. Just having compared the wall upholders to those “other people who did this [kill Jewish people] for him [Hitler],” Anna now expresses empathy for them. I can hear a sincere sense of sadness resonate within the tone of Anna’s voice as she continues to speak. Anna does not hypothesise about the image anymore. Instead, she seems to share with us a kind of intimate, *felt knowledge* as she lets us know why the wall upholders do not let go. As she explains why she thinks the wall upholders do not let go, her voice becomes very quiet, imbued with sincere sadness and an undertone of understanding; “Because they are too scared.” Ultimately, she notes, they are not scared of those inciting them to uphold the wall of thoughts, but they are “[s]cared to let themselves engage with other human beings.” If we look at the image closely, we can discern that the wall upholders have the chance to see Elisa in role as Clara if they choose to look beyond the wall. They could see her, but their heads are turned the other way. To see her, they would need to take conscious action and turn their heads around, turn their heads backwards. Basti and Leonie explain that the wall upholders might be scared that the armed performers in the front will shoot them. Basti proposes that they are scared, that they will regard them as *Verräter*, traitors, if they help Elisa. Being regarded as *Verräter*, he points out, equals being behind the wall, being “on the other side.” If you are on the other side, Basti says, you “are being held captive.” In other words, becoming a *Verräter* equals being defined as part of a minority by a majority. Elisa “is being made small,” Anna adds. “She is being run down.” Kati whispers softly, “And she is alone and lonely.” Anna states that it takes a lot of work of the imagination to get a feeling for “what it’s like to be THERE” as she points to the side of the wall where Elisa is. “One should try to put oneself in someone else’s shoes, because we ARE all just human beings.” The wall, to Anna, is “the division between ... it is made out of fear and hate. The hate comes out of the fear.” Fear, Friederike explains, emerges when someone is threatened. We look at each other. There is a moment of silence.

I step into the square. The two wall upholders let the wall down and reveal Elisa. She is still crouching on the ground, protecting her body and her head with her arms. It strikes me that from the point of view

of the gun holders, you really cannot see Elisa. You can only see a vague patch behind the wall. The certainty in Leonie's voice strikes me when she explains what the performers upholding the wall represent; "In the beginning it is anger, but at the end it is then simply only fear." Anna clarifies that the fear is propelled by "The point of view that one maybe has from the start, that those are bad people and are the good, those are the bad. That comes from maybe that one is influenced by other people." Anna recognises the danger of labelling people "good" and "bad" and of uncritically adopting other people's standpoints. This awareness stands in stark contrast with her own acts of Othering when saying there is something wrong in people's brain if they utter right wing populist remarks. Friederike reflects on the masks the armed persons are wearing. She clarifies that they wear them so no one can recognise or identify them. Anna nods; "Because they are scared that IF one knows them, that everyone will abandon them. Because they actually know exactly that one does not do that, shoot other people, kill, but they are scared that if they do not do it, then, somehow, ... they THEMSELVES will be threatened."

I experience co-researchers as speaking from a place of 'deep knowing.' Co-researchers seem to use their own knowledge about peer pressure and the wish to be part of a community to illuminate a very human craving to belong and conform in order to achieve a stable sense of safety and identity. Considering the resurgence of the term *Volksverräter*, traitor of the people, amongst organisations such as AfD and Pegida and the people they enthuse, co-researchers' explorations offer a striking analysis of the inner workings of right-wing populism. In Germany, this word is weighted, eliciting associations with those who were classified as enemies Hitler demanded to be liquidated in Nazi Germany. Like many other terms used for Nazi propaganda in the Third Reich, *Volksverräter* has in recent years become part of an everyday vernacular deliberately employed during AfD speeches and Pegida marches to incite people who identify as German to reject refugees and to intimidate, stigmatise, and delegitimise politicians and non-politicians alike who advocate welcoming refugees. As German linguist Janich (as quoted in BBC, 2017) notes, the term makes the "type of discourse that is essential to democracy impossible" (n. p.). All of us sit down on the ground. "How are you?" I ask Elisa, clarifying we are now talking to the character Elisa is portraying. Her tiny voice hits me in the heart. "I'm intimidated. I'm scared." She points at the collapsed wall. "One can only see the shadows. Really faint patches, virtually. So, nevertheless blurry. But I could hear everything." I swallow. "Could you say something to them?" Elisa's eyes pierce my gaze. She shakes her head. She is scared to be eliminated

if she says “something wrong.” Something wrong implies that there is “something right” determined only by those in power.

I ask co-researchers to create a ten-second movement sequence that starts with the family selfie and ends with the freeze frame they have just constructed. I call these movement sequences Images of Transition performances. Friederike clarifies to her peers, “That means we should simply go from the family selfie to that one.” Her offhand comment makes the task sound straightforward and the connection between both images somehow self-evident. Ronja processes the task of depicting how the characters transition from being an ordinary family so familiar to us to the horror scenarios portrayed in co-researchers’ second freeze frame. Her words overlap Friederike’s as she mumbles, “Eh? That doesn’t even work.” The concurrence of Ronja’s and Friederike’s utterances reveal the absurdity and paradox of right-wing populist rhetoric bolstered by social media. Soon, co-researchers will create and deconstruct their Images of Transition performances and explore this very paradox absurdity.

Group A shares their movement piece first. I turn on the soundscape that will accompany the scene. I layered a slow, emotive, and melodic piano instrumental with the subtle atmospheric sound of being under water. High-pitched social media notification sounds constitute a third sonic layer. They mostly disrupt and distort the music, but sometimes they eerily merge with and hide within a piano note. The happy family selfie that seemed so normal to us starts to dissolve in uncanny slowness. As Jonas, Ronja, Elisa and Sina slowly turn halfway around their own axis, Max’s dabbing gesture gradually transforms. His arm sinks to the ground. Using his fingertips to balance his own body, Max briefly lets himself hover above the ground until he rises to a standing position. With his head and gaze down to the ground, he slowly walks over to the right. While Ronja, Elisa, and Max float towards the back of the stage, Jonas and Sina put on a white mask each. Although they had been holding these masks in their hands the entire time, they had not been visible to the audience. In this way, the two masks are seemingly appearing out of nowhere. As an audience member, I cannot see any faces. I can only discern the backs of the performers’ heads. Ronja, Elisa, and Max move further to the back. Jonas and Sina, now masked, watch them. Ronja and Max stand still in their positions. They have become the wall upholders. Elisa stops moving once she has reached the very back in the centre. She is now behind a sheet that is lying on the floor parallel to the audience. As if they were automated, Ronja and Max

simultaneously bend down and take the sheet into their hands. As they slowly lift their own bodies and the sheet up, Elisa melts into a kneeling position behind the rising barricade. Concurrently, Jonas and Sina lift their arms. Seemingly divorced from the rest of Jonas' and Sina's bodies, their right hands mould themselves into guns. They point at Elisa. She is visible only as a blurred, dark patch behind the sheet. It reminds me of translucent frosted glass, but this sheet is not solid. It melts into an ocean of white rippling waves as it reaches the floor. Two of them crawl towards Jonas and Sina. Max is looking at the faceless gun holder Jonas. Ronja is looking at the masked, armed Sina. I can see a sense of obedience in their eyes. Performers freeze.

After sharing out initial observations, we decide to see the piece again. To find out more about what happens to the family, any of us can now clap and freeze the scene at any point in time they find interesting, intriguing or confusing. Anna is the first to freeze the scene. The moment she freezes is the moment in which Ronja and Max are standing in their positions next to the sheet, Elisa is almost at the back behind the sheet, and Jonas and Sina have put their masks on and face the back wall. Friederike shakes her head. "I just don't understand why they are going back there." There is a moment of perplexity. We ask Elisa why she is going where she is going. Elisa stares into the silence. Carefully, the high pitch of Elisa's quiet voice dares to emerge; "Because this is my place." Astonished, I hear behind the brittleness of her defeated voice, a definite knowledge that enables her to tell us who determines where her place is. With glare of certainty and urgency in her eyes, she looks up; "Those who threaten me." Spellbound, the audience witnesses Elisa speak. Silence. Not even Max and Basti make a sound. Suddenly, Friederike breaks the silence in frustration; "I don't understand that, when someone threatens someone, that they say that someone should go behind a wall." Jonas blurts out, as if his words were superfluous and his explanation self-evident, "That is a wall of thoughts!" Another moment of stunned silence ensues. "One thinks up the wall as protection, you know," he carries on, now with patience. Friederike nods. She explains with sudden confidence, "The audience can't recognise that from the very first moment."

During both workshops, co-researchers struggle with ambiguity of meaning. Co-researchers explicitly and openly express that they do not understand the fictional fragmented story, statements of their peers, expressions, ideas, concepts, (moving) images, interpretations. This behaviour stands in stark contrast

to the behaviours exhibited at the beginning of the workshop, where co-researchers were very reluctant to share feelings, observations, or opinions. During the sharing of the Images of Transition performances, a space of common struggle to understand and make sense of the world seems to establish itself. This common ground seems to provide a sense of safety that allows co-researchers to feel comfortable enough to 'admit' not to understand, not to know, and to bear and share this insecurity. These expressions of struggling to make sense of the world are not always uttered quietly. In fact, there are instances when co-researchers confidently proclaim them. Here, Friederike expresses that she does not understand why Elisa in role as Clara goes behind the wall. After Elisa/Clara has given us a challenging, timid response – "Because this is my place?" – and has told us that those who threaten her determine where her place is, Friederike quite bluntly and loudly blurts out to declare point-blank that she does not understand that "when someone threatens someone, that they say that someone should go behind a wall." There is a tone of frustration in Friederike's voice. But, rather than letting frustration and the vulnerability it entails shut down the idea that challenges her to make sense of the scene, Friederike bears its ambiguity and confidently voices her confusion and not-knowing. She opens up the space for dialogue, questioning, and critical communal exploration. She opens up dialogue with her fellow co-researcher Jonas. He proposes that the wall Elisa/Clara is captured behind is a wall of thoughts. To the wall upholders and the armed, masked persons pointing at her, Jonas suggests, the wall of thoughts is a form of "protection."

Friederike nods as she hears Jonas' interpretation. Only minutes after declaring her own inability to understand, Friederike creates a new layer of knowledge for herself and, possibly, for her peers. She now encourages the other co-researchers to grapple with the complexities of images and the signs they consist of as she explains to her peers the process of signification and deconstruction they find themselves in; "The audience can't recognise that from the very first moment." She explains to herself and the others that images must be carefully encountered and critically examined to make sense of more than initially meets the eye. Jonas expands Friederike's ZPD, and Friederike takes the first step to, potentially, expand the ZPDs of her peers. Anna deepens this new insight by adding, "All these are things that go deeper, where you also have to think outside the box." The wall of thoughts as protection is, to Anna, "the distance between victim and perpetrator". She calls it "safety/security distance", or "the border/boundary from one side to the other, like for example in the GDR with the wall." From this

vantage point, protection from the unknown, from insecurity and the absence of safety, from the absence of normality in the face of the postnormal, are continuous acts of not looking another human in the eye but keeping a distance. Patches of dark matter cannot look us back in the eye to remind us of our shared humanity. As I imagine myself guarding the wall of thoughts masked and armed with empty paroles of *Wir sind das Volk*²⁰, watching, holding, embracing each single brick that upholds my stable view of this unstable world, a picture in which I am good and an Other evil, I can see how I would not even dare to think about taking off my white mask, my mantras of belonging, my certainty. How could I bear losing a sense of home?

“I would like to know why he held the sheet up and didn’t let go!” Basti barges in with a timbre of urgency in his voice. Basti points at Max, the wall upholder on the right. Max is overwhelmed. I ask the group why someone would need such a safety/security distance. “Yes well, to protect oneself!” Basti exclaims, “from, from ... the opponent/foe.” “And who determines who the opponent/foe is?” I ask. As if his answer is obvious and my question utterly superfluous, Basti responds, “Well, the narrator of this play!” Max immediately replies, almost desperately, almost reproachfully, “Well, that is you!” I hold my breath. For the first time, there is no quarrel between Basti and Max. Quietly, almost as if delivering a confession, Basti nods, “I know.” I feel the atmosphere between the boys shift. In these moments of wide-awakeness²¹, sincerity, and vulnerability, there is genuine, thoughtful dialogue. Max and Basti, performer and audience member, object of signification and constructor of meaning, stare at each other in bewilderment as they become aware of the power relations between them, of the complex dynamic that propels our (hi)story and its fictional characters’ fates into a bleak future.

In role, Elisa tells us that her name is Clara. The certitude and seemingly immanent knowledge I can sense in her voice astound me. I feel defeated. I picture Clara as my little sister, my daughter even, eleven, just got braces, plays the guitar, loves elephants. I played the guitar every evening in our tiny old kitchen and my dad would come join with his flute or his harmonica or some other random glued-

²⁰ *Wir sind das Volk* ≈ We are the people. It is a famous German political rallying cry. Citizens of the GDR created it during the Peaceful Revolution of 1989, which ultimately led to the opening of all borders to West Germany and the dissolution of the GDR and its inhumane regime. In recent years, the expression has been hijacked by right-wing populist groups in Germany to incite xeno- and islamophobia.

²¹ Greene (1995) defines wide-awakeness a state of consciousness characterised by deliberate curiosity and attentiveness. Echoing Freire’s *conscientização*, wide-awakeness describes a person’s active and conscious perception of how she experiences the world. Wide-awakeness allows her to critically reflect on her perceptions and interpretations of the world. In consequence, she can choose to engage in social critique and act towards change.

together invention, and the others would take their heels and run. “Who determines that Clara is a threat?” My voice breaks inside my head. Anna is remarkably quick to chime in. She reminds me of a teacher who is explicating axiomatic facts with unbudgeable, irrevocable certainty; “That is, er, that is inside the brain of the people who do that, that is inside the brain: the foreigner is the enemy. The foreigner can’t even be an enemy because it isn’t like that, it is – when they say, that they have to explain themselves: “because it is like that, because tree” and stuff.” In Germany, ‘Because tree.’ started gaining popularity in teenage slang around 2008. It is a universal answer to questions about reasons for specific behaviours or attitudes. Answering with ‘Because tree’ wards off questions and demonstrates that a person does not want to or is not able to explain why and how something happened. ‘Because tree’ is a ‘wild card answer’, arbitrary and interchangeable. It enables people to not justify why they do what they do but still offer an utterance. ‘Because tree’ enables people to avoid having to admit that they do not know something, that they do not know or do not want to think about deeper reasons. Throughout the workshop, Anna oscillates between convincing herself and others that there are “no bad human beings” and stating with a haunting assurance that there is something inherently bad “in people’s brains” if they utter populist remarks or do refuse to reflect on their own acts of Othering. Frustratedly, Anna explains what ‘Because tree’ means: ‘It just is.’ And in the same breath, she explicates convincingly, “It just is like that with people, probably in the head and stuff. Those are the bad ones, those are the good ones.”

Anna does not seem to realise that she is engaging in the exact thinking patterns she criticises. Even someone as reflective and interested in social equality and justice as Anna is, seems to have internalised a majority position perspective. In other words, Anna exhibits attitudes based on dominant discourse in which an individual’s ability, effort, and desire alone causes patterns of thought and behaviour (Sleeter, 1995). Engaging in Othering in this way, Anna is involved in the very thought processes and behaviours that are conducive to right-wing populist rhetoric and its success. This question makes me think about my own constant doubt about the legitimacy of my research design. I can expect that co-researchers and their parent(s) are interested in the workshop topic and positively inclined towards its underlying political and pedagogical stance anyway. After all, both co-researchers and their parent(s) had to read and sign the project’s Co-researcher Information Sheet and Consent Form. If, however, certain *weil Baum* thought processes are the most accessible means for young

people to grapple with postnormality, is the work I propose here not vital for everyone, no matter where they are located on the political spectrum and scale of willingness to empathise with others and think critically?

The idea that people who engage in Othering are somehow “evil” is in itself an act of Othering. Anna exhibits such assumptions throughout the workshop. Repeatedly, she oscillates between convincing herself and the rest of the group that there are “no bad human beings” and stating with haunting assurance that there is something inherently bad “in people’s brains” if they utter populist remarks or refuse to reflect on their own acts of Othering. The persistence of this incessant oscillation suggests that there is a seemingly paradox simultaneity at play, a layered doubling of a craving for both humanity and for simple answers for inhumane behaviours towards others. I have experienced Anna as a very engaged young person who is genuinely interested in and increasingly vocal about social justice and equality. It is crucial to explore, then, how someone like Anna seemingly effortlessly maintains concurrent proclamations of humanity and deterministic outlooks on inherently “bad” Others with innately flawed brains.

Anna is frustrated that she cannot recognise a clear-cut causal explanation between the family selfie and the second freeze frame. The performance has not given her one distinct meaning that provides her with certainty. The family “breaks apart,” Anna thinks out loud, and then, as if interrupting herself, she expresses yet another frustration of hers; “But WHO SAYS that it breaks apart? I mean, it isn’t even mentioned in the book.” I suggest that we have discovered that the family changes. At the end, only Clara is left. All the more irritated, Anna challenges me; “Yeah but where is that written then?!” I can hear the cleft, the lack of one officially verified ‘true’ version of reality has ripped into the comfort of our everyday lives tremble in Anna’s reproach.

We deliberate. We want to find out more. Group B claim the performance space and Group A transform into the audience. I turn the layered piano soundtrack back on. We can see the family in their selfie. Slowly, performers start sinking towards the floor into a squatting position. They form a tight circle. Leonie is the last to drop to the floor. She completes the circle. From the audience’s point of view, it is faceless. Only backs are visible, some isolated body parts. The scene comes to a complete standstill.

Performers' heads almost touch in the middle of this exclusive circle, this seemingly impermeable bubble. Abruptly, they rise up and come to a standing position. Basti turns towards the audience with clenched fists. Kati, Leonie, Friederike, and Anna mould their hands into guns. They angle their arms so the guns point upward. Eight barrels start rising upward like many flames of one single fire emerging from the bottom of the broken circle. Kati and Friederike cross their arms with derogative expressions on their faces. Emotionlessly, they stare straight ahead. They are facing the audience, but not looking at us. There seems to be an invisible wall between them and us. Leonie crosses her arms in front of her chest. She stares straight ahead. She too faces us but does not look us in the eye. Her gaze is empty. It misses our faces, our eyes, our expressions. I can sense an invisible sadness in her eyes. Her arms and guns, resting on her own body, almost look like she is attempting to hug herself. Leonie's fingers, still formed into guns, become soft. Leonie, Kati, Friederike, and Basti freeze. Suddenly, Anna drops to the floor. She holds her drooping body up with her right arm. Her head is lifelessly hanging off her own neck. Anna bends her right arm, moulds her right hand into a gun, and holds the barrel towards her own head. With her head tilted down, we cannot see her eyes. Seemingly divorced from the rest of her body and mind, Anna's left arm stretches out to the side. The fingers of her left hand squeeze against each other. Her left palm and stiff fingers stare back at her lifeless, faceless countenance. Anna ceases to move.

Group B perform again. This time, anyone in the audience can clap and freeze the performers at any point to further interrogate what is happening in the chosen moment. Elisa and Jonas freeze the moment in which performers transform into the faceless bubble. I turn off the music. "Well, I don't know, this is, like," Elisa wonders out loud, "some kind of a transformation, that they first go in and then come out different." "Maybe they are thoughts!" Ronja interjects. Here, Ronja suddenly picks up and elaborates on the notion of the wall of thoughts that emerged from Friederike's struggle to make sense of Group A's Images of Transition scene earlier in the workshop. Performers are whispering, trying to chime in. I encourage them again to remain silent until the audience has finished observing, describing, and reading their performance. "So..." I respond, "human beings themselves transform into mere thoughts?" Anna chimes in. She is trying to interject several times to correct other people's comments, but this time I am stopping her quite firmly. Anna is struggling to be silent and bear the interpretation of others, to experience powerlessness in the making of meaning. We see the faceless bubble again. I wonder aloud

what happens when human beings like Clara, Tobi, Me/Luka, Mama, Papa, Oma transform into mere thoughts inside the heads of the people who are there in the new country Elisa then picks up on Ronja's comment; "They become one-sided," she explains. Her explanation is informed by her own experience of cowering behind the wall in role as Clara. She goes on to say, "So, that they always only think and do the one thing. I think one becomes one-sided when one becomes a feeling because then one is just ONE feeling. One can't ... be that much ... be MUCH anymore, and can't think, because one is just a feeling." From Jonas, Friederike, and Elisa expand each other's ZPDs which allows them to develop insights into how the Othering processes underly right-wing populism.

Group B continue their performance from the faceless bubble image onwards. The constituents of the bubble emerge, enlarge, grow to the top. As their arms too slowly stretch to the top, they reveal that all hands are guns. I freeze the performance. I wonder aloud how thoughts turn into a threat, into weapons. Ronja replies, "Because maybe they want to defend themselves, because they are scared." On stage, Anna cannot bear being interpreted and defined by others anymore. Loudly, she blurts out; "I am not a human being though eh, so ---" She abruptly stops speaking as she catches herself interject. Anna is struggling to bear 'not having a voice' and 'not defining her own image.' Anna finally reflects on her scene in a space in which herself as co-researchers, herself as performer, and herself as a fictional element slowly seem to merge; "Well we do have that connection between the first image, one was just a happy family there and in the second image it wasn't the family at all anymore, it was just completely different persons and, like, the connection, and it was just completely, too, when we depicted the images, we were, eh, the images we depicted as a group, I find, as a family, one couldn't really actually the connection ... And they came together, so to speak, and, yeah---" Anna moves beyond the frustrations that the workshop has repeatedly caused her. Several times, she was frustrated that our engagement with the (hi)story did not present her with a whole, closed, self-explanatory story. She was frustrated that she was unable to make out a clear-cut causal explanation when we tried to make sense of the Images of Transition performances. As Anna continues to speak, she seems to be able to accept the absence of an ultimate truth and consider, however fragmentarily, how the transition from the family selfie to imageries of terror, hate, and death is possible: "---we completely changed because of those guns." Those thoughts-turned-weapons, Anna suggests, render the family unrecognisable. They dehumanise Mama, Papa, Oma, Luka, Clara, and Tobi.

Anna explains that her group wanted to show “the feeling, the fear to lose...this fear, this safety/security distance.” She explains that “people who are sad or disappointed are angry most of the time, but want to, but are actually in hidden way sad, and we wanted, just, to depict that out of fear hate and anger can develop really really quickly because one oneself can’t come to terms with one’s feelings just now.” Anna asserts that being filled with anger is “easier” than being filled with fear. It is easier “to think about.” She tells us, “But you just can’t start to cry at the push of a button to show everyone that you are sad, it just doesn’t work/it’s just not okay/allowed [these are all possible translations], or disappointment, that always has got something to do with different feelings and then expressing them.” Anna suggests that there is a bigger picture in the form of social expectations and taboos. If internalised, that which is “just not okay” or even “just not allowed” becomes an impossibility; “it just doesn’t work”. The word “just” proposes that an allegedly straight-forward, simple, and normal no emotion policy is at play in these young people’s everyday lives. Such a policy, they imply, create cops in the head that suppress sparks of emotional expression if the latter dares to suggest ‘weakness’. Anna and Leonie clarify this notion further. Anna suggests “that it is difficult in our society to say to someone “I am real scared right now” or “I am real sad.”” Leonie stutters with striking sincerity, “Yeah and when one is scared, then, er, ... well ... that, ... then one isn’t noticed. One ...” “One is a wuss then.” Anna explains, and Leonie nods defeatedly. “Yes.” “This notion,” Anna continues, “so, in these times it is just, right now as well, when you are scared---” Leonie smoothly continues Anna’s statement as if it were her own: “then you are, just”--- A split second of silence fills the space. Yet, Anna’s next utterances somehow seamlessly ends Leonie’s sentence, in a moment of connectedness and painful realisation. “---weak.” Anna finally whispers humbly. I can hear an expression of sadness unfold within her last word.

“I don’t even like the mere term “foreigner,” Anna concludes, “because one has to think too, once, when, when the foreigners come here to Germany, what are we, then, to them? We too are just completely different, we smell different, we eat differently, we behave differently too, maybe, but in the end, in the end we are all just human beings and we all too want, basically, the same, that is,---” Friederike seamlessly continues Anna sentence as she says “---to enjoy---”, and Anna continues, “our” --- Friederike sighs and nods: “---life.”

I wonder aloud if anyone could have done or said anything differently. If we could have interrupted and changed the course of the (hi)story somehow. Anna suggests emerging out of the faceless filter bubble with hands that form many little hearts turning into one embrace as all performers reach a standing position. As she explains her idea, she demonstrates the action of getting up and forming the heart. For a few seconds she just stands there, hugging herself lost in thoughts. When she notices that she stood up, she self-consciously sits back down. I can feel myself smile as I watch Anna rise up with her fingers shaped into a heart. A smile whose one half emerges from genuine joy for the beauty of her small solo performance, her emerging passion for humanity and social justice, and whose other half originates in deep despair and doubt. If only things were that easy and straightforward. And, I catch myself thinking, after all our exhausting efforts of detailed and in-depth explorations today, is this all she is coming up with? I forget how young these co-researchers are and how much and hard they have worked today, keeping their eye on the ball for that long while grappling with such complex tasks in this way, maybe for the first time in their lives. "And what do we need for that to happen?" I ask, scared there will be no answer at all. "It can't, eh, happen magically." I click my fingers as if I possess magic powers and lower my arm. As if her response is obvious, Friederike is quick to respond: "What you need for that?" She looks around the circle. She draws a couple of circles into the air with her hand, tracing the shape our little impromptu community has created. "The group!" she exclaims. "One needs team spirit!" Anna explains. Ronja adds, "Five people?" Their tone of voice is uplifting, as if they are on a mission and they've got the power and the plan. As if intending to put my mind at ease, Anna reassures me, "But in a two it works already, too. To me, for example, it means so much when I hug my best friend and she hugs me. I feel much more safe/secure when that one person does that." Anna, Friederike, and Ronja suggest that to encounter ideas both affectively and rationally we need a base line of safety that a sense of human connection can create. It is a sense of solidarity and care that takes place within and through human presence and intermediate interaction that abandons unspoken 'no emotion policies' and that virtual worlds cannot offer us despite its promises of limitless connectedness and companionship.

We read the last three pages of *Home & Away*. There are no more drawings, no more life, no more expression. Just an orange background, and on it, a handwritten note per page. We find out that several politicians say that the family is not welcome in the new country. That they are just there for the money, to steal jobs from those who already live there. That they should have put their names on a list before

entering. Co-researchers are stunned. Anna tries to dissect the book. I had stuck a few pages together. Pages during which the family travel across the ocean, pages during which Mama and Papa die, pages that show the children in a refugee camp. Anna urgently needs to know more. Anna seems to crave a complete whole, a ready-made narrative. In a slight panic she grabs the book and says, “Are there these puzzle pieces everywhere, I just wanted to have a quick look, maybe it is a puzzle piece that becomes a big puzzle in the end---”

We read the last page of the book. We find out that Luka has given up on being a vet. That she will try to get Clara and Tobi out of wherever they are now, by washing cars maybe. That Luka would do anything to keep herself and her siblings together. That that’s what Mama and Papa would have wanted. We look up from the page. Alarmed, Anna reproachfully exclaims, “Did they die during this!” Anna, Jonas, and Basti express their frustration and disapproval. They are deeply upset and disappointed. They seem to find it extremely difficult not to have read the ‘complete, official’ (hi)story, and that the (hi)story ends so abruptly with a lot of ambiguity but no closure.

I give co-researchers the opportunity to speak with one of the politicians mentioned at the end of the book. They choose the Minister of Immigration because, as Anna says, “she must fight for the refugees”. Elisa asks if they themselves are now the refugees. Co-researchers deliberate. Who do they want to be? Is it likely that refugees are able to attend such a press conference? Co-researchers decide to be themselves.

Max is losing concentration. He cannot seem to stop giggling and distracting the other boys. While Max and Charlotte set out to go for a walk in the fresh air, I set up a chair and a portable speaker underneath it. I pull a black blazer out of my green suitcase and explain to co-researchers that we will create one last scene together. The scene takes place during a press conference. I propose that I will be the Minister whenever I am sitting down on the chair wearing the blazer. Counting down from three, co-researchers clap me ‘into’ scene. On their clap, I put on the blazer, sit down in the chair, and turn on yet another soundscape. Muffled voices, intermittent coughs, fleeting whispers, and the constant clicking of cameras fill the room. The press conference has started.

Sternly, the Minister stares at the children who are sitting on the ground in front of her. I can feel their awe and bewilderment as they stare back at me with open mouths. In amazement, no one speaks. I am excited. "So, then," the Minister says in a low, unimpressed voice as I suppress my enthusiasm with all my might, "Any more questions." The last trace of my smile has vanished from her face. Anna begins. She is polite. She addresses the Minister formally. "Dear Mrs Minister of Immigration," she says loudly, as if she has revised this sentence many times in her head. Jonas shakes his head in embarrassment. "This sounds so wrong," he mutters. Co-researchers are navigating the fictional power relations the drama demands while rehearsing to speak to authority. They are in the process of finding their voice and place to speak from through the fiction, of challenging the kind of voicelessness adults in the real world have so far expected them to accept as young people. Co-researchers challenge the Minister about the legitimacy of the list that refugees are to sign before entering the country. Co-researchers alternate between referring to the fictional family from the book and referring to refugees in general. Every now and then, they mention Germany, Syria, and the Mediterranean. Upon being challenged by Elisa and Anna, the Minister denies responsibility for "random people" to fill out such forms to correctly. An uproar spreads among co-researchers. Unintelligible noise. Friederike jumps up. She now stands behind her fellow co-researchers, a couple of metres in front of the exit. If the Minister of Immigration wants to get up and leave, she has to get past Friederike first. Co-researchers are increasingly outraged by the Minister's indifference and the injustice that 'failure' to adhere to a very specific bureaucracy equals not deserving to lead a safe life. "Yeah and where is that list!" Basti shouts and claps his hands in anger. Leonie exclaims "Where are they supposed to get that from eh?!" Anger, shock, and indignation fill the space. "Where are CHILDREN supposed to ---" Anna clamours. The Minister's face remains unchanged. Disinterested in the lives of others but agitated about co-researchers' passion, she responds, "Yeah, on the internet. Excuse me?!" Jonas counters immediately, "Yeah but if they don't have a phone?!" The Minister is irritated. "Yeah if they don't have a phone", she imitates Jonas, "Then they come, as soon as anyone is here ---"

Basti has had enough. Deeply stirred, he claps his hands again and shouts, "They are CHILDREN!" One argument tumbles into the next. "And where, please, are CHILDREN supposed to---", Anna begins. I can hear her voice lose its fierceness as she continues "---who, from---" Anna looks at Friederike to

regain confidence to continue the scene, the (hi)story, the dialogue the way she decides. Remarkably, she decides to say “who ... flee from ... Syria ... aged 15, 11 and 6---” Rehearsing acts of advocacy through an evolving fiction for Syrian refugees who cross not some faraway unnamed sea but the Mediterranean brings the social justice issue at hand into co-researchers’ very own real life contexts. It knocks at our doors, and we can no longer ignore it. The fictional Minister might never come to life again, but the echoes of those knocks might reverberate within our hearts as we leave the workshop space and go about our daily lives. It may remind us of our anger and outrage. It may remind us of our passion and empathy. It may remind us of the panic that we witnessed cower behind the Minister’s uncompromising urge to fill each silence before it had begun with concatenations of masked aggression and disinterest. Importantly, it is co-researchers themselves who decide that the fictional children flee from Syria to Germany. It is them who bring the story home. It is them who bring Luka, Clara, and Tobi in person, in colour, in aliveness into this concrete room, into the concrete jungle of this very city. It is important to them. It occupies their minds and hearts.

The Minister says that the government does make exceptions when it comes to children. Co-researchers are not satisfied with her disinterested answer. They want to know why Luka, Clara, and Tobi cannot stay in the country. Demanding the Minister to take personal responsibility for the lives of these three individuals, they want to know why the Minister has not made an exception in these three cases. As if shooing away a worthless discussion with her left hand, the Minister gets increasingly tense. She responds loudly; “Who?! Who are you talking about anyway!” Basti is infuriated. Using his fingers to start counting in front of the Minister’s face, he loudly begins to spell out the fictional characters’ names: “About Tobi---” Fed up, the Minister raises her voice: “Who please is Tobi!” She is addressing the children formally but she is shouting: “Do you really think that I know who Tobi is!” There is an unintelligible, very loud shout from Basti at the Minister followed by sudden silence. The Minister of Immigration is stunned. “I ---”, the Minister starts again, her tone softer as if she is hanging onto her last, very frayed bundle of nerves, “do you know HOW MANY files are on my desk! How many numbers there are?!” Still standing, blocking the exit, Friederike stares the Minister down: “Only ONE.”

The Minister is confused. She pauses. Then, she continues, “THOUSANDS are there.” Now Anna has had enough. She is getting up. She gives the Minister an imaginary folder. “Okay, I am giving you, here,

the FILE, then." Elisa adds sharply, "Maybe you should work on the files for once." Loudly but matter-of-fact, calmly gesticulating with his hands like an experienced politician who delivers yet another diplomatic speech, Jonas addresses the Minister. Doubting that the Minister actually sees the refugees as distinct human beings with biographies, hopes, and dreams, Jonas challenges the Minister: "If you know how many files there are, then you would have to know, wouldn't you, what is written in these many files, because you know, don't you, the exact number of them." "Exactly," Basti nods. Friederike is outraged. She snaps her fingers at the Minister; "Exactly! Why don't thousands of foreigners live here?! When you have thousands of files there." Friederike's comments make me think of the fact that especially in small East German towns, *ressentiments* towards refugees has been growing, even though hardly any foreigners live in these places. I am close to hearing an inflection of defeat in the Minister's voice. She explains, "I have got very many files ---" She starts to stutter, to struggle for words, "--- on my desk --- the name Tobi ---" She raises her voice again, as if agitated by her own words, "says NOTHING to me right now!"

Anna's voice becomes soft and sincere; "Okay. That we believe you." Anna is empathetic with the Minister. She sees her as a human being. Concerned for the characters who are still alive at the end of the book, Basti resorts to his hand again, demanding the Minister's attention. Using his fingers, he continues to count. "Then there is also Clara..." Friederike paces to the right. She is still standing behind her peers, now closer to the exit. It is impossible to leave the room without having to confront her now. Anna appeals once again to the Minister's empathy, humanity, and sense for social justice; "This family, aged ---, these are children, who, during their journey on a boat across the Mediterranean, their parents ---" Friederike paces back to the left and stops behind her peers. To her left sits Oma, her hopes untouched, those green leaves far from wilting.

In the attempt to shut her down, the Minister interrupts Anna. The Minister seems unnerved but continues to address everyone at the press conference formally. Her voice is becoming louder but thinner; "Do you know how many of them ---" Unimpressed, Anna carries on, "and before that ---" The Minister continues as if Anna does not exist: "Do you know how many---" At the same time as the last two words exit the Minister's mouth, Anna calls out "THEIR OMA". Anna's voice resounds loudly in the space. "Now it is my turn!" she calmly exclaims. The Minister continues, refusing any dialogue with

Anna, "That all must ---". Even more slowly, clearly, and louder than before, Anna's voice fills the room as she demands her voice to be heard: "It is my turn!" "That must all be ORDERLY!" the Minister shouts with a voice paradoxically imbued with both indifference and agitation, "That must all be orderly!" Basti expels a sound of protest. Jonas puts his arm up in the air, gesticulating, saying something, passionately. It is loud. It is impossible to decipher what he says. "Orderly, regulated immigration! Regulated immigration!" I can hear the Minister shout, and then, very loud, fast, and now even aggressively, "Anyone can come here then eh?! Some terrorists can come here into this country then eh?!" Friederike is remarkably unimpressed. Still standing behind her peers and right next to Oma, she imitates the Minister's childish argumentation. Basti gets up. The Minister threatens, "Yeah what do you think will happen here! What do you think will happen here!" Anna shouts, even louder than before, "Okay!"

Suddenly, silence fills the room. The Minister is perplexed. Anna is calm. "I've got Clara, Luka and Tobi standing in front of the door. I am bringing them in."

There is no sense of surprise among co-researchers. It feels as if this is the natural flow of things. Seamlessly, without arranging and agreeing upon what will happen next and who will be who, Friederike rushes to the door frame that leads to a short hallway bordering with the exit door. Resolutely, Basti follows her. So do Leonie and Ronja. A few seconds later, Friederike returns. Once back in the room, she exclaims purposefully, "Can you guys come in please?" Leonie walks through the doorway. "I am Me, then." Friederike leads Leonie, Ronja, and Basti into the heart of the press conference. She leads them right next to the Minister. They come to a stand. "Luka, Clara, Tobi." Friederike confidently names and introduces the three. Anna speaks; "And these refugees, you have definitely seen them before? They have lost their parents and their Oma---" Like Jonas moments earlier, Anna challenges the Minister to consider what it means to be seen, really seen, as a human being. In an attempt to reclaim and restore the characters' humanity, (hi)story and individuality, Anna doubts the kind of alleged 'knowledge' the Minister can gain about refugees by reading files. Thinking beyond the immediate fictional (hi)story, Anna now extends the characters' fate to the destinies of all those unnamed refugees she has heard about before or who she can imagine exist in the world, fictional and real; "--- and like so many others have that, they have it too and it is hard. They just want to live here and they cannot be

sent back to the country alone, where they, where there is war.” Anna is pleading for not only the characters, but all of those real refugees whose (hi)stories and names are unknown to her. Anna is pleading for not only the characters, but all those refugees whose (hi)stories and names may be unknown to her. Since survival and humanity are at stake, it does not seem to matter if these others suffer in the (hi)story of the fiction or in the (hi)story of the real. Allowing suffering in either world seems unbearable because encountering images of others without feeling both for and as them, at this point in the workshop, seems impossible. Throughout the workshop, co-researchers exhibit sustained moments of thinking beyond and thinking critically. They engage in empathy and the social imagination as the active creation of visions for a more just future for everyone (Greene, 1995) through “disinterested attention to the needs, values and desires of the other.” (Neelands, 2015, p. 33) They identify that social injustice exists and that we need to work together to actively challenge the source of its emergence. Neelands (2015) defines the latter as a “failure of the imagination” since “[y]ou cannot gorge whilst others starve unless you have lost empathetic imagination to live in comfort with this contradiction” (p. 34). Co-researchers’ behaviour suggests that they also understand the importance of challenging others to engage in these processes as well. While talking to the Minister, they put into practice their own ideas evoked by our Images of Transition explorations that social change is only possible if we live and work together towards equality in solidarity, as an ensemble. Here, the drama workshop becomes a rehearsal for small revolutionary everyday interventions, in which co-researchers test out DE-provoked insights in practice.

The Minister shouts. Beneath her agitation, I can hear an inflection of panic. “That’s thousands of people, we can’t just let thousands of people in with no regulation, with no control!” There is another uproar. Tobi, in Basti’s body, crouches on the ground between his standing sisters Luka and Clara, embodied by Leonie and Ronja. “Why don’t you see that we are people?” little Tobi asks the Minister in bewilderment. Luka raises both arms up high over her head. While doing so, she takes a big step forward. She leans forward in a lunge. Luka’s face is now only a few centimetres away from the Minister’s. “We are---”, she begins, and then, in an act of ultimate confrontation, she spreads her arms out wide as she exclaims, “CHILDREN!” Immediately as Luka’s utterance ends, Leonie emerges out of her role. She turns around and steps back. She seems embarrassed. A mocking smile unfolds upon her face. It seems as though she is mocking her own utterance in self-consciousness. Is she surprised

by her own passion and act of standing up? She looks at Friederike for approval. She has bravely 'acted out' and now seems self-conscious about what she has performed here. After a mere second, she returns to identifying with Luka.

Throughout the press conference, co-researchers have one by one started to stand up. Almost a half-circle of standing actors surrounds the Minister of Immigration now. Friederike is standing at the right end and Clara at the other end. "But the question is, right" the Minister continues triumphantly, "What becomes of us?!" Friederike leans in to bend down to Anna. Friederike whispers something to her as if quickly suggesting what to say next. Loudly, Friederike speaks: "You said when it's about children you are making an exception!" Tobi kneels on the ground between his siblings. He calls out "Yes, exactly!" Jonas raises his hand towards the Minister in an argumentative gesture. Jonas reacts to Tobi's shouting at the Minister, recognising its inappropriateness. Like an older brother, he tries to calm Tobi down. There is no more strife between Jonas and Basti. The two, in role as Tobi and a newly found brother, unite and channel their focus into challenging the Minister's views and policies. "They want, you say, that, they will destroy that---" Anna is upset. She takes a breath. Defining herself and her peers as part of the majority of the 'new country' she goes on to say, "That they will turn us into something worse." Sina, who has been quiet all day raises her hand for a split second. She looks around. She seems amazed by the protest that is unfolding around her, that she is part of. Tobi starts crawling around. Friederike, with her hands on her hips, approaches the Minister; "Those are refugees!" She is naming the family as refugees, refusing to let the Minister's imagery reign. Sina is almost standing, one of her knees is now bent, her foot on the ground. She fixes the Minister with her gaze. Finally, Sina determinedly pushes herself up to a standing position. Elisa starts moving too. She is getting ready to push her hands into floor and herself upward. Elisa is standing. Jonas gets up a split second later. They look straight ahead, fixing the Minister with their gaze. Everyone is standing now. Everyone is facing the Minister of Immigration, drawing an unbroken half circle around her. Anna looks at Jonas happily, amazed. Clara and Luka calmly stand to the left of the Minister. In awe, they watch the others stand and speak. They seem shy and uncertain, but happy. Elisa's high voice suddenly pierces the air: "But they are humans TOO, aren't they!" "Exactly!" Jonas protests. "Exactly like you!" Anna adds. "If you weren't sitting here, but were someone like this, and we wouldn't let you in, how would YOU feel?!" Friederike's passion takes the better of her. Overtaken by anger, Friederike explicitly confronts the

Minister with the complacency of her majority position perspective; “Yes, that’s what it is, isn’t it, you are sitting on a velvet cushion with your bum every single day, aren’t you!”

Anna shakes her head. “I don’t understand you. I thought you are taking a stand FOR refugees.” Anna tells the Minister how the problem is the distinct majority position perspective the Minister occupies, or more specifically, her lack of social imagination; “The problem is just, how would you feel, if YOU stood here, as Luka? How would you FEEL?!” Anna’s words, charge and plea at the same time, reverberate in my chest. “How would you FEEL?!” Not only on an abstract plane do co-researchers think beyond themselves and extend their call for the social imagination to others. When directly confronted with a fictional character embodied by a real person, they stand by their demands. The persistence co-researchers exhibit while talking to me in role as the Minister proposes that they attribute an even higher importance to their demands than they did before. When co-researchers talk to the Minister, they repeatedly remind her that the fictional children are human beings exactly like her. They ask her to put herself in the children’s shoes, to imagine how she would feel if she were in their place.

A loud, glaring ringing sound merges Anna’s final word and pierces my ears. I jump out of the hot seat and take off the blazer. Max and Charlotte had buzzed the doorbell and are now standing in the doorway. Dripping wet, they stare perplexedly into the space, as if hit by a wave of overwhelming energy. The air is electric. The tension around me is on the verge of its release. A surge of pride streams towards me. Co-researchers give each other and themselves a round of applause. They are ecstatic. They stood up to the Minister of Immigration! I see sparkling eyes and wide smiles of pride and joy. Anna and Leonie give each other a high five. As we come back together in a circle, we reflect on the Hot-Seating experience. An atmosphere of excitement and relief fills the room. Laughter. Sighs. Disbelief. Ronja is stunned. “One could actually really speak to her for once!” she declares, and I can hear a sense of old frustration in her voice. In the beginning of the workshop, Ronja expressed scepticism about refugees. She represented her dad’s opinion that refugees might bring with them terror and danger and that “too many” is “too much” to handle. In the Hot Seating sequence, Ronja embodied Clara, who did not actually speak during the entire press conference. Instead, the co-researchers not portraying characters from the (hi)story represented her voice. Did Ronja, in role, then, feel that she did speak vicariously through her peers?

Like Ronja, Friederike too voices frustration about the ways she as a young person is usually not heard in the realm of politics; “It also felt good that those, I mean, politicians, just, that, that only they are there, but, that us children TOO, that we are there too, that we have an opinion too.” Friederike describes that she does not feel taken seriously and regarded as a political agent in the real world. Talking to the fictional Minister “felt good” to her because she could demand a space for her voice to be heard. In this space, adults finally acknowledge young people as being an integral part of life and thus the political arena. In a mood still elevated from the experience of challenging the Minister, Anna transposes her positive feelings about having helped the three fictional refugees as ‘me/not me’ (Ferholt, 2015; Schechner, 1985), as neither ‘just’ co-researcher nor a closed fictional character. She has helped them as a performed self in a heightened state of awareness of the communal act of creating the present through presence. Anna transposes her feelings of achievement and her cravings for humanity as a performer who unites the real and the fiction in her calls for social justice into an urge to help refugees who exist in her own lifeworld:

It was just a great feeling to help someone who has nothing, who has lost her parents, who, in part, for her siblings, so generally all, er, to just help people like that, so that they find their home, that was the great feeling, that, IF one were to do this, even, it would be a wonderful feeling, er, just to, other people, who have nothing, who have even lost their beloved parents just because of war, bombs and a dumb ship wreck across the ocean, actually, that it even had to come to this, there, to defend THOSE, that is a great feeling.

Anna’s alternation between grammatical tenses (the past and the present) and grammatical moods (the subjunctive and the conjunctive) suggest that the hot seating experience was a significant rehearsal future action for her. Maybe it was the simultaneity of fiction, reality, and performativity that provided a space in which a personal passion for future acts of advocacy could find its voice.

Co-researchers are eager to write a letter to the Minister. Some write on their own, others in small groups:

Stupid Minister of Immigration!
I don't think it's nice at all that you are so unfair.
The children are all alone their Oma died and the parents too
If I were you I would bring into safety all children without parents. THE END

You are super stupid because you are not very nice because you accept hardly any foreigners.

She should be nice

Hello! You are really mean and you always with your but and that isn't fair these are just human beings too like all of us stand for justice and open your heart because these human beings have experienced so many horrible things please think about this.

Minister of Immigration, (I don't know how to address you) have not accepted vey many refugees because they haven't filled out their forms the right way. How would you feel if you had lost your Oma and your parents and then weren't let into the country? One should let everyone in. No kind regards.

Dear Minister of Immigration, let, you better let other human beings migrate to Germany no matter which skin colour they have or which country they come from

Dear Minister of Immigration,
We do not accept that you as Minister of Immigration are essentially advocating against refugees. Are you Trump or what? No, and that is exactly why we want you to accept and welcome refugees who have to flee from their home because of war and to look after them. First and foremost, however, after children without any chaperones, like, e.g. parents, relatives, etc. Example: Tobi (7), Clara (11), Luka (15) they fled across the ocean and lost their parents doing so. As a suggestion: You could initially provide accommodation for them (gym, etc.) and check if what they say corresponds to the truth. (e.g. if there is actually war, if the parents are actually dead, etc.) If you have any queries about this we are available to respond to them for you.

Kind regards. PS. We find it very sad that something like this has to happen.

Tip: Put yourself into the children's shoes!

When Elisa hands me her letter, she double checks with me if I know the Minister. It hurts me to remind her that the Minister she talked to today only exists in the fictional (hi)story. Elisa says she understands but her face cannot hide her disappointment and worry. I cannot hide mine. "Oh bummer." she sighs. I nod.

Anna takes away from the workshop "really many different feelings. Yes, the (hi)story has, just is, you somehow don't get yourself to realise that that actually happens daily, every second." She contemplates, "Wouldn't the refugees do the same for us, if we came into the country, then they would surely have done the same for us ... Then we would be refugees." To Leonie, "the collaboration with everyone ... and ... er ... with our teacher too" stood out. Jonas states that he is happy he could reconnect with the young people around the neighbourhood again. Elisa stresses that she "found the (hi)story beautiful but also sad." Kati too describes her experience as "beautiful" and expresses that she

wants to do workshops like these “always.” Anna can image engaging in the type of drama work that we engaged in today as a hobby. I suggest they ask Nina to help find a local theatre group that meets every week, but Anna immediately declines: “Well yeah but I would really like to do it with my group. I mean this, this one now, HERE.”

Most people have left. Anna walks towards me. I walk towards her. We say ‘thank you’. We say ‘goodbye.’ We stand there. We look at each other for a long moment as we stand there amongst the horrifically beige lampshades and the mess of leaves, sheets, and felt tip pens. It is a rare and touching moment of stillness. Over a year later, I can still feel Anna’s struggle to let go. Her eyes. Her mana. Her heart. “Oh, may I, just once, ---”, she stutters suddenly but gently, politely, and revolts against all social etiquette as she gives me a fleeting hug before finally turning around to let her silhouette silently merge back into the concrete desert.

CHAPTER 7

VOICES FROM BENEATH THE VEILS: WORKSHOP TWO

Twelve days later, it is another rainy day in the city. This is the last time I will haul my green suitcase through this town. My phone navigates me through another maze of grey multi-storey buildings blocks. I still cannot quite comprehend I am here, but I am much more confident navigating my way around. I walk on the right side now. I don't bump into people anymore and make them angry. The dull colours of the city don't hurt my eyes anymore. The sharp sounds and abrupt patterns of speech that dominate each of my interactions here cease to leave me feeling insecure and guilty. I can get by without the sight of cabbage trees and nīkau palms, the subtle scent of the sea, the griping tūī who never fail to sneer at my lack of colour coordination. In this narrow silver cube, there's none of that. No sound, no smell, no sight. Except that of my reflection on the high mirrored wall opposite me. I look tired.

The doors of the lift open into a long, wide corridor divided by double glass doors. It feels like a hospital. It feels like my old school. Even though there are pictures on the walls here and there, the building seems sterile. I cannot fathom there is a council-run youth centre up here. The rattling of my suitcase on wheels echoes through this seemingly endless white tunnel, proudly announcing my arrival. I feel not so proud. I feel tense. I feel nervous. I feel out of place. Behind one of these walls, there is a person who knows my name. I have emailed back and forth with her about running the workshop here for many months. Karen and I wrote to each other from hemisphere to hemisphere, but I have no idea who or what to expect. I don't even know her voice. My gaze fixes nametag after nametag as I walk along the empty hallway. Finally, I find Karen's office door. As soon as my suitcase ceases to clatter, the corridor stares at me in utter silence. Is this my own heartbeat? I knock. I breathe. I open.

Karen is sitting in front of a clean white desk. I tilt my head in puzzlement. She looks like she is working for an insurance company or a property management firm. I rub my eyes. Karen runs the youth centre here. Her sentences are short, direct, to the point. She introduces me to Melanie, the drama tutor. We sort out the formalities, ethics forms, confidentiality agreements. Everything seems strangely efficient and bureaucratic. Somehow, there seems to be blind trust in who I am and the work I am bringing with me. Despite this strangely distant matter-of-fact speech, it seems like I am no stranger here. I am

puzzled. This world, this country, this language once was my whole world. Melanie smiles at me. My mind travels decades back and forward again within seconds. I am aware I am walking. I am aware Melanie is talking. Faint echoes of images, scents, sounds flicker behind my eyes, ring in my ears, flare up somewhere deep inside my chest. The park outside our kindergarten. The circus who came to our neighbourhood every single summer since the year I was born. The first time I went out to a gig and my mum admitted she pretended to sleep and play it cool but would not rest her head until she heard the click of the front door. The songs my girlfriend and I listened to over and over again that one long winter; we'd leave the window open half of the night and let the snow melt on our skin as we lost ourselves in the music. The terrible temperature we got the next day, the cold that lasted our entire high school exams. The white harsh corridor light hits my gaze. She had to convince her drama group to take part in my workshop, Melanie chuckles as she leads me to the space I will be working in today. They were not impressed to be asked to engage in a drama workshop pitched at ten to twelve-year olds. I remember the facts. Everyone in today's group is fourteen, except one eleven-year-old girl. There will be seven female co-researchers and one male. "This is it" Melanie nods. I find myself in a tiny room with a built-in black box. This could be an exciting day.

Only a short while of setting up the space passes before I hear voices approaching. I can hear giggles, I can hear banter, I can hear the echoes of light footsteps, skipping, squeaking. "I've done this before; I know what to expect" I try to calm myself. And then they enter the room: my co-researchers for the day. Anke, Tabea, Christine, Emma, Fine, Mia, Laura, and Finn have arrived. Their sight strikes me. Facing the doorway, I feel myself freeze into the ground in bewilderment. They are adults? As we greet each other, my anxiety grows. They all seem so old, so mature, a world away from the young people I worked with just the other day. These people are not children anymore. These people seem just like me. If I could, I would run away. They seem just like me, just like me now, just like me as I am there in that tiny drama room on this cold rainy day in May 2019. They seem just like me now and they seem just like me seventeen years ago, and only seventeen years ago feels like yesterday. Seventeen years ago feels like this very now, as I stand there, dumbstruck, frozen in time, *some* time, perplexed. Seventeen years ago was when I was safe, when I was home, when I had it all. I look at them and I remember my own laughter and my own safety and I cannot but admit, I become envious of them. I want to be them. I want to be home. I want to be safe. I want to turn back time and start over; this time

no one dies and we all stay together, we look after each other, and we are a family with a bright future ahead of us. I cannot stop admiring their liveliness, youthfulness, carefreeness. The more I feel it, the more I crave it, the more I grieve my own. I let my accelerating heartbeat galvanise me back into the now. My nervousness smirks sardonically as it stares through my eyes right into the haze of my memories. What do I possibly have to offer them?

We come together in a circle. We introduce ourselves. I hear their voices, their language, their slang. I hear these little sounds that would be meaningless to my Kiwi whānau but tell whole stories, whole jokes if you grew up with them. The more I hear them, the less I can believe I am actually here. Foreign words flow out of my mouth, and they sound just like theirs. The vague memories they gently call forth suddenly make me feel so at home it almost hurts. I explain the ethics forms and collect their parents' consent forms. We finish these strange formalities and decide to make a start. I turn on the camera.

We walk around the space together. We stop and walk on my command. After a while, I no longer speak. Instead, we come to a halt when anyone in the room stops moving. As I experience how these young people respond to each other kinaesthetically, how they cooperate, laugh together, and trust each other, I can already feel that this is a more or less established drama group who meet regularly. I become aware that I will be working with a group that is very different to the one that emerged from Workshop One, in terms of age and dynamics. At least part of my nervousness makes way for snippets of excitement about how our work today may play out. We clap and jump on my command. I swap the meaning of those commands. There is a lot of laughter and excitement. I can make out a sense of familiarity and trust among these young people, a sense of a shared history. As I call out different numbers, co-researchers quickly disperse into small groups consisting of those numbers. Building on this activity, we start building rapid freeze frames in different configurations. We create 'Home', 'Fear', 'Different/Foreign/Other', 'Facebook', 'Power', and 'Thought.' I invite co-researchers to play with the sheets and masks in their images. I ask them to play with levels, distance, proximity, and contrast, and suggest that not all performers have to be human beings at all times. 'Power' shows itself in different shapes and variants. Masked beings take hold of kneeling people's heads. Feet relentlessly stomp a crouching person into the ground. Puppeteers anonymously control their puppet's limbs as the puppets try to balance their own weight. Gazes of submissive willingness and bewildering admiration

unquestionably freeze all movement. I am equally taken aback by co-researchers' embodiment of 'Thought.' Seemingly floating guns point at unsuspecting victims from behind. Shadows of bodiless faceless limbs hold masked heads in place. An overwhelmed young woman hugs her own torso. Behind her, someone contains and immures her exhausted head in an invisible box. Outstretched fingers point at covered faces in disappointment and disdain.

Co-researchers now devise five-second movement sequences that start with the freeze frame 'Thought' and end with that of 'Power.' During those seconds, moving sheets morph from looming, blinding traps into comforting blankets. Knees give in as bodies exhaustedly melt to the ground. As soon as curled up beings on the floor cease to move, fists clench and gazes of disgust appear. Sudden twitches in stillness on one side of the space ripple into shadows violently pulling clasped hands apart on the other. Mouths open wide into silent screams. Frozen gazes seem unable to see what they are looking at. All these interactions happen in the same performance space, but this space is an archipelago of isolated actions. These islands are three detached spheres, three isolated universes of thoughts turning into power, power that comes into being by feeding on others, by creating powerlessness. I wish these figures were able to draw wedges between the gears of these conveyor belts, bring the whole machinery to a halt, bring these figures to pause, look up, down and around to see each other. Would they see these patterns, see these structures; see that they are blueprints of and for each other, upholding the world, the only world they know? What are the oceans between these islands? How do we cross them? How do we listen to the sounds beneath the roaring waves?

We dive into the story. I show co-researchers Home & Away. Co-researchers playfully suggest a possible translation of home, *Heimat*. A shiver runs down my spine. *Heimat* reminds me of patriotic Nazi propaganda. Co-researchers look at me with big eyes. To them, it simply means home. I try to keep my shudder at bay. Add a few more years, and we'd be different generations, I must have thought. Irritation and a messy, murky concoction of confusion and stunned relief wrestle for my attention. How can we just throw this word around? Are we reclaiming something beautiful? Can we allow ourselves to? A discussion emerges about what it means to be home. To co-researchers, home is not just a feeling or a city. It is where their parents, family, and friends are. It is where they feel accepted.

We read the descriptions of the protagonists of the story, Mama, Papa, Oma, and the children Me, Clara, and Tobi. We look at the family portrait depicted as a drawing in the book. In two groups, co-researchers create two family selfies each. They are excited about even the slightest and seemingly most superficial connection. Enthusiasm bubbles up as co-researchers compare Emma's and Clara's braces. Once co-researchers have created their family portraits, I enter the still images to thought tap the characters. We laugh at our very own, very real memories provoked by these characters' utterances:

Oh them again with their dumb selfies!
Er there's a tennis match on, shit man
Did you tidy up the kitchen?
We should grow some pumpkins, actually
I am the greatest!
I am the smallest!
Gee that's gonna be an awesome group selfie for sure, prime family bonding time---
---er how does this friggin' thing work?!

We reflect on creating and experiencing those living portraits. Co-researchers smile about how the mums in the images are 'just like real mums', always trying to encourage the kids to go outside for a walk, to be active, to play a board game, how they love gherkins and pizza and crime series, how they are the glue that holds the family together, and how they are always a little overworked.

We turn the page. The picture we encounter now reveals a cracked fish tank in the living room and an armed cowboy on TV. To Laura, the fish in the aquarium are a metaphor for people like us who live our lives in a bubble of safety and peace; "We, without war, are, so to say, swimming in our aquarium and when this crack, so the war ---" Laura stops herself. Tabea gently takes over, "Then they die, right. Because there is no water in there anymore eh" and Christine whispers under her breath, "until time slowly stops." Co-researchers wonder whether the story is about a 'real' war or about an internal 'family war,' like a divorce. As soon as we encounter the next pages, however, co-researchers understand that the family now live in a war zone. The pictures confront us with a deserted shoe, a child's drawings of bombs exploding, helicopters circling, stick figures raising their arms in horror. We witness an abandoned black dog roaming through endless red stains. Vaguely, pale blue stick fingers scream through the sanguine splatters. Hundreds of tense hands reach up in despair, desperate to catch an emergency ration falling from the sky. In contrast to the group who participated in Workshop One, these

young people are open to creating a soundscape of war. What might it look, sound, smell, feel like to be in a war-torn city that you call home? We decide to draw all curtains shut. I put on a slow, atmospheric piano piece. It is pitch black.

fear I hear
shots and screams I see
in the city no human soul and I feel
entirely alone I cannot
breathe in the city
any
more I cannot see
anything in the city
anymore nothing whole anymore I see
bodies carried around I hear
humans, families, searching
in
despair for each other
I see everything
collapse into itself
I hear
screams for help I see
the city in ashes in dust heartbroken
I am
I am
hungry
I am
scared
I can't anymore
find my family
I am scared
our
house
too

Fine opens the curtains, drawing us back into the now. The rain must have stopped. Sunlight floods the room. Laura's gaze is not quite focused on anything within our circle. She seems deeply stirred as she reflects on her experience; "Like, through that one, an image in front of one's eyes, like, what it could look like, and somehow I really had [our city] ... like, in front of my eyes, and somehow it was like that." As she names her city, I hear worry and affection fill her voice.

As we turn the page, the family sit together in darkness. In the basement, Papa tells the family that he has heard of a boat that might get the family out of the country. We create another soundscape, but this time I am asking co-researchers to jump into their two family groups and speak as their respective character. Co-researchers want to rehearse in complete darkness to atmospheric piano music. Finn and Fine draw the curtains. Everyone joins their respective groups. In the dark, two lively discussions arise about what it might be like to be the family in this moment of the story. Slowly, mood and

atmosphere change as co-researchers one by one turn into the characters. Every now and then, a co-researcher speaks or utters a snippet of sound as themselves. It is only progressively that co-researchers merge into the Mes, Claras, Tobis, Mamas, Papas, and Omas of our (hi)story. As the echo of each fleeting second slips into the darkness, I can hear more and more characters speak in the basement. Co-researchers and characters submerge each other into one another. I can feel them converge into an incessant and unfaltering articulation of sincerity. It is an eerie and confusing soundscape. As they emerge from each other, emerging as an Other, I can hear clear lines unravel, borders breathe. Those scattered voices become an invisible dance between the real and the fictional. In the momentum of this movement, they start to refute their own existences. If, on the basis of our memories, our past and present experiences of what it is to feel, to fear, to hope, we can create split seconds of unremitting, unflinching embodiments of humility and humanity, are we not making and re-making (hi)stories, devising bold futures in the apathetic face of the bleak invisible darkness that surrounds us?

We share our soundscapes. One group now become the performers and the other turn into the audience. The performers sit together in a tight cluster in the centre of the room. The audience sit or lie on the ground around them. Violin strokes accompanied by a piano join our scenes. Group A performs first. A muffled bang, a split-second burst of hollow thunder fills the darkness just as a timid violin stroke begins its first note. I can make out footsteps outside, elusive echoes of dull sounds, the unintelligible mumbling of men's voices. Some people must be passing the drama studio, banging a door adjacent to the long empty corridor bordering on this room. A performer starts to cough in role. Underneath the muffled murmur from behind the walls, a tiny voice emerges. We can hear mums and dads talk to little children as calmly as possible about packing nothing but their favourite toy, even if it is not worth a thing. We can hear children ask why their pet fish cannot come along, not knowing they have eaten them because there was nothing else left to sustain the family. We can hear parents lose their nerves, shout, curse, cry. We can hear children cry out again and again that they are hungry. We can hear children terrified of losing their friends. We can hear silence.

As some of us draw back the curtains, a yellow coat reveals itself on stage. Tabea shakes her head in disbelief; "It is actually really intense when one puts oneself in their shoes." Co-researchers write on

green cardboard leaves what they hope for in this very moment of the story. They write in role as their family character who is still holding out in the darkness of the basement.

I hope that get something to eat and that we don't starve. I hope that my cuddly toys survive and that Mama and Papa don't want to eat them. I hope that we all stay together and we don't lose each other, otherwise I don't know at all, you know, where to go, when everyone is gone!

I hope that everyone arrives healthy. And that we can keep ourselves alive there. That the children have a future, yes maybe even able to practice a good profession when they are older. First of all we have to survive the trip. I hope that the children never have to deal with something like war again and are able to be just be children.

I hope my children survive, that is the only thing I want. I can't lose them.

I hope that our children will get and stay healthy. I hope that the war is over soon and we have more to eat and a proper home and we are all well. Tomorrow we are fleeing, away from home, and I hope that we can stay, for now, at a better place.

I hope we are finally getting something to eat and this fear disappears at last. And that, some time, which is hopefully soon, my biggest worry is something like the song for the band competition again. Just that this horrible feeling disappears. That we actually arrive somewhere.

I hope that we soon have enough to eat again and a place to live. I hope the war is over soon and that we survive it unharmed.

I hope I'm getting fish again ~~new ones~~ and that everything will be better then I am hungry and don't actually want to go away from here but it has to be hopefully I find all my friends again and we can finally play again like we used to ~~and maybe I can then again me~~

I also, that we are accepted at the other place and maybe find a little bit of normality again

When we come back together after our break, a new double page reveals that Oma dies just before the family make it onto the boat. We see hungry seagulls circle in the air. Torn snippets of a child's drawing of happy stick figures with colourful clothes disrupt the image. A glimpse of the open ocean. A crayon sketch of a blue stiff body. Sand trickling through a limp hand. A fish in a bubble tries to escape the picture through the bottom corner of the book. "That is so sad," Christine mumbles quietly. There are a few seconds of silence. Fine looks over to her; "You won't start crying?!" she addresses Christine. Fine's voice seems to deliver a warning intended to wear the disguise of a joke. It does not fit. Several seconds of silence ensue. To me, this moment epitomises a peculiar 'no emotion policy' that I encounter here in Germany a lot. In Aotearoa, we acknowledge and bid farewell to those who have passed before the most mundane meeting. We cry and we laugh as we sing waiata that conclude encounters, speeches, gatherings. We acknowledge our grief as we acknowledge our joy. Our past just as our present. Here, I feel, emotions are masked, are silenced, are banned into the realm of the personal, away from official

display and recognition. "That has proper Titanic vibes right now," Emma comments, and I cannot help but feel like her utterance despairingly seeks to prevent her from genuinely grappling with the horrific fictional situation confronting us and the very real sadness it is capable of provoking. Very quietly, defeatedly, more to herself than to the others, Laura whispers with a hint of a smile that seems to try to hide away her own anguish, "I wrote on my leaf 'I hope Oma Lieschen doesn't die.'"

In their family groups, co-researchers devise a goodbye ritual for Oma. The only instruction I set is that the yellow coat will represent Oma's dead body. Nevertheless, Group B keep nominating someone from their group to act as Oma. Co-researchers cannot seem to stop denying and defying the fact that Oma is now nothing but an inanimate coat. They cannot seem to accept that they cannot give her back even the slightest breath of life or voice. "A jumper like that!" I hear an outraged outcry. Laura protests, "But then she can't say anything!" I remind Laura and her group that Oma has passed away. In quiet shock and sadness, Laura responds, "Oh, already." I nod. After a few seconds, Laura defeatedly but unacceptingly responds, "But then she can't say anything!" I am struggling for words. All I am able to resort to is "So, Oma is dead, in the story." Laura does not accept this. "But she does say first, like ... but then we do need an Oma!" After a split second of hesitation, Fine chooses to outright ignore my words: "The ... I am ... I'm just gonna be Oma now!" Co-researchers come in contact with the experience of voicelessness. As they are speaking as actors in the rehearsal space and not as the fictional characters, they are safely distanced from this experience. Fine defies this minority position perspective at this moment. Her urge to give Oma a voice is so strong that she defies my 'authority' as workshop facilitator. In the end, the group does adhere to 'the rules of the game' and choose to have Oma represented by the yellow coat.

We share our short scenes of goodbyes. There is a sense of dignity in having these rituals take place on a proper illuminated stage. As her yellow coat glows in the light, it feels to me like we are giving Oma the funeral she will never have. Even though none of us has ever experienced a situation as extreme as depicted in the book, the scenes we now experience do not sound so unfamiliar at all. We witness mums talking to their kids that it is time to go in gentle, incredibly calm 'mum voices.' They convince even me for a moment that all we have to do is leave the beach for a second but very soon everything will be alright. We witness mums who place green leaves of hope onto Oma, and I feel like I am just

watching children arrange their beautiful little art works. For those short seconds, I am quite sure that this was all part of the plan, that Oma will be back, that she will be waiting on the other side, where there is food and doctors and new friends and safety. It is those everyday mums from the family portraits who are shining through in these scenes, indirect amalgamations of our own mums or the ones we got to meet throughout our lives. The (hi)story of Home & Away seems to be in the process of becoming our own.

I invite co-researchers to make their way into the country the boat is heading for. I explain that in this other country, there is no war, but there is a lot of talk. Via TV, via the newspapers and via the internet, people who already live there hear that there is war in the family's home country. They also hear that people flee. That people seek refuge. Here. Many people in this other country are preoccupied with the news. They exchange many ideas and statements. They have heard a lot online via posts on different platforms. While co-researchers were devising their goodbyes, I scattered these posts all over the floor. They are the posts I already used during Workshop One: A4 paper, white on one side, shades of Facebook and Twitter blue on the other. Engrained in these blue backgrounds are white Facebook and Twitter logos. Yet another layer of black bold print displays the quotes. Catchcries jump out of the blue in even bigger letters. The entire ground has transformed into an ocean of white squares.

One by one, co-researchers turn over the posts to reveal their words. Post by post, the ground surrounding us turns blue. Some co-researchers sit down to read, get back up, and wander on. Others stay standing, roaming through the new country with tilted heads. Preoccupied with the posts, they never seem to look up and see those around them. I hang Oma up high, just in front of the black back wall of the stage. She will remain the backdrop of the rehearsals and scenes to come. Co-researchers take a quote that they find interesting in any way. With one post each in their hands, they sit down in their family groups. They share the posts they have chosen and discuss their understandings of them. Group A identify fear as a feeling that all their posts share. They devise a freeze frame depicting 'Fear'. Group B create a freeze frame that represents the picture that all their posts together paint of the family. Both groups now devise a movement piece that illustrates a transition from the family selfie they created in the beginning of the workshop to the freeze they have just constructed.

Group A - Anke, Tabea, Christine and Emma - claim the stage. The rest of us shuffle together to form an audience. A soundscape I prepared in advance accompanies the scene. It comprises a melodic piano piece layered with the subtle atmospheric sounds of being in a water bubble. Constant but erratic social media notification sounds constitute a third layer. The scene begins. I see Anke take a family selfie in front of Oma. I see big smiles, posing gestures, fingers moulded into a peace sign. I am mesmerised by the joy this sight manifests. Faint memories of my own childhood settle on these smiles. A few seconds turn into timeless units of reminiscence. The longer this image of normality stands still, however, the more distant the warmth in my chest becomes. This picture is stuck in time. This picture is no longer alive. This picture, I feel, is nothing more than an image in a dusty photo album. Anke is slowly lowering her arm. A sudden thump catapults me back into the now. Three performers have jumped outward and landed just outside of Anke. They are now framing her in a triangle. Anke is taking one timid step forward. She is looking up while the other three are picking up one polythene sheet each from the ground. Tabea on the left and Christine on the right are throwing the sheets over their own bodies. The sheets veil them completely within a split second. As soon as the performers touch them, an incessant white noise morphs into the sound of continuous waves that disturb the deeply touching melody of the piano. I soon become accustomed to this permanent disruption. It lies itself over each note and each of my senses like a soothing normality that has always been there. Like the evanescent warmth in my chest. My mind ceases to jump when the harsh twitter sounds pierce my perception. I stop to notice even the most jarring frequencies. Anke is looking behind herself. All she seems to be able to see is Emma's back. Anke is looking right, but all she can see is a veiled being. Anke glances to the back again. Now, Emma too is turning into a faceless, bodiless ghost. Anke is looking left, but all she can see is another veiled being. As if struck by this sight, Anke falls to the ground. She is looking up and around herself. The three veiled beings are slowly drawing closer toward her. Anke is looking down at the end of the sheet that covers Christine. As if trying to protect herself, she grabs the end of the sheet and quickly throws it around her shoulders. The beings are encircling Anke. She looks up in horror. Only Anke's head is visible in between those moving veils, amidst that white noise, those constant waves relentlessly and restlessly crashing against and into each other. One veil almost slides off Christine's head to reveal her face. Effortlessly, she gives it another upward push. It hovers up above her head for a split second until it floats back down onto her again. It shrouds her completely in

an instance. It covers even Anke's very own eyes. Blinded, without any way of communicating through her gaze, Anke is looking up into the white noise until all performers freeze.

We clap. Performers untangle themselves. I invite the audience to share what they have experienced and ask the performers to remain quiet and simply listen. Laura is puzzled. She recognises the family portrait, the existence of a transition, and a sudden change. She associates the sudden change with "a bomb" but considers that it could be something different. She recognises the confusion that she has witnessed Anke experience after the "sudden change." Co-researchers' readings indicate the nature of the discourses and representations that regulate their processes of meaning making. Laura, for instance, immediately jumps to the conclusion that the majority of veiled persons are "these foreigners," "these other people." At the same time, Laura states that, in-role, Anke "took something from them." Before we can unpack this idea further, Finn retorts, "Why foreigners? They live there eh?" Finn's interpretation seems to differ to Laura's. Does he suggest that the veiled beings depict the people who already live in the new country? Upon Finn's remark, Laura starts to challenge her own thinking; aren't those who live in the new country foreigners elsewhere? Laura accepts that the veiled beings can very well represent "these ... natives" in the new country, and that Anke could have portrayed "a foreigner" in the new country. "Well I don't know" she contemplates, "I find one can interpret, like, both sides, that Anke was a foreigner or that Anke was different other ... so no [one] normal in the country." Laura does not seem to realise that she is not even considering two variations here. Don't both of her suggested readings frame Anke as Other, as not 'normal?' Fine elaborates on the interpretation that Anke is portraying a member of our fictional family, who this discussion has already rendered nameless, faceless, a foreigner, an Other, a non-'native.' Even though Fine works with this reading, she unquestioningly identifies the aggressors in the image as the foreigners; "Yes, so, [that] she is being harassed and besieged by the foreigners, so to speak." Mia is quick to identify the veiled beings as a mass of intruders from the outside. Her tone of voice is firm and confident when she challenges the interpretation that the shrouded persons may represent the people who already live in the new country: "Yes I would rather have said that she is someone from this country, and the others are coming in, you know."

Tensions rise as co-researchers become aware of the possibility that their readings differ. Tabea tries to calm her fellow performer Emma down; “Emma, let the audience interpret!” Emma, however, cannot stop herself from trying to reclaim her power to determine and dominate the interpretation and meaning-making process. “You are saying the same thing all the time!” she complains. I can hear an undertone of agitation and self-defence in her voice. “I find it somehow funny, now, that you immediately associate that with the foreigners, er, although that wasn’t even our intention at all, because, totally, like, out of these Tweets and Facebook posts just some kind of a feeling---” Emma has talked herself into a cul-de-sac. She takes a breath. We decide to see the scene again. We want to understand what happens to the family. We want to understand how a family portrait that might as well be our own turns into such a horrific scenario of fear, isolation, and division. This time, any audience member can call out ‘Freeze!’ to stop the scene so we can interrogate the frozen moment further.

Group A are setting the stage again. As she picks up the sheets to place them in the right position, Christine exclaims, “They’re completely broken!” The more we engage with, play with, and decipher the stage of signification, the more porous these veils become. The audience count down from three and clap the performers ‘into’ their scene. Tabea, Christine and Emma jump out into the triangle that encapsulates Anke. Laura claps. Performers freeze. I stop the music. “The moment of jumping!” Laura calls out. We rewind the scene to the moment directly before the jump. All Laura can decipher is the family selfie and then an unexpected abrupt change. “Something turns away or something is being torn apart,” she suggests. But what catalyses such change? Performer Tabea suggests that “raw fear” provokes the jump, the abrupt change the family experiences. Both Tabea and Emma seem anxious to not have the audience attach determinate meanings to their constructions. “You know, that can be anything, you know,” Tabea adds quickly. Emma is fast to underline Tabea’s comment; “Anyone can interpret for themselves.”

I ask what this scene tells about the family in the story. “Yes then I would say that it is this family life and then this *Sprung* becomes clear, eh, that it changes all at once, as there is war,” Anke suggests. *Sprung* means both ‘crack’ and ‘jump’. While Anke is literally referring to the jump the three performers undertook to encircle her, she is also referring back to our reflection on the crack in the aquarium a few pages earlier. Is it the invisible majority under the veil that, together, cause the fracture forcing Anke’s

ability to feel safe and at home to ooze away? Tabea and Anke in fact suggest that, somehow, this violently evoked *Sprung* can also happen in the new country. Although Christine was part of devising and performing the *Sprung*, she is taken back by the unexpected suddenness of the change, and how it is possible that 'normal' family life is suddenly wiped out. As she speaks on stage, she looks lost, as if the performance was unplanned, as if it is something she has just experienced for the first time. The creation and existence of "one image" turns the family's life upside down by creating "something completely different." Christine tries to express how she feels as she stutters disconcertedly, "I mean in the beginning there was this family life, right. And suddenly, in one image ... suddenly like, like, one didn't, like, expect that in the beginning and this *Sprung* is, you know, like---" Stunned, she clicks her fingers. "Suddenly, what one hasn't expected at all, suddenly something completely different."

Anke shakes the end of a sheet into a ripple:

I just... I just break down, into myself, underneath that. So, I am falling down, virtually, so that is just because, I am falling down because I am so scared that all of it, that these people are virtually coming towards me, I am falling down because I am so scared and that all that affects me so, all of a sudden, that I am virtually falling down, so breaking down, into myself. It *erdrückt*s one.

I wonder who Anke is speaking as right now. Anke, the performer? Anke-in-role? And if it is the latter, what fictional element or character are we witnessing here? Is she a family member, a refugee? Is she someone already living in the new country? Are all of them somehow experiencing the feeling of being *erdrückt*? *Erdrücken* means to overwhelm, crush someone to death, to smother. The translation equates 'overwhelming someone' with 'crushing someone to death' and 'smothering someone.' This feeling of being scared of becoming overwhelmed or overrun is exactly the fear that right wing populism harnesses to fertilise their ground, their rhetoric, to make sensational narratives of Otherness thrive. Literally, *erdrücken* means "to push someone into 'nothingness', 'death', into 'non-existence.'" Just two letters turns the act of pushing or pressing (*drücken*) into an act of liquidation (*erdrücken*). I remember June 2019, when German local pro-migrant politician Walter Lübcke was assassinated in his home by a person motivated by xenophobia. I remember how organisations such as AfD and Pegida explicitly deny all responsibility for disseminating very real violent words that turn into very real violent actions

right in front of our eyes. Anyone can be *erdrückt*, both sides, Anke explains. Christine explains that the sheets really stand for all the fears someone holds. “Everything that seems threatening.” Tabea adds. Anke explains that it is “all these influences and factors under which one breaks down into oneself.”

I want to address explicitly the notion that the veils are representations of fear and destruction, and that people already living in the new country are the wearers and maintainers of the veils. Anke explains that the sheets represent “the fear of the people.” She elaborates, “that they then, are then, what do I know, scared, when they say they are taking our jobs away from us, then it is that they are taking the jobs away from us.” Anke’s intonation reminds me of the Minister’s. Paradoxically, there is a tone of both indifference and contempt in her voice, as if these fears are unacceptable and thus unjustified, shameful, and not worth talking about. Laura’s words crash into Anke’s. “That they are terrorists! And only take money from them! That the state too---” Anke interjects “and that ---” She loses track of her thoughts. “Real suddenly,” Emma nods, equally lost in thoughts, as if she remembers a feeling of uncertainty, “because it is something new ... what one doesn’t know.” In role as performer of a fictional character or not, together we have created a space in which ambiguity, not-knowing, and the utterance of sentiments not deemed politically correct in public outside the workshop space are not banned into the realm of speechlessness and taboo. And as long as there is expression and dialogue, there is movement and the potential for democracy and social change.

Without prompting, Anke now fluctuates between identifying with a minoritarian role and a majoritarian one. The sense of certainty, genuine concern, and knowledge in her voice takes me aback. I am not sure anymore who I am listening to. Anke-in-role as refugee? Anke in role as someone from the new country? Anke as performer? Anke as herself? Anke sternly raises her voice. “Exactly, so it is like, you are in YOUR COUNTRY---” The back of her hand vehemently hits the palm of the other. “And then there came this *Sprung*” In Anke’s voice, I can hear a fine balancing act between despair and resentment, disbelief and some kind of knowledge of a ‘definite truth.’ She slams the floor with both of palms. The dull beat she creates resembles the sound she created during Group A’s performance, when she fell onto the ground, when she ‘broke down into herself’ as a refugee. “That means that all at once refugees invade,” Anke now whispers hauntingly. She repeatedly moves her hands towards her chest, quickly, urgently. I can imagine something invisible invading the sheer essence of her very self.

I can sense, I can see with my own eyes that something will soon deprive her of air to breathe. “And with that, that fear, then---” Anke lifts up the sheet lying next to her. It is sprawling across the right side of the stage like water pouring out, bleeding out, like a growing cloud of hissing fog. Anke gestures vividly. In this gesticulation lies an absolute certainty, a ‘knowledge’, a ‘truth’. It strikes me that it was Anke who only moments ago talked about the economic fears of people already living in the new country in a derogative and unsympathetic manner.

Tabea interjects. She explains that when you are under the sheet, you are not only unable to see and genuinely encounter what is outside the veil, you also cannot discern the sheet itself, its structures, its constituents. “Yes, and when one is under these sheets one can’t really see and recognise what that is.” Tabea notes that wearing the veil prevented her (in role) from looking inward and reflecting on her own behaviour and underlying motivations; “One doesn’t see what is inside,” she elaborates, “but one is already scared of it.” Tabea’s experiences and explorations in role suggest that the idea of self-reflection and the discovery of ambiguity and uncertainty it foreshadows, are in themselves a source of fear. “It is also the unknowable,” Anke adds, “what one is scared of too.”

I want to know what it would take to transform the sheets into something different. Emma thinks visually. “Just” moving those in high status into the low status and vice versa is her idea. Tabea wants everyone “to just take off the sheets.” I want co-researchers to think harder, think metaphorically, disrupt the simplicity of “just” reversing status, of “just” taking off the veils. I want to know what the characters in the scene need to take off the sheets. Fine responds, “Like, all these fears or something, to find all of that out, what’s there underneath the sheets so to speak, er, somehow courage or something?” Performer Christine reaches down and takes her sheet. Holding its corner, she stands back up. Now the sheet is one calm semi-transparent layer. I can see through it the colour of her trousers. “That one has courage, you know,” Fine continues, “to, what do I know, now in relation to the story or generally to the foreigners who then come into the country, er, to have the courage to walk towards people and also to talk with them, to get into an exchange with them, to grapple with the situation, why they are even here in the first place.” Fine uses a homonym here. So, besides *to walk towards people*, I could have translated her utterance as *to shut down* or *close people*. What knowledge about the nature of ‘courage’ do co-researchers’ in-role explorations create, as they are enriched by the multiplicity of meaning that the act

of translation engenders? To really engage with others as human beings, do we have to develop the confidence to shut Others down as a means for projection of our fears, as a means to define ourselves through difference? These explorations suggest that confidence and courage are crucial if we are to fleetingly but frequently suspend our excess of difference as we go about our everyday lives and encounter words, images, ideas. The discoveries that Workshop One's co-researchers undertake propose that we can foster confidence and courage by coming together as ensembles that transmute unspoken but ubiquitous 'no emotion policies' into the solidarity that supports us in our struggle to grapple humanely with the anxiety-inducing ambiguities of postnormality. Could not Others then emerge as 'other human beings?' If we shut the door on certainty and a supposedly stable identity, don't we open another that enables us to welcome a sense of safety and belonging that experiences of solidarity and togetherness create? Proposing that, to change the status quo of the scene, we must "grapple with the situation," Fine suggests a look inward. *To grapple* is only the conceptual translation of the German reflexive verb Fine employs. Literally, Fine tells us that we have to *sit ourselves apart*. In order to grapple with the situation of reputed Others arriving on our shores, we must, she suggests, pause, step back, stand still, and reflect. We must sit down with and become conscious of the identity constructions we engage in, those constructions that we ascribe to ourselves to uphold an allegedly secure version of our 'selves', and the fears and motivations underlying them.

Group A performs one last time. Anke has just landed on the ground after her fall. The three veiled figures surround her. These three performers look like the tip of three icebergs. I can make out a blur of dark matter inside them. I can hear the ocean moan again. The white noise is wailing. The ripples are smashing into each other with seemingly no other choice. I wonder what is underneath the surface, that space that only exists in my imagination. The majority of mass, I wonder, must be immersed in the sea. Tabea lifts the sheet so that her head is visible. She is now a floating head above this ocean of ripples, this cloud of mist, this seething ice. I wonder aloud why those three performers did not, or were unable to, leave the sheets on ground. Why could they not refrain from putting them on? Anke takes a corner of one of the sheets into her hands. While we are talking, she examines it, folds it, twists it, holds it. "Because..." Finn carefully proposes, "they are not the family anymore, you know." He cautiously constructs his sentence. It feels as if Finn is spelling out for us all what tragedy has really happened here. There is silence. "Because society ... models it like that, I think." Laura mumbles, "So, many have-

--" Finn interjects instantaneously, "Maybe they aren't human beings anymore!" Laura nods, "---many have ... so to speak ... these thoughts and these fears and stuff on both sides and that is why one just adopts and embraces them then too." Emma and Christine are still under the sheets. Every now and then, they push the sheets a few centimetres away from their bodies so that they can breathe better. After each push, the veils uncannily slowly float back towards their bodies. Each human contact with the veils causes a hissing sound, but when the sheets creep back towards Emma and Christine, their movements are hardly audible. They are so slow that I can hardly perceive their movement. I begin to overlook their existence. Surrounded by those three shapeshifting, spuming icebergs that now seem to incessantly hiss at our every remark, Anke speaks; "And it is easy to hide under a sheet than talking to them or something." Anke is still sitting on the ground. Her legs are crossed. They are now drowning in the sheets. Anke pulls at the corner of the iceberg on her right while Tabea is covering herself with her veil again. "It is simply easier just to stay in your comfort zone," Anke explains, "and that is why these sheets, because they want to protect themselves from that." Tabea is now nothing but a faceless iceberg again. Anke has to lash out to the left as a gust of Tabea's sheet is blowing in her face. It is as if the veil is trying to respond to what Anke has just said. As if it is trying to muzzle her. "Why are they, they jumping away, so to speak?" Laura asks carefully. Anke replies, "Well either the invasion of the refugees into the country or the beginning of the war." Is Anke equating "the invasion of refugees" with "the beginning of war?"

Emma chooses to remove the sheet from her body. She holds it in her hand. Anke carries on, "We were scared eh, and in this new country, she..." Anke puts both hands on her chest, "...she is scared of all these people." Emma puts the sheet around herself like a cape. It covers all of her except her head. "That doesn't matter, in principle!" Emma exclaims, suggesting that any human being can be stuck under layers of fear, so pre-occupied with maintaining enough air to breathe that they can neither look in - nor outward. Christine gives a sheet a gentle kick, minimising its space on stage. It is hard to say whether it is one or two sheets. They seem to have melted into one. I cannot tell them apart anymore. They are one and the same.

Speaking as herself-as-performer but referring to herself-in-role, Anke explains that those wearing the sheets rendering themselves unrecognisable as individuals "don't want to talk with her [Anke-in-role]

but are hiding under sheets and under these she is then *zerdrückt/verrückt*." *Zerdrücken* means to crush, squash, flatten, to push or press until it has lost its form, until it is unrecognisable but its matter still existent. The word has the same root as *erdrücken*, a verb co-researchers have decided to use earlier in the workshop: to push or press something or someone into 'nothingness', to completely eliminate or kill. The very fears under which the people in the new country are hiding renders Anke in role as a refugee unrecognisable. They distort her identity and (hi)story. Her self-determination is lost in heteronomy. These fears do not utterly eliminate her but affect that she loses her form as a human being. She is becoming indistinguishable as a person. I am unable to decipher with certainty whether Anke is saying *zerdrückt* or a completely different word, *verrückt*. The latter can be translated as mad, especially as manifested in wild or aggressive behaviour. Literally, *verrückt* means relocated. *Rücken* is a verb that indicates a movement. It means to move or make space for someone or something. The prefix *ver-* indicates an extreme or excess of the root verb it attaches itself to. *Sprechen*, for example, means to speak, but *versprechen* means either to promise or to misspeak. Similarly, *fallen* means to fall, but *verfallen* means to fall into oneself, into one's own constituents, so, to decay or to be ruined. We can, then, look at *verrücken*, the root verb of *verrückt*, as an act of relocating, changing place and making space for someone or something to an extreme or excess. This extreme or excess distorts the action the verb *rücken* signifies into meaninglessness, and, in this way, into new meaning. Anke, in role as a family member, is being *verrückt* to an extreme. People's fears make her make space in an excessive manner. She is losing any sense of place, of an inner *tūrangawaewae*, of a space in which she can share, express, and define herself, her character, and her (hi)story, and in this way remain human. This excessive yielding, this denial of her own existence as a distinct human being with a (hi)story, this excess of non-space translates into space for 'the people', for those executing such acts *verrücken* in the first place.

As we have discovered by exploring Group A's performance, we understand *z/erdrücken/verrücken* as acts not of creating sheets, but of picking up, wearing, and maintaining these veils woven out of fears. Interestingly, we have found out that it is those very fears themselves that motivate and catalyse such acts. In feedback loops, then, fears of the unknown, economic instability, the unexpected and sudden set into motion acts of *z/erdrücken/verrücken*. The veils, however, do not make these fears disappear. Quite the opposite is the case. Group A's performance and our communal reflections propose that the

veils' very constituents are culminations of fears. They are woven together into veils of invisibility and anonymity. Together, they create confidence through conformity, unity, and community. Interwoven into high densities, they amplify each other, making it impossible to allow wearers to sincerely look through the sheets to see what is on the other side, and to recognise that the definition of 'outside' is a matter of perspective. The longer the characters are covered by these agglomerations of masked fears, the less they can breathe, the more they, quite literally, overheat - as you will discover soon. Pre-occupied with inhaling enough air and constantly managing this heat, wearers cannot look inward either. Fears echo in this chamber, filtering out potential alternative perceptions of the so-called outside before they even reach the veil's membrane. These amplified and multiplied fears catalyse repeated acts of *z/erdrücken/verrücken*: of adjusting sheets, putting them back on, of drawing closer and closer and merging into one block, one fog, one mass.

Even though it gets too hot to bear, too hard to breathe, these three characters continue to put the veils back on. They keep wearing them. They keep choosing them. Is the white noise they make just too persuasive in its ability to soothe, to shut down our anxious minds, to simplify the complexities of the now? Although the majority in this image is wearing the sheets, it is Anke-in-role who is made unrecognisable by them – and by the majority's repeated acts of *z/erdrücken/verrücken*. As Anke has just told us, it is the majority, not Anke-in-role, who “are hiding under sheets”, but is she who “is then *zerdrückt/verrückt*” underneath them. She is labelled *verrückt* - mad, aggressive, and wild. If they could see outward through the sheets and had enough air to breathe to look inward, could they not see that she is dis-placed? They could become conscious that she has become conveniently malleable lifeless material for fear-fuelled projections. The wearing of the sheet and its ensuing blindness relocates her identity as a human being into the realm of Otherness. She is now oriental, aggressive, wild. A stranger, a terrorist, a thief disguised as a beggar. Fine identifies *erdrücken* as an active act carried out by human beings as she reflects that “they [the family] are then *erdrückt* by the persons who are underneath there, staying anonymous, so to speak. That Anke is now, so to speak, *erdrückt* by the people who are underneath these sheets anonymously, so by them inside there.” Co-researchers notice that, even though the three veiled performers-in-role are scared, they are walking towards Anke. Anonymity and invisibility as a mass, Laura explains, mask people's fears; “Under the sheet they are, so to speak, anonymous, you know, or then no one sees them, you know.” Fine identifies *erdrücken* as an active act

carried out by human beings as she reflects that “they [the family] are then *erdrückt* by the persons who are underneath there, staying anonymous, so to speak. That Anke is now, so to speak, *erdrückt* by the people who are underneath these sheets anonymously, so by them inside there.” Anke is trying to free her leg from Tabea’s sheet, again and again. Like a snake, Christine’s sheet slides down Anke’s shoulder, covering her chest. Mia and Fine look at the sheets as fears in the wider context that the performances reveal. The veils, they conclude when reflecting on Group B’s Images of Transition Performance, ultimately effect “this *Erdrückung* [noun of *erdrücken*] of this life ... by this prejudice [plural].” Accumulations of prejudice, aggregations of bricks of thought, make a self-determined life impossible, for both Anke-in-role and those veiled into overpowering invisibility.

We want to experience more of the scene. Performers go back into the image in which we had frozen them. We freeze the moment in which the three ‘icebergs’ have moved in close towards Anke. They are reaching out for her. Anke has grabbed a corner of a sheet to quickly wrap it around her shoulder. She is looking up at the ‘iceberg’ on the right. Co-researchers notice that, even though the three veiled performers-in-role are scared, they are walking towards Anke. Anonymity and invisibility as a mass, Laura explains, mask people’s fears; “Under the sheet they are, so to speak, anonymous, you know, or then no one sees them, you know.”

Tabea lifts up her arms. The iceberg rises mightily. When she lowers her arms, the veil slowly sinks again. I can see it take a huge, slow breath. I am mesmerised by this sight. The veil seems to be alive. It seems to be alive, but only because it has an alive host to live on. Like a virus, it is incapable of prospering, replicating, and propagating without being inside the living cells of living organisms, cells it can infect and force to rapidly create identical copies of itself. As vectors who carry and transmit the virus’s genomes, fears enable the constituents of the veil – the fears’ own echoes - to produce, maintain, and reproduce themselves. Interestingly, vectors do not cause disease themselves but are hijacked by the virus to convey pathogens, illness-inducing genetic information, from one host to the next in order to escalate infection. Escalation promises survival. Yet, like a virus, the sheet merely has the potential for life. It is not able to create the energy and atoms to maintain itself. Isn’t change, then, possible because it is kept alive by living people? Can’t its potential for life be expunged if (potential) hosts grow immune to it? How do we share our immunity? The virus cannot be autonomous. Living people can be.

We watch the performance from the moment we paused last until the end. I freeze the final moment of the scene. The three 'icebergs', their arms stretched out in front of their bodies, have come so close that Anke is about to disappear within them. Anke, dressed in black, is looking up to the 'iceberg' on the left. She stands out against these white semi-transparent ghosts. Underneath the sheets, however, I can decipher shapes and shades just like Anke's. I can make out that there is dark clothing, there are heads, there are limbs, there is skin. If I do not let myself be intimidated by these veiled faceless creatures and the sounds they make, I am able to confidently suppose that inside, they are just like Anke. And just like me. I am entering the stage to sit down next to Anke. "I don't know who she is," I declare, giving Anke the chance to tell the story from a perspective of choice. I ask Anke if she can stand up now and go wherever she wants. Anke is cowering at the bottom of, almost underneath the three giant breathing icebergs. In the darkness, we stare onto the illuminated stage. We stare at Anke. Magnetised, we wait for an answer. "No." a thin voice eventually emerges from under Anke's breath. Silence. Gently, slowly, insecurely, I ask: "How come?" Abruptly, Christine blurts out, "Wow it's so warm in here!" "Yeah it's mega warm", Tabea shouts. All three veiled performers pull the sheets up and over their bodies and heads to free themselves. An eruption hits my field of vision, my ears, my skin. White fog exhausting overlapping waves of white noise is filling the stage, and it feels like it is surging out into the auditorium. Emma is struggling to free herself from her fog. The more she struggles, the more the layers of white noise multiply. While Tabea and Christine are moving to their respective sides of the stage, Emma's head pops up from underneath the sheet. She is now an iceberg with nothing but a bodiless head on its summit. The iceberg floats directly underneath Oma. Anke answers. "Because one is virtually wedged in! So, one has then only a distinct space left in which one can move because, virtually, already, because the people already, so, one is, you know, virtually, pigeonholed. And then one is in that pigeonhole and one can hardly get out of it again." Both Tabea and Christine almost simultaneously pick up their sheets, squeeze their ends together, hold them tight. The sheet can be some kind of floating and unruly fog but also a concrete object that can be held, handled, and examined. Its shape and use can be actively changed, but it takes deliberate acts. Anke goes on, "And that is why one is being *erdrückt*." Repeatedly, Anke's hands quickly move to her chest and throat. I can see it, feel it, hear it. The person she is embodying is running out of air to breathe. "And the self-doubt *ansetzen*, so one is virtually being *erdrückt* then by the outside fac... tors, influences, and then this self-doubt and

that is why one cannot move then, anymore.” It strikes me here that we still do not know who Anke-on-stage is. Anke-as-co-researcher? Anke-as-performer? Anke-in-role as fictional character or element? If so, is she embodying a family member seeking refuge or someone already calling the new country home? Does it matter? Is it not this honest indeterminacy, this overcoming of fixed roles that opens this moment up for critical exploration? Anke is choosing the word *ansetzen* here, which is surprising to me in this context. I suspect she is meaning to say *einsetzen* to express that self-doubt is *setting in*. Yet, she chooses the former, which can mean both to start drilling a hole and to accumulate something by taking in too much of it. In fact, Anke chooses the plural of ‘self-doubt.’ She is talking about a multiplicity of infiltrating debilitating thoughts.

Christine lets go of her sheet. It falls to the ground. The sheet falls much more quickly now that it is in a different shape, now that some of it is contained, been forced to come together, be still and encountered. It hardly lingers, it does not obstruct any vision, it does not make a sound. Anke carries on, “I believe one does not even want to, well, virtually, to free oneself, but one has this fear, you know, if one frees oneself from it, that it will get even worse.” Emma lifts her sheet and puts it over her head. She is an ‘iceberg’ again. We want to know from Anke-in-role who she is. “So, now rather as a foreigner or as a non-foreigner?” Anke asks back. Is Anke turning the tables here? Is she making being ‘foreign’ – whatever that is – the ‘norm’, hence saying ‘non-foreigner’? Emma pulls her sheet off herself. It rustles as it slowly sinks to the ground behind her. Christine has been rolling up her sheet slowly. As she is rolling the veil around and around itself, an accumulation of solid but light matter is growing out of her left hand. With each motion, the sheet’s floating tail is getting shorter and shorter, retreating from the stage into Christine’s hand. With certainty, Anke defines herself in role as she declares, “Well I come from the war country.” Tabea has now rolled up her entire sheet. It has become a solid sphere of white matter. Tabea looks down on the ground. She lets go of the plastic. It quickly falls onto the spot that Tabea had fixed with her gaze just before. It is no longer an overwhelming, ungovernable fog that unpredictably lashes out at anyone who speaks. I can hardly hear the unspectacular thud it produces. “It’s like this,” Anke tries to explain, “virtually, that you are wedged in there, and that is, you know, like, your comfort zone.” Again and again, Anke draws a tiny imaginary circle in the air. “And it is, you know, hard, there, out, to get out of there and one is, you know, scared, well, if human beings *erdrücken* one

now already, like this, what they, then, when one virtually does even more then, that they hold even more against one.”

Group B – Fine, Mia, Laura and Finn - get ready to perform on stage. Group A transforms into the audience. Oma is still hanging there, hanging in there, as the backdrop for the scene to come. For many seconds, the performance is motionless. Frozen in time, the stillness of the family selfie stares back at me. A sheet is scrunched up on the ground behind the performers. It glares harshly in the beams of light. My attention, however, is on the four performers in the front. They look happily into the camera of a cell phone, portrayed by a white mask that Finn is holding. Mia is cheekily kneeling on the ground, holding hands with Laura on her left and with Fine on her right. Abruptly, all four performers look up. It is as if their sight strikes and freezes them into this very moment. For a second, there is no movement. Then, all performers simultaneously look down on the ground. They slowly drift away from each other. Mia, still kneeling, is not letting go of Laura’s and Fine’s hands. Her arms are now entirely stretched out to both the left and the right. Laura is sinking into the ground. Worried, taken aback, she looks as if she does not know what is happening to her. Fine, still holding Laura’s hand, is slowly moving backwards. Mia is following her, crawling on her knees, and eventually rolling over into the sheet. Upon contact with Mia, the sheet starts to hiss. Fine lets Mia’s hand go. Meanwhile, Finn starts engaging in eye contact with Laura. He reveals he is not only holding one mask, but two masks stacked on top of each other. As Finn is separating the masks, he takes Laura’s arm and leads her to a standing position. She turns towards him. Finn is giving her one of the masks. She puts it on. Fine, kneeling on the ground next to Mia, pulls her jumper over her hair, shoulders and back. She clasps her hands in front of her chest, tilts her head down, and looks on the ground. Her lips touch the tips of her fingers. Mia pulls the sheet closer to herself, puts it around her shoulders first and then around her whole body. All I can see is her head floating above this white fog. Mia is stretching out both hands in front of her chest towards the audience. Both of her empty palms face upwards. Laura and Finn are now masked. They have walked behind Fine and Mia. They are stretching out their arms towards the audience. As they do, all of their hands mould themselves into guns. They point straight into darkness in which I am sitting with the rest of the audience. Freeze.

Emma recognises the family selfie and then “terrorists”, “beggars”, “believers”, “people who are praying”, people who “are left with merely trying to get a little bit of a spark of hope from somewhere.” How can Emma throw all these descriptors into one and the same pot without taking a breath, without the blink of an eye? Engaging in acts of Othering, Christine and Tabea outright and uncompromisingly label the armed persons in the scene as “racists.” To Christine, the threat in this scene comes from the people who already live in the new country. She is upset about the fact that even though it is plain to see that the begging refugees “have nothing,” the people in the new country threaten them. To Emma, the masks are a metaphor for belonging to the majority; “And [that] they, you know, hide underneath that majority, so underneath these masks.” There are two standing performers and two sitting performers on stage, and yet Emma talks of the majority. She identifies that being the majority is not about numbers alone, but about having the power to be anonymous, to stand, to have resources to dominate and control. Tabea concludes that it is “so many” people who hide under and as the majority. A co-researcher adds that people hide under the sheets and behind the masks because there is “fear, that one is scared to step out, to stand out from the mass, just going along and conforming with the others.” Anke suggests that the people under the sheets crave and find in the sheets safety/security. Emma underlines that safety/security is only possible “through the majority” and Christine stresses that it is only possible “when one is anonymous.”

Coupled with the notion of fear, the idea of *Sicherheit*, here translated as safety/security, sits at the heart of both Workshop One and B’s co-researchers’ analyses of the inner workings of right-wing populism and the Othering processes on which they live. The explorations that co-researchers of both workshops make suggest that people in the fictive ‘new country’ long for safety/security in a rapidly changing world that seems to have lost its stable order imagined as once existent. It no longer gives them an unquestionable and unshakeable sense of identity. A wall of thoughts can give a sense of stability but simultaneously impedes safety/security because it prevents people from recognising that the ominous patches they surmise are human beings just like them. The more weapons they point, the less they can see. Like the physical wall of the GDR, the wall of thoughts creates two allegedly distinct sides. For the people in the ‘new country’, the wall of thoughts serves as protection. In Anna’s words, it is a safety/security distance between victim and perpetrator, between the subject and the object of Othering. The fear to lose – post-GDR national identity and economic stability - constitutes an absence

of safety/security. This absence creates the idea that a safety/security distance is necessary. It creates it. No matter how close people are physically, there can be a seemingly insurmountable distance between them. The bigger the fear, the denser the wall, the louder the anger and the hate. Co-researchers' explorations propose that this happens because being regarded as weak by society is the most shameful possibility of all. Under veils of fear so thick they impede visibility of and empathy with both self and other, people crave safety/security, a state only possible, in Emma's words, "through the majority" because it affords anonymity. Being one with the masses, I can render invisible my own role in potentially unethical means to achieve a sense of safety/security.

As you are reading my (hi)stories of the workshops, do the recurring slashes and parentheses *verfremden* you from my writing? Do you have to choose one translation over the other? Which one do you pick? Why? Have they provoked you to draw wedges between the gears of your routine meaning-making patterns, bring the everyday to a halt, bring you to pause, look up, down and around to reflect on the relationship between story and history, between safety and security? Have you ever provoked yourself to wonder about the relationship between prejudice and advantage, and to ponder upon what it means to you to be 'one'?

I initially regarded my post-field work transcription and translation of the audio-visual data material as the mere preparation for my individual second stage analysis. Only during this phase do I come to realise that I cannot give you a definite translation of notions such as *Sicherheit*. As ATAR productively complicates research in the field and DE transforms learning objectives into puzzling experiences of *Verfremdung*, the act of translation does not clarify cases and channel its data into coded conclusions. By confusing acts of meaning making, it constructively challenges attempts of data analysis.

Sicherheit means both/either safety and/or security. German equates the two. While the terms safety and security are interrelated in the English language, the latter does distinguish between them. Security has the connotation of physical protection against deliberate external threats and criminal activities that criminals with malicious intent perpetuate (Springer, 2016). Walls, borders, and bubbles in the form of gated communities are established to achieve security. A person may feel they have achieved security by having a physical weapon available as defence against external threats. Safety, in contrast, evokes

a sense of protection against unintended threats and accidents. The term also has explicit emotional connotations. Safety responds to fear. Safety is the feeling of being protected from that which is feared to cause harm. If someone perceives themselves as capable of controlling and regulating that which is feared to cause harm, a feeling of safety ensues. Feelings of trust, belonging, connection, inclusion, and support in relation to other human beings constitutes safety. Safety cannot be quickly erected like a wall around a house. As a sense of inner certainty, it develops over time. Safety cannot be mechanically built around a home but rather must evolve from within. In this way, we can consider security as external and safety as internal.

Our ATAR-based research suggests that right-wing populist rhetoric in the German-speaking world lives on the idea that if we can guarantee security in the form of external borders that keep at bay human beings whose need is perceived as a deliberate threat with malicious intent, then internal emotional safety for those who already live in a 'new country' ensues. Paradoxically, there is a sense that the more we perceive refugees as deliberate threats with malicious intent, the more internal safety is possible. If I see refugees as human beings like you and I, I cannot trade them in as a solution that eliminates the lack of internal safety that characterises life in postnormal times. In other words, *Sicherheit* equates perpetual acts of warding off external threats – real or imagined deliberate acts that cause harm – with guaranteed emotional stability. If we engage in Othering and thus upkeeping of the image of threat, we are attempting to control what we fear to cause harm in the pursuit of internal safety: a stable identity, emotional stability. In the face of postnormality, however, guaranteed stable internal emotional safety is impossible. The clear-cut logic right-wing populist rhetoric purports stipulates that ostracising people ends such impossibility. It implicitly alleges that such exclusion is even necessary to achieve 'social justice' for the majority, 'the people.' The more thoughts-turned-weapons we accumulate and carry with and within us, the more we feel we have it both – security and thus safety. Co-researchers' critical explorations, then, are crucial reminders: the more weapons we point, the less we see. The more arms, the less humanity. The more we hold on, the more we fear.

Urgently, Tabea interrupts. She seems wound up; "And inherently, intrinsically one probably knows, eh, that that is wrong what one is doing because one wouldn't hide oneself otherwise. Because when one does something right, one wouldn't hide oneself." Emma adds, earnestly, "Or to even find, for oneself,

that that is okay, what one does there.” She suggests that the fears of people who already live in the new country emerge from uncertainty and insecurity/unsafety; “Yeah ... that THEY are in a new country, and everything is new, and one doesn’t know, you know, what one is supposed to do and then the only thing that one still has, you know, only these thoughts, maybe?” Emma adds, “Also that one doesn’t get help from the outside maybe?” Tabea and Emma propose that life is changing in the new country, life is changing for “one.” Life is changing for both people regarding themselves as part of ‘receiving nations’ and for people fleeing from their home country. Is help “from the outside” missing then? Research suggests that people from Germany or people who have lived here for a long time, especially in the former GDR with its distinct economic climate, feel left out, forgotten about, not cared for. Do they then turn to the AfD, is Pegida, whose rhetoric reflects, affirms, and amplifies their disappointment, their frustrations, their fears? Do they finally feel at home, no longer alone?

‘One’ is the conceptual translation of *man*. *Man* has no literal meaning. It strikes me that, throughout the majority of both workshops, co-researchers use *man* instead of a personal pronoun. Often, they use *man* in conjunction with the passive voice. Even when they speak about their own experiences from their own point of view, co-researchers tend to use *man*. While facilitating the workshops, this did not strike me as unusual. However, when I returned to the recordings once I was back in New Zealand, this frequent employment of *man* started to appear strange to me. As I revisit the workshops from the other side of the world, I am getting concerned about the constant self-distancing these young people undertake. I am equally struck as I watch myself speak. The more hours of recording pass, the more often I witness myself speak from my perspective as if it were not mine at all. *Man* creeps back into my vernacular. And then I remember. This used to be how I spoke every day. From my memory, it is quite normal to speak like this in German, at least where I grew up. And it seems to be the case in this part of the country too. The notion of *Amtsprache* flares up inside in my mind as I watch us on screen, as I read and re-read my transcripts and translate them back and forth. As I sit at my desk so far away in my Auckland office, this notion of “Bureaucratese” sends a chill down my spine. One of the major players in the organisation of the Holocaust, Adolf Eichmann, coined the term when asked to explain during the Nuremberg Trials how it was possible for him and many others to Other and subsequently organise the systematic killings of millions of human beings. The notion of *Amtsprache* suggests that a sterile speech that disconnects people from emotional engagement with their own thoughts and actions not only

distances people from the ethics and consequences of what they think, say, and do. Language that excludes “I” runs the risk of relocating responsibility from active individuals who choose to think, speak, and do to an implied faceless totality. If thought detaches from feeling, we inoculate ourselves against empathy. If ‘one’ thinks or says or does, I do not. If one thinks or says or does, none of us do. It just is what it is. *Weil Baum*. Watching us on screen huddle together in attempts to make sense of the imagery we have created, I become painfully aware of how not only language itself, but also ‘speech culture’ – the normalisation of certain expressions - restricts our options of thinking and feeling about, of being and acting in the world. To counter right-wing populist rhetoric, it seems crucial to facilitate and experience sustained moments of learning that connect thought and feeling by catalysing personal lived experiences.

One of the instances during which co-researchers use *man* occurs during Workshop Two. When we are reflecting on Group B’s Images of Transition performance, Tabea and Emma propose that the war in the fictional family’s home country drastically changes life in the ‘new country.’ Life, they suggest, is changing for “one.” They argue that postnormality is changing life for both people regarding themselves as part of ‘receiving nations’ and for people fleeing from their home country. The English conceptual translation of *man* suggests to me a kind of shared human experience, or humanity. Peculiarly, it proposes to be both some universal connectedness and a sense of individualistic isolation. How is this paradoxical simultaneity possible? If a neoliberal system relentlessly buries our potential and need for connectedness and empathy with allegedly auspicious individualism, does it not create fears of loss and danger? What does it take to excavate and revive this dying empathy? In a world order that erodes compassion and fills its defaced shell with a contorted rationality that enshrouds, immures, and exploits our urge to feel, a workshop such as this can be no more than an act of picking up a handful of displaced soil at a time, investigating the shapes of the rocks, the colours of the sand, the density of the clay it comprises. Drama workshops cannot change the world. We cannot overthrow a system that breeds greed and social injustice. It will keep producing its purportedly propitious promises. Can we try, however, to keep the memory of such acts of excavating and reviving empathy and solidarity as potent provocations for future actions of passionate *Zivilcourage* and critical thinking? Can they be acts of daring to turn our hands and letting our fragments of fear sink into the oceans that we, this archipelago of scattered hopes for safety, float within as we mindlessly circumnavigate our own axes, locked up in

the echoes of ubiquitous stories about an ominous axis of evil? Will these fragments eventually create paths between us, land that is us, to pause, look up, look down and around to see each other? To see these patterns, see these structures, see that we are blueprints of and for each other, upholding power by upholding powerlessness? Is this how we can cross these seas? Is this how we start to see more than some would like us to believe? Creating these paths, do these waves reveal more than meets the eye?

I ask the two sitting characters, depicted kneeling and begging in the last moment of the scene, if they could stand up and do what they wanted. Finn quickly interjects, "I believe we cannot explain before we resolve." I ask Finn to wait so we can talk to the characters first and continue to work on the interpretations we have developed so far. Finn urges to reveal a 'truth', to solve the 'riddle' of the scene and provide clarity and certainty - his version of the 'truth.' Our way of working challenges him to bear ambiguity and momentary powerlessness within the meaning-making process. Fine, sitting on the ground begging, seems insecure, uncertain, unconfident when asked to speak; "I would rather say that we don't have it." Fine looks over to Mia who is kneeling next to her on the floor. She continues, "I would say now that she, for example, couldn't stand up because she, you know, is simply being *erdrückt* by all the problems that she, that exist there." Mia adds, "all these negative comments, you know, that one, you know, isn't being accepted, so to speak, in this other country." Anke chimes in, using the plural form of prejudice, "Yes, the prejudice of the other people."

There is contention amongst co-researchers about the meaning of the image. About who is looking for warmth – for a sense of home in the form of safety/security - and how the act of covering oneself with a jacket may represent this. Co-researchers come to recognise the discrepancy between what performers are wishing to show and what the audience is reading. Trying to correct the audience's interpretations – maybe restoring the dignity of the characters – Fine bluntly exclaims, "But those are other roles, you know!" and Mia blurts out; "So, we are doing something different, you know!" Finn finally breaks his silence; "Yes!" In the audience, Christine shushes the performers. Emma hisses at them, "Shhh OUR interpretation!" Underneath a thin layer of subtle sarcasm, there is a sense of seriousness in her voice. It strikes me now that the dispute over meaning has created quite a lot of tension among the co-researchers. Anke suggests that Mia was thrown into the sheet by Fine. Abruptly Fine turns her

head to Mia and looks at her perplexed. This seems not to have been the story Fine wanted to tell. Stopping herself from blurting out, she puts her hand over her mouth and looks back at the audience. Fine is bearing another person's interpretation of the images we are creating. After a few seconds, she cannot help herself from shouting at the audience: "You have got a completely different interpretation than us!"

Performers are burning to tell us about the intentions behind their performance. Laura is moving both hands up to her head next to her ears. She is indicating how difficult it is for her to bear not articulating her own meaning, not having her voice heard. Performers loudly and dynamically playfight over who will talk to the audience about their scene first. Finally, Finn explains, "So, we were, from the beginning till the end, the family. So ---" The audience is perplexed. I can make out sounds of bewilderment and confusion. "Shit situation," Tabea nods. The audience is muttering. Mia, still sitting on stage, has had enough. "You have to listen!" she shouts at the audience. Finn continues, "Yes, er, at the end was, so the pose at the end, it was, you know, someone other than us." While Finn is talking, Mia complains to Fine about the audience's meaning-making process. In an attempt to appease Mia, Fine tries to explain to Mia that they have to accept that the audience read their scene differently. Finn continues to speak. "We had tweets, that we are terrorists and stuff, what isn't true, of course" Mia is lifting her right arm, stretched out towards Finn, as if she is about to interject. She changes her mind and lets it sink frustratedly. Finn carries on, "but that is, you know, just *writing around*²² and, you know, Laura and I depicted that---" Laura interrupts Finn: "We are, so to speak, these people---" Despair and urgency emerge from Laura's voice as she continues to speak: "----these terrorists, who now one knows" Laura's anguish seems to fill the room like the expanding white fog. Both are invisible, but I can feel them, feel them compete for my attention. "So, like ...", Laura stares at us in distress. "People have no idea WHO WE ARE!"

Fights for attention ensue. Pleas and demands to be heard. Fine slams the floor with both palms. I ask co-researchers to listen to each other and have one person talk at a time. Mia explains, "in the beginning we were the family, we took the picture, then we separated, so to speak, because on the one side, you know, er, we match this prejudice and, you know, become/are these terrorists, and on the other side,

²² = ideas and assumptions that people write and circulate

you know, are trying to, er, build something up for themselves” Mia is using the plural of *prejudice*, indicating an accumulation of prejudice. Does Mia’s experience suggests that the separation – the *Sprung* that tears the family apart – happens not because of war in the home country, of a bomb, but because the family is represented, by those who have the power to do so, as a source of terror and (financial) insecurity?

Laura is struggling to free herself from the imagery of terror and violence she is now part of. All of a sudden, she fervently blurts out in despair; “It is these advantages!” Laura is saying *Vorteile*, which means advantages. Laura does not utter the second syllable of the German word *Vorurteile*, which translates into prejudice in the plural form. This gap in Laura’s utterance creates an entirely different word with a new meaning. In German, this difference in meaning can easily slip away from the speaker’s and listener’s consciousness and sidestep critical exploration. The omitted syllable does not call out for attention in the fast flow of words and the overlap of sounds that occupy the space. Laura’s statement can easily be brushed off as a slip of the tongue. Translated into English, however, the new meaning Laura’s utterance creates radically demands attention. It makes strange the expected and familiar. Advantage and prejudice are very differently sounding words. They cannot be mistaken for one another. They cannot be repudiated as a mere slip of the tongue.

Laura does notice herself that she has just said advantages instead of prejudice (plural). She utters a sound of realisation. She lies down on stage exhaustedly. She quietly and tiredly laughs at herself. She puts her hand on her forehead. These subsequent actions, along with Laura’s sound of realisation, indicate she intended to say prejudice. So, the context of Laura’s statement, and my knowledge of what she and her peers will say later during this moment, allow me to gauge that Laura’s word choice may be a parapraxis, or Freudian slip. Parapraxes originate in the preconscious. I understand the latter as thoughts not currently conscious but capable of becoming conscious. As slips of the tongue, parapraxes can expose unconscious ideas, positions, and feelings. Paradoxically unintentionally and purposefully at the same time, Laura unearths unconscious, unheard knowledge. This knowledge ultimately springs from her very own lived experience. It is her experience of both her own lifeworld and empathetic identification with the story’s characters, interwoven with the embodiment of the reality of right-wing populist rhetoric disguised as fiction.

Laura is still on stage. Pleading to be heard, she emotionally exclaims “but these advantages are, right--” and “but these advantages are, you know---” The timing of her utterances would define her as ‘Laura, the performer.’ The scene has ‘officially’ ended. We are talking about it. However, the affect-laden embodied liveness of our discussion extends the performance of transition into the now. Talking about the image of this reality becomes talking with, and as, the reality of this image. Laura is speaking on stage. She is still occupying the minority position of performer wedged into the image on stage. At the same time, I cannot unsee her in role as the family member-turned-abstract imagery of horror and terror, and I cannot undo the role I am playing in the reality that is unfolding. Finn interrupts Laura. It seems that he is attempting to correct her choice of words. He shouts out; “Prejudice!” Laura, however, determinedly and confidently ignores Finn’s interjection. Despairingly and defiantly at the same time, she goes on to exclaim, “that they are taking jobs away, for example, you depicted now, right, that they have no money and live on the street---”

Laura has continued to speak determinedly even though she is now consciously aware that she equates accumulations of prejudice with advantages. Consciously choosing to do so, Laura throws light on the inner workings right-wing populist rhetoric. She suggests that the prejudice of “taking our jobs away” and “having no money” and “living on the street” is an advantage for some. “Ur” is the seemingly tiny two-word syllable whose omission turns accumulations of prejudice into advantages. “Ur” on its own can be translated as ‘primary’ or ‘primordial’. *Vorurteile* (accumulations of prejudice), this exploration suggests, comes first, comes before *Vorteile* (advantages). Prejudice paves the way for advantages. It is its prerequisite. No prejudice, no advantage. This is arguably the case for both politicians who make a very comfortable living from right-wing populist propaganda, and for the people they impress. For the few, prejudice indirectly effects economic benefits. For the many, prejudice grants the auspicious promise of belonging, identity, superiority, and simple grand narratives that buffer the lack of certainty, safety, and clarity that postnormal times tear into our everyday lives.

I come to deconstruct this moment because the act of translation demands me to pause, step back, listen again, and think again. The act of translation threw a light so glaring onto the millisecond gap between the syllables of Laura’s words that this crack could not but estrange me from my own, always

already somewhat normalised and thus expected meaning-making process. The act of translation pries open the seemingly mundane, the everyday, the already silenced. It gives a parapraxis the stage it should have – that of meaningful possibility for understandings that dare to look beyond the surface.

“It is these tweets!” Finn exclaims, and in his voice I can hear utter despair. Does he despair because we have not explicitly expressed that we are conscious of the role the posts play in the emerging (hi)story of the family? Finn’s arm is reaching out into the darkness, reaching forward toward us, the audience. It looks like he is attempting to pass his experience of being wedged into the world of the scene over to us. “It is these tweets!” he repeats exhaustedly. His tense arm is still stretching out into the darkness of the auditorium. In distress, Finn turns toward Fine and Mia. Laura notices that she has just said advantages instead of prejudice. She puts her hand on her forehead. Now lying on the stage, she quietly laughs at herself. Her laughter sounds drained and worn out. Mia turns to the audience loudly and defensively. “We depicted this prejudice, you know!” As outrage and protest grow, the boundary between prejudice and the real, between representation and lived experience blurs. “But if”, Laura gently starts again, “but these advantages are, right, ---” But Laura does not stand a chance to be heard amidst these wrought up, wound up performers and audience members whose passion merges into one force that catapults their own words into an arena of contestation. Snippets of sound and syllables tumble over each other. Somehow, Laura finally catches a moment of silence. Determinedly, she begins to fill it. “But these advantages are, you know ---” Finn corrects her immediately. “Prejudice!” he shouts out. Deeply stirred, Laura ignores Finn’s interjection. As an amalgam of despair and defiance carries her voice, Laura exclaims, “That they are taking jobs away, for example, you depicted now, right, that they have no money and live on the street---” Fine interrupts Laura. She is upset. She points to the posts. As if defending herself she agitatedly exclaims, “Yes, that’s what it said as well, you know!” Fine is getting emotionally involved in how representation has turned her character into terrorists and beggars, and how she herself has been part of this the construction of this representation. She is upset about how the audience did not grasp and take into consideration the posts as the blueprints for this construction.

Finn has waited patiently to speak. “But, all of this has something ... er” he explains, “in the end, all of it has something to do with those tweets. So, there, we are depicting that, you know, these tweets we

chose." Silence. Contemplation. Some whispers. Co-researchers are exhausted from the storm their engagement enabled them to create. Laura looks at the posts. She contemplates, "I'm saying, now, THEY have the power," Anke nods, "I reckon they have the power, so to speak, how, who these two are in the heads of other people." With a voice imbued with sadness, Anke adds, "But not who we really are." Laura nods, "That's how one imagines that, but that isn't our real face."

Fine picks up the sheet and lets it go again. "This here," she explains, "this is what was there already, lying there from the beginning on, we have that, so, it didn't have anything at all to do with their (hi)story." While Fine might be intending to emphasise that her group has not given the representation of the sheet on the ground much thought during their devising process, she also proposes that the veil has nothing to do with the fictional family's (hi)story, who they are and who they have been. The family did not create the sheet. The veils of fear do not find their root in these characters' identity, culture, or behaviour. She explains, "Or also this mask, the mask we have, you know---" Finn continues Fine's sentence, "---only, just because." Fine nods, "Yes that was just because." She seems upset. She seems to feel the urge to defend herself. She tries to clarify vehemently that she did not do what the audience read into her scene. She has to convince us that she did not push Mia into the sheet. Mia fell. Fine-in-role is not an aggressor. Something unexpected happened. Are Finn and Fine becoming aware that the signifiers they had placed into their performance without carefully considering how they might link to the family's (hi)story catalyse the construction of signifieds they have no control over, even though they are the performers of the scene?

Co-researchers are experiencing what it is like to be read by others, to be defined by others who have the power to do so. Here, it is the audience who is asked to talk and the performers who are asked to listen. They are experiencing how seemingly random, ordinary events, objects, moments, movements, gestures, facial expressions, bodies are defined into whatever the person(s) in power are compelled to define them into. Finn returns to the idea that certain discourses transform the family from people like you and me into terrorists and stealing beggars. In role, Finn becomes aware of the specific and very limited and limiting discourses social media makes available and allows to develop. He is aware that the representation of his character is not an arbitrary construction in a vacuum, but originates in fabricated structures, distinct discursive patterns contingent on specific social contexts; "So, through

these tweets we, also, you know ... changed." A hardly audible sadness reverberates in his voice. Finn sounds defeated, "It ... *makes us so.*"

We read the last pages of the book together. Laura is surprised that the story has not ended yet. We find out about politicians opposed to allowing Clara, Tobi, and Me to enter the country because they have not registered in accordance with their policies. We find out that Me would do anything to keep her and her siblings together, and to get out of wherever they are stuck. As we figure out that Mama and Papa might have died on the journey, Laura's mouth drops. I can see and hear and feel recurring waves of lament impossible to put into letters. I experience young people who are both deeply deflated and indignant at the same time. Mia wants to hold the book again. I see her sit there, in our circle, holding it. I can feel a sense of refusal to accept the course of the story and consequently the history of the real world that is unfolding right in front of our eyes, and, in this country, right in front of our doorstep. If coupled with indifference, inertia, and apathy this refusal is a problematic stance. However, does it not have an abundance of powerful potential to catalyse critical-democratic citizenship and moral courage if people have a forum to come together to provoke each other and themselves into agency, action born out of the synthesis of empathy and critical thinking? After all, the lament and outrage I am hearing here is protest against, and opposition to, a world order that complacently produces social inequality.

Sounds of lament continue. Gently, Finn speaks again. "You know, for the refugees that is probably..." Finn looks around the circle. Carefully, he mumbles, "reality." Laura cannot bear the thought. Defiantly, she protests, "For SOME. There are also good endings!" Another voice cries out, "For most!" Christine nods, "Yes, for most ... but---" She shakes herself. Is she trying to shake off (hi)story to replace it with her illusion or is she trying to elude her disbelief in her own utterance? Around me unfolds another upsurge of mumbling and lament of voices simultaneously subdued and outraged. As if trying to soothe the others, Finn speaks: "Well, I see it like this---" Sounds of lament drown out Finn's words. A space opens up to park the ratio, the great old German *Vernunft*, and defy all these unspoken 'no emotion policies' that took me so aback today and twelve days ago. Co-researchers make time and hold space for each other to mourn, to grieve, to be human in the face of inhumanity. Out of the lament, Laura's voice emerges; "That is so sad when one imagines that they are running around alone on the streets."

Laura's voice cracks. She is staring on the ground. "Just like the three children." Laura's response to Finn's attempts of comfort indicates that her imagining does not stop just because we have shut the book. To Laura, the refugees she tells us about, those lost in the streets, are not the three characters from the book. They are *like* them. Laura's words suggest that she is sad for those refugees who exist outside of the fiction, inside her own reality. The ones she never met, of whose existence and suffering she has no proof. In a moment, Laura will realise how "[t]hat does surely happen in reality too!", an exclamation that carries a sense of genuine lament and surprise. Laura might encounter news and numbers about refugees on a daily basis when she turns on the TV or opens Facebook. The gravity of human suffering, however, seems to hit home for her now. Laura's engagement suggests that the vicarious felt in-role experience of searching for refuge and the out-of-role witnessing of other characters, as well as the minority position perspectives experienced as a performer, may have provoked her relationship to the issue of forced migration and xenophobia to change, to move into an affective realm of recognition and consciousness. This relationship is no longer one between Laura and a ubiquitous detached normality. Rather, it is one between her and a personal, painful, and changeable lived reality whose acceptance as 'normal' is ethically wrong.

Laura is caught up in sorrow, consternation, and growing anger; "The thing is they could have actually had some kind of a future!" Emma is stuttering, trying to explain to us that the children are probably not giving up because their parents would have wanted them to be happy. Christine too starts stumbling across her own words as she expresses how unbearable it is for her not to know the missing "real" ending of the family's (hi)story, not to know what is happening with them "now." Mia tries to console the others; "Can also be, eh, that Mama and Papa are waiting for them." The ensuing silence is a sobering response. Another loud, passionate discussion surges up. Co-researchers are upset about the parents' possible death, or rather, the ultimate uncertainty about their deaths. Gently, as if trying to comfort Laura and the other co-researchers, Finn says, "I think it's good that it doesn't have a happy ending." Finn makes explicit connections to the real world. He does so to soothe the outrage, sadness, and upset his peers express towards the (hi)story. Into the lament of his fellow co-researchers, Finn carefully suggests that the (hi)story of *Home & Away* is "probably reality" for refugees in the real world. As he gently attempts to comfort those around him, he proposes that it is good that the story does not offer any relieving closure, despite the injustice and the tragedy; "Otherwise one couldn't show it, you know, as it

is. If it were a happy ending one would think, oh yeah, everything, you know, is always all good. I reckon it shows ... NOW." Rather than attempting to comfort his peers by denying the injustice and the tragedy in the fiction, Finn tries to console his fellow co-researchers by doing the opposite: by highlighting their existence of injustice and the ensuing tragedy in the real world. Finn's strategy proposes a mentality that is marked by critical consciousness and agency. It suggests that he is aware that awareness makes possible agency: if we are critically aware of the injustices in the world, we can engage in little interventions within our everyday lives that contribute to social change. Finn emphasises the importance of sincerely naming the state of the world as it is, and to share this process. Finn is challenging complacency, and he is aware of what is happening "NOW." The word of his choice suggests that he is aware of what is happening in the specific social context of his very own lifeworld, and that this situation requires urgent action.

I try to ask people if they would like to write to one of the politicians mentioned in the book. The first three words of my question hardly exit my mouth. A silence hits my senses. I backpedal. We sit in silence. Laura, her eyeless white mask still in her hand, stares straight ahead. Lost in thoughts, she moves the mask back and forth underneath her head. Into the silence, Laura says very quietly, yet defiantly, "No."

Silence.

"What is it?" I hear a soft voice. After a few seconds, Laura breaks it. Her words are gentle, genuine. "I'm so sorry for that." For the first time in my life, I actually *hear* this apology. I hear the German words for what they are. For the first time, I can *feel* what they mean. "That causes me so much suffering", Laura is whispering, actually, literally, and I can see, I can feel this pain, this sorrow in the way she sits there, on the ground, in our circle, the emptiness in her face, struck by disbelief and a deep sense of knowing at the same time. Gently, another voice emerges; "What for, then?" And another; "What is it?" Laura's empathetic and emotional response seems to be puzzling to some other co-researchers. Maybe their sudden concern for Laura has made them forget about the story. There is a sense of fear that something horrible has happened in the here and now, something that Laura feels she is responsible for or somewhat involved in. As she speaks now, Laura's voice carries a tone of upset and gentleness

at the same time. She looks at us as if we were slow on the uptake; “For the children!!!” One last time, there is another upsurge, another wave of lament. It is impossible for me to decipher distinct words. These sounds of empathy are more powerful than the hissing waves that relentlessly crashed into and tried to dominate our every word earlier today. Out of the lament, Laura’s voice emerges; “That does surely happen in reality too!” I see her face and I hear a penny drop.

Co-researchers write a letter to the fictional Minister of Immigration together. Mia is tucking herself in with a sheet and lying down downstage. Throughout the rest of the workshop, Mia stays tucked in under the sheet, sometimes freeing parts of her body from it, sometimes letting herself disappear under it. It looks like a warm comfortable blanket.

Dear Minister of Immigration,

I would like to my upset regarding the list which all refugees (including my friend Clara Collin) should have signed in to receive a residence permit. Don’t you find it unfair too that the future of these human beings depends on some list which they weren’t even informed about? Isn’t it cruel to take the outlook away from these human beings and to destroy their life? Should we provide human beings, who are here because of our weapons, no care and shelter? I would be happy if you think about this and give refugees an honest chance.

Kind regards

The letter to the Minister refers allegorically to the questionable role Germany’s exports of arms have played in the Syrian civil war. Here, co-researchers argue that Me, Clara, and Tobi “are here because of our weapons” and demand that the Minister and her government will take responsibility. Interestingly, their chosen personal pronoun – “our” – suggests that co-researchers themselves are taking responsibility as well. They construct themselves as part of the act of delivering weapons. They see themselves as an active part of politics and political decision making. Their demand for the government who represents them to take responsibility becomes a personal matter they cannot ignore. Similar to Anna, who throughout the Hot Seating strategy constructed her and her peers as part of the ‘new country’, Workshop Two’s co-researchers choose to identify as part of the ‘new country’, even though, in the fiction, the people of the ‘new county’ have so far exhibited questionable thinking and behaviour. They transpose their real-life majority position onto the fictional world. They seize the opportunity the fiction opens up to stand up for and initiate change.

We come together one last time. Emma reflects on the difference between the responses the news and the workshop elicit in her. She compares her experience of imagining herself as the fictional family, assuming a minority position perspective, and deconstructing these experiences with her encounters with the news; “Well, like, somehow, by putting oneself into these, into there, so I dunno, when one listens to the news, then one maybe does that too every now and then, but this is more ... it is more intense to do this and then to go through this, how one feels, what one lives through, there.” To Christine, the fate of the family in *Home & Away* does not seem so far removed from her own life after all. Christine seems perplexed as she explains, “Also real intense, like, so at some points it was really like where one could put oneself into someone else’s shoes really well, like, and one thinks to oneself Whoa how could this happen to me, like.”

Like Anna in Workshop One, Laura calls for the social imagination. She connects her own real-world experiences with her explorations provoked by the fiction as she thinks beyond herself and her experience of the fiction. Laura suggests that people who engage in xenophobic Othering processes should experience the workshop; “I find too when one always, well, I sometimes hear, you know, like, people who are against the foreigners who come from Iran and stuff and always speak against that and stuff, if THEY did the workshop and saw once what that is REALLY like to be like this, then ... to hope that one will be accepted and stuff and what they then give the foreigners, I mean, what kind of a feeling and stuff, then” Laura goes on to share that “[i]n the beginning I thought, like, ‘Yes, it’s pretty bad but then it got somehow more and more intense and, I mean, then more and more happened that, I mean, also if one were in the situation, would destroy one or ... burden one ... and it is, you know, it is, you know, no (hi)story, it happens, you know ... really.” Laura tells us that in the workshop, she thought the (hi)story is “pretty bad”. Then, she describes, the workshop “got somehow more and more intense and, I mean, then more and more happened that, I mean, also if one were in the situation, it would destroy one.” The workshop, culminating in the intensity of the confrontations with the Images of Transition scenes, seems to have had a profound impact on Laura. Describing the effects of Othering as ‘destruction’ of a human being, she expresses a felt understanding of the dire consequences of xenophobia. Laura *affectively* recognises that “it is, you know, it is, you know, no (hi)story, it happens, you know ... really.” A personal tone resonates with Laura’s “it would destroy one”. Even though she uses “one”, I can sense she is speaking from her own perspective, about herself. As I have discussed,

this is actually very commonplace in the German language and Germany's normalised 'speech culture.' Laura's utterance, then, suggests that she cannot strictly divorce someone else's suffering from her own life anymore.

Finn emphasises that beauty and enjoyment were integral elements of his workshop experience; "Well, I found it, in any case, very beautiful. It was fun too." As I remember co-researchers' despair, grief, and indignation that fills my memory of this rainy-sunny day in May 2019, I am once again reminded of the crucial role of the aesthetic and ensemble-building in DE endeavours. Without a deep sense of beauty, enjoyment, and togetherness, open receptiveness and genuine engagement in the unsettling (hi)stories of postnormal times seems close to impossible.

Everyone has left. Only Anke and Mia linger around the stage. While I start packing up, they climb on stage and approach the book. Kneeling, they look at all the pages again. Their heads drop further and further to the floor to be as close to the images as possible. One big taniwha of contorted bodies takes me by surprise as I turn around to collect the next sheet. While Anke and Mia dive deeper and deeper into the story, Oma calmly hovers above them, still adorned with all those green leaves of hope. Melting icebergs and abandoned masks are scattered around the space. As soon as I re-enter the space after seeing off Finn and Emma, Anke and Mia exclaim, "How did the parents die." The full stop I can hear in their utterance carries a tone of urgency, of reproach, of aghast exasperation. I walk towards Mia, Anke, and Oma, picking up a sheet on the way. "In the story?" I ask, or rather, I anxiously clarify. As if speaking out of one mouth, Anke and Mia simultaneously exhale a stern "Yes." I pick up another sheet. "So," I begin, "the father was---" I throw the sheet up in the air to shake it out. It rears up one last time, hissing, crackling. I continue to walk. Wide-eyed, Mia nods before I can even finish my sentence; "Stabbed." Disillusioned, Anke stares at me, "Stabbed." I come to a halt in front of Anke, Mia, and Oma. "Stabbed," I hear myself say, and it feels like I am admitting something, and I feel horrible doing so. "There was a fight over..." I mumble, and I cannot believe, I cannot bear my own words; "A fish." Mia and Anna stare at me. A long veil hangs off my arm. Anke holds her head by the temples. I start to roll up the sheet. "It only says that it has been eight months since the mother died," Anke mumbles. She stands up. Mia is not moving. "But one doesn't know WHAT happened." Anke whispers. Oma is still an unyielding silent presence. "It looks so intense, when you see THESE," she says as she stares at Me

on the open ocean, “and then the ones one sees in the beginning.” We stare at the family portrait. “Yes.” Anke replies, sitting back down on the stage floor next to Mia.

Silence.

“This is her there, no?” Mia asks softly. She gently touches a spot on the page. I feel helpless.

Mia flips through the pages. Anke sits with her. They watch the images run their course. Mia returns to the family selfie, turns the page, pauses on the open ocean. Mia goes back to the family selfie, lets the pages pass through the gaps between her fingers like gravity cannot but let sand pass through an hourglass. Mia pauses. A blood-smeared page stares back at her. Again. Mia flips through the pages. Anke lifts herself up. She is hovering over the book. I give the girls space. I continue to pack up. The melting icebergs that hiss at anyone who dares to touch them transform into nothing but small white balls of solid matter that hardly make a sound. Mia turns the last page. She closes the book and turns it over so that the cover is facing upward. Facing Oma. I can hear Mia whisper something into Anke’s ear. Some utterance that includes the word now. “Okay” Anke whispers back. Mia nods, “We can go.” Mia gets up. It is as if she is standing up for the first time. One of her feet abruptly slams the floor. She is rubbing her knees a few times to get rid of any dust, dirt, residue from the stage. Anke too stumbles off the stage and walks back into the safety of a Tuesday afternoon drama club. Mia walks over to the letter and kneels down in front of it, reads it, one last time. A long time passes.

Mia nods, “We can go.”

Oma and I are alone. Scattered around us are the melted icebergs and white faceless masks. I collect the last bits and pieces and return them to my big green suitcase. I pick up the last melted iceberg. Upon my touch, it roars into the silence, but it cannot chase it away. As I walk forwards, it bends backwards. While I am rolling it up into yet another small plastic ball, it starts to hiss, to scream, to wail. It does not want to disappear. It does not want to lose its shape. It does not want to give up its existence. The closer to me it comes, the quieter it becomes, the less it shouts into this empty space. It can bear the silence.

I enter the stage. On my tiptoes, I touch Oma's shoulders. She gracefully sinks from up high down into my arms. Green leaves are rustling in my ears. Words of hope wave at me as we walk over to my suitcase. I bid her farewell. We can go. I place the yellow-green coat into my suitcase, and for a moment I see it sparkle. I pick up the letter, lay it on all those leaves of hope, and finally pull the broken zip. Flashes of a face appear in front of the camera. Scattered glimpses. Brown eyes, brown hair, white skin. I've never really seen myself that clearly.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the previous two chapters, I have offered reflective-analytic accounts of two implementations of my DE workshop. In this chapter, I will discuss five themes emerging from these explorations. These are; the presence of a seemingly paradox simultaneity of calls for humanity and acts of Othering, co-researchers' analyses of fear as the basis of the inner workings of right-wing populism, co-researchers' sustained acts of 'thinking beyond' and making connections to the real, and the methodological possibilities opened up by the creative process of translation. The focal point of this chapter is the fifth theme arising from my reflective retellings of the workshops. This consideration suggests that the reconceptualisation of the DE workshop as a postdramatic performance event of autopoietic feedback loops can point us towards a reimagination of the notion of metaxis. However, I will begin by briefly summarising the four first mentioned themes since their interplay with the findings discussed in this chapter suggest useful insights into how CME-inspired DE initiatives can respond to right-wing populism in postnormal times.

A Seemingly Paradox Simultaneity: Calls for Humanity and Acts of Othering

Throughout the workshops, co-researchers engage in both calls for humanity and repeated acts of Othering. For example, Anna often labels people sympathising with right-wing populist rhetoric as evil individuals with flawed brains. At the same time, she frequently proclaims that there are no 'bad people.' Similarly, she and other co-researchers repeatedly, directly and indirectly, consider that some refugees can be considered 'illegal', 'dangerous', or potentially 'overcrowding' the country. However, they also argue for a universal humanity, emphasising that 'we are all one.' There seems to be an overlap of thoughts and feelings at play. This layered doubling seems to be based on the concurrent craving for humanity and urge for a simple, clear-cut answer for inhumane thought processes and questionable behaviours. One does not exclude the other, but fragments of each superimpose each other onto one another. The DE workshops address such a seemingly paradox simultaneity by enabling engagement in empathic observation and identification as well as the conscious deconstruction of bodies, objects,

spaces, and utterances as signs. In this way, the workshops give co-researchers the chance to safely challenge their very own assertions and impugn habitual responses and lines of reasoning.

The workshops provoke co-researchers to analyse the inner workings of right-wing populism on their own terms. This analysis-in-action does not take place in an emotionally detached manner. Rather, co-researchers make personal and thus affect-laden connections to their own and each other's interpretations of (moving) images evoked by right-wing populist rhetoric. By constructing walls of thoughts and veils of fears as two central metaphors, they discover that an intricate complex of fear is underlying the Othering processes that sit at the heart of right-wing populist strategies and sentiment. Co-researchers argue that this web of fear emerges when people *feel* threatened - which does not necessarily mean that an objectively identifiable threat is present. Co-researchers' explorations suggest that the compound of fear consists of fears to lose one's identity and the life one has worked hard for to obtain. It is a fear of being abandoned and of not belonging, of economic instability, the unknown, the unexpected, and sudden change. Here, the socio-historical, political, cultural, and economic context in which the workshops take place – the former East Germany thirty years after reunification with the West – reverberates into the here-and-now. Co-researchers propose that the tangled composite of fear defines refugees as a threat. They suggest that fear is never isolated but happens in distinct contexts, as they make personal connections to their reflections on how expressing emotions such as sadness, disappointment, and fear are seen in their own lifeworlds as a weakness and essentially a social deficit. Consequently, they suggest, fear is expressed in *Schadenfreude*, envy, anger, hate, violence, and/or brutality.

No Fear, No Hate: The Inner Workings of Right-Wing Populism

Co-researchers explore that the Othering processes underlying right-wing populist rhetoric is possible due to accumulations of rigid thought patterns that effect the creation of a majority group who defines the existence and representation of others as Others. These aggregations are upheld by cravings for an allegedly attainable stable sense of safety, security, identity, and meaning as well as distinct relations of power between those engaged in Othering processes. In turn, these are not only sustained by, but also enable, a complex interplay between compliance and promises of belonging to the 'inside', of a respected and powerful 'self', of a safe and indestructible 'home.' As the distance between the subject

and object of Othering, such amassments are means of purported protection. As boundaries, they serve as a safety/security distance because acts of coming close to a person and perceiving them as human shatter worldviews that promise soothing orderliness and simple solutions. Co-researchers discover that mere thoughts can turn into weapons that render others unrecognisable as human beings. Build-up of fears and prejudice inhibit people from encountering others and engaging in self-reflection. In feedback loops, these accumulations motivate and catalyse new cycles of Othering. Woven together, they have the ability to alleviate our anxious minds and simplify the complexities of the now. As those layers of interwoven strands cover people *into* an anonymous, invisible chanting mass, they mask, mute, and transmute people's individual fears into confidence through visceral performances of conformity, unity, and community. The accumulations of fear-turned-prejudice are the constituents of their own echo chambers, in which iterations and reiterations of their own amplifications make it impossible to sincerely see others as human beings with their own distinct, (hi)stories and hopes for the future. In these filter bubbles of everyday postnormality, they make it impossible to recognise that the definition of 'outside', 'Other', and 'away' is a matter of perspective.

Sustained Acts of 'Thinking Beyond': Making Connections to the Real

Frequently, co-researchers think beyond themselves, beyond the fictional (hi)story, and beyond the time and space of the workshop. They connect their workshop experiences to distinct real world contexts and elements, namely Germany, the German Democratic Republic and the Berlin Wall, the AfD, England, the Mediterranean, Syria, Donald Trump, Adolf Hitler, *ressentiments* against people from Iran, and the dubious role Germany's exports of arms have played in the Syrian civil war. Anna reflects on Notre Dame and Heidi Klum as metaphors for structural inequality and neoliberalism. Co-researchers make connections to the plight of refugees in the real world and discover that 'foreignness' and normality are relative. Co-researchers exhibit an awareness of the existence of refugees and xenophobia and the need for urgent action in their own lifeworlds. They challenge complacency. They call not only for the fictional Minister of Immigration, but also for unnamed and undefined, yet real people outside the workshop space to engage in empathy and the social imagination. They passionately demand that people affectively and critically position themselves in relation to social justice issues and take action. They recognise the importance of challenging the majority to engage in these processes and working together towards social justice as an ensemble. They have empowering, positive

experiences helping the three fictional refugees during the Hot Seating strategy, after which Anna transposes her experience into an urgent provocation and personal responsibility to help refugees in the real world. Co-researchers also exhibit an awareness of the importance of critical consciousness and agency. For example, Finn's behaviour proposes that he is conscious that awareness paves the way for agency. Co-researchers also contrast the DE-provoked visceral experiences of shock, sadness, and anger about the suffering caused by exclusion and xenophobia in both the fictional and the real world with their emotionally detached responses to the news. They interweave the fictive and the real so that the border between these two realms shows itself as permeable. It slowly dissolves itself into a third ephemeral space in which co-researchers can safely test out and enunciate new perspectives and understandings of both the fictional and the real world in a no penalty zone. This space gives us the possibility to explore how the fictive - how we encounter, create, and (re-)tell stories - creates the real, and how this reality, in turn, influences our storying of the world. In a post-truth world, this is a crucial insight to make.

***Verfremdung* as Methodology: The Creative Process of Translation**

My attempts to make sense of German words in the English language indicate the possibilities for analysis inherent in the creative process of translation. Rather than merely constituting the preparation phase for my second stage analysis, it is an integral part of it. In the spirit of Benjamin's (1996) notion of Translation as Art (TA), the previous two chapters suggest that the playful exploration of the relationship between *das Gemeinte* and *die Arts des Meinens* in the ephemeral in-between space in which two sign systems create their own moments of metaxis destabilises meaning by estranging signifiers from their signifieds. Within such "an intricate mosaic of possibilities" (Piazzoli, 2018, p. 122) that two languages create upon encounter, these disruptive fissures offer different perspectives on the empirical material at hand. A constructively complicating dialogue opens up between the world of the language in which co-researchers and I speak and analyse-in-action and the world of the language in which you and I now explore my research as I write, and you read. As our minds and memories enable these two worlds to infuse each other, we open up new possibilities for meaning making and knowledge creation to encounter us. As ATAR productively complicates research in the field and DE transforms learning objectives into puzzling experiences of *Verfremdung*, the act of translation does not clarify cases and channel its data into coded conclusions. By confusing acts of meaning making, it

constructively challenges attempts of data analysis. In this way, the act of translation can be a methodological tool that aids us in the *Verfremdung* from our own habitual meaning-making processes and the meanings we anticipate. It can pry open the seemingly mundane, the everyday, the already silenced and normalised, and makes possible fragmented understandings that dare to look beyond the surface. The act of translation can throw into sharp relief how every language and 'speech culture' simultaneously multiply and limit the discourses they make available and impede. Such deconstructions of notions in the disruptive and thus creative space of translation seem to be vital for research endeavours that aim to offer insights into movements such as right-wing populism.

A Postdramatic Perspective: New Vistas for Drama Education

I will now focus on the fifth consideration provoked by my reflections of my reflective accounts of the workshops. Specifically, I will explore how investigating the DE workshop as a postdramatic performance event of autopoietic feedback loops allows us to expand our understanding of metaxis. I will examine how such a reconceptualisation offers insights into how DE can provoke CME-inspired learning and ATAR-based research in postnormal times. As I have outlined above, the exploration of perceptual realities of fictional marginalised people provoke co-researchers to critically reflect on processes of Othering and the role of fear within them - and connect these explorations to their own realities. As they immerse themselves in the fiction of *Home & Away*, co-researchers simultaneously create and encounter counter-memories. This imaginative inquiry challenges them to consider the position perspectives of subjugated groups and juxtapose these with their own particular positionalities. In this way, co-researchers decentre dominant perspectives and shatter the invisibility of majoritarian positions likely to be taken for granted in everyday life.

Drama Education as Performance Event: Disrupting the Loops

The active exploration of the content of the fiction is only one element that brings minority position perspectives into the centre of our engagement. The process of theatre-making itself affords yet another plane of embodied experience. Fischer-Lichte (2008) regards any 'piece' of theatre as an instance of active theatre-making. Theatre is never an autonomous object of art, but a dynamic, living, ever evolving performance event. The performance event includes acts of performing as well as their reception and

interpretation. In the case of the workshops, co-researchers explicitly verbalise and share their experiences of reception and interpretation. This process of reflective expression becomes part of the performance event as well. Fischer-Lichte (2008) coins the term autopoietic feedback loop to describe the relationship between spectators and performers during a performance event. Polkinghorne (2004) understands poiesis as “the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before.” (p. 115) Thus, the autopoietic relationship between audiences and performers is a partnership of active, collaborative, and perpetual making and remaking of meaning that does not exist prior to the moment of collaboration. As active agents in the making of meaning, everyone in the theatre space continuously affects each other’s performances of acting and interpreting. It is this constant communal creation that generates unique performance events (Fletcher-Watson, 2013). The density and explicit expression of this emergent ‘interconnective agency’ can collapse the binary between audiences and performers into non-hierarchical momentary ensembles of theatre-makers akin to of Boal's (1979) spectactors.

In self-actualising iterations of construction (performance), deconstruction (perception and interpretation), and reconstruction (affective, energetic, kinaesthetic, and/or verbal feedback), the temporary community of audience and performers interact with the spatial configurations of the performance space, with the objects and visual and sonic elements in it, and with each other. This interaction is twofold. On the first plane, they interact with the very materiality and presence of their own and each other’s bodies. On the second plane, they simultaneously interact with these bodies – including the movements and sounds they produce - as signifiers. In the Freeze Frames and Images of Transition, performances that sit at the heart of the workshops, bodies as signifiers are incapable of being *tabulae rasae*. To co-researchers, they are always already triple-inscribed, as friends or peers, as performers, and, within the fictional frame, as family members with whom they already share an intimate (hi)story of care. After all, co-researchers make personal connections to the characters in the beginning of the workshop when they devise and reflect on their ‘family selfies’. They develop empathy for the characters as they imagine themselves-in-role in the basement of the family’s home. They experience moments of genuine grief for Oma through sharing and/or hearing their writing-in-role. This triple inscription complicates the autopoietic feedback loops evolving during the workshops. It

challenges co-researchers to grapple in practice with theoretical notions such as identity, Othering, representation, and positionality.

I propose that Fischer-Lichte's (2008) definition of theatre as an event rather than an art object can fruitfully provoke us to understand the DE workshop in its entirety as a durational performance event. This consideration suggests that the DE workshop does not simply comprise an accumulation of scattered pieces of completed theatre works interspersed with reflective dialogue divorced from these allegedly self-contained performances. Neither is it a pedagogical intervention that instrumentalises theatre techniques to achieve quantifiable outputs and outcomes. Rather, we can conceptualise all elements of the DE workshop as equal parts of one performance event. This conceptualisation defines the DE workshop as an interplay of autopoietic feedback loops as “dynamic living systems which are self-perpetuating [sic] and interactive” (Shaughnessy, 2013, p. 332). Resonant with the principles and aims of CME, this liveness and interactivity can challenge us to explore the very processes and political implications of our very own perceptions and interpretations, and how we regard, interact with, and communicate them. If we push each other to engage with them critically to the point of discomfort, they can throw light on im/possible alternative ways of seeing, communicating, and being in the world - and illuminate the conditions that influence the creations of such im/possibilities. By collapsing the binary between not only spectator and actor, but also dramatic engagement and analytic discussion, the conceptualisation of the DE workshop as performance event opens up new perspectives on Applied Theatre as Research.

Performance events involve observing, witnessing, and experiencing the presence and physical and sonic expressions of others. When a human being observes another's movements, utterances, and gestures, a mental embodiment of the other's behaviour takes place (Shaughnessy, 2012). The observer is emotionally engaged in what she witnesses. This emotional engagement is a cognitive process inevitably occurring in most humans when they encounter other people. Mirror neurons provoke us to recreate and experience the emotions of others even when just observing someone else's body language or facial expression (McConachie & Hart, 2010). McConachie (2008) calls this emotional engagement provoked by mirror neurons empathy. Empathy does not involve consciously reading bodies as signs and critically analysing this process of perception and signification. Yet, the conscious

noticing and deconstructing of autopoietic feedback loops can significantly contribute to CME learning. Such processes bear the potential to provoke us to not only reflect on our meaning-making processes and the relations of power that influence them. They can also evoke the conscious experiencing of minority and majority position perspectives in the context of post-truth times. Such experiences, in turn, can challenge notions of any one singular definite reality, question sources of 'truth', and destabilise meanings taken for granted.

The performance events generated by the workshop co-researchers suggest that the temporary designation of the roles of audience and actors *as if* they were distinct can catalyse CME-inspired learning. As discussed above, both inevitably transform into creators and performers in the theatre- and meaning-making process. The interruption and fragmentation of autopoietic feedback loops can provoke us to become critically conscious of the poetics and politics of signification. In this provocation lies the possibility to harness the potential of emotional engagement *while* transcending "doxic empathy," a form of empathy that uncritically "reiterate[s] deeply ideological images of the familiar that naturalize and thereby depoliticize the status quo" (Lobb, 2017, p. 594). With CME as its theoretical foundation, DE practice can create spaces in which emotional engagement in fact catalyses the conscientisation of how and under which circumstances and influences, bodies, objects, and spaces operate as signifieds, as we strive to make sense of the overwhelming density of signs in a postnormal world. As I will explore by revisiting some moments that occur during Workshops A and B, becoming critically conscious of the stage of signification opens up opportunities for moments of *verfremdend* and unsettling bewilderment. A pedagogy of discomfort can harness such moments of *Verfremdung* in the pursuit of CME-inspired learning by holding space for distress, allowing contestation, and bearing silence. As the instances discussed here will illustrate, DE bears great potential to facilitate such a pedagogy.

"I am not a human being though!" Moments from Workshop One

One of the moments that catalyses explorations of the stage of signification through fractured autopoiesis occurs during Workshop One. Anna and Friederike have just shared their group's second Freeze Frame. Their peers describe what they have seen. Their words evoke stark imagery of violence, chaos, and death. As soon as these utterances escape their mouths, they irrevocably become part of

the performance space. I can almost see these words settle onto the performers' gestures. As they thaw on and into their bodies, the feelings they evoke in me seem to melt through my skin and into my memory of their image. Even though we have explicitly agreed that the performers will remain silent while the audience is describing their observations, Anna is unable to stop herself from loudly 'correcting' these offered readings. On our makeshift stage, Anna shouts at us in outrage. She blurts out: "Eh?! That's not supposed to be suicide! That's supposed to be thoughts!" Anna is demonstrating, or performing, a sense of power in front of us. The audience is taken aback. I can feel a wave of intimidation unfold around me. As Anna attempts to assert herself, an energy of indignation hits my senses. Anna cannot seem to bear to be watched as she experiences her own image being read by the audience in a way other than she has intended. It is here, not in role as a family member and refugee, but as herself-as-performer that she experiences a snippet of a minority position perspective, a glimpse of what it is to not have a voice to define herself. "Can we actually explain ourselves later on?!" Her tone of voice is now half demanding, half defeated. Friederike, equally upset by the offered readings, protests vociferously; "I was envy!" While Friederike intended to embody a feeling, the audience perceived her as a human being, and ascribed to that person and the relationships she holds on stage negative attributes. We have set out to explore the fictional (hi)story of Home & Away, but the audience cannot unsee Friederike, the performer, the human body. Friederike herself cannot separate her performer-self from the fiction. Her tense body and harsh manner of shouting suggests that she too seems to feel the strong urge to correct the audience and, in an emotion-laden manner, attempts to clarify what she initially chose to represent in the image.

Another instance of such behaviour occurs when Anna's peers share their observations and feelings in relation to the Images of Transition performance that Anna and her group have created. After a short while, Anna, on stage, cannot seem to endure being interpreted and defined by others anymore. Suddenly, she interrupts the audience as she shouts out; "I am not a human being though eh, so ---" She abruptly stops speaking as she catches herself interject. Anna is struggling to bear not having a voice and not defining her own image. However, she is trying to stick to 'the rules of the game.' She gives herself the chance to experience a position perspective different from her own. A similar moment happens when Ronja suggests that the constituents of the faceless bubble in Group B's performance are thoughts. Their heads stuck together in the tight circle, the performers start to whisper to each other

in suppressed protest. They try to chime in. In a way, this moment of unrelenting, undefinable white noise of hissing commentary is a performance on its own. I encourage the performers again to remain silent until the audience has finished observing, describing, and reading their performance. Performer Anna cannot control her desire to speak up and tell us her version of events. She is trying to interject several times to correct other people's comments. The only reason she ceases to do so is because I firmly ask her to stop in an attempt to prevent her voice from dominating the space. Anna seems to be struggling immensely not to be dominant. She seems to be struggling to be silent, struggling to bear the interpretation of others, to experience powerlessness in the making of meaning. Anna and Friederike's actions are part of the stage action. However, they are not rehearsed. Neither are they improvised elements directly provoked by a fictional narrative. They are real actions provoked, born, and performed by our very presence and affective reciprocal relationship of autopoiesis in the here-and-now.

"But that isn't our real face." Moments from Workshop Two

Workshop Two exhibits similar instances. One of such moments occurs when we reflect on Group A's Images of Transition performance. Performers Tabea and Emma realise that how others interpret and take as read their images is out of their control if they cannot come into dialogue with them - but are constrained to a very limited space (the stage) and a very limited role (objects of ascription). When Tabea tries to calm Emma down, Emma does not remain silent, but complains about the audience's suggested meanings. She attempts to choose and establish on her own terms an interpretation of her identity as fictional character and/or element in the scene and as self-determined performer. Emma sounds and looks agitated. As if defending herself, she voices that the audience did not read her group's intention at all. Rather than a picture of "foreigners," she explains, they wanted to depict "just some kind of a feeling" evoked by right-wing populist rhetoric. Both Tabea and Emma frequently express a sense of anxiety about the very likely possibility that the audience ascribe distinct meanings to their performance. Once any audience member has expressed their experience of the performance, Emma and Tabea remarkably, quickly and anxiously, attempt to brush such comments aside as one of many options in desperate attempts to highlight that no meaning is set in stone.

Loud conflict over signification arises as we explore Group B's Images of Transition performance. There is contention amongst all co-researchers about the meaning of the image, about who in the scene is

looking for a sense of home in the form of safety/security and how this might be signified in the performance. Co-researchers come to recognise the discrepancy between what performers are wishing to show and what the audience is reading. Fine tries to correct the audience's interpretations. Agitatedly, she bluntly exclaims how they were depicting pre-determined roles. She implies that her group did not intend to create a scenario of terror on stage. In a voice that carries a sense of self-defence, Mia immediately blurts out that the audience's interpretation of violence, theft, and deception is wrong. Performer Finn, who has managed to remain calm and silent for so long, finally bursts out in despair to confirm Fine's and Mia's points of view. There is not only a sense that Fine, Mia, and Finn are attempting to restore the dignity of the characters who have turned from ordinary people like you and me into nothing but an overpowering imagery of brutality and criminality. I can also perceive a sense of self-defence. As if frozen inside the tiny black box that is the illuminated stage, these performers stare into the noisy darkness of the auditorium, into the invisibility that is us, the momentary arbiters of meaning, with shaking heads. They seem desperate not to be read as responsible for such a horrific transformation.

Agitatedly, Fine is grappling with how the stage of signification has transformed her and her fellow performers-in-role into violent terrorists and deceiving beggars. As the performers talk to us, they seem to still carry the burden of this representation on and within their bodies. Fine seems to be deeply upset that the audience does not exhibit an explicit awareness of how it was right-wing populist rhetoric in the first place that has catalysed the distressing imagery that she and her peers have become. In the audience, Christine and Emma shush the performers so that their interpretation dominates the space. The latter is now fraught with tension. I can feel that something invisible, unspoken, but immense is at stake. Autonomy. Self-determination. Power. Even among the performers Anke, Mia, and Fine themselves, the story of the images that comprise their scene is not clear. The more they speak about their performance, the more they realise that there is no one truth. Fine manages to stop herself from blurting out and correcting her peers' ideas. She is now bearing other people's interpretation of the images we are creating. Yet, after a few seconds, she cannot help herself from shouting at the audience that their interpretation is completely different from hers. With her hands covering her ears to block out all sound, all words, all interpretations, Laura is crouching on the stage floor, visibly distressed as she

struggles in this excess of howling, harrowing purported truths to bear not articulating her own meaning, not having her voice heard.

Still on stage underneath the glaring spotlights, the performers now start to play fight over who gets to talk about the intended meaning first. They are highly invested in 'setting the record straight' and explaining their 'truth' of the scene, however fragmentary. I can discern that this is a play fight. This is a performed fight, both a demonstration of power in attempts to reclaim it and an expression of raw despair. There is a sense that the performers do not only perform it for each other, but also for us, the audience. It is a performed fight, and yet the actions, utterances, emotions, and urgency it evinces are real. These exhausted but tense bodies, wildly gesticulating limbs, and grimacing faces distorted by a deeply felt exigency exhibit affective responses to an engagement that uncompromisingly points to a powerful, relentless presence, some immeasurable gravity that is at play here. Feeling part of this performative action, I feel disturbingly at peace in the cool dark space in front of the stage and simultaneously overwhelmed by all the impressions I have somehow been inseparable from all along. For a moment, I can feel under my very own skin those strained muscles fighting for attention in oscillations of despair, indignation, defeat, and attempts to reclaim the power to signify. Voices heated up by harsh floodlight flare up behind my eyes and echo back onto the stage. Rendered invisible in the darkness, how do I know I am still here? Am I in power to choose where to look, what to hear, how to feel?

There is a fleeting moment in which all sound dies down. None of the performers have left the stage. In role, Finn speaks into the fleeting silence, "So, we were, from the beginning till the end, the family. So - -" The audience, confused, bewildered, perplexed, starts to mutter again. Webs of words, syllables, voices surge up once more. Wedged into the image, Mia demands attention as she suddenly shouts into the mumbling darkness; "You have to listen!" As Finn now continues to speak, the experience of being a performer who occupies a minority position perspective of powerlessness in the making of meaning takes on a new dimension. Finn connects this first plane of experience with a second level. This second plane links these embodied discoveries directly to the Othering processes at play in right-wing populist rhetoric and the distinct mode of representation of others as Others on which it lives. Finn does so by returning to the fiction. As he employs the first person plural and talks about a "pose," he

seems to identify as both fictional family member and performer; “Yes, er, at the end was, so the pose at the end, it was, you know, someone other than us.” The despair of Finn, the performer stuck on stage, seems to arise from an interplay between his performer self’s conscious experiencing and his ‘real’ self’s deconstructing of autopoietic feedback loops and the synthesis of fiction (Home & Away) and reality disguised as fiction (right-wing populist rhetoric). “We had tweets, that we are terrorists and stuff, what isn’t true, of course,” Finn tries to explain with a voice imbued with a haunting very real presence of anguish and distress. Finn tries to explain that the things that people write, say, and circulate propose he and Laura are terrorists. He attempts to clarify that they are not. Rather, it is a misrepresentation of both a vicariously, indirectly experienced fictional reality and their direct experience of an immediate performed reality, which is, of course, informed by their very real existences as young people, workshop co-researchers, and peers. Full of anguish, Laura interrupts Finn. Her expression adds to the sense that the Images of Transition performance reaches into the present moment. Framed on stage, the real, the performed, and the fictional seem not to collide, but to superimpose each other into a single loud, dense image of urgency that seems to irreversibly burn itself into the back of my mind. The more words escape Laura’s mouth, the less I can discern whether the co-researcher Laura, the performer Laura, or a fictional family member speaks; “We are, so to speak, these people, these terrorists, who now one knows! So, like ... People have no idea WHO WE ARE!” Finn chimes in. He exclaims despairingly and exhaustedly, “It is these tweets! It is these tweets!” His stretched-out tense arm is trying to reach us in the darkness of the auditorium, but we are an invisible, anonymous void of noise. We are an ocean of words, assumptions, alleged truths. We are the waves relentlessly crashing into each other. We hold on to our words because an inexorable excess of signs fills our perceptions. Confusion fills our lungs as we draw air from this undefinable elusive space fraught with exclamations, images, noise. In this moment, can I still see Finn, the young man who walked into the drama room this afternoon as a workshop co-researcher? Can I remember whose story he is trying to tell?

The space calms down once again. This time, the stillness of this emerging silence almost disturbs me. Eventually, Finn speaks again. The tweets he and his group chose catalysed the family’s transformation; he mumbles. Laura nods. The posts have power, she contemplates. As audience member Anke puts it, “I reckon they have the power, so to speak, how, who these two are in the heads of other people.” With a voice imbued with sadness, Anke adds, “But not who we really are.” Laura

nods; "That's how one imagines that, but that isn't our real face." Anke is part of the audience. Yet, she uses the first-person plural. She identifies with the misrepresented, with the Othered, despite her comfortable position in the anonymous darkness. Her memory of being on stage during her own group's Images of Transition performance seems to be very much alive. In this moment, she is both subject and object of ascription. Empathically, she expresses solidarity with those wedged into a minority position perspective on the stage of signification. Momentarily, she shares their position. She becomes part of them. Out of the space of friction that seems to hold the potential for Finn, the co-researcher, the performer, and the fictional character to speak as one, Finn defeatedly reflects. He contemplates how the distinct discourses, that the very real technology of social media enables, allow for a very limited representation of himself and the family of characters and performers of which he is currently part. Into the calmness and exhaustion after the storm, he quietly concludes; "So, through these tweets we, also, you know ... changed. It ... *makes us so.*"

Towards a Postdramatic Pedagogy: Exploring the Im/possibilities of Representation

A theoretical exploration of these visceral, affective, and critical moments of discomfort, friction, and insight bears the potential to advance our understanding of how DE practice can respond to the demands of CME in postnormal times. Traditionally, DE practice and research are firmly grounded in the tenets of dramatic theatricality and the resulting possibility of moments of metaxis between a fictional character and the DE co-researcher. O'Neill emphasises that PD lives on improvisation coupled with an awareness, appreciation, and application of theatre form according to the aesthetics of classical Aristotelian drama. Additional reflection on the dramatic activity and devised theatre works offers vital complementary learning opportunities, especially when co-researchers make personal real-world connections to these aesthetic experiences. Neelands criticises purely realist and naturalist theatre, acknowledges non-mimetic performance forms, and suggests that his CA moves beyond dramatic theatricality since the drama strategies he proposes are Brechtian in nature. Interpolated Epic Theatre strategies of *Verfremdung* are to enrich the unfolding fictional plot and illuminate characters' motivations, social contexts, and internal psychologies. Reflection interspersed into dramatic engagement provokes co-researchers to think about their experiences, of and as part of the fiction, and to transfer these emerging questions and insights onto their own lives and real-world behaviours.

I propose that enriching these existing DE tenets with another perspective on theatre-making can fruitfully inform a complementary angle on DE theory. Such an expanded theoretical framework can offer emerging guidelines and compelling provocations for DE practice in postnormal times. Specifically, extending our conceptualisation of the DE workshop as a performance event of autopoietic feedback loops to Lehmann's (2006) notion of Postdramatic Theatre (PDT) can develop our understanding of DE's potential to catalyse sustained moments of CME learning. PDT does not rigidly reject the Dramatic Theatre (DT) paradigm in its entirety. Rather, PDT exploratively extends and constructively challenges DT (Kotte, 2005; Primavesi, 2004). PDT is an umbrella term that describes a wide range of theatre practice that shifts DT's focus on mimesis, text, logic, and causality to an emphasis on poiesis, presence, perception, and the im/possibilities of representation.

In DT, both audiences and actors subscribe to a fiction contract. While we can consider them as located in autopoietic feedback loops, they are to believe completely in fictional characters existent in a fictional, closed cosmos. Not all DT strictly subscribes to the realist or naturalist paradigm. In fact, a fourth wall may not be present throughout the theatre event or parts thereof. If the fourth wall is broken, however, it is always a fictional character who directly addresses the audience. In this way, DT exhibits a closed logic. Changes in time and location follow a clear reason based on a coherent, already provided plot. Characters are in themselves 'well-made' pieces of make-belief with logical psychological motivations.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, theatre makers have challenged the notion of DT's mimetic theatre. Increasingly, practitioners like those of the historical avant-garde, Brecht's Epic Theatre with its intermittent *Verfremdung* and stylisation, as well as artists engaging in performance art and happenings playfully began to explore the im/possibilities of the totalising representative acts DT offers. Lehmann (2006) describes PDT as an amalgam of contemporary theatre practice that emerged out of these decades of theatrical explorations. PDT challenges the notion that theatre can mimic real life by presenting audiences with closed fictional worlds. From this perspective, in its quest to represent the world mimetically in a logical and causal way, it fails to represent the complexities of human experience, especially in the twenty-first century (Stegemann, 2009). PDT suggests that theatre can, however, present possible subjective fragments of our world in collaborative performance events. Here, actors do not present spectators with readily rehearsed and polished dramaturgies of closed characters and

neatly sewn narratives. Instead, ensembles of active performers and audiences explore open dramaturgies of the unavoidable incongruities and inconsistencies of multiple perspectives, feelings, images, and ideas. In the process, they devise new performance events.

PTD extends the DT paradigm by refusing to regard dramatic literature as the unquestionable basis and most important element of theatre. While Brecht's Epic Theatre rejects realism and naturalism, and the immersive emotional identification and catharsis they promote, it does have coherent narratives at its base. A playwright determines a plot, and a director determines how actors execute embodiments of this plot. Actors' bodies illustrate logical, causal fables that are interspersed with *Verfremdungseffekten* in order to shock audiences out of empathy with fictional characters into openness for critiquing these characters' fictional material circumstances and for taking on board distinct political ideas in the real world. In this way, Brecht's Epic Theatre, and by extension the DE practice it inspires, may run the risk of developing dogmatic tendencies (Lehmann, 2006). PDT departs from Brecht theatre concept in so far as it no longer regards pre-determined narratives with internal logics as the instruction and aim of theatre-making. A 'dehierarchisation' of theatrical means effects that text is only one theatrical element of many, such as light, space, body, objects, movement, sound, voice, language, and mise-en-scène. Each element is equally important and valid in its own right. Rather than a servant to text or even a subordinate communicator of political ideologies, the theatrical element in PDT is free to refuse any rehearsed representation. It is free to 'stand for itself.' In other words, not every element is necessarily thought up and composed into one distinct sign before the performance event but may point to its very own materiality and presence during it. Stillness and silence too become part of the network of theatrical elements and thus of the PDT performance event. DT's obsession with chronology of action and events gives way to simultaneous open interplays of signs (Weiler, 2005). They generate open continua of time, space, and fractured attempts of narratives and roles. Through collage, montage, surreal jumps in time and space, and sudden, startling juxtapositions of conventional dialogues and their deconstruction, PDT challenges audiences to incessantly dismantle and reconstruct dramatic constituents (Finter, 1985; Kotte, 2005).

PDT does not offer audiences uninterrupted representations of characters with fully formed internal psychologies. Instead, there tends to be a focus on the human body itself. Often, the body is not

exclusively a signifier for something else or an embodiment of a distinct fictional character. Rather, the focus shifts toward “the execution of acts that are real in the here and now and find their fulfilment in the very moment they happen” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 104). The affect-laden direct visceral experience of presence, performativity, and liveness moves to the centre of the performance event. Performers and even audiences may be provoked to experience the very presence and physicality of their bodies in the form of pronounced bodily sensations, such as exhaustion or heat. In this way, PDT interrupts DT’s psychological character building by holding space for self-representation. In other words, the PDT actor is often not engaging in DT’s ‘as if’-acting in the pursuit of impersonation, pretence, and mimesis, but becomes a performer who offers a performance of herself. Kirby (2002) usefully notes that there is in fact a range of performance modes other than mimetic acting. For this discussion, it is crucial to note that, although a performer does not represent a fictional character, she is someone other than herself. Carlson (2004) suggests that “[e]ven if an action on stage is identical to one in real life, on stage it is considered ‘performed’ and off stage merely ‘done’.” (p. 3) What characterises a performative action is that occurs on stage. The stage here is a metaphor for a “play frame” (p. 54), which is marked by consciousness. If we are conscious that we have an audience of any kind, we engage in performative action. Although a performer is not engaging in classical DT ‘as-if’-acting, she is, just like the audience, “operat[ing] in a world of double consciousness” (p. 54). In other words, a metaxis is at play between everyday reality and a permeable dimension that is possible within it and as part of it. This is the realm of what Lehmann (2006) calls *theatReality*.

An Invisible Relationship? Theatricality & TheatReality

Fictional frames demand that DT operates on the level of theatricality (*das Theatrale*). PDT, however, shifts the primary focus from theatricality to theatrical reality, or *theatReality* (*das TheatReale*) (Lehmann, 2006). *TheatReality* emerges from the ensemble’s heightened state of awareness and perception of the “intensified presence” of living human bodies in the theatre space (Lehmann, 2006, p. 163). *TheatReality* does not exist outside of this space. Such a space, however, does not have to be a traditional theatre building. It does not have to involve a purpose-built stage. Neither does it prescribe any distinct audience configurations or parameters for participation. Rather, it is a space emerging from the intention to perform, experience, and partake in a performance event in any way. During a PDT performance event, dramatic theatricality may be fragmentarily present or entirely absent. *TheatReality*,

however, is always at play in the form of an existent consciousness of taking part in theatre and the visceral experience of the raw 'realness' of human presence and interconnection.

A Hidden Kinship? Postdramatic Theatre & Drama Education

PDT's focus on theatrical effects that DT's traditional fiction contract on which DE lives becomes fragile (Jan Fogt & Fogh, 2015; Gronau, 2005). This fragility does not mean that PDT has no place in DE. Quite the opposite is the case, since the PDT co-researchers in the performance event becomes an active "co-author of his experiences and thus a co-artist of the artwork" (Stegemann, 2009, p. 288, my translation). PDT emphasises the affective relationship among ensembles, highlighting participation, interaction and process rather than the importance of a completed product. From a PDT perspective, theatre is "an active force (energeia)" (Lehmann, 2006, p. 104). This ensemble-based *energeia* emerges from the complex interactions in which theatrical elements free from hierarchisation and rigidly prescribed signifieds create rhythms of imagery and association. They invite audiences to engage in a common struggle with the inevitable ambiguity of meaning as they attempt to synthesise their perceptions on their own terms during a performance event (Kotte, 2005; Weiler, 2005). By creating *Spielräume* for unfamiliar perceptions through an aesthetic of the performative (Fischer-Lichte, 2004), PDT provokes spectators out of "normative audience behaviour" (Fletcher-Watson, 2013, p. 23) that problematically perpetuates anaesthetising inertia, uncritical consumerism, and the absence of alert wide-awakeness (cf. Greene, 1995; Primavesi, 2004). Herein lies the potential for CME-inspired educational practice and new perspectives on the ATAR process.

A Reimagination of Metaxis

The reconceptualisation of DE practice as PDT performance events provides us with a contemporary lens through which to explore the notion of metaxis, a DE co-researcher's sense of simultaneous belonging to fiction (such as the narrative of *Home & Away*) and reality (her existence in her own lifeworld). Specifically, it allows us to examine DE's potential to transfer crucial elements of CME theory into practice. Boal (1995) defines metaxis as "the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image. The participant shares and belongs to these two autonomous worlds" (p. 43). Co-researchers' generation of the

performance events/data, my written accounts of them, and the discussion offered above point towards the importance of exploring the nature and possibilities of metaxis in the face of postnormality. They invite us to consider two provocations. Firstly, they propose that the two 'worlds' at play in metaxis are not as 'autonomous' as Boal makes them out to be. A PDT perspective on metaxis complicates and challenges the notion of the dichotomy between a clear-cut, closed world of fiction and reality as another sphere rigidly detached from it. A notion that argues that independent fictional and real worlds can overlap or collide with one another posits that those realms must be rigidly separated to begin with. Not only PDT, but also the very culture of postnormality challenges this very presupposition. Pertinent educational endeavours must respond to this challenge accordingly. The second provocation offered by the generation of and analytic reflection on the performance events/data corresponds to this demand. It emphasises that a PDT perspective on metaxis introduces theatReality as a permeable third dimension at play in performance events and thus in moments of metaxis. Reimagining the notion of metaxis from a PDT angle appears to be crucial if we are to develop, implement, analyse, and inform potent DE practice in postnormal times.

The PDT-enriched conceptualisation of metaxis I propose includes four central elements: reality, theatricality, theatReality, and f(r)iction. This reimagination does not regard the fictional mode, which I assign the label theatricality, as an autonomous sphere rigidly separated from reality. Rather, theatricality takes place *within* the realm of reality:

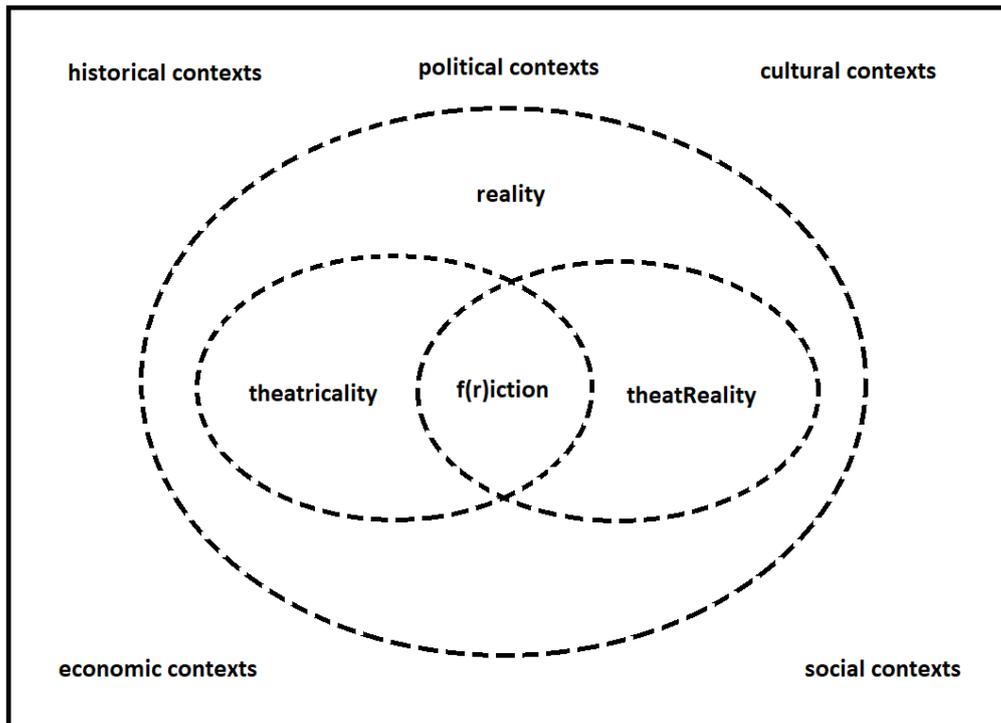


Figure 1. A reimagination of metaxis informed by a Postdramatic Theatre paradigm

As I have discussed, I define reality from a Critical Poststructuralist standpoint. I regard reality as discursively constructed within distinct historical, political, social, cultural and economic contexts that manifest lived experiences of existent, unequal relations of power. My reflections on the notion of (hi)story in the previous chapters suggest that theatricality cannot be divorced from reality. Reality directly informs our experience, perception, interpretation, and communication of fiction, and vice versa. Reality and fiction are themselves located in constant autopoeitic feedback loops. In postnormal, post-truth times of distorted representations and fake news in ubiquitous echo chambers and filter bubbles, this reciprocal relationship blurs the boundary between what is real and what is fictional. The border between these allegedly independent spheres becomes permeable and questions the very autonomy of their own perimeters.

TheatReality and reality are in a similar relationship. TheatReality too occurs within reality. Since both theatricality and theatReality take place within reality, there is a state of permanent permeation *per se* at play between reality and each of these realms. There is no impervious line segregating reality and TheatReality. In fact, we could consider that a certain degree theatReality frequently invades the performative space of the everyday. For example, for Goffman (1959), any everyday social interaction

can be regarded as a stage, a play frame, constituted by an intention to perform. His performative sociology proposes that theatre is an adequate metaphor for the presentation of the self in everyday social life. Butler (1990) takes this idea a step further by arguing that identities are not inherent, but performative. Those perspectives suggest that some degree of theatReality is intricately interwoven into what we perceive as reality.

TheatReality is a dimension distinct from theatricality. TheatReality can exist without theatricality. A heightened sense of awareness of the reciprocal relationship between theatReality and reality can occur with no fictional framework present at all. For both DE practitioners and ATAR researchers it is important to note, then, that not only the conscientisation of the metaxic relationship between reality and theatricality can catalyse fruitful moments in which co-researchers can explore themes surrounding representation, signification, Othering, and the discursive frameworks and power relations at play in such processes. Becoming aware of the autopoietic relationship between reality and theatReality too bears the potential for CME-inspired learning. It is thus important for practitioners and researchers to be aware of and pay careful attention to the dimension of theatReality when facilitating, observing, reporting, and evaluating or analysing practice. This includes paying heed to our own experiences of theatReality, which, in turn, demands from us a sense of wide-awakeness and openness to unexpected experiences (cf. Greene, 1995). This sense requires us to consciously regard the DE workshop in its entirety as a PDT performance event. I suggest that future researcher-practitioners should make the notion of theatReality a crucial element even in the conceptualisation and planning phase of DE practice, especially if they are interested in provoking CME-inspired learning experiences. We must not hierarchise our own and co-researchers' actions, utterances, and observations according to whether they occur within or outside the classic fiction contract. We must not classify data constructed outside any allegedly 'actual' dramatic engagement as data of 'secondary importance.' Instead, we should regard theatReality as an integral element of the performance event.

An interesting question emerges from these considerations. Is theatricality without theatReality possible in DE? As my illustration suggests, I posit that it is. Practice that often passes as DE is capable of robbing both practitioners, researchers, and co-researchers of the invaluable experience of heightened states of awareness of presence, perception and of participation in poiesis, and thus of critical reflection

on our own patterns of responding to signifiers and interacting with other human beings. Such practices are rigidly structured and didactically facilitated role plays, activities that ask people to mimic and illustrate predetermined story lines, dogmatic demands for re-enactments of given scenarios, hours of isolated sensory, trust, and acting games or of lengthy 'living through' improvisations in uninterrupted closed fictional spheres. Such practices are analogous to multicultural initiatives that ask participants to mimic and exhibit expected forms of unconditional empathy as demanded by an implicit prescribed political correctness, or programmes that encourage the imitation of someone else's cultural tradition in order to purportedly develop deeper understandings of (and tolerance for) fundamentally different Others. Such endeavours impede poiesis as the making of communal reflection and creation of reciprocal relationships of genuine interest, solidarity, passion, and critical empathy.

Metaxic Moments of F(r)iction

Moments of f(r)iction are quite the opposite of such death of theatReality. I am borrowing the term from Fogt and Fogh (2015) who themselves adopt it from literary theorist Behrendt (2010). I define f(r)iction as a space in which reality, theatReality, and theatricality imbue each other *into* an emergence of metaxis. In this space, we experience ourselves as what we regard as our 'real' selves in any given context, such as DE facilitator or co-researcher. Of course, all the other roles we occupy in everyday life outside of the performance space always reverberate within these 'real' selves. Similarly, the specific contexts that influence and manifest the nature of these internalised constructions are present and implicitly become part of performance events. In the fleeting space of f(r)iction, we simultaneously experience ourselves and each other as such 'real' selves, as performers in the dimension of theatReality, and as fictional characters or elements in the realm of theatricality. An unpredictable dynamic interplay between presence and representation defines the emergence of f(r)iction. As Fischer-Lichte (2008) suggests,

The more frequent the perceptual shift between the arbitrary order of presence and the purposeful order of representation the more unpredictable the entire process and the more focused the subject becomes on perception itself. In the process, the spectators become increasingly aware that meaning is not transmitted but brought forth by them.

(p. 150)

Finn, for example, experiences a simultaneity of himself (reality) and of himself as performer in a minority position perspective of powerlessness in the making of meaning (theatReality). He makes crucial insights into the *modi operandi* of the stage of signification, especially as it relates to the inner workings of right-wing populism and the advancements in new media that expedite it, when he consciously steps back into the world of *Home & Away* (theatricality). As he enters the realm of f(r)iction, he connects his experience of theatReality with theatricality. This provokes him to link his embodied discoveries as performer/co-researcher directly to the Othering processes at play in right-wing populist rhetoric and the Othering processes, discourses, and technologies promoting it. The momentary audience can be considered to enter spaces of f(r)iction as well. For example, it is a visceral experience when the audience becomes an invisible, anonymous void of noise in front of the stage. The experience of becoming an ocean of words, assumptions, and alleged truths provokes me as an audience member to be consciously present as myself, the facilitator, as a performer located within an autopoietic feedback loop, and as a theatrical element catalysing theatricality. After all, I play a significant part in creating this ocean, this undefinable force of pushback the fictional family faces in *Home & Away*, through noise, through silence, through my mere presence. It provokes me to interrogate my own enjoyment of temporary feelings of ease and power and my own action and inaction in this very moment of the performance event. The real memories it evokes in my 'real' self arouse me to reflect on my very own, very real past and present habitual thinking patterns, behaviours, and automatised modes of perception in the social world. When Finn speaks using the first-person plural and words such as 'family,' he pulls me back into the realm of theatricality, but my sense of belonging to both theatReality and reality remains. In other words, an autopoietic feedback loop catalyses a sustained moment of f(r)iction. Even though the autopoietic loop of theatricality is fractured, since we have temporarily frozen the Images of Transition performance, an autopoietic feedback loop of theatReality sustains the performance event and eventually catalyses the emergence of f(r)iction.

Superimposed fragments of reality, theatricality, and theatReality rub against and agitate each other into an ephemeral state in which the triple inscription of facilitator/co-researcher, performer, and fictional character/element effects a complication of who and how we are in the social world. No matter if we identify as an audience member or an actor, our performer selves experience moments of ascription

even though we are not located in a classic fiction contract. The echoes of our fictional characters connect us to embodied experiences our 'real' selves never had, preserving the felt knowledge arising from affective states of pain, sorrow, fear, and hope experienced in the realm of theatricality. We take these emotions into the space of f(r)iction, where they meet face to face real personal memories that we associate with them. It is no wonder, then, that f(r)iction encompasses agitation, irritation, and resistance. Yet, such affective states take place in a space other than everyday reality. In fact, f(r)iction can allow for such raw affective conditions and confrontations to unfold safely.

Fragility as Possibility: The Safety Paradox of F(r)iction

The fragility of the classic fiction contract does not necessarily entail lack of safety. F(r)iction can enable a pedagogy of discomfort that holds space for disconcertment and contention because it is able to provide a double framing. As O'Connor et al. (2006) note, a double frame is possible when "one dramatic perspective into the event has been placed within another" (p. 239). I posit that a theatReal perspective can be placed within the theatrical. If workshop design and facilitation explicitly frame co-researchers as performers in the realm of theatReality, they (as both temporary audience members and actors) become performers who intermittently engage in as-if acting to transport themselves into the realm of theatricality. In the space of f(r)iction, a safety paradox is at play. Protecting co-researchers "into emotion" (Bolton, 1979), a double frame "provides a double protection but, paradoxically, a double opening for young people to feel the issues" at hand (O'Connor et al., 2006, p. 239). Within the realm of f(r)iction, this double opening allows co-researchers to explore the stage of signification through "postdramatic aesthetic reflection" (Fogt & Fogh, 2015, p. 1923). This is a "level of meta-reflection" that is "achieved in states of acting that go beyond simple 'as-if' acting" (p. 1923), which runs the risk of promoting doxic rather than critical empathy. In metaxes between reality and theatReality, co-researchers experience first-hand the power relations at play in the very process of signification. Concurrently, they connect these experiences to the realm of theatricality, always subliminally aware that Home & Away is not some unlikely, otherworldly fable, but a (hi)story analogous to the very real postnormal, post-truth world of our times.

A Postdramatic Pedagogy for Postnormal Times

I suggest we define a DE practice that consciously embraces both DT and PDT elements as a Postdramatic Pedagogy. Such a pedagogy has the potential to catalyse moments of f(r)iction that confuse the very making of meaning to problematise the politics of representation itself rather than showing participating what kind of representations are purportedly 'wrong.' Instead of seeking to communicate a reality or truth, it shatters these very notions. F(r)iction acknowledges the pervasive persistence of chaos, contradiction, and complexity of postnormal times and the insecurity and confusion it conjures up. On the basis of good will and solidarity, performers find themselves together in an equally exhausting and astonishing communal experience of attempting to make sense of their perceptions and interpretations, their feelings and thoughts, amongst a density of signs and a multiplicity of layers of representation. Another level of safety comes in the guise of shared affective experiences and felt moments of connection amidst an elusive, but forever imminent, excess of ambiguity, which is no longer suppressed but acknowledged as an integral and inevitable part of life in postnormal times.

In this chapter, I have argued that we can conceptualise, facilitate, and analyse CME-inspired learning experiences and ATAR processes that adequately respond to postnormal times if we regard the entire DE workshop as a performance event of autopoietic feedback loops. An interplay between the DT principles of representation, mimesis, and theatricality and the PDT elements of presence, poiesis, and theatReality can create metaxic moments of f(r)iction that provoke research teams to affectively and critically explore how stages of signification and politics of representation operate. As a Postdramatic Pedagogy, a PDT-inspired DE practice fosters critical empathy by inviting co-researchers to investigate the im/possibilities of simultaneous engagements in calls for humanity and acts of Othering, discover the inner workings of right-wing populism, and critically connect their experiences in the workshop space to their lived realities of everyday postnormality.

CONCLUSION

This research project set out to explore how creative and embodied engagement in theatre-making can provoke young people to critically encounter right-wing populist rhetoric and xenophobic representations of migrants and refugees in a hyper-technological postnormal world. I have traced the histories of Applied Theatre and Critical Multicultural Education to conceptualise, implement, and analyse a Drama Education practice. The methodology of Reflexive Interpretation based on Critical Poststructuralist ontology and epistemology aligns with the critical nature of the CME paradigm. It has allowed me to carry out a critical analysis of my own reflective-analytic engagement with my practice.

This engagement proposes that a Postdramatic Pedagogy is able to respond to postnormal times by regarding the entire DE workshop as a performance event of autopoietic feedback loops. A Postdramatic Pedagogy embraces startling interplays between representation, mimesis, and theatricality and presence, poiesis, and theatReality. In this way, a Postdramatic Pedagogy can create aesthetic experiences that take young people beyond mere empathetic identification through immersion in dramatic worlds. Instead, it catalyses critical empathy that propels the deconstruction of attitudes and behaviours in metaxic moments of f(r)iction. These moments are not devoid of emotion but engage affect as a fleeting fissure of possibility for ethical encounters with otherness. Metaxic moments of f(r)iction acknowledge the significant roles of both catharsis and critical thinking in the exploration of how stages of signification and politics of representation operate.

A Postdramatic Pedagogy is able to facilitate CME-inspired practice by troubling the ubiquitous myth of objectivity. It can set in motion creative explorations of the complex, chaotic, and contradictory interrelationship between genuine desires for humanity and automated acts of Othering. It has the potential to provoke co-researchers to recognise themselves as catalysts for social change. They can experience the invisibility of majoritarian perspectives and positions and create counternarratives within the safety of non-hierarchical collaborations in the realms of theatricality, theatReality, and f(r)iction. In these realms, they can experiment with the momentary suspension of their excess of difference and the political power of their own attitudes, actions, and positionalities. Young people connect their experiences in the workshop space to their lived realities of everyday postnormality and become

increasingly independent agents and experts in developing their own and each other's social responsibility and critical citizenship in the passionate pursuit of social cohesion, justice, and equality.

From a CME standpoint, a limitation of my practice is that my workshop has not explicitly addressed distinct notions such as the religion of Islam or the workings of algorithms and their function in the neoliberal machinery. Yet, they do play a major role in right-wing populist rhetoric, as a contorted representation of an alleged ominous ultimate evil and mechanisms of distortion respectively. It seems crucial, then, that future research explores how a Postdramatic Pedagogy can facilitate respectful explorations of such sensitive topics that are otherwise discussed in very heated and polarising terms or are outrightly downplayed. I therefore suggest that further investigation into how a Postdramatic Pedagogy can promote more explicitly context-specific explorations is needed. I suggest that future research should investigate how a Postdramatic Pedagogy can catalyse learners to explicitly examine representations of cultural and religious identities and the role of social media in the distinct social, cultural, political, historical, and economic settings in which they live. Such research can provide further insight into how drama-based learning experiences can set in motion genuinely open and unconstrained yet respectful explorations of fears surrounding migration without dictating desired social norms or a certain political correctness. In the face of the frantic search for a New Normal that amplifies fears and *Feindbilder* of the next best scapegoats to be blamed for the chaos, contradictions, and complexities of our postnormal times, bold and explicit explorations of distinct sensitive topics in specific socio-political contexts seem more vital than ever.

I also recommend that AT and ATAR research further investigate possible avenues for a Critical Poststructuralist Reflexive Interpretation research practice. Specifically, I propose that researchers should examine the potential of Benjamin's notion of Translation as Art. The deconstruction of notions in the disruptive and thus creative space of translation seems to be paramount for research endeavours that aim to offer insights into movements such as right-wing populism. If research takes place in one spoken language only, researchers should not let this language fall into the trap of invisibility. Rather, we should oscillate between looking through the magnifying glass of *das Gemeinte* and use the kaleidoscopic lens of *die Art des Meinens* to critically explore what the language and 'speech culture' in questions make im/possible to communicate, what they presume, and what they silence. I propose

that researchers can explore the relationship between *das Gemeinte* and *die Arts des Meinens* outside of what is traditionally understood as a translation process. We can examine a single spoken language or treat co-researchers' verbal communication and their body language as two distinct sign systems as a starting point for analysis. By playfully exploring the relationship between the literal and the conceptual, the verbal and the physical, an in-between space within a single language or within the friction of vocalisation and embodiment can create metaxic moments of f(r)iction that bear the potential of throwing light on different vantage points on Postdramatic Pedagogy and the themes it investigates.

a beginning

Tāmaki Makaurau
Auckland
November 2020

I was asked to write something about myself again

Not how I got here

But where I am now

Give me a minute, I feel a bit sick

So close no matter how far

Was our favourite line

Well I don't know anymore
If that is true, quite frankly

Now I'm almost thirty-three
And I cannot even check
For typos, weird grammar
In some random writing I did

Three years and seven months ago.
I thought it'd be easier to let go
As an adult, you know. But I guess

You never stop being a child
Someone's child
Someone's daughter
A (hi)story's daughter

You never stop grieving
Your home
Your mum
Your maunga

[even if it's just the tiny bump that looked like a volcano when you were four
the one you went sledging on every single December every single Christmas every single birthday]

Even if now you've got a reasonable sense
That it was all mostly built on lies
And pretty pictures
And trauma
And loss

that has survived

the decades, maybe centuries:

The fear

The mamae

The longing

The speechlessness

And I too cannot remember

Let myself remember, let myself speak

My heart skips

And my breath has long gone searching for the missing beat, somewhere undefinably far

Away

And

The fear

The mamae

The longing

The speechlessness

Stop me

And I cannot let myself remember

And I cannot even check

For typos, weird grammar

In some random writing I did

And I type and notice

The tears streaming down my face

And I hope

My office mate doesn't see

Again I stay silent
Do not make a sound
Here reigns conformity
No emotion policy

And I don't want to be like this.

I don't want to be like them
I don't want to be like her
In many ways

And I know that this sounds harsh
And I feel guilty for it
And it breaks my heart

Because I only remember hearing her say this once
Once she could bring herself to say
Those three words
Even though she was full of love
She was made of love
She was love
To me

And I guess home
Comes down to just this
And when you're away
And gone are

Your language your words your funny sounds your silly jokes your made-up words that don't mean anything but we could understand everything and your laughter and my laughter and you just cannot replicate that

Nowhere

Never

When you're away

And remembering is not just terrifying but impossible

Because when the loss has killed

All memory

Then you need those who share it speak it hear it see it in the whistling of the leaves

Or in the colour of a stranger's T-shirt that you probably would have liked

You need those

To be around

And when they are nowhere to be found

Then

And then I realise

The beauty and the joy

They were there

They were

For many years

It wasn't all a lie

And I don't have to renounce

Everything that was beautiful

For it hurts too much

To admit it

To

RE:MEMBER IT

or because the world would rather streamline you into a normalised mask of numb (hi)storyless
happiness

[because it's just easier that way]

And I know I won't be able to read this again, not for a couple of years at least and I cannot even check
for typos weird grammar in some random writing I did three years and seven months ago and I can't
believe I'm almost thirty-three and still

I miss you

And I love you

And I'm sorry

That we never got to say goodbye

I heard your heartbeat

And I remember thinking

As long as this heart beats

Everything is perfectly fine

Everything will be perfectly fine

And it beat perfectly fine

Who on earth would have thought this would be our (hi)story

I would have liked to apologise

For many things

But mainly just

do our words in our language our funny sounds our silly jokes our made-up words that don't mean anything but we could understand everything and your laughter and my laughter in the tiny house you raised me in our little garden under our small apple tree on that ground on that land in that quiet unspectacular little corner of the world and I accept that

I cannot replicate that

But maybe I can

now

soon

some time

start

I know you'd wish for nothing else

To rewrite

To build us something

like

a

H

O

M

E

I'll try

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