# A collaborative self-study of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education

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Promoter: Professor Dennis Francis

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Dot Vermeulen who expressed such enthusiasm as a participant in the research narrative, but sadly passed away long before its completion.

- I, Marguerite Müller, declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree in Higher Education at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

- I, Marguerite Müller, hereby declare that I am aware that the copyright is vested in the University of the Free State.

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# Abstract

In writing this thesis I tried to create an 'artwork' in which theory, literature, narrative and art become interwoven to illuminate the lived experiences of educators working towards anti-oppressive practices in a higher education context. I used an illustrated narrative inspired by the memories and experiences of the participants (including myself) in order to create 'portraits' of educators working in this context. These portraits are presented as collages which then become part of a bigger narrative. This narrative explores the connections between educator identity and the issues arising in the broader South African higher educational landscape.

I employed Kevin Kumashiro's (2002) four conceptualisations of anti-oppressive education as a theoretical lens through which to read and discuss the stories. Often, when we talk about social justice we talk about social identities and constructed identities. But these fixed categories can reduce us to measurable and quantifiable units that function in set hierarchies which and can never be disrupted or troubled. Through my research I rather attempt to emphasise the complex and messy nature of educators' experiences and emotions as they try to teach in anti-oppressive ways.

This study is rooted in arts-based practice and experiments with ways in which this research methodology can inform social change. The use of art in the thesis is thus purposefully connected to a theme of anti-oppressive change as it engages not only with different ways of being, but also different ways of learning and knowing. The work is situated in a poststructuralist framework in which oppression is read as intersectional, situated and multiple. Art opens up new spaces for the researcher to explore the social context and educational landscape. The extension of self-study into anti-oppressive theory made it possible to explore the contextual realities through the 'eyes' of the participants. In this exploration I used a collaborative self-study to connect the theory to the experiences of the educator where it can open up an in-between space in which anti-oppressive change becomes possible.

Art assisted me to challenge certain academic conventions of thesis writing, but it also helped me to make connections between theory and experience that would otherwise have been impossible. The methodology informed me theoretically as working towards anti-oppressive change also involves giving up some control so that we can learn from uncertainty and crisis in order to trouble existing knowledge. The implication being that as educators we cannot learn

or be 'told' how to work towards anti-oppressive practice but have to build such knowledge through our experiences – and our creative engagement with these experiences.

The portraits foreground educators as complex beings dealing with complex issues and resist the idea that there is a correct way to be or to teach. In this way, it troubles prescriptive recipes for anti-oppressive practice by looking at creative avenues of exploring one's identity to become different. This research shows how we work in in-between spaces of uncertainty, discomfort and self-doubt, and how our experiences are disruptive, interrupted, and messy. We are troubled and haunted by our own identities as we try to move our experience into a new frame in which difference is possible.

Key terms:

Anti-oppressive education

Anti-oppressive change

Anti-oppressive theory

Arts based practice

Collaborative inquiry

Educator emotion

Educator portraits

Fiction as research

Narrative inquiry

Self-study

Social justice

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List of Characters

*Daisy:*

She is the central character and protagonist in the thesis. Her explorative journey weaves throughout the thesis as she interacts with the other characters and engages with her own memories and experiences of growing up in South Africa and becoming an educator in this context. In a sense Daisy is the alter-ego or character 'portrait' of Marguerite.

*Marguerite:*

As the author of the text Marguerite sometimes steps into the story to engage in conversations with the characters. This happens progressively more towards the end of the thesis as Daisy gradually 'becomes' different and 'grows' into Marguerite.

*Dennis:*

As a Professor in Education he is the guiding and critical voice in the thesis as he challenges Marguerite to think about her engagement with the theory and methodology that underscores her work. He fulfils the role of supervisor and academic advisor.

*Josh:*

He is Daisy's 4 year old child. As the narrative unfolds he help her to connect her academic and maternal self as she moves between professional and personal spaces.

*Frank:*

As Daisy's partner and friend he shares her concerns surrounding their son's education and also their careers in higher education.

*Dot:*

She is the first 'portrait' introduced to the reader and plays the role of an artist working within an academic stetting. She also tragically passes away early on in the

narrative.

*Alice:*

The second 'portrait' to be introduced is Alice. She is a friend of Daisy who works in education and shares her professional experiences in relation to her childhood experiences. Her narrative deals with racial and religious tensions that she experiences across various educational contexts.

*Celine:*

This character is the third 'portrait' to be introduced. She outlines her life in terms of the stumbling blocks she had to overcome in order to get to where she is now. Her gender and racial identity is foregrounded as key components in her narrative.

*Chubby:*

As the fourth 'portrait' he is older than the other characters in the story. He reflects upon the changes in higher education and his personal journey from a time of apartheid to the current context.

*Mick:*

He is the fifth 'portrait' to be introduced and places emphasis on his many different roles as a lecturer, friend and fellow PhD student.

*FridaFreire:*

As the last 'portrait to be introduced FridaFreire talks of the tension between personal memory and professional experience, and also the tension between different parts of the self.

*D:*

This character is both Daisy and Marguerite. D comes into being as Daisy starts to resist and question her social categories in a quest to become 'different'.

**Chapter 1: Draw me an educator working towards anti-oppressive practice**

*"Draw me a sheep", said the Little Prince. So the Pilot drew a sheep, but the Little Prince rejected the first drawing, and the second drawing, and the third drawing. Finally the Pilot made a drawing of a box and said: "This is only his box. The sheep is inside" and the Little Prince was satisfied* (Saint-Exupéry 1970, p.8).

Neither the Pilot nor the Little Prince would approve of the title of *my* story for it is long and cumbersome and a title for grown-ups and academics. However, I hope that as I write this uncertain and fragile narrative it will not buckle under its heavy title, but remain a story – one which exists in the unquantifiable realms of imagination.

I suppose all stories have a beginning. This one began one Tuesday morning in a very dirty and chaotic high school art room in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. I was sitting there watching things unfold and feeling utterly defeated and helpless. The room was swarming with grade 9 Arts and Culture learners who were supposed to be doing a painting project, but the whole thing had spun totally out of control and now paint was flying through the air and colliding with grade 9 bodies. Realising that I had lost control of the situation I sat down on my chair and tried to fight a raising panic and resist the urge to scream. What was I doing here? How did my existence connect to this place in time and to the students in front of me? What was my MEANING in this space? What did my identity as a white Afrikaans woman signify in this predominantly black Zulu classroom? What should I do next? … So let's say that was the beginning of this story. It starts with me in a messy space, in an uncomfortable situation, feeling a little lost and trying to find a way out.

From there on the story took many twists and turns, running in and out of disciplines, across educational institutions and different South African provinces. One day a few years later I found myself sitting in the office of Professor Dennis Francis who had agreed to be my PhD research supervisor at the University of the Free State. I was in many ways privileged to find a promoter whose own research was about bringing together education for social justice (Francis, Hemson, Mphambukeli, and Quin 2003, Francis & Hemson 2007a, Francis and Hemson 2007b, Francis & Le Roux 2011) and art based methods (Francis 2013), which was also what I wanted to do. So I could freely express my disinterest in the formulistic academic writing style that most PhD theses seemed to follow: introduce your topic, state your problem, review the

literature, give a theoretical framework, present the data, analyse the data, discuss and conclude. I explained that I wanted to work in a more creative, artistic and narrative way than this formula allowed. I wanted to leave room for the element of surprise which is crucial to good story writing and allow myself to be guided by the unpredictable intuitive process which is part of the art making process. Understanding my dilemma Dennis told me to write a creative abstract for what I envisioned this thesis to be upon completion, and so I wrote the following:

*In this research the author has created artworks which attempt to visualise a narrative of identity and transformation of South African educators. These artworks are in the form of portraits and function as alternative identities in which teachers can visualize and express themselves and the space in which they function. The portraits serve to reflect the perceptions of teacher identity, emotion, passion and narratives as held by individual teachers (including the researcher). An arts based methodology is used to make the identity and narratives of individual teachers 'visible', and to create a space in which this narrative identity is portrayed as a reflection of self. This extends into what Zembylas (2007, p.136) calls the "Foucauldian politics of passion which creates possibilities for developing alternative emotional responses, expressions, identities and visions which serve to promote passionate, affective and adventurous teaching and learning practices, i.e. teachers and students who practice the 'art of not being themselves'". The portraits serve as meeting place for the body and the mind; a site in which ideas and perceptions can be expressed in concrete artistic forms. Furthermore, they become a site where different voices and interpretations meet: the voice of the researcher in producing the portrait, the voice of the participant in choosing where and how they wish to be portrayed, and finally the voice of the viewer who see, hear and interpret the artwork. The portraits talk to the senses and therefore function as tactile conversations and entry points into a larger narrative of identity and perception. The aim of this research is to provide a lens through which educator identity can be viewed, but can also speak and transform into otherness or alternatives. Portraits are not reflections of reality, they reveal part of the subject in a partial way which is open to interpretation by the viewer. Portraiture is a way of sharing stories, of interacting with self and others to create a new or alternative identity. Finally the end product is not static nor final nor complete, but is merely a glimpse, a moment, and a shadow of itself.*

When I wrote this I did not know where it would end or what this thesis would become. I only knew that I was on a journey of exploration and that I wanted this journey to be reflected in my thesis. Sometime later Dennis gave me the following advice: *"Look Marguerite, you are pushing the boundaries or arts-based methodologies, you are also pushing the boundaries of what a positivist constructivist construction of a thesis is. It does not mean that the other theses you have read is better or prove any more than yours, nor any less. It just means that your thesis is different."* And so what I will present to you in this chapter and in this thesis is different, and it is meant to be DIFFERENT. For it is difference that I seek - in my teaching, in my writing, in my art, and in myself. What will follow is a narrated, illustrated and fictional journey of my search for 'educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education' inspired by art, real life experiences, theory and fiction.

*Educators working towards anti-oppressive practice,*
*the protagonists in this tale*
*Who are they?*
*What are they like?*
*What do they do?*
*Not sure I know…*
*Do you?*

Let us start with a box:

Inside the box are the stories of 'educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education'. The box contains the story and as we open the box the story starts to unravel. The first object I find is a small terracotta tile, which is painted and glazed. This object serves as an embodiment of memory (Cole 2011); a sunny memory of a faraway day out in the green grassy Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, where I was painting ceramics with my Grade 12 art learners. It is a simple picture of a paintbrush and pencil and a space in between them. As I unwrap this memory I see myself standing in the space between art and education, and it is from this space that I now write; the pencil writing the narrative and the paintbrush painting the picture. For me the pencil is symbolic of the theoretical underpinnings of this story whereas the paintbrush symbolises my methodology. In the space between theory and methodology my story comes to life.
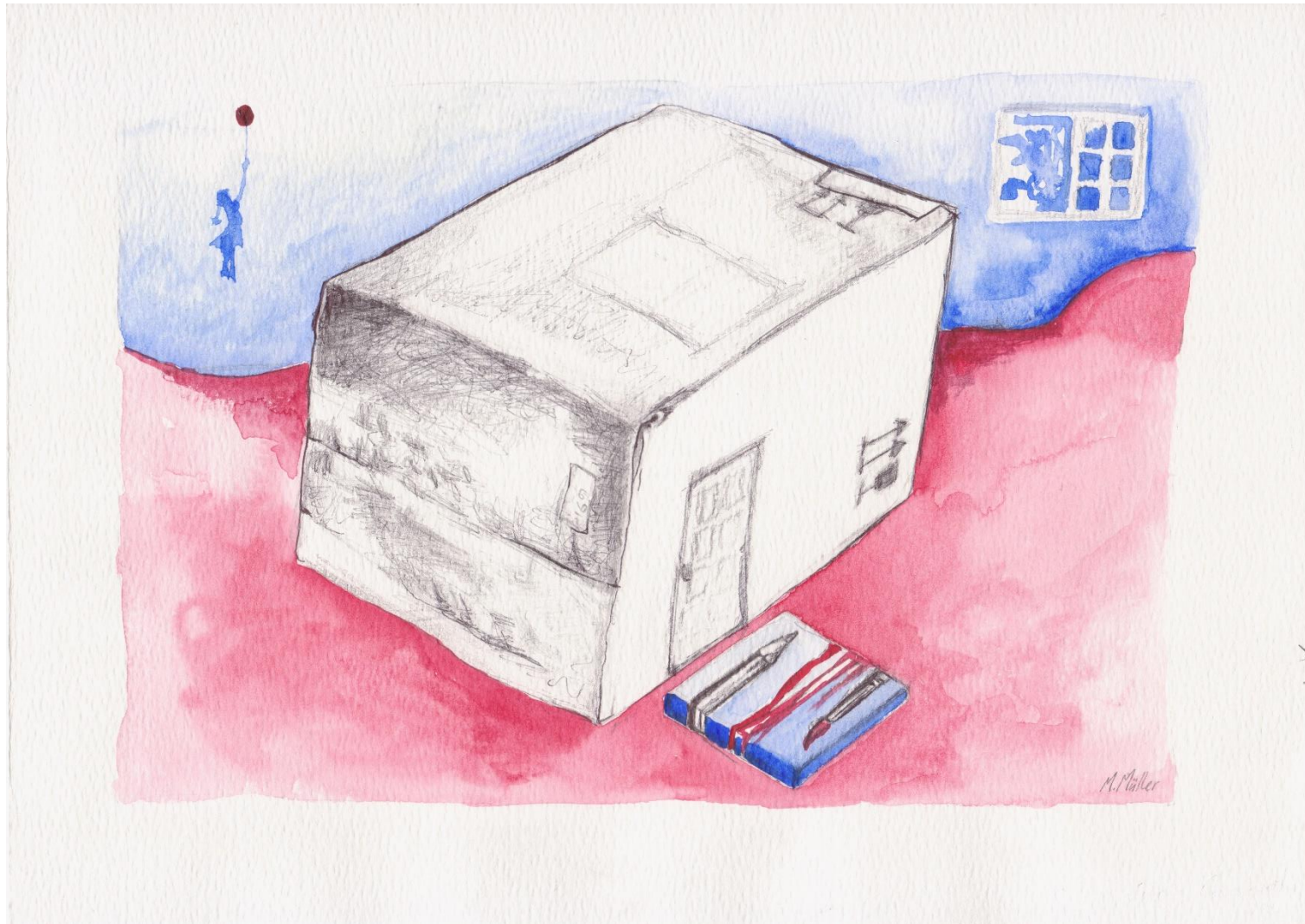
Figure 1. *A box,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, pencil and watercolour
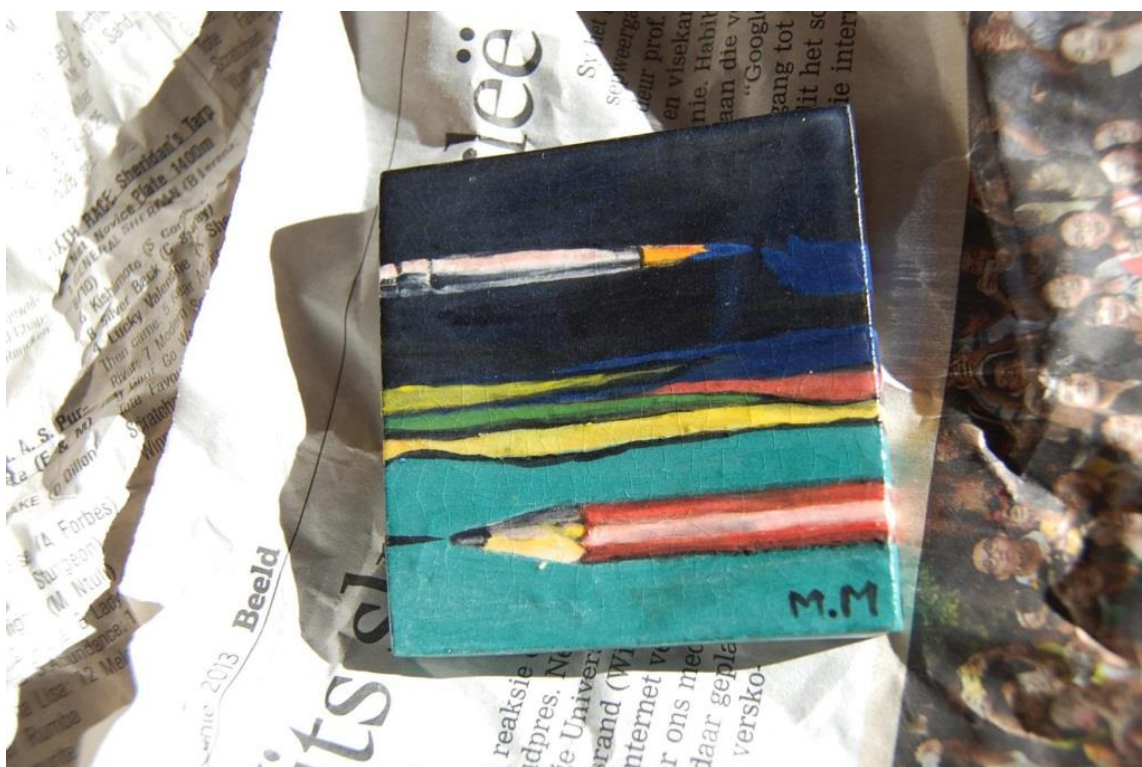
Figure 2. *Between a pencil and a paintbrush,* Marguerite Müller, 2015, photograph of ceramic artwork

My paintbrush is painting and my pencil is writing. My thoughts unfold in a scattering of objects that cover the surface of the kitchen table, cluttering my space and threatening to push me out altogether. To the left a tower of theory books is leaning at a dangerous angle. Behind the theoretical tower is a larger solid mass of unmarked student essays. I turn my attention to the collection of children's books with "Where the Wild Things Are" (Sendak 1963) at the top, and open on the page were the walls become the world all-around Max. To the right of the story book is a photo album from the middle eighties which is struggling to keep my childhood inside its yellowing pages. One picture has escaped – it is a faded image of a little girl holding a red balloon.

She is me, I am telling her story, and I choose to call her Daisy. She is holding on to that red balloon real tight, because inside it is her story. If she does let go the story would drift away on the wind and be lost forever. So perhaps painting and drawing is a way to hang on to something, but it is also a way to pin something down before it evaporates from sight and memory, and finally it is a way to let go. It was Pablo Picasso who said that: "painting is just another way of keeping a diary" (Leavy 2009, p.215), and I couldn't agree more.

*Daisy is playing with a red balloon in a green suburban garden. The air smells of Jasmine, sunshine, watermelon, birthday cake, washing powder, ironed clothes, mowed lawns… She goes to a 'good' Afrikaans school and gets a 'good' education. Sundays her family goes to the Dutch Reformed Church where her father is a Dominee (minister) and after the service she attends Sunday school. She is part of a close-knit community where similar views on religion, politics, history, and a shared language serve as the glue that binds them as white Afrikaners. The only people of colour she knows work as cleaners or gardeners. She listens to them speak languages she cannot understand. Although they are grown-ups she does not call them 'Oom' or 'Tannie', as she would call white grown-ups, but rather by their names. She knows that they have children, because unused toys or outgrown clothes are often sent home with them, but she never sees their families, or their homes. They seem to only exist in her world, with their own world somewhere beyond hers, out of her sight.*

My pencil would like to interrupt my paintbrush at this point to scribble a few notes. Although this is the story of Daisy, it is not dissimilar to many other stories of white Afrikaner children growing up during the eighties in South Africa. She is blissfully unaware of the turmoil and unrest brewing outside of her suburban middle class life. She has never heard of the Struggle, or even Apartheid. In her life things are just the way they are. Her education, Christian religion, and Afrikaner culture blends into one seamless unquestionable entity of school, church, and 'nation' while her family enjoys the privileges of the white middle class during the eighties in South Africa. As I write Daisy's story I have hooks (2003, p.26) in the back of my mind saying that "I have found that confronting racial biases, and more important, white-supremacist thinking, usually requires that all of us take a critical look at what we learned early in life about the nature of race. Those initial imprints seem to overdetermine attitudes about race". And so I start the story of Daisy at a point in her early life. I use my memories to bring the story to life, but memory is not static or opaque; rather it is transparent and fluid. As Daisy grows up my reading of her childhood experiences starts to change and takes on new meanings.

*Look there is another picture of Daisy, dressed as up as a cowboy. The picture was taken by her pre-school teacher who, unlike other teachers, did not seem to mind when she refused to do ballet with the other girls or chose to be a 'lion' rather than a 'fairy princess'.*

Why was Daisy challenging her prescribed gender role at the age of five? Her teacher and parents did not seem to mind, but she was aware that for a girl to do boyish things were frowned
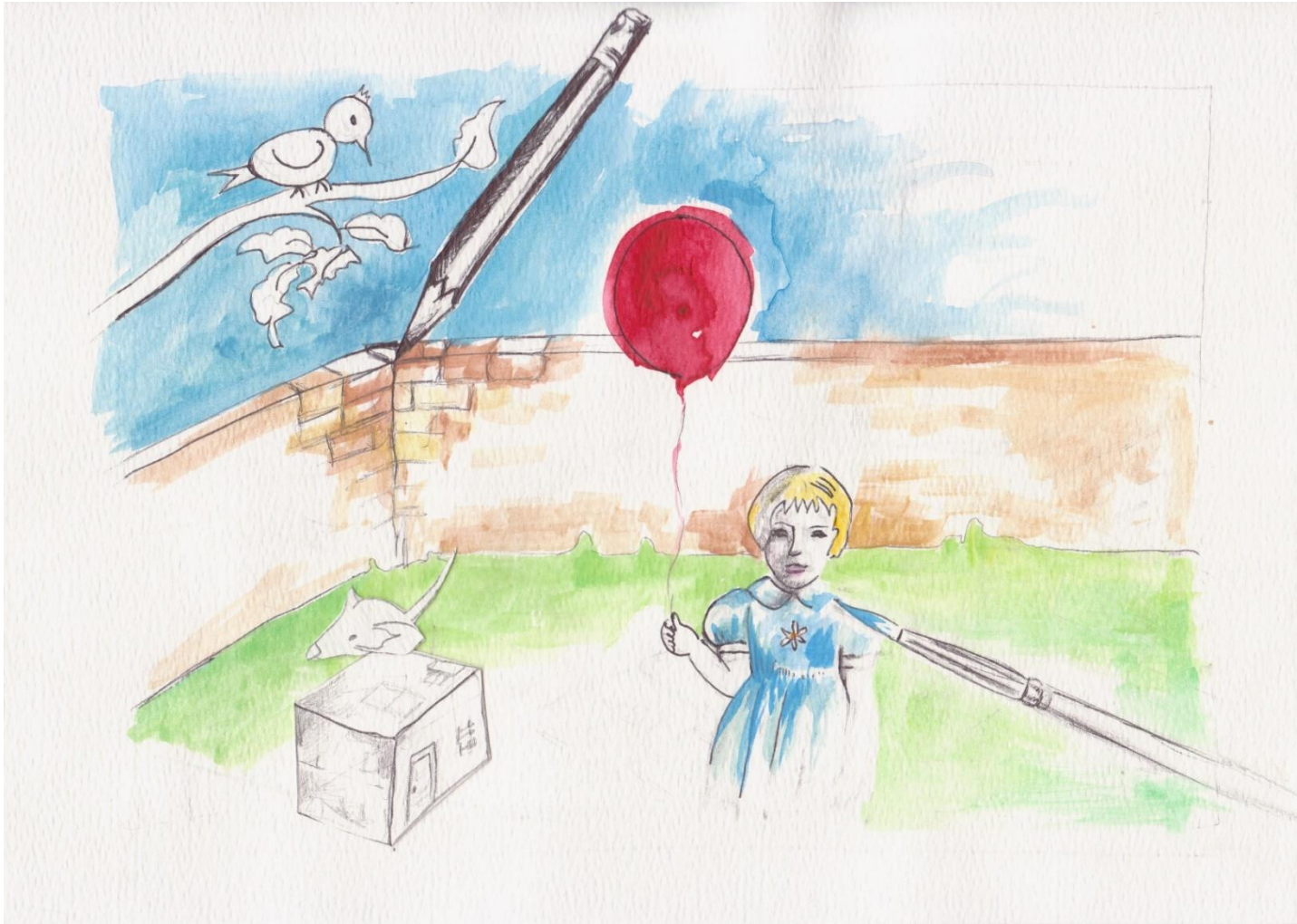
Figure 3. *Daisy's portrait,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, pencil drawing

upon by many grownups who referred to such girls as 'tomboys'. Was she perhaps becoming aware that she was living in a society where white was not only privileged over black, but also masculine over feminine?

*As she progresses through the school system the freedom of pre-school evaporates into strict patterns of right and wrong. In primary school she finds herself marching in very straight lines. Strict rules define the boundaries of this semi-militant world. Sunlight filters in through high windows and the dust dances around like little specs of freedom before it disappears in the folds of heavy velvet curtains. Her memories are not unpleasant and smell of sharpened pencils, wood polish, industrial cleaning detergent and order. Look - there is the principal, male and important, addressing the assembly of uniformed children in straight lines, boys to the right and girls to the left, no talking, no moving, breathe if you really must. He is explaining that a coloured girl will join their straight white lines tomorrow, she is in standard 4 (6th Grade), and there will be no trouble thank you.*



Figure 4. *Straight Lines,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, pen drawing

*Around the same time there is a request that a child with Down's syndrome should be allowed to attend the primary school. The request causes a rift in the otherwise uniform community.*

*Should a child with 'special needs' be allowed to come to our 'normal' school? Daisy overhears the grown-ups argue and debate this issue around the 'braaivleis vuur' (barbeque fire) with a game of rugby flashing on the television screen in the background. Surely it is the right thing to do some say, but surely 'such' a child will slow down the learning of the other children, say others. Eventually the request is withdrawn by the child's parents and everything goes back to 'normal'.*

*Sexual orientation is not a topic that ever comes up but somehow they are all aware that heterosexuality is the norm and that homosexuality exists (somewhere OUT THERE in some shadowy place far away). Daisy is in the Biblical study class of one of the male teachers rumoured to be gay who makes them copy down some Bible verse that says homosexuality is a sin.*

So at primary school level she is socialised into believing that she is part of the 'normal' group. Part of this process is the growing awareness that there are others outside of her group, those of colour, those with disabilities, those who are homosexual and those who are poor, but they are always somewhere on the margins and peripheries of the world she inhabits. However, her 'normal' world is changing rapidly. When she goes to high school in 1996, South Africa is two years into a new democracy. The country has a new flag, a new president, a new constitution and a new South African Schools Act which makes a commitment to social justice in creating a new system of education that would combat "racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance" (Republic of South Africa 1996, p.1).

*So I turn the pencil around to start erasing Daisy's known world and reveal stormy seas beyond her walls. As the walls around her become transparent she begins to see what lies on the other side of what she had taken for granted. She becomes aware of a new climate of fear and uncertainty framed in hope and optimism. It is nothing concrete, just a feeling in the air, a sigh of relief perhaps for some, a celebration for others. Things have changed but they are still the same, more-or-less. For the first time she sits in school classrooms shoulder to shoulder with coloured Afrikaans speakers. Her coloured classmates do not live in the white neighbourhoods, but in the township which was designated for coloured people under apartheid legislation, and which is far away from school. They arrive in buses in the morning and leave on buses in the afternoon. In class she gets to converse with some of the coloured students and exchange ideas on topics from music to religion. When the bell rings for break the coloured learners go to sit in one group and she goes to sit with the other white learners. The teachers are all white and*

*the cleaners are all black. The principal is male and the secretaries are female. Being in a co-ed school makes it easy for Daisy to observe the way gender roles are performed and the way males are privileged in this space. Daisy is made to sit silently through countless ceremonies to celebrate the school's mediocre rugby team and watch boys with inflated muscles parade across the stage while she applauds in a 'civilised' manner. No whistling or shouting! On early winter mornings she is secretly envious of the boys who get to wear pants to school when she must wear short skirts (five fingers above the knee) with stockings. Even if pants were allowed she wouldn't wear it anyway, that would make her seem unfeminine and therefore unpopular. She would love to take woodwork and metalwork as a subject because of her interest in sculpting, but she doesn't dare to do such a thing. One girl in the school did have the guts to take the 'boy subject' once and everyone talked about it saying she must be a lesbian. Daisy is not ready to give up her heterosexual privilege for learning how to weld and carve. It seems to her at this point that being a desirable heterosexual female is much more important than learning skills that might be useful in a possible future career.*

Kent (2004) points out that what we learn in school is much more than the 'formal' curriculum and that students learn how to perform gender and sexuality in what many perceive to be a 'safe' space. "Each 'space' within the school hosts a complexity of gender and sexuality performances; they are part of everyday life and largely go unchallenged" (Kent 2004, p.68). So growing up Daisy forms perceptions of how race, gender and sexuality is performed by observing these in both informal spaces and formal classroom settings.

*Reflecting on her school experiences (both as a pupil and later as a teacher) Daisy realises that through school she had been exposed to so many gendered spatial divisions - the tuck-shops were run by women and girls while the men worked as security guards. The appearance of female teachers were discussed relentlessly by learners, from the shape of their legs to the colour of their hair. The quality of their teaching seemed much less important than their appearance. Male teachers were not discussed in this way. Male teachers could be seen smoking outside the staffroom and this was viewed as normal behaviour. When female teachers were spotted smoking, or rumoured to be smokers this was viewed as rebellious and 'naughty' behaviour. Sometimes male teachers made sexist remarks and as girls they just giggled. In and out of the classroom girls were expected to be naturally more responsible and mature and less rebellious or daring than boys. The few rare occasions when sex was discussed in this context the message was clear – as girls it was their responsibility to protect themselves from naughty boys and to make sure they didn't 'step over the line'. It was their responsibility to say no to*

*sex. Or if all else failed it was their responsibility to make sure they didn't get pregnant. In grade 9 one girl did get pregnant and left school. It was her problem and they never saw her again.*

In this way students come to believe that it is normal for male students to be privileged, that gender roles are cast in iron and that heterosexuality is the norm. These notions are not challenged in school settings, because 'safe' is often associated with upholding the 'status quo' or not rocking the boat. As Kent (2004, p.71) puts it: "The performance of compulsory sexualities displayed femininities and masculinities as two very unequal halves where males control the negotiation of power and space". I start the narrative with Daisy's early childhood experiences and schooling for a number of reasons. Firstly it is where her own socialisation would have begun. These were her first encounters with the world and through them she came to understand what the world is 'like' and what 'she is like in the world'. Bobbie Harro (2000) refers to our *Cycle of Socialisation* and how all these experiences help shape our social identification with gender, race, age, sexual orientation, religion, economic class and ability/disability status. Harro speaks largely to our socialisation within oppressive environments and how we are taught to reproduce the oppression, or are sometimes able to break the cycle of oppression. According to Harro (2000, p.46) we are kept in the cycle through ignorance, insecurity, confusion, obliviousness and fear. Another reason I start with the 'portrait' and story of Daisy is because this is what I asked the participants in this research to do; to share their stories and their memories and read it through an anti-oppressive lens. By sharing my own story first (with the help of Daisy) I hoped to become sensitive to what the participants would feel when I asked the same of them. Finally I acknowledge that this is a partial story told for a specific purpose. I am sharing some of my encounters and remembered experiences through Daisy and leaving out many others. I am constructing Daisy for a specific purpose, for example to illustrate her socialisation through formal and informal spaces, but what I choose to tell is carefully selected. Later in this process I will return to her stories to look at the silences or the omissions in her narrative. While in this first chapter I present her as a little naïve and almost as a 'victim' of her own socialisation I know that is only partially true.

*She finishes high school and goes to study Fine Art at the University of Pretoria. In class the English speaking students tend to befriend each other and the Afrikaans students form their own group. The grouping is not just along language lines, but along what they perceive as shared 'values' and 'culture' and even 'religion'. The tension between Afrikaans and English speaking white South Africans can be traced back well into colonial history with the South*

*African war (1899 – 1902) being perhaps the pinnacle of animosity between the two colonial groups. She grew up with war-stories which highlighted the suffering of Afrikaners at the hands of the English. She had heard countless negative narratives about 'Die Engelse' (The English) and derogatory terms like 'pommie' or 'rooinek' were commonly used by Afrikaners to refer to this 'other' group. Now at university she notices that the English group seems to include more diversity than the Afrikaans group with students from different religions and cultural backgrounds forming part of it. After completing the BA Fine Arts a few students from this class go on to do a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) to qualify as teachers. Daisy is one of these and discovers that in this new setting it is possible for her to cross the language lines and make friends with the students from the English group. Her friends are no longer from the same language or religious background; the common denominator is rather that they all have a background in art and are now studying education.*

*During this time Daisy takes a part-time job tutoring a South Korean primary school student who came to South Africa to learn English. As she arrives at her new tutoring job a small dark-haired middle aged woman opens the door and gestures for her to take off her shoes. She is lead from the one side of the tiny bachelor's flat to the other where an eight year old girl stands frowning at her. Daisy becomes intensely aware of a strong unfamiliar smell which is coming from the fridge. She glances around the one room apartment which seems to be mostly empty except for the clock against the wall and a small table bearing an English dictionary.*



Figure 5. *A Foreign Space,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, pen drawing

*Years ago in that primary school hall she looked at the sun as it filtered in through the high windows. She longed to be outside in the sunshine rather than to be sitting in a straight row of similarity. Now she has grown used to the borders of her world, but she is starting to grow tall enough to see out of the high windows. She is looking out of her confined world of sameness – to see difference DOES exist. Moving out of the familiar is making her different too. Now she wants to climb out of that window and go off to see what is going on outside her walls, beyond what she can see.*

*One summer holiday she goes to England to work as an au pair and suddenly finds herself washing other people's underwear, cleaning their toilets and attempting to take care of their spoilt children. When a silver earring goes missing around Christmas time she is indirectly accused of the crime and made to go through numerous rubbish bins. When she turns 21 the family she works for cooks her a lovely meal and they take her to the local pub. She grows fond of the children and the dog and the little town which is so pretty it might have been in a book or on a movie set. Many of the poems and books she read as child were 'set' in England and now the pictures of those books were coming to life for the first time: the snow, the big Christmas tree, the Wellington boots, the fireplace. In the morning she drinks tea with the elderly gardener who likes to talk about 'those bloody Boers' and the South African War.*

*After completing her studies Daisy goes to teach English in South Korea. She lives amongst a group of other 'wei-guk-in' (the Korean word for non-Koreans). In this new context her understanding of the 'normal' way to do or be is challenged. Within their group of 'wei-guk-in' it is easy to make friends across the previously perceived boundaries of nationality, sexual orientation, race and class. She is relieved to make friends with people she likes, rather than with people who are 'like her'. It becomes second nature to take off her shoes when entering a house, a shop or a restaurant. Bowing when greeting someone is expected and the younger you are the lower you bow. It is made clear from the start the desirable accent is the American accent and that South African English is somehow inferior. In fact some of her South African friends are asked to not only conceal their South African identity, but also alter their accents to sound more American. She finds her own accent changing gradually to be more 'understandable'. She notices that the majority of the 'foreign' teachers are American or Canadian. A clear distinction is made between 'foreigners' from English speaking countries (Canada, America, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) and those from countries like Russia, Serbia or Indonesia. The first group gets employed as teachers with good working*

*hours and good pay while the second group gets employed in restaurants where the pay is low and they often suffer verbal or even physical abuse.*

As Daisy grows and moves out of her familiar childhood space the intersections and complexities of oppression start to shine through the walls of her story. Language, class, gender, sexuality, religion, etc. are spilling out of their boxes and becoming one big grey blob on the floor. She is trying to see her reflection in this blob of difference. She is surprised when she finds that moving outside her previously unquestioned privileged spaces makes her suddenly more aware of that privilege. It makes her uncomfortably aware of her own complicity with oppression. She is now floating uncertainly over stormy waters. The waves are caused by doubts and questions which she hadn't been challenged with before. As Peggy McIntosh puts it: "My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will" (McIntosh 1988, para.5). Daisy grew up thinking of herself as 'normal'. When the foundation of 'normal' starts to disappear she has to re-think herself.

*Many years later Daisy is still in Korea, and teaching a compulsory Practical English module at a foreign language university. The reading of the day mentions apartheid as an example of institutionalised racism. She has to explain apartheid to the Korean students who watch her intently. They know that she comes from South Africa and she finds herself feeling embarrassed and guilty. She feels complicit, she feels blamed and shamed. She thinks that she doesn't like to talk about apartheid.*

Why does she have this reaction? "It is an undeniable fact that the apartheid regime favoured white people: some jobs were reserved for white people, land was taken from blacks and given to whites, government subsidies were given to white farmers, white children received superior education, and the list can continue" (Matthews 2011, para.3). White privilege does not only refer to concrete advantage, but also to the "presentation of features or characteristics associated with white people as normal or desirable" (Matthews 2011, para.5). In Korea there is a huge market for skin care products that promise 'whitening' of the skin. Daisy's students openly expressed a desire for white skin and discussed a range of methods from bleaching to staying out of the sun to acquire such skin. She also noticed that the obsession with white skin seemed to be an especially desirable female characteristic and she encountered it again later in the South African context where black female students would refer to similar skin lightening

products and a black male student once told her that he preferred a female with 'yellow bones' (when she enquired about the meaning of 'yellow bones' it was explained to her that it was a reference to light skin colour). On another occasion a coloured girl said in a class of mostly black students that she would only date a guy with light skin, and two other black girls remarked that they also preferred a guy with lighter skin so their babies would turn out caramel colour.

hooks reminds us that the "white woman as symbol of purity continues to dominate racist imaginations globally. In the United States, Hollywood continues to project this image using it to affirm and reaffirm the power of white supremacy" (hooks 2003, p.34). It is not really necessary to go far to see what she means, a visit to any toyshop will do. In South Africa where the majority of girls are black it is really hard to find a doll with dark skin or dark hair. Daisy remembers that as a girl she had longed for a doll with brown eyes like hers, but couldn't even find that. No, dolls are white with blue eyes no matter where in the world you go and everyone seems to be happy with this arrangement, right? Besides the obvious gender stereotypes portrayed by dolls of the Barbie variety they also enforce whiteness as the norm. "The assumption that 'whiteness encompass that which is universal, and therefore for everybody, while 'blackness' is specific, and therefore 'for colored only', is part of white supremacist thought" (hooks 2003, p.39).

*Still living in Korea Daisy and Frank both work at the foreign language university. They get married and have a little boy and Daisy quits her work at the university to care for the little one. Like most contract positions (in South Korea and South Africa) this one does not come with maternity leave. When Josh is about seven months old she takes him down to the local play area. They are the only foreigners in this rural neighbourhood, where they had been mostly treated with friendly curiosity. Once in a while people come up to her and ask if she would take a picture with them or even if they could touch her hair. Josh had just started to crawl and she wants him to practice his skill outside in the Cherry Blossom infused spring air. This is his first time to visit the play area. She takes him out of his pram and he immediately sees a group of Korean children at the other side of the play area. He crawls toward them eagerly, but when the children see the little blonde baby approaching they scream and run away. It seems to her that what grown-ups had expressed as curiosity the children express as fear. The reaction of the Korean children makes Daisy think about her whiteness and what it signifies in different contexts. Growing up in South Africa as part of a white minority she never in any way felt that she was anything but 'normal'. Being White had meant that her "decency, honesty and propriety [were] assumed"(Matthews 2011, para.9). Living in Korea she had*

*grown accustomed to being a foreign curiosity. A drunk old man once attacked her (with his fist) in a public space. What she could make out of his yells was that he had assumed her to be American, based on her appearance. A long history of American presence in South Korea had formed the basis for both positive and negative feelings between the two groups, but Daisy's appearance was enough to cast her as an American. Her friend who is Indian and understands Korean often told her of the racist comments he had to endure when riding on the bus, because people assumed he could not understand their language and openly discussed their views.*

She returns to South Africa and starts teaching in various educational institutions. She is no longer a foreign curiosity – she is local and a history of oppressive relations between white and black is reflected on the surface of her white skin. In the classroom she is confronted with oppression in many forms on a daily basis. She realises that awareness is no longer sufficient to help her glide over these issues.

*Not so long ago Daisy finds herself teaching a literacy class at the University of the Free State. Most of the students are black. The discussion on "Teenage suicide" (the reading for the day) is floating around the room and for a moment settles on the high suicide rate in a country like South Korea, where she explains that she had spent some of her earlier teaching years.*

> *Student: But they are highly stressed people.*
> *Daisy: Who?*
> *Student: The Chinese.*
> *Daisy: You mean the South Koreans?*
> *Student: They look the same.*

*There is a moment of silence before protests erupt from elsewhere in the class. The discussion moves to stereotyping and she tells the class how her South Korean students sometimes had trouble understanding how she could be from South Africa, and not be black. "Where are you <u>really</u> from?" they would ask her.*

*The class is silent for a bit before a black girl in the front row poses the question: But why <u>are</u> you white, ma'am? She feels herself go a little red with embarrassment and change the subject without answering the question.*

The discomfort and conflict that arise when issues of bias are discussed in the classroom might lead educators to avoid any such discussion. Weinstein and Obear (1992) talk of how teachers who begin to treat bias in the classroom (if they have not been trained to do so) might

experience something similar to culture shock which results when "typical behaviours are met with atypical responses" (Weinstein & Obear 1992, p.40).

*It is the last day of the Korean school term. On her way to school Daisy had purchased a smallish cake with some Christmas decorations on it to give as a gift to her Korean co-teacher, Sung Min. She had become friends with Sung Min and wanted to give her a gift before they parted for the holidays. She had observed that giving a cake as a gift seemed common practice. When she gave the cake to Sung Min in the staffroom she could immediately see that she had done something wrong. Sung Min looked visibly embarrassed and lead Daisy, with the cake, over to the grumpy vice principal sitting in the corner. Daisy had not even exchanged one word with this man throughout her stay. Sung Min indicated that Daisy should give the cake to the vice-principal, which she did. He cut the cake and the three of them each ate a piece. Daisy felt very confused by the whole event and could only guess at its meaning which might have something to do with face saving and the hierarchy of gift giving in the Korean society.*

"Culture shock stimulates self-doubt and confusion and results in self-shock, which is essentially a challenge to one's core self-image" (Weinstein & Obear 1992, p.40). Discussions of bias in the classroom might lead the educator to experience feelings of being in uncharted waters, of being out of the depth, of not knowing the answer. Self-doubt that arises from such discussions "…challenge our self-image as competent, clear-thinking professionals" (Weinstein & Obear 1992, p.40). This challenge to the self-image is not pleasant or comfortable, but it is a crucial component of working towards anti-oppressive practice.

*Throughout her career she finds herself mostly teaching in contexts where she is the only white person in the room: first as an English teacher to South Korean students, then as an Art teacher to predominantly black Zulu learners in Pietermaritzburg, and now as an English Academic Literacy facilitator to mostly black students at UFS. She begins to wonder about the significance of this and it makes her uncomfortable. In the Academic Literacy manual it reads that "…we acknowledge the students' diversity and reject the deficit view of students' competencies. Our focus is to embrace students' cultural differences and recognise the different ways in which our students were socialized into literacy practices in their prior learning experiences." (Drennan, Potgieter & Gouws 2015, p.6). Daisy wonders how she acknowledges and embrace difference.*

*Daisy goes to an exhibition of Peter Magubane's photographic work on campus. "A struggle without documentation is no struggle at all" is the title of the exhibition. It is an emotional*

*experience as the photographs show some shocking images from South Africa's apartheid past. She realises that many of these pictures were taken around the time that she was playing with her red balloon in the green suburban garden of her childhood. While the awareness of this uncomfortable and tragic history washes over her in all its visual intensity she overhears a conversation at the other side of the gallery. A white woman, a black woman and a black man are talking about the exhibition and the white woman says: "You know I feel so ashamed that people of my skin colour were responsible for this..."*

*The woman's words jolt her memory and immediately takes her back a few years to when she was a high school art teacher in Pietermarizburg. It was an urban school and her students were predominantly black. There was one student who was very active in class discussions, and whenever Daisy raised a concern about class discipline or clean-up duties, or tardiness, or homework not done, he would say: "This is black people, ma'am", as a way of explaining the problem to her. He said it in a joking manner and no one seemed to take him up on the comments. One day he was helping her carry supplies into the store room and during an informal conversation his "this is black people" remark slipped out again. So this time she asked him why he was so keen to put down all black people in this hurtful manner. Standing out of earshot from the other learners he said: "Sometimes I feel ashamed of being black, ma'am". To her own surprise she said: "Well sometimes I feel ashamed of being white."*

Matthews (2011) suggests that white South Africans need to be honest about how they benefited from the injustices of the past and that feelings of shame about this is appropriate. "Some people believe that it is best to put the past behind you, to never speak about the events that have happened which have hurt or wounded us, and this is their way of coping – but coping is not healing. By confronting the past without shame we are free of its hold on us" (hooks 2003, p.119). Shame and guilt might be necessary to bring us to a certain realisation, but these emotions might also lead to a passive state of negativity.

*We see ourselves, it would seem*
*through the colour of our skins.*
*And to our skins cling*
*many uncomfortable things.*
*How do we shed that uncomfortable skin?*

*In the art room she draws up a clean-up roster. She does this because it is how things were done when she had been in school. Every week two learners are responsible for sweeping the class and taking out the trash during the register period at the end of the day. In week two her system fails. One of the grade 11 boys inform her that he had already been to 'the mountains' and can therefore not sweep the class as that is a woman's work and he is now a man. The girl whose name is also on the list that week intervenes to say that she will sweep and he can take out the trash. This quickly becomes the norm and everybody seems to accept it. Girls sweep, boys take out the trash. Daisy does not challenge the 'new' system. She worries that forcing the boy who had been to initiation school to sweep would make her seem culturally insensitive. And she also feels that she had been overruled by the students.*

In this part of her story (as in many others) gender and race intersect in a way that she finds challenging, confusing and uncomfortable. If a white Afrikaner boy had told her he would not sweep the class as it was 'a woman's work' she would surely have challenged him for being sexist? But when a black Zulu boy tells her the same thing she feels that she cannot react in the same way because she might make herself guilty of white ignorance and insensitivity to 'black cultural norms'. But surely such a double standard is problematic? The uncomfortable feelings in her classroom are echoed in her wider social interactions and observations. When she goes to the local grocer all the people working the tills and bagging the groceries are black and all the people buying the goods are white. When she goes to the hairdresser a black person washes her hair and a white person cuts it. When she goes to the hardware store white males try to intimidate her with their superior knowledge of which sanding paper to use on which surface. Once she is even offered a job as a secretary in such a store – it seems the only qualification necessary is that she is a female. And then what really adds to the growing feeling of discomfort is what she sees happening in her own son's formal education.

*As a 3 year old his favourite colour was pink; pink toothbrush, pink milkshakes, pink yogurt. Now suddenly after going to pre-school he seemed to have changed his preference to blue. Out of the blue? One day Daisy reads him a bedtime story in which the main character is black. At the end of the story he looks at the book and then at her and asks: "Ons is nie bruin nie?" (We are not brown?) What are we then?  she asks a little taken aback by the direction of this conversation and he asks/answers: "Ons is wit?" (We are white?). Where did this come from she wonders? Where did my son learn this?*

*Daisy opens a letter from her son's school. The letter's gender specific tone amuses her. Matters of finance are not addressed to a specific gender, but when it comes to matters of child care only the 'Mamas' (Mothers) are addressed. In this specific letter the 'Mamas' are asked to send in a recipe for the school cookbook. She glances up from the page to see her son baking peanut butter cookies with his father.*

*Josh tells her that boys have short hair and girls have long hair. She is sure he couldn't have come to this conclusion by himself as his father has long hair at this point in time and his female teacher has short hair. "Where did you learn that?" she wants to know. "At school" he says. What could be the point of including such trivial, shaky and useless knowledge in a school curriculum she wonders? What else is he learning at school?*

*So what is a four year old boy internalizing about the world which makes him first of all aware of the differences in skin colour between himself and others and also associate himself with one specific group – white male. She thinks about his school and what he sees everyday: white teachers and black assistants, cleaners and gardeners. The teachers wear everyday clothes and the other staff wear uniforms. So he is probably internalising the role of a white person as superior to that of a black person – just by going to school. And furthermore in what ways is his gender role, or understanding of gender roles, being shaped? All the teachers, assistants and secretaries are females. The principal, gardener and the security guard are male. Boys are encouraged (or at least not discouraged) to play with guns. The pictures on their t-shirts and backpacks are of Ninja Turtles and Spiderman and Cars whereas the girls have glittering pink ponies and Barbie and Hello Kitty. How is it possible that 28 years younger than her he seems to be going through a repetition of her own schooling?*

The story of Daisy is not complete, indeed it is told very selectively in an attempt to show how race, class, sexuality, gender, religion, language and being able-bodied all formed part of her socialisation, and her social identity formation, and how these same issues now create spaces of discomfort in her roles as educator and mother. From these feelings of discomfort she finds a growing desire to work toward anti-oppressive practice, which to her means entering into unknown territory.

*The world of certainty has disappeared beneath her feet*
*she feels uncomfortable,*
*she feels blue.*
*To work towards anti-oppressive practice*

*is really hard,*

*to get **there***

*is the problem.*

*Where should Daisy go?*

*What should Daisy do?*

I use art, narrative and fiction to respond to my experiences of intersecting oppression in my living and work spaces. When I create an artwork it is a response to an external pull and an internal push. The artist does not identify a problem and then make an artwork to address it. The artist experiences a feeling or a moment which demands a response. Therefore the conception of an artwork is very often *an intuition…*

*a sigh*

*a cry*

*a thought*

*a doubt*

*an aha*

*a mess*

Daisy finds that her own story has become a weight that drags her down. She can no longer float above or glide past oppression as she used to. The world has become the walls all around her (Sendak 1963), and she has to take her story to move somewhere beyond where she is now. To change and transform into one of the educators she is looking for: an educator working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education.

*Daisy: Marguerite - why are you doing this? What is the point of all this writing?*

*Marguerite: I am a teacher, I like teaching and I would like to be a good teacher.*

In the next chapter we will zoom out of her story to look beyond it. What is happening in the world around her? How can her experiences be contextualised? To even start peeling away at the layers beyond the story it is necessary to explore some of the literature on oppression as it presents itself in the South African higher educational context. Against this backdrop the

theoretical underpinnings of anti-oppressive education as outlined by Kevin Kumashiro (2002) will provide the lens to look anew at the story of Daisy.

*Daisy looks up to see the walls of her little world fade to expose the things that lay beyond them. She feels the floor give way beneath her feet and she holds on to the balloon and floats away to discover new things.*

**Chapter 2: In which a white, Afrikaans, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian, female educator shifts uncomfortably in her middle class chair…**

To create this story I am using a pencil and a paintbrush. The pencil represents my teacher-self and the paintbrush my artist-self. In between these two selves is a space where I am looking for new ways of being. On the one side, I have the subjective and fictional story of Daisy as she recognises and experiences oppression, and on the other side I have a slice of objective 'reality' in the form of newspaper articles and academic publications dealing with issues of oppression in a specific context. In the space between I look for new ways of seeing. This is a space situated between critical theory and postmodernism. In between these two I hope to find new ways of understanding and possibilities of becoming an educator working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education.

**2.1. A small balloon and a big wave**

In art and film the technique of juxtaposition or montage is often used when two (seemingly unrelated) images are used to create a 'third space' in which the viewer must make the connection, fill in the blanks, and create a narrative to bridge the 'gap'. I would like to make use of this technique by inviting two (unrelated) images to become part of a 'new' story – the story of Daisy. The first image I use is a graffiti work entitled *Balloon Debate* (2005), by the ever elusive and mysterious graffiti artist known as Banksy on the Palestinian Wall, more commonly called the Israeli West Bank Barrier (Renmar 2012). More recently a similar Banksy Balloon Girl stencil, which first appeared in London in 2002, was transformed to resemble a Syrian girl letting go of a heart-shaped red balloon to show support for Syrians affected by the country's brutal civil war (Logan 2014).



Figure 6. *Balloon Debate*, Banksy, 2005, stencilled graffiti

The second, much older, image is The Great Wave off Kanagawa (British Museum n.d.), which is a famous colour woodblock print by the artist Katsushika Hokusai.



Figure 7. *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, Katsushika Hokusai, 1829 –32, colour woodblock print

The two images are unrelated (except perhaps in their commodification and over-use as commercial reproductions). I employ each to symbolise a part of the story I am writing and thereby appropriate them into my own artwork to become part of a new story. The Banksy image denotes innocence (the little girl), freedom (floating away/escape), separation and conflict (the wall) and also the way in which graffiti art is often used to make political commentary. The Hokusai image shows force, danger and peril (the wave) and our human vulnerability to forces which seem to be beyond our control (people in the boats on the stormy ocean). The wave also makes us aware of a future with an uncertain outcome – what will happen once the wave breaks? What will happen if the girl lets go of the balloon? Both artworks therefore leave the viewer with a sense of perpetual suspension and keeps the 'outcome' hidden from our view. In this way both images resist finality or 'conclusion'. This is my own interpretation of these works. In my own artworks I use these existing images as my point of departure to show how the story of Daisy is changed when seen within a larger context of the world around her.

Figure 8. *Daisy dangling over stormy seas,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, watercolour.

*Daisy's story is a small piece of a larger picture. As she floats away on the wind she looks around her to see the world outside her story. Beneath her lies the stormy seas envisioned by Hokusai, and above her Banksy's balloon is floating over the past and away from the present to a space beyond the wall of that which she can see.*

I begin this chapter with the juxtaposition of two images which are also symbolic of the integrated approach I wish to follow in this thesis. The waves and stormy seas represent the literature about the South African higher educational context which I will discuss in this chapter, and the balloon represents the theoretical framework for anti-oppressive education which carries my story forward in chapter 3. If I look down at the waves, like Daisy is doing now, it reminds me of the context from which I am writing. For instance, the explicit over-use of racial categorisation in my story is not accidental but rather invoked to describe the past and current experiences of educators in a South African context. The racial categories of Coloured, Indian, White and Black (or African) is something inherited from the apartheid regime and our colonial history, and as such the terms should be viewed as limited, incomplete and socially constructed (Francis et al. 2003). Yet, "…rigidly avoiding using such constructs has the effect of silencing relevant experiences and creating an illusion that by eliminating the use of racial terms one has eliminated racism as well as much of the historical basis for understanding current lived experiences" (Francis et al. 2003, p.139). It also becomes evident that although the story speaks of different intersecting forms of oppression, race and racism is a central theme. In an article entitled *Who are we: naming ourselves as teachers* Francis et al. (2003, p.142) talks of "…the primacy of race as a social identity in South Africa (and perhaps by implication to the ways in which other identities, such as gender, are treated as secondary)." The centrality of racial identity can certainly be traced to South Africa's racially segregated past. It is this past which my story cannot ignore.

## 2.2. A rat called Past and a bird named Future

*Dangling over the stormy seas, Daisy feels loss and longing for the comfort of her little life in a garden with four walls. However, she is not quite alone, as two old friends accompany her on this journey. The one is a rat named 'Past'. He used to live under her kitchen table, and sometimes she tried to catch him and or even kill him but he seemed indestructible and always came back. She tried to keep Past out of sight, but even when out of sight he wouldn't stay out of mind, making little squeaky noises for everyone to hear. She has felt both disgust and pity for this creature. Now she feels glad to see that he is coming with her. The other friend*

*accompanying her is 'Future'. Future is a bird who sometimes sat on a branch outside of her window. Future came and went, but was never present in the persistent manner of Past. Now Daisy feels relief to see the wings of Future glistering in the sunlight somewhere nearby.*

In 1994 South Africa officially emerged from a system of institutionalised racial oppression known as apartheid. For many this marked the dawn of a new era and optimism. The 'New South Africa' was born and perhaps exemplified in the popularisation of the term "rainbow-nation", which at the time may have seemed like the perfect antidote for an oppressive system of racial categorization. The South African Constitution now included a Bill or Rights for the first time, which promoted equity and protected all citizens against discrimination on the basis of, "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. 1996). However, despite the policies that now existed the cracks in our 'vanishing rainbow' soon started to show. Twenty years later oppression in all its forms seems to be ever present in South African society and rears its ugly head in the media on an almost daily basis. For the purpose of this study, I will zoom in on institutions of higher education and some incidents that have come to the fore in recent years.

When driving through the Wynand Mouton Gate of the University of the Free State (UFS) you will see a huge billboard saying "The University healing South Africa". Why? Why the need for healing? A quick glimpse into the not so distant past will provide the answers to this question. "In February 2008, a video made by four young white Afrikaner male students of the Reitz Residence at UFS came into the public domain. It showed the students forcing a group of elderly black workers (four women and one man) to eat food into which one of the students had apparently urinated" (Soudien, Micheals, Mthembi-Mahanyele, Nkomo, Nyanda, Nyoka, Seepe, Shisana, Villa-Vicencio 2008, p.23). The national reaction and condemnation of this incident led to the establishment of a Ministerial Committee on Progress Towards Transformation in Public Higher Education Institutions who reported its findings in what is now often referred to as the Soudien Report. The report found racism and sexism to be pervasive in institutions of higher education, not in the institutional policies, but rather in the lived experiences of students and staff (Soudien et al. 2008, p.13).

The Reitz incident at UFS, "became a reference for framing the need for transformation in higher education" (Keet 2014, p.1). The incident became a watershed moment in the history of the UFS, and "[i]n 2009, the UFS Council appointed a new Rector who proposed a new vision

for the university. The University entered a new period of transformation which was partially about moving away from an image of the UFS as a racist university to the UFS as a place of reconciliation" (Keet 2014, p.4). The university thus became committed alongside its academic project, to the ideal of a human project. In a 2014 report by the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice the multi-layered nature of transformation at UFS is addressed. In this report reference is made to "an allegiance to a definition of a university not as a place where one belongs and feels comfortable, but as a place where knowledge(s) and certainties are disrupted" (Keet 2014, p.1).

*Looking down at the stormy seas Daisy thinks back to a conversation she once had with a group of black (Zulu) grade 12 girls in Pietermaritzburg. She had asked them about their plans for tertiary education and as they went through the possible universities to apply to they dismissed UFS on the grounds that they were "afraid of all those white Afrikaner people, who will make us drink our own pee".*

It should be noted that since the early 1990's Black students have become the majority of the student body at UFS. "In 2012 black students accounted for 72 % of the student body and white students for 28 %. Like many other universities in the country UFS has also seen a significant growth in the number of female enrolments compared to male enrolments (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning 2014). However, the demographic change in the student body does not seem to be mirrored in that of the academic or support staff. "While the academic staff component is dominated by white men, the support staff has always comprised mostly of white women" (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning 2014, p.23). The fact that there is a male/female divide between academic and support staff should not be overlooked either. The Soudien Report (2008) points out how administrative staff often feels inferior to academic staff and this could be mirrored in the feelings of female staff towards male staff. Furthermore, the language policy of the university came under scrutiny in 2015 (Smith 2015). One of the problems with the parallel medium policy was that English classes tended to be mostly filled with black students and Afrikaans classes with mostly white students, which lead to a racially segregated learning experience for students at UFS. Subsequently, the language policy of the university came under review "… in response to widespread concern from the student body, as well as some staff, which was tabled at a University Assembly on 28 April 2015, that the current parallel-medium language policy of the UFS might not work to support the deep transformation of the institution" ('Review of the Language Policy at the UFS' 2015, para.1).

An understanding of the contextual issues at UFS is important for this study, since all the participants currently work at UFS. However, at the same time it is important to note that in the broader South African higher education context other universities have also come under scrutiny for similar reasons. For example, early in 2014 students on one of the campuses of the North West University performed the "Sieg Heil" salute during a supposed orientation ceremony (South African Press Association 2014b), which caused both public debate and government intervention. The incident lead to the resignation of NWU's vice-chancellor Theuns Eloff which allowed Dan Kgwadi, NWU's first black vice-chancellor, to take over the reins. At the time the media also reported on how Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande branded the university's controversial Potchefstroom campus an "apartheid institution" as he lashed out at Eloff for allegedly failing to end such a culture during his two five-year terms as vice-chancellor (Nkosi 2014). Eloff responded to the accusations by stating that Nzimande based his attack on partial information and that his reason for attacking NWU was irritation "by the existence of a university that does not slip into the ANC strait jacket of biased transformation, but prefers to think for itself and do what is best for the country and all its people" (Eloff 2014, para.21). Since then the debates around transformation at NWU has been ongoing and frequently reported on in the media.

In another incident in 2014 two female students from the University of Pretoria were suspended from their residences following the distribution of an image on social media which showed the pair in domestic worker outfits with black paint smeared on their faces and arms. They posed with headscarves and padded bottoms. The students' action was considered racist by many people commenting on social media with the hashtag #blackface (South African Press Association 2014a). The issues thus arising, or at least the issues reported on by the South African media, are first of all related to 'lived experiences' or 'institutional culture' rather than institutional policies, and secondly often related to race or racism. The Soudien Report points to how much of the problem of discrimination in institutions of higher education "emanates from the too-close association of the university with the project of westernisation – and the ever-present danger of articulating this in narrow Eurocentric terms as, to put it bluntly, a 'white' project – and a patent difficulty faced by the university to confront the challenge of opening itself up to different bodies and traditions of knowledge and knowledge-making in new and exploratory ways" (Soudien et al. 2008, p.41).

The higher educational context must be seen as linked to the broader educational context. Therefore, I also make mention of media reports on issues arising in institutions of basic

education. In the spring of 2014 an article reported that, "South Africa's schools are a hostile environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex pupils. Because these LGBTI pupils do not conform to prescribed male and female gender roles, they get assaulted and bullied. A fifth have attempted suicide and a fifth have been raped or sexually assaulted, according to research" (Kings 2014, para.1).

*These days Daisy is a residence head at one of the co-ed on-campus residences at UFS. She is in a meeting with the student leaders of the residence and they are going through applications for the positions of first year mentors for the following year. They are busy dividing the applications into two groups – male and female. The idea is that the mentor group must be one of equal gender distribution. They come to the application of an openly gay student and the student leaders put his application in between the male and female group. "Why do you not put him with the male group?" Daisy asks. "He is gay, ma'am" comes the explanation.*

Another article published in the spring of 2014 raises the issue of compulsory Christianity in public schools. An Non-Government-Organisation called OGOD (Organisasie vir Godsdienste-Onderrig en Demokrasie) appealed to the Gauteng High Court to prevent six public schools from advertising that they are exclusively "Christian" or that they promote a distinctly "Christian ethos" (Thamm 2014, para.1). The very strong influence of Christian education came out in almost all the participants' narratives in this study. To illustrate this I would like to share the following two excerpts:

Alice: *"...because before that I had been in a Catholic school, it was a private school so we were all mixed: Whites, Blacks, Coloureds, Indians. I remember it as a strict and rigid kind of schooling: rote learning and questioning, and obedience, discipline and respect for elders. There was this distance between the teachers and us and the majority of the teachers were Catholic nuns, so anyway there was this otherworldly kind of disciplinarian, you know, so they always threatened you with Jesus and God when you did anything wrong, and they were a bit abusive, yes they were physically abusive..."*

FridaFreire: *"I mean I went to a school which illegally allowed children of colour entry before 1994, because I mean the administrators just believed that this is… obviously it's wrong to have segregation and so those…that in terms of race I was fortunate to grow up in these integrated spaces that challenged very strongly the us/them binary in terms of racial difference BUT in terms of religion for example the us/them binary was very much set in stone, and kind of hammered into our experiences and so it was ok to have racial difference, but I mean*

*religious difference was just absolutely unacceptable, and so that was the biggest thing I really had to critique for myself when I eventually escaped... I see it as an escape... that life and that world and was able to emerge myself in different forms of knowledge...”*

The year 2015 brought with it what has become known as the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement – what many now view as “a movement by young black South Africans who are determined, 20 years after democracy to lead a second revolution that will enable a freedom that had been compromised by older leaders like Nelson Mandela in 1994” (Thamm 2015, para.12).

*Daisy is visiting Celine in her office. It is a research interview and Celine is participating in her study. Against the wall is a black and white photo of Nelson Mandela with the following quote: “It always seems impossible until it is done” Nelson Mandela. Celine is telling Daisy about her experiences at the university. “...People tell us that the university has changed, but even the treatment that you get as a staff member, let alone as a student – it’s different. Of course it’s not all people, it’s not all white people. I think people are just so scared of losing the language, losing the culture and what not, and the second thing is that I somehow blame Mandela, because when he got out of prison he painted this picture that we are all going to live together, but people were still HURT! People are wounded, and some people want, try to make themselves feel better, but at the expense of others. You know people are scared because they are born white...it’s sort of a shame in South Africa...even if you give them that space, like you can ask me anything then they start to be open, but you can still see the fear”.*

The Rhodes Must Fall movement began with an incident at the University of Cape Town (UCT) when Manxwele Chumani threw faeces on the Cecil Rhodes statue on the university grounds (Grootes 2015). The statue was later removed by the university management after a heated debate about symbolism and institutional culture at former white universities such as UCT. The debate also accompanied a discussion about the name of Rhodes University in Grahamstown. All this got much attention on social media networks under #RhodesMustFall.

*Daisy goes to a talk called Signs, Symbols and Statues: The Transformation of University Space hosted by the Transformation Desk of the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice of the University of the Free State. One of the speakers, the architect and designer Phillipa Tumubeinee from UFS, raises the point that if you remove something the absence of that thing reinforces its existence. Another speaker Wiaan Visser from Stellenbosch University raises a question as to why we are even having this discussion in a building named after President C.*

*R. Swart, who passed the Immorality Act during Apartheid, which stipulated that it was illegal for black and white South Africans to have sex. The discussion goes on to touch on the idea that white men are still holding the purse string of many universities, that black students are forced to protest in ways that fall outside regulated forms, and that change only happens when a space is made uncomfortable. That same day at UCT the Rhodes statue is removed.*

*Later that week Daisy takes Josh to play at one of his favourite places on campus: the Thinking Stone* (Boshoff 2012). *The Thinking stone is one of a number of artworks commissioned by the UFS after the Reitz incident. The idea was that the sculpture-on-campus project would promote greater respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and instil a sense of belonging in all staff and students* ('Structures of Dominion and Democracy' 2015). *Josh loves this solid granite artwork as he can climb all over it, look at the engravings, and jump off again. The engravings are shapes from Driekopseiland near Kimberley which mark the site of great understanding and learning in the pre-colonial past* (Spiller 2011). *As Josh is playing Daisy is cornered by two high school students writing a school report on what they refer to as the 'vandalism of statues'. They are two white girls from a nearby school. As Daisy is talking to them she notices a group of black female students at the CR Swart statue nearby. They are posing for pictures with the Swart statue; sitting on his lap, kissing his cheek, and putting their arms around his neck. Swart doesn't move. Daisy smiles as she thinks back to a time last year when Swart was covered in pink plastic along with President Steyn in front of the UFS main building. It was part of the public art project called 'Plastic Histories'* (Aydemir 2014)*, which encourages the public to evaluate public monuments in their historical context and revalue them from alternative perspectives. The artwork was also meant as a public acknowledgement of the contribution of women from all races, communities and sexual orientations to the grand narrative of a post-apartheid South Africa. It had been fun to walk past the Pink Presidents. It actually really made her SEE them for the first time. Now everyone is talking about the statues. In the back of her mind she hears her mother saying that Rhodes was responsible for planning the genocide of the Afrikaners during the South African War. Interesting that social media is now buzzing with so many Afrikaners who are upset about the removal of the Rhodes statue at UCT.*

*Which side are you on?*
*Are you on the side of right?*
*Or on the side of wrong?*

*Are you with us or against us?*

*Hashtag your feelings#*

*If you don't post it*

*it does not exist…*


Social media was also the site of rapid distribution for the controversial 35 minute documentary called 'Luister' (Listen) which was released on 20 August 2015. "The film includes interviews with 32 students and one lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch. They detail their experiences of racist abuse, in the community and at the university, and their struggles with learning under the language policy which they say clearly favours Afrikaans speakers. Personal experiences of discrimination, racism and exclusion from learning are piled on top of each other, impossible to ignore" (Nicolson 2015, para.5). After *Luister* trended on social media, the African National Congress (ANC) criticized the university, calling it an "erstwhile laager of white supremacy" that has failed to provide leadership on transformation. Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande said instances of racism and discrimination are occurring seemingly unabated. Mmusi Maimane from the Democratic Alliance (DA) said the allegations show that race still matters, and the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) said that "racist groups are trying to maintain spaces as white enclaves, using Afrikaans as a tool to do so" (Nicolson 2015, para.14).

And so the debates are taking place all around Daisy; on social media, in newspapers, in classrooms, around dinner tables. Through the overlapping and complexities of the debates it becomes clear that race, sexuality, gender, language and religion intersect with each other in many if not all educational institutions in South Africa.

*In een land waar de toekomst vecht met het verleden*

 (**in a country where the future is fighting with the past**)

 (Bos, n.d).

Where does all this leave us as educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education? It seems that the challenge to work towards an equal and fair society falls to educators and students alike. In South Africa all education acts and policies post-1994 stress the teacher's role to advocate social justice, human rights and inclusivity (Francis & Le Roux 2011). This implies that teachers should actively seek to teach in anti-oppressive ways which means opposing racism, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression in their

classrooms. For this to happen educators need to become more flexible, critical and thoughtful than they were socialised to be (Francis et al. 2003, p.137). This also means that "…all educators have a role to play in dismantling oppression and generating a vision for a more socially just future" (Francis & Le Roux 2011, p.299). In order to do this educators need to consider the "interconnection between various social identities and how such identities can feed into critical agency and education for social justice" (Francis & Le Roux 2011, p.299). But are South African educators prepared for this role as flexible, critical and thoughtful practitioners? In reference to the Reitz incident at UFS Mdunge (2014) questions how learners who had gone through 12 years of formal education managed to make themselves guilty of such blatant racism in the first place? If one considers that this was not an isolated incident then the searchlight must move beyond our learners to fall on educators as well. Educators who might show an outward commitment to social justice still carry internalised oppressive ideas. So, how do we carry the ideals of social justice into our classrooms? How do we, despite or because of our 'baggage', work towards anti-oppressive practice? The first step is perhaps becoming aware of our own shortcomings and limitations. This means becoming aware that we are part of the problem, and hopefully the solution.

## 2.3. But who are we anyway?

Given the expectations stipulated by the Schools Acts post-1994 it stands to reason that educators should challenge, rather than reproduce inequality in South African classrooms. This is no small task as we are living in one of the most unequal societies in the world (Bhorat 2015). In sketching a background of the various conflicts that have played out on the South African landscape Francis and Hemson (2007) write that:

> "South Africa is a society diverse in terms of racial and ethnic divisions, with many languages. Such diversity has been the focus of major conflicts. There is a history of violent conflict between groups since colonization, in suppression of black groups by white colonisers, in the war between Great Britain and the Boers, in the continued suppression of black people in the 20th Century, and in armed opposition to apartheid" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.40).

Perhaps it can be said that violent conflict forms part of the 'indirect knowledge' of many South Africans. In the book *Knowledge in the Blood,* Jansen (2009, p.52) uses the notion of indirect knowledge as a conceptual framework for how post-apartheid children hold powerful knowledge about the past "firmly, personally and emotionally" even though they did not

directly experience apartheid. Many educators working in higher education today lived through apartheid, or at least through the last few years of apartheid. It can therefore be argued that these educators would have been educated under the ideology of Christian National Education, or under the legacy left by it in educational institutions. In this ideology the 'nation' included white South Africans (especially white Afrikaners) and other groups (African, Coloured and Indian) simply stood outside the 'nation'. There is a wealth of research available on the ideologies underlying Christian National Education (see Kallaway 2002 and Nkomo 1990). However, for the purpose of this study I would like to focus on how this ideology presented authority as inherently good, masculine and somehow connected with God (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.41).

*Daisy asked her grade 11 homeroom to tidy up the class before leaving at the end of the day. Mr. Peters, the grade head, came in while the students were busy with this task. He was very unhappy that the students were not seated and quiet as he liked them to be at this time of day. He immediately told them that he would keep them after school the next day as punishment for being noisy and moving about. So the next morning Daisy crossed the invisible line in the staffroom. There are a number of invisible lines in a staffroom, but this particular invisible line divided the male staff in the back from the female staff in the front. She crossed the line and immediately felt she was in foreign territory. She went to sit down next to Mr. Peters and felt the other male staff members' eyes on her. She understood that this was unusual behaviour for a young female teacher and they were curious and a little tense. She told him that the students did not deserve the punishment he had planned as they had only been doing what she had asked them to do. He started by calling her 'juffroutjie' (an Afrikaans term often used to refer to younger female teachers and meaning something like 'little miss') and telling her in a loud voice (for the benefit of the surrounding male audience) that he was the grade head and that the students knew very well what he expected of them and that regardless of HER orders they should have been seated and quiet as HE expected them to be.*

Daisy would like to dismiss Mr. Peters as being a chauvinist. But, hooks reminds her to be critical of the us/them binary by saying that "Whenever we love justice and stand on the side of justice we refuse simplistic binaries. We refuse to allow either/or thinking to cloud our judgement. We embrace the logic of both/and. We acknowledge the limits of what we know" (hooks 2003. p.10). Mr. Peters is not *them* he is <u>both</u> *him* <u>and</u> *her*. So if he is acting in this way then it says something about her, but what? Instead of dismissing Mr. Peters as a chauvinist she must question the education system (of which she is a part) that allows him to act in this

manner and which shaped his actions in the first place. She must try to think of him as someone who can be different. Mr. Peters as a middle aged white South African male was undoubtedly educated in a system where authority was presented as inherently good, masculine and somehow connected with God (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.41). In this hierarchy learners (of all colours) were encouraged to accept their identity and hierarchic place. In such a system critical consciousness had no place. Trying to move out of your 'place' made you a nuisance 'stroomop' (against the stream) person deserving of punishment or social isolation. Underlying this ideology was the idea that the 'white man' in Africa had to lead African people to a better life (Francis & Hemson 2007b, p.41). Given this backdrop it can be understood that the mere notion of critical consciousness poses a challenge for many South African educators.

*Daisy as a white Afrikaans woman finds herself teaching English to class after class of predominantly black students in both basic and higher educational institutions. Her own education had been firmly rooted in the ideals of Christian National Education (even after the fall of apartheid). So how did this ideology shape her identity and how does that identity influence the way she approaches her students and her role as educator in terms of social justice? Wondering about this she reads an article in which a group of black students ask their white female teacher "So you wanted to be that White lady from Dangerous Minds and come save all of us poor kids in the ghetto?"(Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.302). Reading this Daisy has to ask herself if perhaps she is also playing into the extremely problematic ideology of white saviour to the uneducated black masses. It is surely significant that she as a white second language English speaker is teaching Academic English to a group of black second language English speakers? Why is it that she continually finds herself in spaces where she as a white educator is placed in a position of authority over black students?*

Daisy wears the legacy of colonialism and apartheid on her white skin. A long history of racial oppression has placed her in a position of privilege. How must she use this knowledge and understanding in the classroom? Freire provided the "sharp division in his earlier work between 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' which echoed the division between white and black" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.41). In terms of this study it is important to note the influence of this sharp division between oppressor and oppressed, white and black, on the consequent developments that took place in the development of the South African educational context. For example, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Bantu Biko, was influenced by the ideals which emphasized the common features of the culture of consciousness of the oppressed rather than emphasising differences amongst African, Coloured, or Indian people in South Africa

(Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.41). "Freirian influences were also present in the educational movement known as People's Education. This approach was adopted by the United Democratic Front, the ANC-aligned popular movement in late apartheid years" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.42). From all of this was born an education system which is constitutionally bound to forbid discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language and physical ability, amongst others and in which The Revised National Curriculum Statement set out amongst its guiding principles Social Justice, a Healthy Environment, Human Rights and Inclusivity (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.42). The guiding principles seem clear enough, yet the social identities of the educators implementing these principles cannot be separated from the actual teaching that goes on in classrooms.

In many institutions the interpretation of the principles of the Revised National Curriculum Statement grew into an emphasis on multiculturalism. "Within South African education…multiculturalism has been used in terms mainly of an essentialised understanding of culture" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.43). Daisy has observed that students use culture and race interchangeably within a South African context and students might make reference to 'black culture' or 'white culture' to explain perceived racial differences.

*The bell rings and a stampede of Grade 12 bodies push past Daisy to get to the door. Their five minutes of freedom before the next lesson are precious and not to be spent in a classroom. One student remains seated, pasting pictures of South African landscapes into his book. "Go on, you must get moving or you will be late for the next class" she says. He tells her that she cannot understand his world. In his culture he has to do things she cannot understand. They live in different worlds he says. "What are you talking about?" she wants to know and he explains how he is expected to go with his uncles to beat up a cousin who got pregnant outside of marriage. She looks at the pencil shaving which cover the dusty grey novilon floor. "By doing that you might harm the foetus", she says. "I have to do it or else they will beat me" he says. She writes him a late note for his next class and furiously starts sweeping pencil shavings in a cloud of dust.*

*Now Daisy is teaching academic literacy at university and gives a group assignment to role-play adolescent behaviour in response to a reading on the same topic. One group of students depicts a scene in which the adolescent comes home late and intoxicated and receives a brutal beating from the father figure. A little disconcerted by the (simulated) display of violence Daisy*

*makes a comment about abuse not being discipline and a black female student replies: "There is no such thing as abuse in the black culture, ma'am."*

*"Do you believe in mermaids, ma'am?" the grade 12 boy wants to know. An image of Little Mermaid comes to mind and Daisy shakes her head – OF COURSE she doesn't believe in mermaids. "Well there are mermaids and people have seen them in the dam nearby where I live" he says. "Really?" she says in wonder. "Yes, but probably white people won't see them" he answers.*

*"We come to your world but you never come to ours" a black student once said to her.*

In an article about the stories shared in collaborative memory work on racial mixing Pattman (2012, p.8) writes "how frequent references were made to 'culture' and the pursuit of shared cultural interests which were seen to cut across race. So closely tied were 'race' and 'culture' that in some of the stories cultural differences seemed to signify presumed race differences."

*She takes Josh to a swimming lesson and while waiting for him to finish she starts chatting to one of the other waiting mothers. The woman is talking about how she is considering what school to send her child to. She has one private school in mind but her concern is that "in that school most kids are black and my son will be the only white one in the class" and after a little pause says that "I want him to learn our culture, you know?". What culture is 'our culture'? Daisy wonders, but says nothing and just smiles so the woman probably takes it that she understands.*

In a way the outlook of multiculturalism is not much different form nationalism, where each group (defined by race or culture) gets their own piece of land (some more than others) wears their own attire, speaks their own language, and have their own traditions. Separate but equal? The danger of multiculturalism lies in its focus on 'traditional' cultures as exoticised and marginalised (as a curiosity) within main stream culture.

*Daisy remembers a day out at the popular Disney-like theme park in South Korea called Everland. It was a school outing and a giggling group of her Grade 11 students talked her into a ride called 'Jigu Maul' (Global Village) which is apparently similar to 'It's a small world' at Disneyland. She got onto a smallish unsteady boat which sailed through very shallow water past a dusty display of 'the cultures of the world' represented by freakish little miniature dolls dressed up in their country's 'national attire' and singing 'national songs'. She can't*

*remember much about the South African display but she is pretty sure it involved a scantily dressed all-black cast with drumming sound effects, colourful beads and Zulu shields.*

The danger of multiculturalism is a "rehearsal of racially –based cultural stereotypes that have little resonance with the lived reality of young South Africans" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.43). So in terms of social justice teaching this approach can be criticised for its Disney-like qualities, which for the sake of pleasantness, shy away from any uncomfortable exploration of conflict or differences in power. This is perhaps echoed by "the rhetoric of the Rainbow Nation [which] has fostered a celebration of the differences outside an assumed norm. It does not connect with the history of the struggle, and fails to challenge the idea of culture as static tradition" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, p.44). Earlier in this chapter I referred to Celine's narrative in which she says: "*…that I somehow blame Mandela, because when he got out of prison he painted this picture that we are all going to live together, but people were still HURT! People are wounded, and some people want, try to make themselves feel better, but at the expense of others*". So the picture of us living together in harmony while celebrating our differences might not be a very realistic or truthful one and as educators we must also be critical of multiculturalism for this reason. This study does not offer a comprehensive discussion on the wide range of published literature on multiculturalism but merely mentions it as one of the underpinnings of the "rhetoric of the Rainbow Nation" mentioned earlier. The problem is that multiculturalism does not necessarily give us the tools to change anything or address the social inequalities in South Africa.

An alternative to multiculturalism is presented by Francis & Hemson (2007a, p.45) as critical multiculturalism in which we must "see diversity not simply as an individual variety, but seek to reveal the relationship between social difference and the perspectives of social actors, not allowing one to be claimed as the inevitable norm." In such an approach educators need to face their own social identities and grapple with their own biases, fears and prejudices because "people do not inherently what to replicate patterns of oppression, but are quite often unaware of these" (Francis & Hemson 2007a, pp.47 – 48). So for educators to work towards anti-oppressive practice it is crucial that they first recognise oppression within their thoughts, their lives, and their actions. The socially constructed identities of educators thus come under closer scrutiny in understanding our educator identities. Therefore, trying to 'know' ourselves as educators involves critical engagement with our intersecting social identities. In working towards anti-oppressive practice we must work towards a better understanding of who we are.

## 2.4. Facing ourselves in working towards anti-oppressive education

I understand educator experience and educator identity as being key components teacher practice and curriculum development. Curriculum is never merely 'delivered' by the educator, because the educator's identity and socialisation will always play an important role in classroom instruction, and consequently the students' learning experience. This is because we are constantly creating the world we live in. Therefore it stands to reason that we be the ones to transform our world despite of, or because of, our oppressive baggage as we move towards anti-oppressive practice. Curriculum understood as such cannot really stand separate from the educator because "[w]orld and men do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. If men produce social reality, then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for men" (Freire 1985, p.36). Freire (1985) points us to the transformative role of the educator in terms of anti-oppressive practice. Francis and Le Roux (2011) use the term *agency* to show the "dynamic and dialectical nature of the interaction between individual and social context, and the active role of an individual in the process of identity construction and teaching for social justice" (Francis & Le Roux 2011, p.301). Thus an educator who is working towards anti-oppressive education must have agency and be both action-orientated and critical.

To become critical of our social identities we first have to recognise how it has been socially constructed. In chapter one I make an attempt at showing how social influences helped shape Daisy's social identity. Daisy, like me, identifies as a white, Afrikaans, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, middle-class, female, currently living in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Her different 'identities' all play a role in her social identity, and consequently they also play a role in her identity as an educator. For example she cannot deny that she is white which comes with privilege, or that being a female makes her vulnerable to oppressive gender roles (Francis & Le Roux 2011, p. 302). In writing the story of Daisy and doing this research I am trying to accept my social identity so that I can resist oppression and redefine who I am. I do this so that I can become different.

Dennis: *"Marguerite, identity changes over time in relation to the development of a society. Not only do identities shift over time, in a long-term sense, some identities become more salient as individuals move from one circumstance to another. The suggestion that the identity development process takes place in linear stages disregards the fact that the individual exists in a sociological and historical space. The concept of identity, furthermore, places more emphasis on that which resides within the individual and does not take into*

*account the social forces that contribute to the development of the self. To understand society as fixed is to deny its dynamism, and changing effect on the individual."*

Moving beyond oversimplistc binaries of identity means that we must also challenge the dichotomy that exists between the oppressors and the oppressed. The fluid and situated performance of identity is much more complex. "Dichotomizing resisters and dominators ignores the complexity of resistance and ignores the existence of multiple systems of hierarchy. It ignores the possibility that individuals can be simultaneously powerful/agentic, and powerless/oppressed within different systems" (Perumal 2015, p.25). Therefore, social identity should be seen as caught up in intersecting and ever-changing dynamics which are influenced by society and context.

As educators we might not even be aware of the fluidity of our identities in relation to an ever changing society. In a study which examines white women pre-service teachers' emerging identities and how these identities are connected to notions of critical agency and a stance towards social justice, Francis & Le Roux (2011, p.309) show that these women are for the most part, "oblivious to how they experience white privilege and the currency this carries within South Africa". Furthermore, they found that white female pre-service teachers were often trapped in stereotypical and oppressive gender roles and oblivious to how sexism influenced their educator identities and actions. This is a confirmation of Freire's statement that, "Oppressive reality absorbs those within it and submerge men's consciousness" (Freire 1985, p.36) or allows the oppressed to play host to the oppressor. The study of white women pre-service teachers then points to how oblivion and ignorance of the intersections of social identities and different forms of oppression become problematic if educators are to be socially just educators, as national policy requires (Francis & Hemson 2007b).

So the need for critically conscious educators in working towards anti-oppressive education becomes evident. "To no longer be prey to the force of oppression can only be done by means of the of the praxis, reflection, and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire 1985, p.36). True reflection, according to Freire, leads to action. "Teachers and students, co-intent on reality, are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators" (Freire 1985, p.56). It is tempting to envision ourselves as being critically conscious,

shaking off our oppressive baggage, and becoming triumphant agents of change. However, teacher education in social justice should be seen, "…less as a triumphant charge from oppression to liberation, and more as a scaffolding of a difficult entry into a new and still imperfect discourse" (Francis & Hemson 2007b, p.100). It seems that to learn about oppression and even to be aware and critical of our own complicity and collusion with oppression will not automatically lead us to liberation. In a study Francis and Hemson (2007) explore the actions of M.Ed. students in a course on pedagogy in social justice education and how these clashed with an anti-oppressive approach. It shows how problematic it is to think that education students (and educators) can simply change from oppression to liberation where in reality the move towards social justice in education is difficult and still imperfect and 'new' (Francis & Hemson 2007b, p.100). The study shows how students moved from a state of political correctness to more honest (and more oppressive) dialogue. The bottom line is that knowledge of oppression is not enough to challenge it and that there are many contradictions in the 'anti-oppressive' classroom and the 'anti-oppressive' educator. We cannot rid ourselves of our social identities, rather we must learn to face up to it: to read ourselves, critique and re-write ourselves. The implication is that working towards anti-oppressive practice is a continuous process that can never be complete. The 'social justice educator' emerges from all this as a vulnerable and unfinished being who can at most recognise and interrupt oppression. The 'rainbow' ideals of non-racism, non-sexism, and so forth, fade away to make space for a landscape in which we can paint a new picture and see ourselves in different ways.

I find that engagement with anti-oppressive theory can be rather painful and uncomfortable as I begin to pick up the numerous ways that I and those around me, including family and friends, speak and act in oppressive ways. In the classroom, especially, I sometimes feel over-sensitive to every topic and conversation and find that I constantly monitor my own actions, words and thoughts. Am I being ignorant of my white privilege? Am I enforcing heterosexist values? Am I enforcing gender stereotypes? Is this person saying something sexist? Surely that was a racist comment? Am I allowing the same students speak while others get silenced? Am I teaching white middle-class values as the norm? Is this textbook for real? Sometimes I feel I must question every act or utterance or text that might be oppressive in some way. But I think there is something judgemental and self-righteous about that approach as well. At the very most I can initiate and engage in conversations about oppression. I therefore approach anti-oppressive education with partial and imperfect knowledge and reject the sort of self-righteous us/them thinking which puts me on the side of 'those who work against oppression' and are therefore

'right' in opposition to those who are oppressive and therefore 'wrong'. Sometimes 'wrong' is right and right is 'wrong'.



Figure 9. *A purple splatter or a purple bird,* Marguerite Müller, 1986, fabric paint on cloth

*A drop of purple paint falls on the nearly perfect picture of an apple tree next to a crooked house – little eyes shoot full of tears. A six year old Daisy becomes aware of the teacher's hand on her shoulder, as she takes the brush and put two wings on the purple splatter. "What a lovely purple bird", the teacher says and Daisy's tears dissolve in a proud smile. Later in life she looks at the picture and recognises what the teacher was telling her - that we have to look past the "utopia" or the desired perfect state to accept and appreciate the flaws and understand how our mistakes and imperfections can 'change the picture' rather than reproduce a 'flawless' sameness. Here the drop of purple paint does not make the picture better, but different.*

> "Although we do not want to be the same, we also do not want to be better (since any Utopian vision would simply be a different and foretold way to be, and thus, a different way to be stuck in a refined sameness); rather, we want to constantly become, we want difference, change, newness. And this change cannot come if we close off the space-between" (Kumashiro 2000, p.46).

In the following chapter I will explore the space-between to try and find out how we can become different.

**Chapter 3: In which I FEEL my chair getting really UNCOMFORTABLE and I decide to find a way to get to a space BEYOND and IN-BETWEEN**

There is no shortage of mistakes, conflicts and oppressions in the society that shaped me. Educators are "…always engaged in political transactions as they relate emotionally to attempted education reforms, because powered relations influence emotional discourse and emotional expressions" (Zembylas, Charalambous & Charalambous 2012, p.1072). In such a conflicted society therefore emotions play a powerful role because they "fuel people's perceptions and actions and often contribute to perpetuating conflict and animosity between opposing sides" (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1073). So in 'seeing ourselves' and 'changing our stories' we cannot discount the role of emotion and discomfort in alerting us to oppression in our classrooms and in our lived realities.

**3.1. Emotion and educator identity**

Educator's emotions play a role in what happens in and outside the classroom. In South Africa we live in a post-colonial, post-apartheid, and post-conflict society and "[in] such a society educators might be the ones who stimulate prejudices and stereotypes and contribute to the normalization of particular values, beliefs and emotions, which is not surprising since the educators themselves were educated in a society with a conflict-based worldview" (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1073). Indeed, as mentioned before, many of the educators currently teaching in higher education in South Africa, like Daisy, would have at least received primary education during apartheid under the ideology of National Christian Education, or the remnants thereof. So if we are committed to social justice we must recognise that our own experiences in education fell far short in this department, and that we are in uncharted waters and lost at sea, dangling with Daisy as she holds on to that balloon. Which does not mean we should give up and go 'home'. There is no home to go to, what we thought we knew is long gone. The perfect little house with the apple tree has vanished along with the illusions and misconceptions that shaped it.

We learn oppression and so surely we must be able to unlearn it, but how? Mdunge (2014) responds to this question by pointing to the importance of reflective practice in social justice teaching. "The consequences of silencing and marginalising these issues [of oppression] in higher education have a far-reaching impact in working towards goals of social transformation and a non-discriminatory society. Thus, we have to reflect on our role as educators in

facilitating social transformation" (Mdunge 2014, p.15). However, once we break the silence we move into dangerous territory. We open ourselves up to traditionally undesirable teaching qualities like emotion, discomfort and uncertainty. However, these might be the very *feelings* which help us recognise the complexities of intersecting oppression and thereby become a sort of catalyst for change and transformation.

*Reason, clarity and certainty simply won't do,*
*or if it would,*
*it should have*
*by now*
*feelings might really*
*guide us through theory*
*and make us see*


*Daisy feels irritation with Veronica who is a black grade 12 art learner. Veronica likes to take control of classroom discussions and Daisy is not always sure how to handle her overbearing personality. Veronica makes her feel powerless and undermines her authority. At present they are doing a section of art history which deals with the resistance art by black South African artists during the Struggle. Veronica seems especially agitated. She won't allow Daisy to continue with the lesson and is now screaming at her: "I hate white people! I hate white people!" Veronica storms out of the class and Daisy is left with a group of wide eyed grade 12 learners – looking at her inquisitively. She feels dismay - how did she prompt this outburst? How should she have handled it? Was it her, or the content they were dealing with, or both?*

This is the artwork they were discussing in class that day:
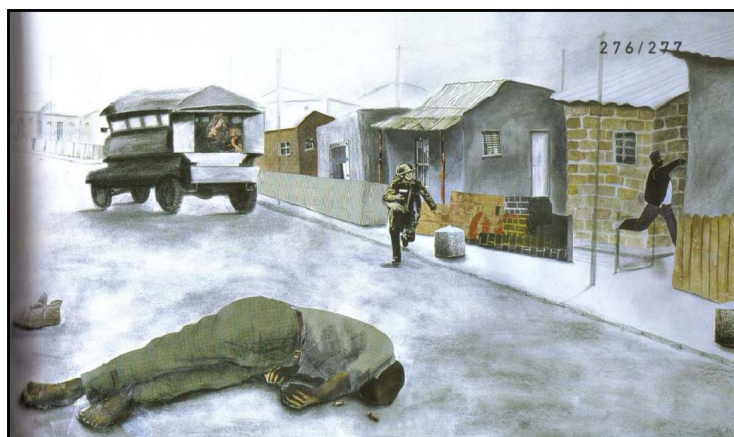


Figure 10. *The Brother is Dead*, Sam Nhlenghtwa, 1998, mixed media

In exposing the limitations of critical theory in a post conflict society Jansen (2009) calls for a postconflict pedagogy. His argument is that although critical theory shows us the systematic and institutionalized character of oppression it is limited in "making sense of troubled knowledge and for transforming those who carry the burden of such knowledge…Critical theory receives and constructs the world as divided between black and white, working and privileged classes, citizens and illegal immigrants, men and women, straight and queer, oppressors and oppressed; its dialogical pretences notwithstanding, the world is torn among rival groups" (Jansen 2009, p.256). Jansen points out that "[t]here is a different and more compelling question that confronts teachers within postconflict societies one posed so poignantly by Freema Elbaz-Luwisch: How is education possible when there is a body in the middle of the room?" (Jansen 2009, p.258).

*On another day Veronica comes to her to ask when they can start doing their practical work since they (she speaks for the rest of the class) are sick and tired of the art history. Daisy replies that once they finish with the history they can do the practical, and the more cooperation she gets the sooner that will be.* (Daisy's argument here stems from her own schooling experiences – first do the work you do not like and then you can do the work you like).

*Veronica stands up and addresses the rest of the class in Zulu, and Daisy understands almost nothing of what is being said. Veronica sits down and for the rest of the lesson an otherwise lively class is deadly quiet and give her their full participation and attention. At the end of the lesson she is perplexed and asks another learner what Veronica had told them, "She said that your cat had died and that you were sad and that we should therefore go easy on you as we all know how attached white people can get to their pets". This really takes the wind out of her sails – she has never owned a cat in her life.*

*Daisy feels hurt and angry when one of her favourite Grade 11 students covers his book with the following words: "This is a black nation, it is time to return to the black roots. Black people are being brainwashed by white people. All of that is about to be told by Umar Johnson. Correcting the behaviour of our young black boys. The school to prison created by the minority. All the people who don't belong here in Africa must take the bags and leave like the Arabs." She tries to take it up with him but he seems offended by her objection and replies that she said they could cover their books in any way they wanted. She is not sure if she should feel offended by the racially provocative content or happy that he is expressing himself so freely.*

*A few years later she asks her university academic literacy class to give her examples of people they regard as being intelligent and to explain why. One student gives Robert Mugabe as an example with the explanation that he (Mugabe) succeeded in chasing white people from his country. Daisy feels… worry? threat? fear?*

**3.2. The embodiment of educators within this space**

*Now Daisy is working as a residence head and sits in many meetings with student leaders. Many of the students are first generation university students and Daisy constantly worries that she might be insensitive to their experiences. In various discussions about the structure of the university many of the black students make it quite clear that the people who they would want in management and leadership positions at the university must be black, often male, and preferably be someone who went through the Struggle. Daisy understands this position, but it leaves her wondering if there is still a space for her as a white educator in this specific higher educational context.*

In an article on the critical pedagogies of place Perumal (2015, p. 25) investigates the challenges that teachers face as a result of relocation to new geographical and political context and explores how "[t]he teachers' narratives in this study highlight the importance of recognising the context in which teachers ply their trade and the positive and negative experiences they undergo by virtue of being located in particular environments" (Perumal 2015, p.31). This is a study of teachers who move into a 'foreign' or new context or into spaces to which they did not previously have access to, often immigrant teachers. This is different from my study where all participants are South African educators. However, some of the participants are black educators who have entered an academic world in a specific context of a previously white Afrikaans University - a space which would previously (under apartheid) been denied to them. Furthermore, with the exception of one, none of the participants is from Bloemfontein originally and it can be argued that the UFS context is in many ways 'foreign' to the participants. In the narratives which will be presented in chapter 5 the contextual realties of space and place of UFS often take a central role.

Alice: "*Then I came here… I was the first Indian person in this faculty, and Bloemfontein was also a very difficult place, because I think I could count the number of Indian people in Bloemfontein. So my racial identity…the first thing they would ask: are you Muslim? And uhm and I'd hear these like silly questions and stuff like that that we eat with our fingers. That we*

*eat curry for breakfast, lunch and supper. I mean really! And then asking questions about what… the clothes and the music and the culture and… My first experiences with students, it was very difficult because it was English and Afrikaans. So uhm I was teaching in English and we make use of interpreting services and then uhm the students would go and complain to the dean and uhm and it came to my head of school and he went to the students and he explained to them that this is the person that is the most highly qualified…eventually when the students came to know me, you know the person, as a person, rather than as 'this lecturer'… I have Afrikaans students coming into my class up until today, they choose my class and I have such good relationships with my Afrikaans students."*

Celine: *"Here at UFS I just feel that it's only a minority of the group that speak Afrikaans on this campus, and if you say that we are a diverse university and we are looking at human reconciliation and those sorts of things, why should we have Afrikaans, because I just feel that when we are at institutions of higher learning we are also disadvantaging those students who take the classes in Afrikaans, because after they finish here, where are they going to work? They won't be employed internationally, because they speak Afrikaans. And if the university has to accommodate all of us, then let us all do our degrees in our own mother tongue, which is going to take forever…. I remember as a student we were given a scope for the exams, it was a very long list, and then you go to the Afrikaans class… Guess what, the question was exactly what we were going to write about…it still happens up to this day, where you get… I don't think, I know I'm being biased, or being called a racist…but white Afrikaans speaking students were treated differently with their marks, you could see it like we don't get the same marks even though we all did the assignment together, and the white student will get 90% and you will get 43. Which I don't have a problem of getting 43, but just tell me where I need to correct myself, and how I should improve, instead of you giving me 43 and telling me I don't know how to write."*

Chubby: *"I think it's all about awareness… There are things I don't know about and I might be stepping on people's toes, but then I do I think there should be a space to talk about those things. We are all on a journey in this New South Africa… I make mistakes, or say naïve things, but don't run to the Rector…come talk to me and make me aware. Sometimes I say something – and then I realise how it might be interpreted. For example one day I was standing in a lecture hall - it had two doors and I was standing with my back to the doors. But you cannot actually see the doors, because there is a little alcove. And so as I was teaching and I heard the one door open and when I turned around there was no one. I said…this was about three*

*years ago... I said "O die spook van Donkergat" (translated it is something like 'Oh the ghost of Dark Hollow' and is a reference to an 1973 Afrikaans movie). And then the next moment the person comes in and I see that it is a black student and my blood runs cold. I realise how this can be interpreted. I must seem like a racist. And I try to explain the reference. But sometimes we say the wrong things."*

The reality is that teachers often move into contexts in which they may feel like they are marginalised as can be seen in the first two excerpts by an Indian (Alice) and a black (Celine) participant. At the same time the context can also be read as extremely sensitive and volatile specifically to race as is evident in the white participant (Chubby)'s narrative, who is worried about how his words and actions will be read. "[A]llied to teacher mobility and critical pedagogies is the importance of negotiating one's own difference in terms of race, class, language, nationality, etc. in relation to the diversity that the context presents" (Perumal 2015, p.32). Furthermore, it should be noted that educators are

> "transformative intellectuals who advocate for broader social justice while ensuring that their own right to socially just practice is not compromised or denied. Finally, there is a need to recognize teachers not as disembodied intellectuals but to appreciate them as fully human whose emotional and physiological landscapes affect their work and productivity levels" (Perumal 2015, p.32).

The recognition of educators as embodied human beings whose emotions matter is crucial in working towards anti-oppressive practice. The educator's identity cannot be separated from the space or context in which it operates. Furthermore it cannot be read as an essentialised or over static identity. The educators in the study should be viewed as holistic embodied individuals who are teaching in a complex and challenging space.

### 3.3. Embracing pain and discomfort

The emotional connection of the embodied educator to the specific context has pedagogical implications which should not be ignored. As educators we are trained (formally and informally) to tune out of our emotions, to remain in control and be impartial. But when we want to teach in anti-oppressive ways we cannot gloss over the uncomfortable moments, the times where we feel distress and dismay, or the moments in which we sense that we need to react. It is precisely in these moments that a possibility for change presents itself through an awareness of something that was previously concealed or suppressed now bubbling to the surface. Challenging oppression is therefore a disruptive and uncomfortable process as pointed

out by Mdunge (2014, p.61) "…despite having knowledge about oppression and how crippling it is to those who are affected by it, I still had great difficulty in challenging it in public spaces." Evidently moving towards anti-oppressive practice it is not painless and is never complete. hooks talks of the pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and of the discomfort that paradigm shifting can cause. She also notes that new ways of knowing may create estrangement from family, friends and community. One of her students puts it like this: "We take your class. We learn to look at the world from a critical standpoint, one that considers race, sex and class. And we can't enjoy life anymore" (hooks 1994, p.42). Also "[f]eeling pain is a more intense experience than feeling comfort. Thus we have experienced from white students a complaint that we make too much of racism, or from men that we overemphasize sexism" (Francis et al. 2003, p.147). Furthermore "… discussions on race and racism may come with a feeling of guilt for white students as they may feel personally blamed for the continued existence of racism; and discussion on issues of hererosexims may involve feelings of hurt for students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered because of their lived experiences" (Mdunge 2014, p.68). Therefore, the personal discomfort and pain that might come with anti-oppressive practice is evident and perhaps also necessary.

*She is marking essays which deals with the topic of marriage and family and how it is understood in South African society. Their reading is from the prescribed academic literacy textbook in which an entirely uncritical view of marriage and family is presented through a heteronormative and Westernised lens. In an attempt to make the issue more relevant (and to challenge some of the biased content in the textbook) she asks the students to write about their own experiences of what marriage and family means in their particular context. She feels upset when she reads an essay by one of the top female students in class. The student goes to great and linguistically correct lengths to explain why females are inferior to males and should therefore be obedient to their male spouses. The Bible is quoted several times to support the argument. This triggers a host of conflicting emotions in Daisy, who identifies as female, as heterosexual, as someone who is legally married, and as someone who believes in certain Christian values.*

*Growing up Daisy was taught that there are good manners and bad manners. For a man it is good manners to pull out a chair for a woman and open the door for her. Now Daisy is going to a meeting between different on-campus residences. The objective of the meeting is to have a conversation about what positive contributions each residence can make to the residence community. As she walks into the meeting young men jump up to get a chair for her. She sits*

*down on the chair and listens to the conversations. The young men from a specifically traditional and former white Afrikaans residence are saying that what they can contribute is good values in terms of being gentlemen. They argue that first year students in their residence are encouraged to open doors for girls and to pull out chairs for them. Daisy cannot help feel irritated, because she knows for a fact that this very residence does not even allow females into their space. The incident makes her wonder about the connection between the 'good manners' and the reinforcement of patriarchal hierarchy and oppression.*

"Certainly as democratic educators we have to work to find ways to teach and share knowledge in a manner that does not reinforce existing structures of domination (those of race, gender, class and religious hierarchies)" (hooks 2003, p.45). Bringing our emotions into the classroom might just be such a 'way'. The problem is that "[e]motionality is frequently marginal to discussions of socially just teaching or at best it is regarded as an effect rather than as a constitutive component in a teacher's actions and the implications of those actions" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.275). However, "[f]eminist thinking provides the necessary challenge to the dichotomies of emotion versus reason and individual versus social, considering the remnants of patriarchal thought and historical power relations" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.278). Historically *rational* (identified with masculine) can be seen as finding expression of superiority over *emotional* (identified with feminine). Therefore, teachers and students often associate authority and power with cold rational and unemotional behaviour.

*As a young white female teacher Daisy feels deflated when the students seem to ignore her completely yet suddenly go dead quiet when an older white male teacher (the very Mr. Peters) enters the room. She notices that the only emotion shown by him is anger and even so it is kept in check. He never loses control. Emotion, Daisy notes, does not go down well in winning authoritarian ground in the classroom situation. In fact when she entered the cold and dreary staffroom all new and fresh the older teachers told her don't you dare smile until July, don't dare show your tears, you lose control and over YOU, THEY will roll.*

Zembylas (2007, p.139) does not agree that teachers must deny their emotions and says that, "By seeking to be affected by passions, the subject creates the conditions of possibility that allow it to actively participate in transforming itself." In an article which explores the emotional ambivalence of socially just teaching Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008, p.275) argue that, "…emotions may be examined for their contribution to social control through the suppression or allowance of particular emotional expressions; they may also be explored as sites of social

and political resistance and transformation of such control." They go on to contend that "emotional perspectives of social just teaching is central to understanding the complexities of socially just pedagogies and drawing on feminist and critical theory they propose the term critical emotional praxis to denote critical praxis informed by emotional resistance to unjust systems and practices in our pedagogies and our everyday lives" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.276).

*Driving home in the hot Bloemfontein sun, Daisy turns up the aircon. She looks out the window and she sees an enactment of Gerard Sekoto's 'Song of the Pick' at the side of the road – white supervisor watches over black workers swinging their pics to force open the dry hardened soil.*
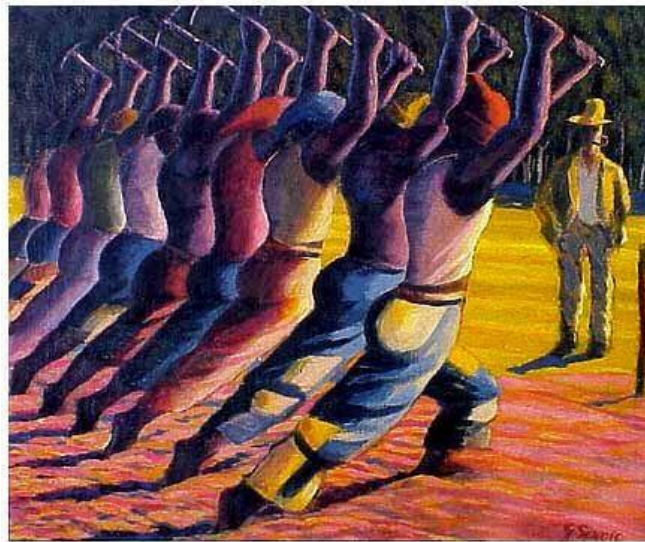


Figure 11. *Song of the Pick*, Gerard Sekoto, 1947

*Her mind drifts to a discussion that happened in class earlier that day on the difference between male and female intelligence. The conversation rather predictably grew into one on gender inequalities in employment. One black male student made the comment that, "Women only want to be equal at the top, where the good jobs are, but what about the bottom where it is all construction work and hard labour?" he asked rather angrily, "You don't see them fighting for **those** jobs".*

"Emotions should be understood as embedded in culture, ideology, gender and power relations" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.275). Emotions can be political (who gets to express them and when), but it can also be transformative in the way that it forces us out of our comfort zones, for example when a white teacher asks students of colour to discuss racial injustice it

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might bring on feeling of anxiety, anger, sadness, guilt and shame (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.280). However, by avoiding discomfort and emotion teachers often avoid discussing issues relevant and necessary for social transformation. The term emotional knowledge is noted by Jansen (2009, pp.189 – 192) as knowledge held deeply about race, identity and history which makes it very hard for people (he talks specifically about white Afrikaners) to change precisely because the knowledge is not cognitive and can therefore not be out-reasoned. So being a white Afrikaner means that I must confront my emotional knowledge in order to change. Therefore this thesis is an exploration of how emotion and discomfort, when acknowledged, might help educators (including me as white Afrikaans female) move beyond emotional knowledge.

*Bra, remember you came here in 1652*

*You a skollie too*

*You were fokken sentenced with a convict crew*

*You robbed and screwed the natives*

*Now who's the savage?* (Dookoom 2014)


*I carry the marks of my origin*

*it is imprinted on my skin*


According to Jansen (2009, p.192), "…you could not ask those who were shaped by, and benefited from social and institutional racism to be the same persons leading it's undoing". A thought that is perhaps echoed in what Freire (1985, pp.46 – 47) says when talking of members of the oppressor class who join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. "It happens, however that as they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's  ability to think, to want, to know…To affirm this commitment (to the people) but to consider oneself the proprietor of revolutionary wisdom – which must then be given to (or imposed on) the people – is to retain the old ways". This reminds us of the fact that socially just teaching is rife with contradictions, for example: "White, middle-class female teachers, who constitute the vast majority of teachers are, the first significant audience for socially just teaching. Frequently unwitting recipients of structural privileges on the basis of race, class, language ,gender or sexual orientation, these dominant-culture teachers need to

critically examine their place in society to recognize how power and privilege are dispensed differently to different groups of people" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.283).

*She muses over her quest to teach literacy in anti-oppressive ways as she does her groceries. As she reaches the till Daisy looks up to see everyone bagging the groceries is black and female, and almost everyone doing the shopping is white. This bothers her and she goes to a coffee shop to make notes on her iPad. In the coffee shop a white male manger is looming somewhere in the background and black waiters and waitresses are serving the mostly white patrons. She finishes her coffee and goes to the hairdresser where black hands wash her hair and white hands cut it. She is reading a book on Marxism against Postmodernism in Education and uses a price tag of her son's new Lightning McQueen plastic toy as a bookmark. Black hands sweep and sweep and sweep away her thoughts and in the mirror she sees guilt, depression, anxiety and fear.*

"'Feeling like a fraud' captures the insecurities of teaching about social justice form a position that you know has been privileged" (Francis et al. 2003, p.148). Feeling like a fraud is very uncomfortable. Honest self-reflections and indeed confronting oneself is undoubtedly an emotional and even painful process. And there is no going back. Once you see your own privilege it is not possible to 'unsee' it. As mentioned earlier the student of hooks (1994) said that a growing awareness of oppression made it difficult to enjoy life. It might even lead to alienation and suspicion of all that one once held dear. In the study by Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) they write about a white female participant called Sara who thinks that she is committed to social justice teaching only to get called out by her black students for trying to "be the lady in Dangerous Minds". Sara eventually comes to the conclusion that "[t]he first place to establish justice is inside ourselves, in the relationships we have with each other. I'm tired of doing justice. I think there's a way to be just… justice is within as much as justice is without, externally in the world" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.303). I agree with Sara because I do not think it is possible to leave our emotions by the door and teach social justice as objective authoritarian teachers. We must bring with us the guilt, the anxiety, the fear, the anger and the frustration. Teaching for social justice is not only a cognitive endeavour, because "it involves engaging in emotional reflection, finding one's own contextualized relationship to justice, and creating an empowered sense of agency to take action and transform one's teaching practices" (Chubbuck & Zembylas 2008, p.311).

*They are in the school bus on their way back from an outing to a ceramics workshop in the Midlands of KwaZulu Natal. She had painted a picture of a pencil and a paintbrush on a small tile and is feeling rather pleased with the outcome of her artwork and the outing as a whole. The students were well behaved and seemed to have enjoyed the workshop immensely. Now on the bus she is sitting next to a Grade 12 learner. He is a child with one of those 'against all the odds' stories, having been found abandoned when he was just 1 year old and raised by a subsequent host of foster parents and child care facilities. At present an overseas charity is sponsoring his school tuition and board. He puts the following question to her: "If they are selling those pots for R50 000 each then why are those workers making the pots not rich? Why is that white lady living on a farm with horses and traveling overseas if the black artists that do the actual work seem to be so poor?"*

Discomfort arises when what you take for granted is suddenly challenged (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1072). The value of discomforting emotions might lead educators to critically examine their constructed self-images and also critically examine how they have learned to perceive others. "Educators resist change because of the desire for repetition and to learn only that which affirms that we are good people and therefore we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia and other forms of oppression" (Kumashiro 2000, pp.43 – 44). Consequently, teachers can be the ones to stimulate prejudices and stereotypes and thereby contribute to normalize particular beliefs (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1073). In a study of how discomforting emotions were manifest in Greek-Cypriot teachers during a peace education workshop Zembylas, Charalambous, and Charalambous (2012) state that teachers are always engaged in political transactions as they relate emotionally to attempted educational reforms, because power relations influence emotion discourses and emotional expressions (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1072) According to Zembylas et al. (2012, p.1071), teachers' emotions (and the discomfort they bring) are important in conflict and post-conflict societies in any effort to promote peaceful coexistence and/or reconciliation. Emotion and discomfort might not be something that educators invite into their classrooms, but it will be there nonetheless (supressed or out in the open). Recognising it, naming it, looking at where it comes from, and where it can take us might be a crucial aspect of socially just teaching.

## 3.4. Being disrupted

Emotion and feelings of discomfort might cause one to question, unlearn and re-learn, and attain different understandings by 'looking beyond', "which is where the researcher turns to

the silences and contradictions in the story" (Kumashiro 2002, p.129). Freire gave us the idea of the oppressor (agent group) and the oppressed (target group) (Freire 1985). However, it seems that these roles can sometimes overlap. As discussed in chapter 2 the fluidity and situatedness of identity means that, "[d]ichotomizing resisters and dominators ignores the complexity of resistance and ignores the existence of multiple systems of hierarchy. It ignores the possibility that individuals can be simultaneously powerful/agentic, and powerless/oppressed within different systems" (Perumal 2015, p.25). "Thus a white staff member who is a woman is able to speak from the 'privileged' role as a white person, part of the time, and at other times from the subordinated role ('target group'), as a woman" (Francis et al. 2003, p.147). Yet, those from a privileged group would often pick a target identity and identify the ways in which they have been oppressed, rather that the ways in which they have been acting oppressively (Francis et al. 2003, p.147). Is Daisy falling into this pattern?

Reading the story of Daisy, which functions as a self-portrait, I try to look beyond to the silences and the contradictions in the story. What is she leaving out? For example in chapter 1 she tells of the time she worked as an au-pair to the wealthy upper classes in the UK and perhaps in this way tries to 'identify' with those who work as servants or those who are at the mercy of their master's hand. But from a critical point of view this could be read as an attempt to shy away from her own alliance with privilege and oppression. The fact of the matter is that she was doing this for a summer-job, getting paid very handsomely, and could leave any time she wanted, which is certainly not the reality of most 'domestic workers' in South Africa. Furthermore, she cites oppression on the grounds of language when she talks of her undesirable accent at the time she went to teach English in South Korea. Here too one could argue that the entire English Second Language (ESL) industry is a form of linguistic imperialism in which she was acting as an agent rather than being a target. She was well compensated for teaching English based on the fact that she came from an 'English speaking country', and sometimes had to lead classes with Korean co-teachers who were much better qualified and much more experienced than her, but were considered to have inadequate English language proficiency (even though some of them had lived in 'English speaking countries' for extended periods). In this 'foreign' context her whiteness still awarded her unearned privilege as Peggy McIntosh (1988) reminds us that white privilege is something we can carry around, it can and does transcend different contexts. As a white South African, it was easier for her to get employment as an English teacher than it was for black South Africans in the same context (and a picture

always had to be attached to job applications). In Korea the dolls in the toyshops still came with blonde hair and blue eyes and bandages matched the 'flesh colour' of her skin.

*"The rain it is raining", writes one of her Sotho speaking students in his essay. With a heavy heart she corrects his poetic phrase with a red DS which stands for double subject and is outlined as an error in the Academic English study guide. Standard English: It is raining.*

*The rain it is raining*
*it is the sound of a parent comforting a crying child in the night*
*sshhhhhhh*
*it smells of wet grass*
*it is making the dry earth cry for joy*
*the rain it is raining*
*it is washing away the corrections of my red pen*

> "When educational settings become places that have as their central goal the teaching of bourgeois manners, vernacular speech and languages other than standard English are not valued. Indeed, they are blatantly devalued. While acknowledging the value of standard English the democratic educator also values diversity in language. Students who speak standard English, but for whom English is a second language, are strengthened in their bi-lingual self-esteem when their primary language is validated in the classroom. This validation can occur as teachers incorporate teaching practices that honor diversity, resisting the conventional tendency to maintain dominator values in higher education" (hooks 2003, p.45).

The power and politics of language mentioned above do not escape Daisy. She understands that language denotes class and status and carries emotional weight. As she now has to decide on a school for her own child this comes to mind. Her child gets a place at an English school and a decision has to be made. As she struggles with emotional turmoil over this decision she is surprised at how her own "conscience is weighed down by emotional knowledge of the past" (Jansen 2009, p.121). As a student at the University of Pretoria around the turn of the millennium she chose to study in English (as many other Afrikaans speakers did) not because she was forced to, but because the majority of the instruction and reading was in English and she also saw the "economic advantage and geographic mobility in the choice" (Jansen 2009, p.122). However, now that she has the choice of English instruction for her child she suddenly

feels 'guilty?" as if choosing English instruction is a form of betrayal to her own Afrikaans heritage. Trying to understand these seemingly irrational feelings she has to look into the emotional knowledge that Jansen (2009) speaks of. This knowledge includes the stories handed down by older generations, for example her grandmother who told her stories of her own childhood and how if they had dared speak Afrikaans in class (East London 1920s) they had to wear a sign saying "donkey". These narratives told by the older generations form the base for the subsequent anger and embarrassment which then spilled over into a toxic soup of Afrikaner nationalism. The educators who had taught Daisy were born and schooled in the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism and the history she had learned (especially at primary school) was one in which the suffering of the Afrikaner at the hand of the English during the South African War still leaves visual imprints in her mind. Language and specifically the Afrikaans language became a political tool in manifestation of Afrikaner nationalism. To this day she automatically corrects herself when she is speaking Afrikaans and an English word slips in (even though from a linguistic perspective she understands this now as being a normal process of code-mixing and switching), because she can hear her Afrikaans teachers talk of language purity and how 'Anglisismes' must be avoided at all cost. Later in life she found the whole concept of language purity revealed itself as ridiculous when looking at how languages have actually been crossing in and out of each other for centuries, and how the Afrikaans language was formed form a myriad of linguistic influences: African, European and Asian. In other parts of her story her Afrikaner roots also betray themselves in the 'white fear' which slips into the story and also perhaps the tendency to foreground her own 'suffering'. Jansen (2009) calls attention to the fact that Afrikaners believe in a myth that they are in fact the victims of oppression.

*In an attempt to rekindle the warm friendly memories of church-going from her youth she visits a Dutch Reformed Church in Bloemfontein. The service is familiar and comforting in the way she expected. But there is an undercurrent in the message that makes her uncomfortable. In this specific service the Dominee (Minister) is tapping into the feelings of fear and being victim that seems to be common amongst white Afrikaners these days (politicized into notions of extreme white supremacy by aging celebrities like Steve Hofmeyer under the auspices of minority rights). In the service the discourse of the white Afrikaner as a victim is invoked with talk of how white South Africans are being pushed overseas as a consequence of black Economic Empowerment and how these poor souls now long for the 'braaivleis vure' (barbeque fires) and 'culture' they left behind. Farm murders are also mentioned and of course the rising crime levels. She struggles to remember how this all tied into a religious message,*

*but she leaves the church without the warm comforting feeling she went looking for. Rather the service was like reading the local Afrikaans newspaper called 'Die Volskblad' out loud in a church.*

She feels frustrated as she hadn't gone to church to get politically brainwashed, but rather to connect with a spiritual dimension of life. hooks (2003) speaks of the crucial role of spirituality in liberatory education. She writes that: "In reflecting on my youth, I emphasize the mystical dimension of the Christian faith because it was this aspect of religious experience that I found to be truly liberatory. The more fundamental religious beliefs that were taught to me urging blind obedience to authority and acceptance of oppressive hierarchies – these didn't move me" (hooks 2003, p.161). In many of the character portraits the participants also refer to the influence of religion on maintaining oppressive hierarchies:

Alice: *"Now when it came to issues of sexuality the first thing they were quoting was the Bible…and you know…like in the Bible it says homosexuality is prohibited… but how do you invalidate somebody? Because you might have children in your classroom that come from same-sex parents .Boys who would want to dress up as girls, and how would you deal with it? How would you cope with it? But it ALWAYS came back to religion."*

Mick: *"The disrupting is very key to this work, cause often when you're working with someone's core, when you're disrupting…you're working with people's values and how they see themselves, and if you change that… So for me sometimes I forget, when I'm in the classroom that this is obviously not going to be easy, it's not like I'm going to speak to the students and then they are going to see it immediately then… Because I am working with religion, which is how some…how people define themselves, that's not gonna be easy for me to tell you that men and women are equal if you believe that GOD has SAID… And that's gonna be quite painful, so that's disruptive…"*

FridaFreire: *"That in terms of race I was fortunate to grow up in these integrated spaces that challenged very strongly the us/them binary in terms of racial difference BUT in terms of religion for example the us/them binary was very much set in stone, and kind of hammered into our experiences and so it was ok to have racial difference, but I mean religious difference was just absolutely unacceptable, and so that was the biggest thing I really had to critique for myself when I eventually escaped… I see it as an escape…that life and that world and was able to emerge myself in different forms of knowledge… And you know then there were silences, I mean sexuality to me was silenced, it wasn't...it was not even…it was NOT spoken about and it never*

*even crossed my consciousness EVER, uhm so that kind of binary was not even kind of visible, for example.''*

Having grown up in a religious household and community I understand both the liberatory and oppressive dimension of religion. The most oppressive viewpoints are so often defended by some Bible text or another, and patriarchy, sexism, heterosexism is easy to find in almost every religion. Like hooks I am not interested in this type of fundamental teaching and intensely irritated by it. I am however interested in the liberatory dimension of faith which urges that we look beyond our earthly existence while at the same time it calls us to be present, and to be a community that transcends our social identities. I think that spirituality opens up a space to transcend difference rather than enforce it (as it unfortunately often does) and also a space to question the status quo. I cannot for a moment claim to share the viewpoints of fundamental Christian beliefs or politically charged church services (as the one Daisy went to) but at the same time I do not find it necessary to denounce my Christian identity since I see this as one type of spiritual identity. I choose to build on the childhood religious understandings of humility, sharing and caring since I see these as being in line with a quest for a more socially just world. I leave a space open for spirituality in my classroom, in my teaching, in my learning, and in my life. I also leave a space open to question that which I choose to believe.

### 3.5. Kumsashiro's framework of anti-oppressive education



Figure 12. *Things are possible,* Gabriel Khan, 2015, photograph

Figure 13. *Floating in between this and that,* Marguerite Müller, 2015, watercolour

In this chapter I have discussed how emotion, discomfort, crisis and spirituality influence teaching pedagogy. Furthermore, teaching pedagogy is influenced by our socially constructed identities as discussed in chapter 2. The discussion lead me to understand that socially constructed identities must be framed as fluid and ever-changing rather than fixed and permanent. For example in the Soudien report it is noted that while racism and race is such a central theme in South Africa "…there is now irrefutable evidence that race, as a biological phenomenon has no scientific basis. It does not exist. The genetic differences that have been used to distinguish the so-called races have no significance in determining human capability, character, behaviour and what makes them different from one another. What has happened, however, is that the false beliefs about race have come to be so significant that they play a critical role in determining relationships that human beings have with each other" (Soudien et al. 2008, p.26). In much the same way that gender, sexuality, ability, class, religion, language and all the other categories do not really define Daisy or me. Or do they? Am I just I or do I choose who I am, or am I what others see me to be? Am I white, Afrikaans, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian, female, and middle class? Or have I been socialised to believe that I am these things? Am I perhaps making a choice to paint my identity as such because these identities give me certain privileges? Can I even get rid of any of these categories? Do I choose the labels or do they choose me?

*One of Josh's favourite books is Peter Pan. In one scene Peter Pan is trying to catch his shadow which has gotten away. He eventually catches the shadow and Wendy sews it back on to his feet.*

In a way I think social identity is like Peter Pan's shadow. It is part of me but it is also not me. It follows me around. Sometimes I want run away from my labels, but it seems that some Wendy (sometimes me) always sews it back on to my feet. So I have to learn to live with this shadow, and at the same time remember that it is not me, it is just a shadow.

With my shadow I now go on a search for a theoretical lens through which I can read this story. "Whether working from a feminist, critical, multicultural, queer, or other perspectives [researchers] seem to agree that oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized" (Kumashiro 2000, p.25). However, oppression can intersect and be multiple and situational. While critical theory is useful to name oppression and to become critically conscious Kumashiro argues that we "need to make more use of poststructural perspectives in order to

address the multiplicity and situatedness of oppression and the complexities of teaching and learning" (Kumashiro 2000, p.25). In moving from critical theory to poststructural perspectives Kumashiro (2000) describes four ways to conceptualise anti-oppressive education.

The first way is *education for the other* in which the educators strive to improve the experience of students who are othered. This approach essentially views the school as a harmful space in which othered students are treated in harmful ways. This approach shows how in the educational setting "[r]acial and ethnic prejudice can influence how teachers treat students or sexist ideologies how teachers treat female and male students and how students treat each other. Who the other is or should become (like coloured students expected to become more like white middle class) or whom the privileged must be in order not to become the other" (Kumashiro 2000, p.26). The goal for educators working towards anti-oppressive practice should then be to teach to all and embrace the diversity of students as raced, gendered, sexualised and classed individuals (Kumashiro 2000, p.28). The problem with the first approach is that by constructing the other as outside the norm, we are focusing on predominantly negative experiences of the other. The implication is that the other is the problem and one might look past the privileging of the 'normal' – which goes on existing without critique. Another problem is that "such an approach requires defining and addressing groups whose boundaries are difficult to define and their identities fluid, contested and constantly shifting" (Kumashiro 2000, p.30). For example homophobia does not only harm learners who are LGBT but also those who are perceived to be, or the children of LGBT parents and culturally relevant pedagogies that challenge racism often operates within a heterosexist discourse that silences people of colour with queer sexualities (Kumashiro 2000, p.30). What must rather be acknowledged is the multiple and intersecting identities of educators and students. Consequently, the approach of *education for the other* can then be criticised for being stuck in a modernist binary view of self/other which we must trouble when acknowledging identity as fluid and situated.

> "Perhaps what is needed, then are efforts that explicitly attempt to address multiplicity and keep goals and boundaries fluid and situated. In other worlds, what is produced or practiced as a safe space, a supportive program, a feminist pedagogy, or a culturally relevant pedagogy cannot be a strategy that claims to be the solution for all people at all times, but rather is a product or practice that is constantly being contested and redefined" (Kumashiro 2000, p.30).

In using the first approach as one lens to read anti-oppressive education I will be engaging with the following questions which stem from this approach when reading the participants' narratives/portraits:

a) How do we focus on the negative experiences of the other?

b) In in what way are we looking past the privileging of normal?

c) Do our stories tell of experiences of being othered or othering in a way that keeps the us/them binary intact?

The second approach is *education about the other*. The aim here is to create awareness and knowledge about the other. Such knowledge is often partial and relies on normative values as the 'right' and 'authentic' truth. The knowledge about the other can be misleading and distorted, based on stereotypes, therefore it is partial and biased knowledge. For example, the portrayals of queer sexualities in textbooks only in the context of sexually transmitted disease. The knowledge leaners hold about the other is therefore incomplete because of exclusion, invisibility and silence, or distorted because of disparagement, denigration, and marginalisation. Such partial knowledge is often delivered through the 'hidden' curriculum. To counter this educators should be critical of the curriculum, encourage students to be critical too and integrate otherness throughout the curriculum not just in a 'special section' about the other (Kumashiro 2000, p.33). The problem with the second approach is that the self/other binary stays intact and allows the self to remain privileged (Kumashiro 2000, p.35). However, "learning about the other should not fill a gap in existing knowledge, but rather disrupt what is already there (Kumashiro 2000, p.34). For this reason we need disruptive knowledge to open up a space for learning more. The questions that stem from the second approach which I will use to read the portraits/narratives are:

d) In which ways is our knowledge stereotyped and partial?

e) How is the other excluded, silenced, invisible, distorted and marginalised in our stories?

f) In what ways do our stories disrupt?

g) How is the self privileged in the story?

The third approach is *education that is critical of privileging and othering.* Here the lens is shifted from otherness to how some groups are favoured, normalised, and privileged. Schools are seen to transmit ruling ideologies and reproduce existing social orders. As such, we have to recognise, critique and understand social inequality. This involves unlearning what was previously learned as 'normal' and normative (Kumashiro 2000, p.37). Learning about the dynamics of oppression also involves learning about oneself and becoming critical of oneself (Kumashiro 2000, p.37). The implication is that educators cannot simply teach anti-oppressive ideology, but they must live it too. However, Kumashiro offers a critique to this approach which stems from critical pedagogy because not all members of the same group necessarily have the same common experiences with oppression. Individuals have multiple identities, and experience with oppression is situated and can involve many contradictions. Therefore, the fluidity of identity and power relations resists easy categorisation (Kumashiro 2000, p.38). From the third approach I took the following questions for reading the narratives/portraits:

h) How do our stories talk of unlearning of what was previously normal?

i) How are we critical of ourselves in the stories?

j) What are the contradictions in our stories?

k) Where are the fluidity and multiplicity of our identities visible?


The fourth and final (or not final) approach is *education that changes the self and society*.

> "Critical pedagogy needs to move away from saying that students need this/my critical perspective since such an approach merely replaces one (social hegemonic) framework for seeing the world with another (academically hegemonic) one. Rather than aim for understanding of some critical perspective, anti-oppressive pedagogy should aim for *understanding* for *effect* by having students engage with relevant aspects of critical theory and extend its terms of analysis to their own lives, but then critique it for what it overlooks or for what it forecloses, what it says and makes possible as well as what it leaves unsaid and unthinkable" (Kumashiro 2002, p.39).

In being critical of critical pedagogy Kumashiro moves to a poststructuralist conceptualisation of oppression that centres on notions of discourse and citation so oppression can be understood as "the citing of harmful discourses and the repetition of harmful histories" (Kumashiro 2000, p.40). This can be done through disrupting, reworking and supplementation, rather than repetition. We might desire learning only that which reveals we are good but we must overcome

this to desire to achieve change and difference. This implies that we must constantly look beyond what is being said to look for the silences and contradictions in our knowledge. It also means we have to revisit our desire to ignore certain things. This involves crisis – students and teachers will get upset. But if we revisit crisis, we can give it new readings, new meaning and new associations (Kumashiro 2000, p.44) thereby leading to self-reflexivity and change of the individual. Kumashiro argues that poststructuralism allows us to deconstruct the self/other binary and this involves unknowability and uncontrollability. It is especially this fourth approach that I use to read Daisy's story along with the participants' stories by asking the following questions:

l) What do we overlook?

m) In what ways can we deconstruct the self/other binary to involve unknowability?

n) What do we desire to ignore in the story?

o) What do we leave unsaid?


In chapter 6 I will be using the questions that stem from Kumashiro's theoretical framework to read, interpret, or analyse the portraits. I lay specific emphasis on the fourth approach throughout, because it is here that I see the possibility to move beyond the limits of our stories and become different.

## 3.6. Difference is in-between

In order to tell my story I evoke Daisy as a work of art so that I can re-create myself in a form of 'not I' or a 'refusal of who I am' because "to be oneself no longer makes sense" (Zembylas 2007, p.140). Zembylas (2007, p.138) also points me in the direction of Foucault who claims that, "...a work of art transfigures, interrupts and opens a void which forces the world to question itself. This void opens possibilities for interrogating our experiences in the world; it is the passion of the experience with which a subject is constantly dismantling and recreating itself". Therefore we must recognise ourselves as passionate beings and works of art. However in re-creating ourselves we cannot 'rid' ourselves of our previous selves. The old self is the base on which we create the new selves. The following image illustrates this fusion of old and new in an architectural work, and I will use it as a visual metaphor for my theoretical approach.

Figure 14. *Elbe Philharmonic Hall*, under construction in Hamburg (planned to open in 2017)

Architects Hertzog & de Meuron

The concert hall is designed on top of an old warehouse in Hamburg. This image is used by Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010) to explain their discourse of metamodernism which is described as oscillating between modern enthusiasm and post-modern irony.

*Daisy's problem is that she feels troubled by her experiences with oppression in education (both as a student, an educator and a mother). She wonders how she can change things. She is now on a journey in search of a 'better' place. The journey takes her into unknown territory in which she sees new things and thinks new thoughts. And when she returns she will not be better, just different.*

Critical theory calls for change; change of society and the self, and it calls on us to be 'better' – with which I find resonance. But at the same time it seems to have a very definite idea of what 'better' is – some sort of grand narrative in which we can work towards a shared common goal. Postmodernism on the other hand critiques the binary oppositions of modernism and rather looks at the space between 'good' and 'bad' and at the smaller and situated narratives played out in individual interaction. I am therefore delighted to find Kumashiro's framework of anti-oppressive education because he uses both critical theory and poststructuralism to read oppression. This helps me see these two theories in a layered way – like the two layers of the Elbe Philharmonic Hall which are apart and together all at once. They create a third-space or a space in-between in which new things are possible.

*I get up from my chair to open up the window and draw the curtain. I see the swing set outside my window. I can only choose to get on the swing and swing in unison with others, or*

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*not. When a bee comes in through my window it is both part of my story and part of its own story. When the sun shines through my window it shows me a stain on my tablecloth I never noticed before, I can look at that stain forever and think of what it might represent and accept it, or get up and wash my tablecloth.*

Here critical theory changes the way I see my post-structurally constructed world, even if I read critical theory in a postmodern way. Does the open window change my portrait? Does my portrait *change* the bee or the way the sun shines? Does it change me? And am I not part of the world? So if I change does the world change too? If I tell my story 'in unison' with the story of others, will a melody emerge? Will it be familiar or new?



Figure 15: *Sunny Meadow Fun Park*, Justin Plunkett, 2014, digital print

*I find myself standing in the middle of my table. The essays are coming to life and the red pen marks run like veins over the paper figures. The sun disappears for a second and I see the silhouettes of figures standing in straight rows. We all look up at the school inspector stepping out of the crumpled newspaper to take his place on top of the pile of theory books. "Do we want reflective practitioners or teachers who can teach children to read?" he asks in the voice of reason and clarity.*

Here my portrait takes a fictional and perhaps surreal turn. It is born from critical theory and from postmodernism, but it is searching for something in between those boundaries, beyond those borders. I do not deny that different theories help me paint and read my portrait, but it is through narrative and artistic creation that I find a way to move between them and beyond them. I get in the boat with Max and move beyond the prescriptive authority of critical theory and out of the 'dead end street' and relativism of postmodernism to do "…research that aims to produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 176).

*Daisy is driving her son Josh home from school and the following conversation occurs:*
*Josh: Can we go to the playground?*
*Daisy: Not now. I need to do some things at home.*
*Josh: I have to go now.*
*Daisy: Why?*
*Josh: There is a friend waiting to play with me.*
*Daisy: Who?*
*Josh: I don't know.*


Josh does not confine himself to reality or probability, but rather sees possibility. I view Kumsahiro's 'space-between' as a space where reality is suspended and new ways of being become possible. It is therefore a hopeful space. "There would be no human action if there were no objective reality, no world to be the 'not I' of man and to challenge him; just as there would be no human action if man were not a 'project' if he were not able to transcend himself, to perceive his reality and understand it in order to transform it" (Freire 1985, p.38). "Reality is a process undergoing constant transformation" (Freire 1985, p.61) and "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire 1985, p.66).

*In her fictional space, Daisy is left dangling in between art and education. (Between my pencil and my paintbrush). The balloon of stories is becoming bigger and bigger, and heavier and heavier.*

I am painting partial stories framed in critical theory against the backdrop of postmodernism, and like Kumashiro I am searching for something in between those boundaries, beyond their borders. It is the creative process which makes me get in the boat with Max (Sendak 1963) and

sail to the next chapter over the prescriptive authority of critical theory and out of the relativist 'dead end street' of postmodernism (Hill, McLaren, Cole & Rikowski 2002) to do "…research that aims to produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently" (St. Pierre 1997, p.176). On this journey the following two questions will guide the route I follow and the methodology I will use:

1. How can educators, through a collaborative self-study, 'trouble' their own social identities and experiences of anti-oppressive practice in higher education?
2. How can the collaborative process of art, narrative and fiction facilitate or hinder educators to move toward anti-oppressive practice?

In the words of a fictional version of the character of Walt Disney: "I am just so tired of remembering in that way. Aren't you tired too? Now we all have our sad tales, but don't you want to finish the story, let it all go, and have a life that isn't dictated by the past?" (Hancock 2013).

*Daisy finds herself both wanting to let go and having to hold on at the same time. Past is clinging to her dress. Her head starts to spin and it seems that the world is turning upside down. What was once a cloud is now an island. From this angle the massive wave looks like an impenetrable forest. Daisy is now stuck on an island of her own creation, stranded in her own story. She walks on into the deep dark forest. She has no choice, because she is a fictional character stuck on an island and either she walks into the forest to look for something, or else her story is over.*

Figure 16. *The world is an upside down sort of place anyway,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, watercolour

**Chapter 4: In which Daisy is searching for a treasure map**

*Daisy is now stuck on her island of stories. She is wandering through a forest of her own creation and she is lost in the narrative. Let us for a moment remember that this is a story and she is a fictional character and when a fictional character gets stuck on a desert island they do not worry about where their next meal will come from, but rather where they will find a buried treasure. She needs a map. The map will tell her how to get to the 'treasure' and perhaps then she can get off this island? She starts to draw a map in the sand. There is no certainty that her map will help her find the treasure at all, she might encounter pirates on the way, or she might stay lost in the woods forever and never find the treasure at all, but this does not deter her from going on the journey. She is a fictional character after all, therefore her continued existence depends on the story to go on. She needs me to write and I need her to think.*

Like Daisy I am also looking for treasure in the form of new knowledge, growth and change. I am trying to find out how to be a better educator - no not better, but *different*. Like Daisy, I am also on a difficult path and definitely a little lost. In chapter 1 I started by looking inside the box (inside myself) to find Daisy. She is my starting point. I painted a portrait of her to help me open the 'trap door' and let my stories out. Together we embarked on a journey to find knowledge which is far removed from the objective claims of quantitative research which seeks universal truth and replicable methods. Daisy cannot be repeated and she cannot be bothered with universal truths, it would be unfair to demand it of her – she is only a fictional character after all. So what I am asking of her is to assist me in a form of research which is qualitative in nature and rooted in arts-based practices.

However, the goal is not to fixate on one methodology or create some sort of master methodological narrative, but rather to search for a multi-method approach. This approach is in line with the search for multiplicity which is central to a post-modernist approach. As such I drew on elements of self-study, narrative inquiry, arts-based inquiry, a/r/tography, collaborative and participatory methods, but at the same time moved between these as to resist drawing on a meta-methodological narrative. This approach echoes the theoretical component of the study where there is an oscillation between critical theory and post-structuralism which is taken from Kumashiro's work on anti-oppressive education. While I outline the different methodological influences in the following chapter it should not be seen as a search to find an

absolute methodology but rather as an engagement with different methodologies as part of an explorative journey.

## 4.1. Arts based practice for social change

In writing this thesis I am using a method perhaps more commonly used in illustrated children's books – the combination of text and image to tell a story. In chapter 1 I began by 'painting' you a portrait of Daisy. In chapter 2 I looked at the higher educational context in South Africa, which forms the backdrop to Daisy's story. In chapter 3 I invited a few critical theorists to 'read' my story through an anti-oppressive and poststructural lens. Now in chapter 4 my methodology will unfold to reveal a multimethod approach with roots in arts-based practice, a/r/tography, and narrative inquiry which branches out into a collaborative self-study.

I view the use of art as a form of cultural production, which implies that I do not see art as separate from everyday life, but rather as an "ongoing process of creating and redefining our shared cultural space through symbolic creativity and interaction" (Kuttner 2015, p.76). While I use art as a means of individual expression, I also see the arts as a way to connect with the broader community. I do not believe in a firm divide between 'artist' and 'audience' nor in hierarchies between different art forms (Kuttner 2015, p.76). This dimension of the arts have been explored in the dramatic arts through Forum Theatre which is an embodied approach to social justice wherein Brazilian artist Augusto Boal (Boal 2002; Boal 2001) enacts Freirean consciousness-raising approaches through improvisational theatre arts. Therefore, Forum Theatre is a participatory, improvisational theatre form which raises consciousness and enables debate and critical reflection as it engages the audience in its own learning and unlearning (Francis 2013). "These strategies engage audiences as active participants, using theatre games to raise consciousness (conscientization) about how oppression works systemically and to move participants to enact challenges to oppressive relations and create more equitable solutions" (Bell & Desai 2011, p.288). Bell and Desai (2011, p.288) also "highlight the value of alternative epistemologies (ways of knowing), as essential sources for understanding the roots of oppression and for expanding our notions of what justice may look like." The close relationship between the arts and social justice lies in the fact that art can enable us to critically analyse and recognise interlocking systems of power within our lives (Kuttner 2015, p.79).

> "The arts can help us remember, imagine, create, and transform the practices that sustain oppression as it endures across history and locality. When tuned to that purpose, the arts

play a vital role in making visible the stories, voices, and experiences of people who are rendered invisible by structures of dominance. Equally important, the arts confront how we have learned to see and provide new lenses for looking at the world and ourselves in relation to it" (Bell & Desai 2011, p.288).

Therefore, I view art as a powerful research methodology for socially just and anti-oppressive approaches. Through using an arts-based methodology I hope to gain unique insights that may lead to new knowledge about educators working towards anti-oppression in higher education.

In chapter 1 I used the visual object metaphor of the pencil and the paintbrush to explain how I see myself as standing in the space between art and education. Leavy (2009, pp. vii–viii) similarly talks of how her researcher identity and artist identity became compartmentalised in the 'publish or perish' academic world in which quantitative research and replicable research procedures are privileged and people seek clear answers from hard science. In such an environment qualitative research is often judged against inappropriate positivist standards. Longing for a more holistic approach to align her researcher, artist and teacher self she developed an interest in arts-based practice. Reading the book *'Method Meets Art'* (Leavy 2009) helped me realise that I did not have to compartmentalise my 'work' in little positivist boxes, or do research in a manner in which I had to keep the personal and the professional separate. I came to understand that it was possible to do art *and* research not as separate activities but as an integrated process. What a relief for a person who has moved around so much between the disciplines of art, language and education and now wants to know across disciplines rather than within them. I no longer had to 'try' keep my knowledge, experience and interests separate. I tore off the labels and started to work at becoming a more 'holistic' person and educator.

Consequently my research became influenced by postmodern and poststructuralist theories, which according to Leavy (2009, p.8), "rejects totalizing or 'grand' theories, calls for a critical restructuring of 'the subject,' pays attention to the productive aspects of the symbolic realm, accounts for the sociopolitical nature of experience, and rejects essentialist identity categories that erase differences" and as such, "researchers informed by postmodern and poststructuralist theories have adapted qualitative methods in order to expose and subvert oppressive power relations" (Leavy 2009, p.8). At first arts-based research which stems from this postmodern paradigm might be uncomfortable for those of us who were educated in a positivist tradition and probably "prefer our knowledge solid and our data hard. It makes for a firm foundation, a

secure place on which to stand. Knowledge as a process, a temporary state, is scary to many" (Eisner 1997, p.7). The idea of knowledge as a process is an important aspect that arts-based research can emphasise in relation to social change. This study is concerned with using art as a way to illustrate the continual journey and process of moving towards anti-oppressive practice.

Bell and Desai (2011, p.288) explain how art can help us confront our knowledge to gain new lenses for looking at ourselves in relation to the world. From this perspective practices that claim to be socially just should "enable people to develop the critical analytic tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part" (Bell 2007, p.2). Furthermore, "[s]ocial justice practices at their best should also awaken our senses and the ability to imagine alternatives that can sustain the collective work necessary to challenge entrenched patterns and institutions and build a different world" (Bell & Desai 2011, p.287). The implication is that as educators working for anti-oppressive practice we need to engage in active imagining of alternatives by using our critical consciousness to unearth the complex ways that systems of oppression operate. In doing this we "need to engage aesthetic and sensory capacities so as to create and experiment with alternative possibilities—imagining what could otherwise be" (Bell & Desai 2011, p.287). Consequently from in a poststructuralist framework the transformative and social characteristics of the arts can make a critical contribution to anti-oppressive practice, which is why I ground this study in an arts-based research methodology.

*The sun disappears behind a cloud and Daisy looks up at a dark ceiling of lush forest green – these trees are tall and she feels very small. She listens to a nostalgic tune as the wind hums through the thick branches of memory and forgetting. The desolate beach remains barely visible between the silhouettes of tree trunks and they seem to be closing in on her like an army of silent faceless soldiers. A cold shiver of fear runs down her spine. She jumps at a sudden yet strangely familiar sound. Don't worry 'Past' reassures her "That is only the sound of 'Future' who followed us here."*

The focus of arts based practice (and anti-oppressive teaching) is on the process of discovery, rather than on the end result. Art has the power to evoke emotion, to captivate, and to move, which traditional forms of research might not possess. The emotional dimension which

becomes possible in arts based research is crucial for raising consciousness. "This is important in social justice-orientated research that seeks to reveal power relations (often invisible to those in privileged groups), raise critical race or gender consciousness, build coalitions across groups and challenge dominant ideologies" (Leavy 2009, p.13).

> "Arts-based practices help qualitative researchers access and represent the multiple viewpoints made imperceptible by traditional research methods. For the many researchers committed to accessing subjugated voices, engaging in reflexive practice, and opening up to a public discourse, arts-based practices are a welcome alternative to traditional modes of knowledge-building" (Leavy 2009, p.15).

In a poststructural paradigm multiple viewpoints and multiple voices in the research might help to break down the idea of universal truths which serves to silence many groups and individuals with experiences contrary to the 'universal truth'. An artwork can represent different things to different people and it can lead to explorative questions. Instead of asking *what is it?* Leavy (2009, p.17) suggests we ask *how does it make us feel?* What does it *evoke or provoke?* What does it *reveal or conceal?*

## 4.2. Art for everyone?

American painter Edward Hopper is quoted as saying "If you could say it in words there would be no reason to paint" (Quotes About Painting, n.d.). I find that when I make an artwork it gives me new ways to think and it opens up new possibilities. Therefore, I use art as a point of departure for this collaborative self-study, but I stay mindful that not all those participating in the collaborative process are artists or share my connection with art. Despite this I view the artistic contribution by non-artist participants as important because it is a point of entry into the creative realm. In the Western tradition art often carries an elitist connotation and there are social 'rules' about art. hooks (1995) points out that race, class and gender shape who makes art, who sells it, what is sold, who values it, how it is valued, who writes about it and how it is written. Art can (and does) therefore often function as a site of exclusion. Many people without formal art training will be quick to point out that they cannot draw and seem uncomfortable when asked to do so. In the research process I noticed that while participants were comfortable to talk about themselves and their experiences, most of them expressed anxiety when asked to draw or create something along the same lines.

Dennis: "*Marguerite, the thing is that people learn differently and express differently and as much as your work engages with the differences in social identity it also engages with the*

*differences in the ways that people learn. And some people might react to the artwork like in your study…..'Oh I don't like art or…" However it does offer a dimension or a different way to understand how people think, and how people make meaning of teaching in higher education."*

*Daisy thinks of her husband Frank. He is a creative and artistic sort of person. After the more than ten years they have been together Daisy still struggles to convince him to draw or paint for fun. Apparently in second grade he was a budding artist and loved to draw. He drew a flower vase and showed it to his teacher who said that his drawing was wrong and put a red line through it. So like scores of children his artistic aspirations were crushed by the foolish and limiting perception that art can be right…or wrong.*

But this is all the more reason to challenge art as the exclusive tool for those who 'can' make art and to rather focus on the process than the end product. The question should not be: is it good? It should rather be: what can it tell us? Because the participants cannot be expected to possess artistic ability, the aesthetic quality of the work takes a back seat to the communicative quality thereof (Leavy 2009). The value of art for research purposes resides in its ability to communicate that which would otherwise be impossible.

*Daisy once heard someone make a comment that Jackson Pollock did not make paintings, but rather performed the art of painting. This research then is not about the artwork 'Lavender Mist' as it hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. This research is about Jackson Pollock's performance of making 'Lavender Mist'. It is about the interplay of negative and positive in the way that Escher made 'Sky and Water 1'. It is about the fast and circular movement of Josh's hand as he draws a roller coaster and imagines himself flying through the air at exhilarating speed. It is about the dreamy little row of flowers Daisy once drew in her Grade 8 accounting book when she couldn't get the columns to balance, and the fury of her teacher's red pen which responded in anger to her inability to think in repetitive ways. It is Munch's silent Scream which we can all hear. It is about the salty taste of her tears as she looks at Magubane's photographs about apartheid. It is about every scribble on every school desk where generation after generation carve their existence, their anger, their boredom, their frustration and their love into worn wood and cheap plastic. It is about the way that images haunt humanity and our compulsion to doodle and draw a protest against our insubstantial and temporal existence.*

Daisy: *Marguerite. You are drifting away with the notes of Beethoven's 5th piano concerto. Come back to your point.*

Marguerite: *Didn't Freire say something about Beethoven? In speaking about how the oppressors do not feel liberated in any new situation where the oppressed are liberated.*

> "Conditioned by the experience of oppressing others any situation than their former seems to them like oppression. Formerly, they could eat, dress, wear shoes, be educated, travel and hear Beethoven; while millions did not eat, had no clothes or shoes, neither studied nor travelled, much less listened to Beethoven. Any restriction on this way of life, in the name of the rights of the community, appears to the former oppressor as a profound violation of their individual rights – although they had no respect for the millions who suffered and died of hunger, pain, sorrow and despair" (Freire 1985, p.57).

Why is Beethoven singled out as problematic I wondered when I read this? Is it because Beethoven and knowledge of Beethoven signifies elitism and exclusion in perhaps the same way that 'fine' art often does?

*Daisy remembers once taking a group of grade 12 students to a national museum in Pietermaritzburg. There was a lot of excitement and discussion going on. Students were pointing and giggling and looking and talking. Lots and lots of talking "Did you see this?" "What is that?", "Is this even Art?", "I can do this!" Of course it didn't take long for some dusty staff member of the museum to come in and ask them to leave. She said they were disturbing the other visitors (there were none), and I wondered how art is 'protected' from lively youthful viewers by keeping it in unwelcoming hostile spaces, protected by elitist snobs. As sweet revenge they left and had a loud and noisy lunch on the front steps of the museum which lead right onto the street under a sign which read: do not sit on the steps.*

I want to make it clear that I am not using art to support any elitist notions of exclusion and oppression in this work. Rather I am interested in the way that art can be a vehicle for social change. Therefore, the use of visual arts-based participatory methods may involve strategies in which the participants are asked to create art which serves as data , but may also serve as a point of departure for dialogue in a multimethod design (Leavy 2009, p.227). In participatory research art functions as a point of departure for conversation, rather than as a site of exclusion as it is often used. Art as seen in this way is a catalyst for sharing and asking and exploring issues of oppression in this collaborative self-study.

**4.3. Self-study as transdisciplinary and transformative practice involves vulnerability, messiness and loss.**

Self-study demands confidence and vulnerability which help teachers embrace the messiness, complexities and omissions of their teaching and how these can lead to positive results (Samaras, Karczmarczyk, Smith, Woodville, Harmon, Nasser, Parsons, Smith, Borne, Constantine, Mendoza, Suh & Swanson, 2014, p.121). Therefore, the engagement with self-study as a method to explore our identities as educators has transformative pedagogical implications. Teaching can be viewed "not as a pedagogical task, but also a social-pedagogical task prompted by moral, ethical, and political aims" (LaBoskey 2004, p.830). Self-study might enable educators to learn about themselves as socially constructed beings and question how they engage in teaching as a "social-pedagogical task" which is both personal and interpersonal, both collaborative and socially mediated. At the heart of self-study is collaboration and sharing which lead to transformation. Samaras et al. (2014, p.118) point to the transformative nature of self-study through private and personal sharing and investigate how self-study can be used in transdisciplinary research. The transdisciplinary possibilities of self-study make it suitable for writing a story which stretches across faculties and disciplines as this one does. The transformative quality of self-study lies in the space it creates for educators to critically examine their practice instead of just doing things in the same way that it has always been done (Samaras et al. 2014, p.118). I therefore see self-study as a fitting method for this research because it is has goals which reach beyond the personal into the social. In this way it is supportive of the notion of difference Kumashiro speaks of as it is concerned with the 'transformation' and 'change' of the self.

However, when embarking on self-study we should know that we expose ourselves in a way that might render us vulnerable, make us uncomfortable or even lead us to crisis. Knowles (2014) writes about Judith Butler's ideas relating to vulnerability and how these can inform self-study's contribution to social justice education. I find that as a teacher, an artist and a self-study researcher committed to anti-oppressive pedagogies I have to continually render myself vulnerable in what is sometimes a painful and exposing process. But through rendering ourselves vulnerable and recognising our discomfort and pain we may open up a space in which we might become different. For Knowles (2014, p.91) self-study is a method to engage with practice in a way that connects "the ontology and epistemology of pedagogy, in that I scrutinise my own 'being' as a teacher in order to transform what and how I know and vice versa… This leads to a process of theorising practice and practicing theory (Knowles 2014, p.92). For

example "when there is a clash of cultures, for instance when students or teachers imagine themselves to be marginal to the prevailing norms, there is the opportunity to create new knowledge as one carefully considers the reasons for the clash" (Knowles 2014, p.93). So, new knowledge might lead to a feeling of loss as "we experienced the loss of who we were, or of who we might have been without knowing – and it can be violent, especially when deeply held and fundamental ideas about ourselves or the world are challenged" (Knowles 2014, p.94). The idea of loss brought on by new knowledge also comes out in Jansen's (2009) writing on the loss experienced by the Afrikaners after apartheid, not only loss of power, but also the loss of deeply held emotional knowledge in the face of exposure to a 'new' history which contradicted deeply held beliefs. However if loss and vulnerability are not dealt with it is simply incorporated into the idea of self where it remains unchanged as a form of melancholy (Butler 2004). Such vulnerability is perhaps sometimes expressed as fear. Yet reflection is a way to deal with loss and fear as it is "one way to mediate loss and vulnerability… it can be viewed as a kind of mourning" (Knowles, 2014, p. 95). And mourning for that which is lost is a way to acknowledge "that we do not know who we are without that which is lost; thus we proceed to a level of uncertainty" (Knowles 2014, p.95). In uncertainty we recognise ourselves as vulnerable and this could open up a space where we, "might critically evaluate and oppose the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others" (Butler 2004, p.30). As such, self-study is a way to expose one's vulnerability which makes self-transformation possible. The purpose of the process is therefore to reflect on, to confront and to change oneself. It is action orientated and goes beyond the classroom into the private lives of educators. Through rendering ourselves vulnerable we can expand the norms that frame our teaching practice. Vulnerability seen in this way can help us achieve the difference Kumashiro speaks of. But this is not a process that will ever be complete. It is a continual and circular process, rather than a linear path with a final destination.

The purpose of this collaborative self-study is then to facilitate a process of re-learning and unlearning in educators to become 'different' by "…exploring how inquiry into the self might illuminate significant social questions and make a qualitative difference to the shared human experience" (Pithouse, Mitchell & Moletsane, 2009, p.2). Therefore, the premise is that what we are 'missing' in terms of becoming anti-oppressive educators can be found within ourselves. The process of self-study is not a smooth and scientific one; it is messy and complex and often involves vulnerability and loss. This type of research does not promise certain change or offer a definite plan of action, at most it aims to enable educators to critically interrogate their

experiences with anti-oppressive education, and creatively construct alternatives by looking beyond their experiences.

## 4.4. Using self-study as a form of arts based practice in order to link theory and practice

In this self-study I view my role as that of an a/r/tographer. A/r/tography seeks to use the multiple roles of <u>A</u>rtist, <u>R</u>esearcher and <u>T</u>eacher, as the frame of reference through which art practice can link to educational research. "A useful way to consider these roles as research practices may be to view the <u>A</u>rtist as someone who en-acts and embodies creative and critical inquiry; the <u>R</u>esearcher acts in relation to the culture of the research community; and the <u>T</u>eacher re-acts in ways that involve others in artistic inquiry and educational outcomes" (Meskin & van der Walt 2014, p.55). This connects to "the critical notion of praxis, where theory and practice are inextricably linked" (Meskin & van der Walt 2014, p.55). According to McNiff (2007, p.39), "the search for a method, in art and research is invariably characterized by a crucible of tensions, struggles, a certain degree of chaos, and even the destruction of cherished assumptions. Invariably the encounter with this experience is the transformative engine that carries the researcher to significant new discoveries." Meskin & van der Walt (2014, p.56) conclude that self-study thereby "offers a home in which we can explore our practice in a way that recognises the complexity of ourselves and create space for interrogating how that complexity drives our pedagogic and creative experience". As such, self-study cannot really be disentangled from identity work which "involves communicating information about the experiences associated with differences, diversity and prejudice.

Moreover, identity research seeks to confront stereotypes that keep some groups disenfranchised while other groups are limited by their own biased 'common-sense' ideas" (Leavy 2009, p.24). Self-study can explore how participants choose to reveal and conceal certain parts of their identity in different contexts. Here again it ties in with Kumashiro (2002)'s theory of anti-oppressive education. Specifically the fourth approach in which the focus is on *education that changes the self and society*. In this approach "anti-oppressive pedagogy should aim for *understanding* for *effect* by having students [and educators] engage with relevant aspects of critical theory and extend its terms of analysis to their own lives, but then critique it for what it overlooks or for what it forecloses, what it says and makes possible as well as what it leaves unsaid and unthinkable" (Kumashiro 2002, p.39) The research method of self-study creates a space in which we can question the parts of 'our stories', 'our portraits' or 'ourselves' that we seek to conceal or reveal. In the story/portrait of Daisy I might try to conceal any

collusion with oppression on her part, because it is a self-portrait and reveals things about me. But the challenge is not to do that. Rather, the point is not just to tell a story, but to 'read' the story through an anti-oppressive lens and to look for ways in which the story can help me be different.

*As an education student Daisy did her teaching practice in a school which was formerly all white but had become integrated after apartheid ended. The integration was reflected in the student body rather than in the teaching staff who remained mostly white. Daisy was assigned to teach Arts and Culture to a grade 9 class. The lesson was on Roman Art and Daisy thought it might be fun to show them the movie Gladiator for contextual background* [much more could be said on both the teaching of both Roman Art and the choice of the movie Gladiator, but I need to move on to another point]. *She took them to the video room for which she had to obtain a special key from the office. When the movie was over and she wanted to lock up she couldn't find the key. She came to the conclusion that the key had been stolen by the learners and suspected a group of three black boys in the class. Why would she come to such a conclusion? She had formed an opinion of them as being naughty and constantly trying to undermine her authority. She thought it was an act of malice and spite aimed at the gullible student teacher and that they had wanted to get her into trouble for losing the video room's key. She went to the vice principal to explain what had happened and also made her suspicions known. He went to the class and asked all the students to unpack their bags and searched for the key. The key was not found. About one year later she discovered the key where it had been hiding in a little fold of material at the bottom of her bag. So now, her previous image of herself as a non-racist person was shattered. She had to interrogate her reaction of suspicion aimed at the group of black boys. She had never before considered herself to be a racist, and yet now she had to admit it – her thoughts had been racist in suspecting the group of black boys of stealing the key. She had equated black with 'bad' and 'thief'. Why? Perhaps she had grown up hearing a 'single story' (Adichie, 2009). In that story black people were poor and white people had possessions. Black people protested and white people kept order. Black people, when they weren't doing domestic jobs, meant danger – especially black males. Somehow she had formed the impression that black males were especially dangerous. Trying to pin-point how these messages had come to her she realised it was not from one single source or conversation; they had come from informal conversations with family and friends, from formal education, from the media, from books, from pictures in books, but most of all from a lack of knowledge, and a lack of access to any interaction with black people as equals, or authority figures, or friends,*

*or as part of her community. At this point in her life she had never had a black friend, or a black teacher, or a black neighbour. She only knew one story – a white story. And a single story is a dangerous thing (Adichie, 2009).*

## 4.5. Self-study in an in-between space

From a poststructuralist perspective the use of collaborative self-study as a research methodology also sets out to challenge some of the dichotomies existing in traditional research, such as public/private, rational/emotional, science/art and factual/fictional. The explicit use of the researcher as a subject in the research is one way in which the public/private nature of traditional research is challenged. However, many qualitative researchers now accept that the personal always influence research practice to some extent and that 'objective' observation is simply not possible (Leavy 2009). Feminist researchers have challenged that rational/emotional dualism that exists in traditional research which was historically guided by social scientific enquiry. Also, in autoethnography the presence of the researcher is often communicated through stories and narratives (Leavy 2009). Researchers are also starting to make use of fiction and fictional writing in academic research as can be seen in the work of Clough (2002) and Leavy (2013). This leads to an emphasis on partial truths and multiple truths and also open up questions around what is often perceived as 'serious' research and how these perceptions came about.

In this research the participants might render themselves vulnerable as they work through personal experiences which might involve emotion, crisis, and pain. I hoped that the collaborative aspect of the self-study would diminish the anxieties we feel about sharing our experiences with oppression. This is another reason why I relied on the creation of fictional characters in an attempt to make participants feel 'safe' in the research space. Finally, this self-study drew on aspects of art, narrative and fiction in creating portraits of educators working towards anti-oppressive education.

*The wind is drawing a map in the sand, but Daisy is still lost. She is starting to think that she might not be alone on this island. She can clearly see the silhouettes of other stories emerging from the shadows of the forest. Her story will continue as she becomes part of them. Her story will grow and change as other stories flow in and out of it. She will become different. But where must she go from here? Her map is incomplete. It is an unclear doodle in the sand that keeps changing and shifting as the wind changes direction. Daisy remembers that when Piglet went missing in Piglet's Big Movie, his friends decided to go out and look for him. They were trying*

*to figure out where to start when Winnie the Pooh suggested: "Perhaps if we told the story, the story will tell us how to get there" (Glebas, 2003).*

The idea of telling a story so that it can show us how to get 'there' is what underscores my research methodology and consequently Daisy's 'map' in a number of ways as will be outlined in the rest of this chapter.

**4.6. Perhaps if <u>WE</u> told the story, the story will tell us how to get there**

Daisy and I are both searching for something. **We** need each other to tell this story.

Daisy: *What are we looking for, Marguerite?*

Marguerite: *I am looking for a way to become, not better, but different and I cannot do this while I am stuck in the same old narrative and repeat the same old stories. How about you?*

Daisy: *I am your story and you are writing me, I am trapped in your narrative and I want to get out. I want to become part of other stories. You cannot keep me on this island forever. Once I find other stories I will find a way to leave…*

Marguerite: *Then we are in agreement. If we do not find other stories we are stuck. We are stuck in sameness, and what we desire is new knowledge, new ways of knowing, new stories and difference.*

My choice to enter into dialogue with Daisy is perhaps a little unfair because I get to choose her words, but I do it for a specific purpose. According to Meskin & van der Walt (2014, p.58) the dialogic frame within a self-study process functions as a way to negotiate the contradictory tensions of multiple perspectives. In my study I use it to show how even within myself I have to acknowledge multiple identities and multiple perspectives. For me self-study through narrative writing or artistic creation is a way to work through contradictions within myself to acknowledge and to reflect upon these. Leavy (2009) points out that it is useful for researchers to engage in 'internal dialogue" (Tenni, Smyth & Boucher, 2003), because the researcher can use this process to monitor their emotional, psychological, carnal and intellectual responses throughout the process. I experience this process as a therapeutic way to move beyond certain troubling memories instead of getting stuck in them. However, I wish to move beyond this internal dialogue as well. I am one person with a very specific set of experiences which do not necessarily reflect the experiences of others. To move beyond my own story I need to enter into dialogue with other educators so that we can co-construct a new story. This leads me to

collaborative inquiry as a way to get multiple perspectives and to write this narrative from multiple angles.

I learn and understand through visual art. Had I been someone else I might have approached this study differently, perhaps I would have written poems, or a theatre piece, or a dance sequence. Art is often very individualistic, but increasingly it is becoming collaborative across genres. *Didn't Roland Barthes already write about The Death of the Author in 1967?* So taking my cue from various art forms I will attempt to create a collaborative piece of research. The collaborative methodology could be metaphorically illustrated by the following artwork:



Figure 17: *21 Balançoires (21 Swings),* Canadian design collective Daily Tous Les Jours, 2012, Installation

In this collaborative installation the viewers are also the participants (Jobson 2012). To make the installation 'work' any of the passers-by can get on a swing and a sound will emerge as they move. However, the full melody will only come out if all the swings move in unison. It does not only illustrate the collaboration I view as central to this research process, but also the idea that art, and in this case research, should extend its reach beyond the traditional gallery or academic space to interact with a public audience. The story should go out to meet other stories, so that it may be changed by other stories. It should go out to become different and new. That is not to say it will be better. Samaras (2014) uses the delightful term *exchange and change* to describe the collaborative process which is what I am aiming at with this project.

To bring out the melody in my research 'portraits' I rely on a collaborative process. Therefore, I invited other educators to participate in this study and facilitated a process of storytelling through art and text to weave a co-constructed narrative in which we create and 'read' portraits of ourselves as educators working towards anti-oppressive practice. By inviting participants to be co-constructors of the narrative I hoped to trouble my own 'authority' as the author, and thereby trouble the traditional role of the researcher. However, I remain conscious that even though this is a collaborative inquiry I am in the role of 'lead' narrator, because I am designing the layout, selecting the participants and using a narrative form that I am comfortable and familiar with. My story is inspired by personal experience but also shaped by children's literature which I find fascinating. I must take into account that not all participants will necessarily find this narrative style comfortable, or familiar (Riessman 1987). Just like Daisy cannot rid herself of her socially constructed identity I cannot rid myself of my authoritative voice in writing this story. But it could perhaps be argued that it is impossible to do a truly collaborative inquiry for a PhD thesis. After all I will be the one with the most to gain from this study in the end. So I must position myself as a sort of head author or director, rather than just another participant. I dislike this hierarchal approach; but this ultimately is an academic piece of writing produced for an academic qualification and I have to acknowledge that the very notion of academia as it exists today is steeped in hierarchy.

*As a residence head Daisy is having a conversation with the residence committee about the uniform for the first year students of 2016. She suggests that they do not ask the first years to wear a uniform as this seems rather oppressive. The reply she gets from the students is that the first years must wear a uniform, because that will help them get used to hierarchy. "Why must they get used to hierarchy?" she wants to know. "Because that is just the way the world works ma'am". "Please don't call me ma'am, my name is Marguerite" she says for the millionth time. "Yes ma'am" they reply.*

hooks (2003, p.46) talks of educational institutions such as universities as "founded on principals of exclusion" and " values that uphold and maintain white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" as truth. As such I do not propose a collaborative study in which equal voices co-create new knowledge. Rather the collaborative approach will hopefully help me move beyond the modernist binary construction of self/other or researcher/researched. Kumahsiro (2002, p.19) points out that it is important when we talk of anti-oppressive change, to also present research in untraditional ways that challenge and trouble conventional research practices. These conventions are challenged by "feminist researchers who work against detachment;

activist researchers who work explicitly against oppression in the lives of participants, and collaborative researchers who ask the participants to help them answer their research questions" (Kumashiro 2002, p.14). A collaborative self-study should also aim to have a positive impact on the participants. Giving people a platform to tell their stories and have their stories told is a way to affirm them, and to affirm their existence. The goal is to research 'with' not 'on'(Kumashiro 2002, p.16). Yet, the research I am doing is only collaborative up to a point, but more collaboration would not necessarily make it 'better' or 'truer', it would only make it different (Kumashiro 2002). I stay mindful that the method of collaboration is not unproblematic, because regardless of my intentions I will probably be the one to benefit most from the research. However, what collaboration might possibly do in this study is to foreground the messiness and complexity of human interaction in the research process. This might be important for research dealing with anti-oppressive education, which is not likely to be a smooth or neat process. A collaborative self-study, similar to all methodologies, has certain limitations. Bearing all this in mind I still chose this methodology because it fits the goals of my research (Kumashiro 2002, p.17).

Another advantage of collaborative research is that it breaks the 'single story' (Adichie 2009) into multiple stories. In such a multi-perspective construction the truth/fiction binary is also questioned. Truth, when viewed as multiple, is as elusive as fiction. Therefore, the collaborative approach troubles the traditional power relationships that exist between researcher/participants or truth/fiction by explicitly having the researcher and the participants engage in a co-construction of knowledge. In collaborative inquiry the participant has a voice which helps shape the direction of the research. This disrupts the traditional power relationship between those who conduct research and those who are researched. Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997, p. 666) write about the importance of studying educators' experiences collaboratively, "… in such a way that teachers become research participants: teachers help define the purpose of the research, suggest interpretation, and comment on the final result". In this way the participant is not just a source of data, but part of the analysis and interpretation of the research. The researcher is forced to constantly trouble his/her own interpretation and authority through acknowledging multiple perspectives and interpretations.

Through the process of collaboration this study sets out to create new stories by tapping into the memory and creative agency of the participants. Pattman (2012) makes use of collective memory work, which involves individuals choosing, writing, and telling a story about their past in relation to an agreed theme and then discussing these stories collectively. I want to use

a similar approach; however, my methodology will be strongly informed by fiction writing. Narratives about the past are often more about how we present ourselves now than about actual historical information about what really happened (Pattman 2012, p.9). So in this way our stories about the past are already fictional in the way that we use them to construct ourselves in the present.

Another dimension of collaborative inquiry is the possibilities provided by technological advances such as the internet. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, information sites like Wikipedia and many other rely on the co-construction of knowledge and input from multiple participants to function. According to Leavy (2009, p.12), "The Internet is particularly important in the dissemination of arts-based research." Initially I had planned to use Facebook in the collaborative construction of our story. I was hoping to set up 'fake' Facebook pages for the various characters in my story. However, after setting up two or three of these pages the security settings on Facebook caught up to me and demanded I provide a different phone number for every page to ensure the 'real' identity of the person. Facebook realised that I was using the same number to construct multiple pages and thus shut down my fake 'characters'. Not wanting to implicate any other people in the process or commit fraud I decided to follow a different route. At first I investigated a number of alternative venues for example blog spots or shared, co-constructed documents. I soon realised that the use of fake identities to post on any site would make the process time-consuming and difficult for my participants. I did not wish to make participation cumbersome for people already overburdened with academic and administrative work, and in most cases also busy with their own studies. For this reason, I followed a much simpler approach. I wrote the story prompts and emailed the document to participants on a weekly basis. From their replies I would develop the story and send through the next instalment of the narrative. This served my purpose for developing the story. I wanted participants to have time to read through the work and make comments at their leisure. I did not want the participants to feel pressured to share 'on the spot', but rather to have time to process the contributions of others and construct their own contribution. However, it should be noted that many participants opted not to contribute in writing, but rather asked to see me in person and have face-to-face discussions. Where at first I thought Facebook would serve as an ideal platform for the co-constructed narrative, I soon realised that what a lot of participants valued was the human, one-on-one interactions and discussions. In a way this approach to the research was also more true to my own nature as I am not such an active social media user and prefer face-to-face human interaction. The people who participated were people I know

relatively well, and they seemed to feel more comfortable sharing and talking in person than doing so in a virtual world.

However, I do still believe that that the use of social media can hold very positive advantages for this type of research. For example, from the outset it was my hope to eventually 'set our story free' by making it public, and here the internet and Facebook could have been a very useful platform. Leavy (2013, p.24) speaks of how as academic researchers we are now moving beyond the mandate of *publish or perish* to *go public or perish*. I perceive this to also be happening in the art world where public and interactive art is gaining momentum. So not only were we telling a story collaboratively, we were telling it with the goal to go public, to publish our experiences outside of the academic realm. This is also in line with the notion of generativity, which according to Pithouse-Morgan and Van Laren (2012, p. 1), serves as a counterpoint to the current pervasive emphasis on academic 'productivity' which has connotations of commercial value. "In contrast, generativity connotes creativity and a calling to contribute to the well-being of others, particularly younger people. For us, as South African educational researchers and educators, the idea of *academic generativity* is infinitely more inspiring than *academic productivity*!" (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren 2012, p.2). Collaboration seems to be one way to achieve generativity rather than productivity, and generativity seems to be more in line with the fundamental principles of anti-oppressive education.

**4.7. Perhaps if we <u>TOLD THE STORY</u>, the story will tell us how to get there**

*Daisy: But why do you seek your answers in stories? Could you not perhaps do a survey and get a clearer picture? Could you not do an in-depth interview to find out what you need to know?*

The collaborative self-study is supported by a narrative aspect, as participants share stories, reflect on stories and re-write stories. In this way the participants are involved in a process of restorying (Leavy 2009). The educator's experience is valued in a narrative inquiry and they become active agents in shaping the learning experience. The view presented by Clandinin and Connelly (1998) is that of curriculum as part of a story and knowledge as something that cannot be given, but which must be experienced. Educators cannot be 'told' how to work towards anti-oppressive practice but have to build such knowledge through narrative experience. In my research I look for ways to find expression of this narrative through art with the hope that reflexivity might help us to move beyond the boundaries of our socialisation. The pedagogical

implication being that "[w]hen curriculum is understood as narratively constructed and reconstructed through experience, the stories lived and told by students and teachers of what is important, relevant, meaningful or problematic for them are valued" (Olson 2000, p.170). If we as educators value our experiences it might lead us to recognise our active participation in knowledge creation and reject any view of the educator as a passive transmitter of external knowledge and expectations. The use of the narrative in this study is central to the view of educators as knowledge creators and not just the people who 'deliver' knowledge as in the "banking system" of education which has been criticised by Freire (1985) as being contrary to anti-oppressive practice and education as the practice of freedom.

## 4.8. Perhaps if we told the story, THE STORY WILL TELL US how to get there

Daisy: *Okay, I understand that a narrative inquiry values the experience of the educator by giving the educator a voice in the research, but why fiction? Why don't you rather do autobiographic work or life-history? What is the point of the fictional characters and the re-created narratives? This is not a Terry Pratchett novel, you know, why do you insist on blurring the edges of the truth? I thought research was all about finding the truth.*

Marguerite: *You know, Daisy, for a fictional character you have a lot of opinions! Let me call in the help of my dear friend the Pilot, who is also a fictional character by the way.*

> "The proof that the little prince existed is that he was charming, that the laughed, and that he was looking for a sheep. If anybody wants a sheep, this is proof that he exists. And what good would it do to tell them [the grown-ups] that? They would shrug their shoulders and treat you like a child. But if you said to them: 'The planet he came from is Asteroid B-612,' then they would be convinced and leave you in peace from their questions" (Saint-Exupéry 1970, p.12).

Marguerite: *I am not looking for proof of the existence of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education. Nor am I trying to find some sort of recipe to work towards anti-oppressive education. I am not looking for a quantifiable grown-up answer to determine just what constitutes an educator who might be working towards anti-oppressive practice. I am looking for stories and portraits so that I can create new stories and paint new portraits. If I were to confine myself to the boundaries of that which could be tested, measured, and replicated, in other words the TRUTH you speak of, you would not even exist dear Daisy! But even your story on its own is not enough. It has you sitting on that island and going nowhere; it has you stranded forever. Unless… we find other stories, stories to change our*

*story, to make it different. That is why we need collaboration and narrative and in this case fiction. The fictional space allows us to invite other fictional characters to come into the story and change it. You must walk on into this deep dark wood not knowing what or who you will meet. But if you do not go, your story is over. Fiction gives you the 'what if' that propels the story forward.*

Pablo Picasso (who was a real person but has been fictionalised in many ways) said that "We all know that Art is not the truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies" (Barnett 2014). In a TED Talk about the genre of children's literature Barnett (2014) observes that "You've got truth and lies and then the space in the middle – that's art. You can call that space art, or fiction or wonder". Barnett points to the fact that we can have real feelings about fictional characters. For example, I can get angry with Daisy even though she is a figment of my imagination. She has a will of her own and sometimes I cannot really control her. Barnett (2014) goes on to explain how art is a secret door that can take us into a fictional world. A door to open wonder. It is also possible for fiction to escape into reality, and to become 'real'. Consider for example that people will journey to visit the house of Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street even though they know he is a fictional character.

> "Historically, both academic research and public perception have been informed by the *fiction-nonfiction dualism* that inherently legitimizes the notion of a discernible "truth" while implying fiction to be its polar opposite; however, it is now widely accepted in academia that there are "truths" to be found in fiction, and nonfiction also draws on aspects of fiction in its rendering of social reality. In other words, the polarization of "fiction" and "nonfiction" is misleading and qualitative social science research is moving beyond this false dichotomy" (Leavy 2009, p.48).

So when I opened the box and let Daisy escape into reality – she became real in a way. She *is* the truth that she *seeks*…Suddenly my thoughts are interrupted by my 7 year old niece, Annie, who is peeping over my shoulder with two gigantic and curious eyes.

Annie: *What are you doing?*
Marguerite: *I am writing.*
Annie: *Are you writing a story?*

Marguerite: *Sort of. I am trying to understand something and writing a story is helping me understand it. What are you doing Annie?*

Annie: *I am looking for chalk so I can draw a train track for Josh's train...*

...which she then does – and here is the evidence:
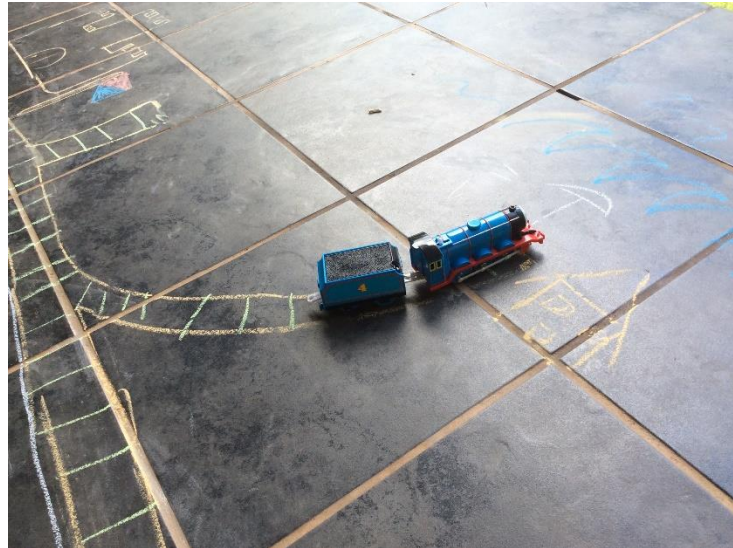


Figure 18. *Annie's train track,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, photograph

So what about validity in arts-based research? How can this kind of research be measured and can it be replicated? Is Annie's drawing of a train track a valid thing? Can she draw that track again tomorrow, and get the same result? Perhaps the question to ask here is rather: does it serve the purpose it was intended for? Watching Josh push his train along the chalk track I note that it does. However, the possibility exists that if she tried to draw the same track tomorrow she will not have the same result – the dog might urinate on it and erase it altogether, the rain might wash it away or it will simply disappear with time. "In general narrative researchers, regardless of their specific methodology can gain trustworthiness by making their research purpose transparent and then set what they deem to be the appropriate context for storying the data" (Clandinin & Connelly 1989, p.19). What I am saying is that my study cannot be measured for validity in the positivist sense of the word. It can only be measured against what it sets out to do, against the questions it poses and an engagement with those questions. This study can be replicated but the results will never be the same, because it deals with individuals and the complexities and differences and the ever changing stories of mortal people and ever changing landscape of memory and forgetting. In fact when working towards anti-oppressive

education the very idea and hope is that tomorrow our stories, our understanding, our readings and our practice as educators will NOT be the same, but different!

Finally and most importantly, fiction has the potential to make academic writing more accessible to wider audiences. "Democratic educators who championed bringing an end to biased ways of teaching bridged the gap between the academic and the so called 'real world'" (hooks 2003, p.46). This is supportive of the concept of democratic education as that which moves beyond the academic setting into the real world. "We share the knowledge gleaned in classrooms beyond those settings thereby working to challenge the construction of certain forms of knowledge as always and only available to the elite" (hooks 2003, p.41). So the use of fiction as a method of research in anti-oppressive practice seems to be appropriate in the way that it reveals the truth/fiction binary to expose the privilege 'truth' has for so long enjoyed in the academia.

### 4.9. **PERHAPS** if we told the story, the story will tell us **HOW TO GET THERE**

Daisy: *So you want to use fiction to find that difference Kumashiro spoke of in chapter 3? This is the treasure that you seek? And you seek this treasure in-between your story and the stories of other educators who are working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education?*

Marguerite: *Yes. But I am not sure I will even get to the 'treasure' or get any sort of answer. I think perhaps for me the value lies in the journey rather than any sort of final destination. I have a nomadic heart and it directs my research. Once I get to the thing that I thought I was looking for there will always be something else on the horizon, a new story to hear and tell and live. So the 'answer' that I seek as you point out is in between our stories but also in some space between* <u>what is</u> *and* <u>what if.</u>

Kumashiro (2002, p.200): "Learn from the work, but always look beyond it by troubling your own authority and the authority of your readings and refuse finality."

Daisy: *Look the wind has settled and I can read the map - it is circular with no beginning or ending. But what is the point of walking in a circle? What will be my destination? Where is the treasure?*

Marguerite: *As you journey on you will ask others to join your story and through those stories you will change and become different. To find the treasure you have to change. You have to see the same things differently, so…*

## 4.10. A step-by-step outline of how the portraits were constructed

The participants (including myself) in this research are educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education. A purposive selection was made, which "…involves choosing people or documents from which the researcher can substantially learn about the experience" (Polkinghorne 2005, p.140). This is also a convenient selection since I am currently working in higher education and therefore approached personal acquaintances or people referred to me by personal acquaintances to participate (Appendix A). I obtained ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee of the Free State (Appendix B).

As mentioned earlier, one of the advantages of arts-based research practices is that it makes transdisciplinary research possible. The participants selected for this study work across faculties in the Humanities. It is a diverse group in terms of their identification with the socially and historically constructed categories of gender, race, sexuality etc. The participants belong to different language groups, religious groups and identify with different 'cultures' as these categories are understood within a South African context. It should also be stated that all participants are educated to a postgraduate level and currently employed by the University of the Free State. Many of the participants were enrolled for a Masters or PhD degree at the time of participation in the study.

Once participants responded with interest to my initial request (Appendix A) I arranged individual face-to-face meetings with each to explain what participation would entail and how it would develop. During the initial meetings I asked the participants to create a character and to construct a "portrait" for their 'research character'. I also mentioned that they could approach the character as a sort of alter-ego. I supplied them with some basic art materials which they could use (or not use) and asked them to make the portrait in any way they felt comfortable. For example, they could write instead of draw, or use a photo, or an object, or an oral description. I stressed that the research is NOT about artistic ability, but rather about the process of storytelling through art. How the participants created the portrait was entirely up to them. The only guideline was that the character they created should somehow reflect themselves.

Predictably many participants expressed anxiety over the use of art and said things like *"But you know I really cannot draw."* Regardless of their anxieties I advised them to have fun with the materials and try it out and see what happened – a "you have nothing to lose" sort of approach. However, I purposefully initiated the process by giving them a creative task to serve as a catalyst for the process and to help us enter into a narrative mode. It was a way to get the

participants imagining and playing with the idea of their fictional character and an attempt to move the research into the 'fictional' realm through the use of art. Asking the participants to create a portrait is perhaps similar to asking them to supply a pseudonym which usually happens at the beginning of a research process. I asked them to give their character portrait a name which served as their pseudonym, but one person opted to use her own name. When people participate in research they are probably always actively constructing themselves in a way they want to be seen or understood, or think they should be seen or understood. Therefore the creation of an alternate identity constructed specifically for the research process is probably always present in participatory research but not always made explicit.

After the initial individual meetings I followed up with a second individual interview during which I asked the participants to sign a consent form to participate in the research (Appendix C). I then asked them to 'share' their fictional character with me in an informal and unstructured conversation. This meeting was audio recorded with the consent of the participants. I simply asked the participants to show me their characters and tell me about the characters. Some conversations were fifteen minutes and others an hour and a half. Some participants created artworks in preparation for this meeting, whilst others used existing artworks and others preferred to only give an oral description of their character.

Throughout the duration of the study I kept a research journal and noted my emotions, thoughts and impressions during the interviews with individual participants. Here are some early extracts from the journal:

*When I spoke to Alice her initial reaction was- it sounds interesting, but do you want me to write?! Do you want me to draw?! The unfamiliar approach to research seemed to create doubt in her mind as to what her role would be and uncertainty about what I expected from her.*

*Mick was keen from the start, he had been engaged with anti-oppressive pedagogies for a while and his own writing dealt with personal stories, so he did not seem worried in any way when I asked him to make a portrait. In fact he seemed quite excited about the prospect of doing something creative.*

*Chubby seemed really interested and happy to participate. When I said I was interested in the lived experiences of educators rather than some text-book correct way of being he immediately shared a story…I was relieved because it was more difficult for me to approach him than the other participants as he is about the age of my parents and everyone else is closer to my age.*

*I felt compelled to use his tile (Prof) whereas with the other participants I just used their names and this also seemed to me to make the whole thing more formal.*

Furthermore, I audio recorded all the meetings with participants and transcribed these. This provided another layer of engagement with the research. My rendition of the transcriptions will follow in chapter 5 in the form of the character portraits which I created based on the stories, memories and experiences the participants shared in combination with the artworks they created. Instead of simply transcribing the audio recordings I used the transcriptions to create collages of each participant's character by weaving together their words and visuals as well as my impressions and experience of the interview process. In writing the interview process as a story, instead of merely transcribing the audio, I moved into the fictional sphere and also started to engage in a process of analysis. The idea of communicating the process of 'data' collection and not just the result comes from ethnography. Thus the researcher is not only concerned with questions of reflexivity but also with ways to communicate lived experience. Thick descriptions of interviews and the interview process stem from a process which is purposefully subjective rather than making an attempt to be objective or neutral (Leavy 2009). In this way the researcher draws on narrative, story-telling and elements of fiction to describe the 'experience' of data collection in which they insert their own voice, while at the same time they try to find a balance between their voice and the voices of the participants.

In the next phase of the study I facilitated a collaboration between different participants in written form. The purpose was that the 'characters' could share stories and co-create a narrative of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education, by reading what others wrote and sharing their own stories and interpretations. I tried to stimulate the discussion by sending out my initial character sketches as an introduction to each character and sending out weekly prompts designed around the themes of anti-oppressive education as they emerged from the theoretical framework of anti-oppressive education discussed in chapter 3. The prompts included a brief theoretical explanation of the topic followed by Daisy's narrative response. The prompts were emailed on a weekly basis over a period of 1 month, participants were sent weekly reminders and updates of new prompts, and encouraged to continually engage in the emerging narrative (Appendix D). Although the prompts were designed to guide and stimulate the narrative the participants were free to steer the narrative in different directions. The idea was not to go through a rigid checklist of things that had to be discussed, but rather to allow the narrative to evolve as organically as possible and to give the participants a true sense of authorship and authority in the direction the discussion took. Participants were also

encouraged to share visuals or photographs and not to feel confined to written text. However, as stated earlier, many participants indicated that while they enjoyed reading the evolving story they did not make any written contributions due to time constraints and because they found it difficult to write in a narrative genre. In the end I decided to follow up with another face-to-face interview in which participants seemed more willing to engage with the story and share their experiences and readings. In preparation for this interview I asked participants to bring a photograph which they felt captured something of them as an educator working towards anti-oppressive education. These photographs proved to be a good way to start the next round of conversations. I used the photographs in creating the final 'character collages'. I also shared the questions that stem from Kumashiro's framework of anti-oppressive education (chapter 3) with each participant and asked them to read the story through and anti-oppressive lens, and to comment on the way it was evolving. The final portraits will be presented in a combination of textual and visual collages in chapter 5.

## 4.11. Reading the portraits

A collaborative approach to analysis is part of the collaborative process. It is important not to ignore the multiple perspectives at this level. In the final stage of the research I asked the participants to engage with the research questions and give feedback about their experiences in relation to the questions. I also asked them to suggest ways in which the questions should be changed or discuss new questions that emerged during the research process.

To some extent I drew on narrative analysis. Kim (2006, p.5) explains this as when "the researcher extracts an emerging theme from the fullness of lived experiences presented in the data themselves and configures stories making a range of disconnected research elements coherent, so the story can appeal to the reader's understanding and imagination". I interpreted the contributions of the participants to create a composite narrative inspired by the work of Clough (1999) and Connelly et al. (1997, p.669) in which, "...events and stories, from a number of participants, are collected [and]…[s]tories are constructed and made up of bits and pieces of the lives of multiple participants." Therefore the co-constructed narrative is not "factual, nor will it be arbitrary and fanciful" (Connelly et al. 1997, p.667). The idea is that through the process of co-creation we critically reflect on our own 'stories' but also on the stories of others. Certain versions of the past get remembered and other versions get left out (Pattman 2012, p.10). So part of the analysis is looking at what our stories say and what they do not say. Therefore, looking beyond what is said is a central part of reflexivity and in line with

Kumashiro's fourth approach to anti-oppressive education. For example, in chapter 2 I reflect on the way in which Daisy's story avoids the issue of sexuality to some extent and the way that her story is shaped by heteronormative ideals. Another example would be looking for the intersections of different socially constructed identities. For example, in Daisy's story of asking the black boy to sweep the class issues of race intersect with gender.

Daisy: *So you don't see analysis as something that happens afterwards, after the stories (data) have been collected. I suppose that thinking of analysis as something that comes after data collection would be a linear understanding of what really is a circular process? Hence the circular map.*

Marguerite: *Indeed. It is impossible to view analysis as something that comes after the fact. Data collection and analysis often happen simultaneously* (Merriam 1998). *So what I am doing is engaging in cycles of analysis throughout the research process, which can help researchers to locate themselves in the process, and cycle back to re-examine earlier interpretations* (Leavy 2009).

Throughout the process of co-construction I used an anti-oppressive lens to comment, add, criticize, read, and re-read the co-constructed story for what it says and does not say. This circular process of reading and re-reading is an attempt to 'move beyond' the story and to 'resist finality' (Kumashiro 2002). This interpretative phase of the research extended the methodological approach of self-study which involves "… methods of stepping back, a reading of our situated selves as if it were a text to be critically interrogated and interpreted within the broader social, political and historical contexts that shape our thoughts and actions and constitute our world" (Pithouse et al. 2009, p.44).

Pattman (2012) uses a thematic analysis of the stories of participants that draws on poststructuralist theories of gender and race which conceptualise these as relational, imbued with power, and always negotiated and enacted in relation to identities constructed as other. The other is always in a binary opposition to identification of the participant. The challenge is therefore to read our characters as they are constructed in relation to the other and to try and move to space where we challenge the self/other binary. The analysis of stories in Pattman's (2012) study reveals, for example, how participants often wrote their stories presenting a watershed moment and a happy ending but left out any current conflicts. As educators we might want to present ourselves as having overcome our collusion with oppression or as always

challenging oppression in the classroom. In truth we are likely to be complicit to various intersecting forms of oppression even though we are familiar with anti-oppressive theories.

I hoped to alleviate some of the anxieties that participants might have had about sharing some of their conflicts by making use of the alter ego/character created by the participants which provides a little distance from the I. Being critical of a character one created is much easier than being critical of oneself, even if you share experiences with that character some emotional distance exists. The 'truth' or a 'truth' might be found somewhere in the space between the participant's experiences and the character's experiences. It is easier for me to see the gaps, silences and contradictions in Daisy's story than in my own.

You have already read a lot about Daisy and her 'portrait' is already part of this thesis. In chapter 5 the other character portraits will be introduced into the story. In chapter 6 I will offer a visual analysis of the story and in chapter 7 and 8 we will engage with the readings and interpretations of the portraits using Kumashiro's anti-oppressive framework.

*Daisy is following the circular map which the wind drew for her in the sand. It leads her into the forest and there she will meet the other characters. She does not yet know who they are or what they will tell her, but she knows that she needs them for her story to go on and become different. So into the unknown she now goes with Past trailing behind her and Future flying somewhere overhead.*

**Chapter 5: Portraits of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education**

The narrative which will be presented in this chapter grew out of co-created portraits of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education. The portraits are interpretive collages and were created through combining artworks by the participants, photographs provided by the participants, stories shared by participants as well as transcriptions of the recorded conversations we had. All the conversations were transcribed verbatim and used as such. The grammar and vernacular speech of participants are not changed. Two of the participants (Dot and Chubby) spoke in Afrikaans during the interviews and these were translated into English.

The use of portraiture helped me to engage with the different aspects of participants' narratives as I linked these to the theoretical aspects of the study. Carolyn Jongeward writes about her use of portraiture in academic research:

> "I was working on data analysis, involved in the demands of categorizing interviews and participants' journal writings. Reading and rereading, comparing and contrasting different aspects of what participants said or wrote, I felt close to their attitudes and perspectives. However, the sustained analytic process of segmenting and coding data made me want to have an image of the whole person. I decided to work visually to weave together multiple threads of each person's perspectives and approaches to creative process. Calling upon intuitive and visual sensibilities that I knew from experience would help me see a sense of the whole, I explored the richness of participants' experiences by making visual portraits" (Jongeward 2009, pp. 239–240).

She goes on to describe the creative research process as follows (Jongeward 2009, p.251):

I work on something (action-interaction)

Something works on me (receptivity-transformation)

Something comes into being (emergent form)

I come to know something (emergent meaning)

Something becomes seen (visibility to others)

I see myself (self-visibility)

This creative process therefore helps me as researcher to ultimately 'see myself'. As such "[r]esearcher self-studies of making visual imagery while engaged in educational research is one way to extend knowledge of potential contribution of arts to qualitative research" (Jongeward 2009, pp.251–252). The technique I used to create the portraits is collage. This allows for the layerdness and interweaving of narratives to emerge. I also found that the physical act of snipping, gluing, writing, drawing and painting helped me become 'intertwined' in the stories of the participants. I was listening to their words, transcribing our conversations, looking at their artworks, and remembering the physical spaces in which our conversations took place. I also had to consider my own emotions and reactions towards the participants in creating the portraits; I had to think how I felt about the person and their story in the way I set up the composition, which elements I chose to include, the colours I chose, the details I added, etc. Artistic inquiry has roots in art therapy and the properties of collage as a research practice has been explored by Chilton and Scotti (2014) who suggest that this form of research can lead to (a) an integration of layers of theoretical, artistic and intersubjective knowledge, (b) arts-based researcher identity development and (c) embodied discoveries produced by hands-on experimentation (Chilton & Scotti 2014, p.163). The therapeutic process of creating and producing 'new' knowledge is part of what drew me to this form of research. An important property of collage making is its physicality (Chilton & Scotti 2014), which can potentially lead to the embodiment of theory in its rejection of the "mind/body dualism and posits that individuals' interactions with their environments through their physical bodies are ways of thinking" (Chilton & Scotti 2014, p.169). For me the collages function parallel to the visual text and the one cannot exist without the other. Talking about collage as a method Leavy (2009, p.222) states that "[the] juxtaposition of words and images opens up new meanings that would not be possible without the incorporation of both text and visual imagery."

As discussed in chapter 4, I initiated the creative process by sending participants a brief description of what my research entailed and asking if they wanted to participate. Once participants responded with interest I arranged individual face to face meetings during which I explained what participation would entail and how it would develop. I kept a research journal throughout this process. During the initial face to face meetings I asked the participants to make a "portrait" for their character (I mentioned that they could approach the character as a fictional self). I supplied them with some basic art materials which they could use (or not use) and asked them to make the portrait in any way which they felt comfortable with (for example, they could

write instead of draw, or incorporate a photo, or an object, or a description). I stressed that the research is NOT about artistic ability, but rather about the process of storytelling through art. How the participants created the portraits were entirely up to them. The only guideline was that the character they created had to be an educator working in higher education and be inspired by their own identity and experiences. Not surprisingly many participants expressed anxiety over the use of art and said things like: "But you know I really cannot draw". I advised them to have fun with the materials and try it out and see what happened – a "you have nothing to lose" sort of approach. In the second round of individual conversations (which were audio recorded) they showed me their artwork and introduced the 'character-self' into the emerging story. Based on these conversations I produced a series of preliminary portraits which I wove into a combined narrative and then shared with the participants via email. Following this there was another round of individual conversations (also audio recorded) during which we reflected on the portraits and also the way in which these possibly connected to Kumashiro's conceptualisation of anti-oppressive education. Before the second round of conversations I had asked the participants to bring a photograph along which connected to their 'character self'. During the conversations they showed me the photographs and we spoke about its significance to their character. After this second conversation I re-worked the preliminary portraits by incorporating the new stories and photos shared by the participants. I then used these re-worked portraits to write the fictional story which is presented in this chapter. I also shared the re-worked portraits and fictionalised story with the participants and invited them to help me interpret, read and facilitate meanings that came out of this layered process. This collaborative interpretative process of meaning making and knowledge construction will be discussed in chapter 7.

In making use of art, narrative and fiction to present my data I am following in the footsteps of many educational researchers (Clandinin & Connelly 1989, 2000; Clough 1999, 2002; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997; Eisner, 1997; Leavy, 2009) who have turned to narrative, art and fiction to communicate that which would otherwise be impossible. I used what can be understood as a multi-method approach. For example, I wanted to incorporate visual art, but at the same time had to acknowledge that writing was central to what I was doing. Not descriptive writing, or reporting, but rather interpretative and creative writing. As this is a self-study I wrote myself into the theory, and I wrote other people into my own story. Throughout this process I tried to remain mindful that, "[d]ata collection and data analysis cannot be separated when writing is a method of inquiry"(Richardson & St. Pierre 2005), and that I was writing my way,

"…into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction" (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005). This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7 in which I explain why I did not limit data analysis to conventional practices of coding, sorting and grouping. Rather I asked questions such as: How do I read and construct the characters? How do the characters trouble and interrupt the story? Where are the contradictions and the silences in the story? What lies outside the frame of the interview and the story? This approach to data collection and interpretation is one way to trouble the hierarchies that exist within the western knowledge project in which creative and interpretative work, in order to be deemed academic, must 'fit' and 'squeeze' into scientific forms of evaluation.

Smith (2013) raises the point that art-based research is often 'hidden' within more traditional research approaches, because researchers want to 'legitimise' it. The legitimacy of this form of research has already been discussed in chapter 4. However, I did experience that in my particular context arts-based research was relatively unknown and regarded with some suspicion by colleagues and peers. Therefore, I was blessed to find a supervisor who saw the relevance of art-based research, and had worked with these methodologies before. However, I often experienced a sort of blank questioning look when I told non-artist friends and colleagues of my work. I often found myself having to justify my choice of method and having to convince people that it was legitimate, and in fact constituted research. I remember specifically how one professor at UFS once listened to my proposed research and said rather condescendingly that this approach might be suitable for a Master's thesis, but for a PhD?...Yes, I thought, because art is of course fine for playing around, but not when we are trying to do serious research… (and here my sentence is absolutely dripping with sarcasm which could not possibly have been conveyed in any scientific way). Having to work in an environment where almost no one I know of is doing arts based research I was pleasantly surprised when I recently attended the Tenth International Conference on The Arts in Society and went to session after session in which researchers were using various forms of art to 'create' and share and trouble what so many people seem to view as 'scientific'. I realised that in fact I no longer have to justify my choice of method nor try to convince you, the reader, of its seriousness and validity. Instead, I will tell the story as I am consciously trying to challenge some of the conventions of traditional thesis writing…

Dennis: *"...which are largely positivistic and structured by men for what purpose. In your study, you are intentional in approaching the study differently with a different set of spectacles.*

*It is exhausting using the same methodologies and tired findings. Rather you use art based methodologies…"*

Is it even possible to do social justice research within the traditional and oppressive frameworks of thesis writing? When doing research on anti-oppressive practice the method of research must come into question. "[T]he refusal of any totalizing philosophy of ABR [Arts Based Research] is essential to what I see as the great potential ABR practices hold for social justice work in education" (Osei-Kofi 2013, p. 136). Furthermore, "anti –oppressive ABR offers new possibilities for coming to know, for discovery of self and other, for creativity and embodiment of our work, for consciousness-raising, for question, for community engagement, for social action and ultimately for social change" (Osei-Kofi 2013, p.148). Through art and narrative I attempted to engage in research as resistance (Brown & Strega 2005) which troubles traditional research terminology such as *interview, data* and *analysis* as it steers clear of *labels, comparison, coding, sorting and categorisation* that one might expect from qualitative analysis. Thus what I am presenting is a creative interaction with co-created stories and artworks. These are interwoven with an experimental process which explores new ways of knowing and being. What follows is not a description of data, but rather an experiment with thinking, storytelling, sketching, creating, re-creating and exploration of possible, partial and incomplete knowledge. This process was fuelled by a commitment to anti-oppressive practice on the one side and by curiosity and a desire to experiment with new ways of knowing, being and becoming on the other.

## 5.1. What lies in a pseudonym?

Daisy: *"So basically I'm writing this story…I'm creating a story about educators working in higher education and everyone participating sort of creates a character, so first of all you can give me a name for the character if you want and then just talk about the character… and ja, anything that you want to share – it can be as long or as short as you want, uhm, and I'm going to use whatever you said to create a sort of a portrait for this character".*

I asked the participants to choose a name for the character which would also serve as their pseudonym in the research. One of the participants, Dot Vermeulen, said she preferred to use her real name.  This is an extract from our second meeting which was audio recorded, transcribed and translated from Afrikaans into English:

Daisy: *So, did you think of a name for your character?*

Dot: *Uhm, I don't have a name... I wondered if I can just use my own name.*

Daisy: *If you prefer.*

Dot: *Ok, because I actually have more of an image, than a name. So you can use my own name, so Dot Vermeulen.*

Daisy: *Ok then, Dot Vermeulen.*

I was creating a fictional narrative with fictional characters, yet Dot wanted her 'fictional character' to have her real name and in doing that she was also troubling conventional research practice by exposing the blurry lines between truth and fiction in her identity. That alerted me to the fact that the portraits really exist in that blurry space between fiction and reality: an in-between space which perhaps all research occupies.

## 5.2. A story of some portraits

You already know Daisy so I will not waste too much time on painting her portrait, just a quick watercolour sketch will do. She is the little girl with the red balloon playing in a green suburban garden where the air smells of jasmine, sunshine, watermelon, birthday cake, washing powder, ironed clothes, and mowed lawns. She is also a person floating over a world which changed to reveal the stormy seas behind the walls of her childhood garden. She has had to look beyond what she once took for granted. With her balloon she floated away to an unknown place where her story got turned upside down and a cloud became an island. On this island she is now all alone and walking into the deep dark forest of unknowable things. She is looking for other stories to become part of her story. As she is walking in the forest she notices that the untamed undergrowth gives way to a neat square of freshly mowed lawn. It is a hot summer's day and she feels the sweat running down her face as she opens the door of a small office which smells of turpentine and good quality drawing paper. Daisy sits down on a high chair and watches Dot where she is busy drawing on the floor.
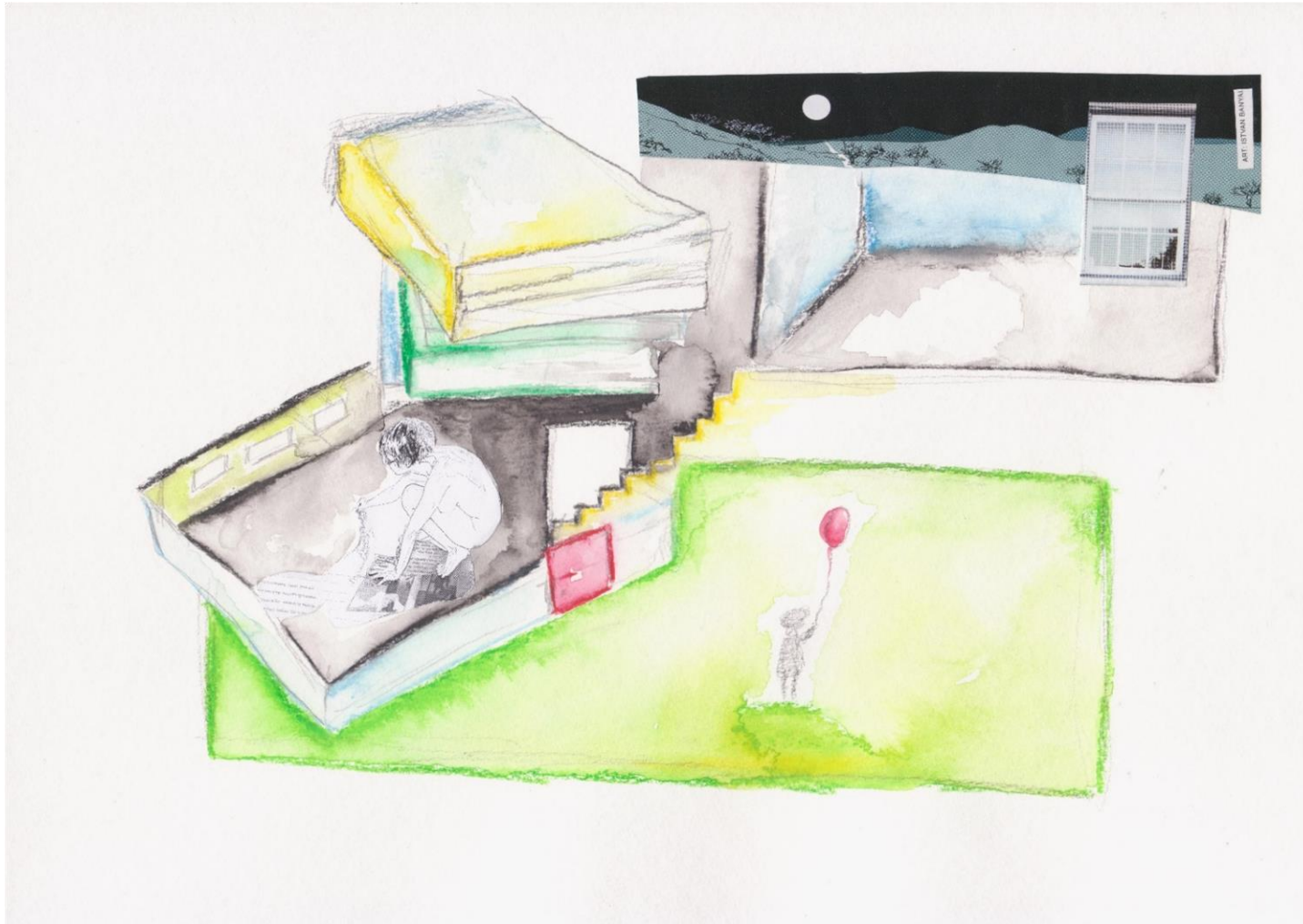
Figure 19. *A portrait of Dot*, Marguerite Müller, 2015, collage

*Welcome to my office/studio Daisy. I can offer you PowerAde and biltong for lunch?*

Daisy declines the offer and takes a seat.

*You know I sometimes think the problems is that there is a **disconnect** between our **bodies** and the **research** that we do. I think I am always moving - physically moving - between spaces; you could say I am a **nomad**. I move between the university and spaces outside the university and then I constantly have to make a switch in my mind too. I have to translate my experiences of 'outside' back into this system. It's almost like bringing **alien** things from 'outside' and having to translate those experiences **back into the system -** it's quite a challenge. But if you think about the **body** and text and how it all fits into an academic environment…it's a challenge to **keep that boundary**, because students bring their personal issues into the work and it influences their work, and yet I do not feel it is my place to address those issues. I was trained to be an art instructor, not a psychologist, you know? But I'm really interested in the **relationship between the body and text**…that is what some of my art is about. Sometimes it is difficult to be an artist in the academic space where everyone wants you to **publish**. I love to do research, and I really see it as closely linked with practical work, but practical work takes time, and as artists we have to exhibit. The other day I mentioned this to an academic colleague in a different department and they said why you don't just write an article about every exhibition you have…and I replied: well why don't you just make an **exhibition** about every article you write!?* Her laughter is light and fills the room. *But really I love my work, sometimes I cannot even believe how lucky I am to do this work…*

Daisy is watching Dot and notices that as she is speaking her body becomes a drawing and her voice becomes silent text. Suddenly there is a cold draft and Daisy goes over to the window to close it. As she does that she notices a small girl with curly hair standing outside on the crispy green university lawn. The girl seems strangely out of place. Wondering if the girl is lost Daisy leaves Dot's office which is now silent and empty. She doesn't know where Dot went and cannot even say goodbye. Daisy follows the girl across the lawn to another building. The girl is running as if it is a game and Daisy struggles to keep up. She follows the girl out of the bright sunlight and into the dimness of the other building. For a moment she is blinded. When her eyes adjust the girl is gone, but to her left is the door of Alice's office. As she knocks the door slides open. Alice is not there, but Daisy is attracted to the shimmer of a small hand mirror lying on the desk. Curiosity compels her to go closer and run her finger over its dusty surface. The face reflecting back is not her own. *Alice?*

Figure 20. *A portrait of Alice,* Marguerite Müller, 2015, collage

*Oh, Daisy it's you. I'm afraid I'm stuck in this mirror. The thing is I'm not sure if I practice what I preach. So like I feel all this sense of **uncertainty** and I'm like looking at myself and I'm wondering – **am I doing the right thing**? So there is this constant state of flux that I'm in. Does it make sense? I'm constantly feeling like I'm…. I don't know…**like I'm not doing the right thing**. I teach **language,** so the students need to ask what language is. And they must be **critical and reflect on their role**… I always say to them that it's much more than reading and speaking, that we use language and literacy for particular purposes… and if we don't reflect on how or why we use language then we create these deficits of children… But this is what I have to constantly ask myself…in what I am saying am I creating…do I think of the students as **being deficit** because they don't think in the way that I do? So I have to constantly think about what I do and what I say. For me teaching is like a kind of mirror and looking into this and whatever's going on in **the classroom is reflecting…back on me.** So in a way I am stuck in the mirror, you see?*

Next to the mirror Daisy notices an old faded photograph of a girl with curly hair.

*Is this you, Alice? I thought I saw this girl earlier, she was outside and I followed her here.*

*Yes, that's me on my first day in a **new** school. I was in grade 7. Look at that curly hair! Those were the days of apartheid and that school was an INDIAN school. I didn't look typical…like a typical Indian you know? And I had this kind of accent that was not Indian, and I **felt different** and I was made to feel different, because I came from this different kind of school…because before that I had been in a Catholic school, it was a private school so we were all mixed: Whites, Blacks, Coloureds, Indians. I remember it as a strict and rigid kind of schooling: rote learning and questioning, and **obedience, discipline and respect for elders**. There was this **distance** between the teachers and us and the majority of the teachers were Catholic nuns, so anyway there was this **otherworldly kind of disciplinarian**, you know, so they always **threatened** you with Jesus and God when you did anything wrong, and they were a bit **abusive**, yes they were physically abusive…they used to give us these German knocks, like knuckles on the forehead… And even if your parents sent you like little boxes of sweets and and stuff, THAT was even…they would check what was in it and then **they** would make decisions about what they would give you and when they would give it to you…so it was…but I learned **discipline** there, and to work hard….and I learned to be independent.*

*But anyway then that school closed down and on my first day at this new school, this Indian school, in the afternoon the principal wanted to see me and she asked: "**What are you?** What*

*is your race?" And I was not sure…so she said: "Are you coloured?" And I was like so uncertain about what I was…I said: "Yes I'm coloured".*

*So she called my mother that day and she asked for my birth certificate.*

*On the birth certificate it said Indian and I, uhm, you know then she told my mother that: "You know she said she's coloured?" So my mother explained you know, "You need to understand in the school that she came from they never made an issue of the race, because they were mixed."*

*I felt very ostracised in that new school. But I did very well and I outperformed everybody else in class and stuff like that. But I was always a rebel. I always wanted to… I had difficulty in **conforming** there in that school… I had VERY CURLY hair you know? Once I was pulled out in assembly and they told me I'm not allowed to have a perm…and my mother had to take me to the hairdresser to ask them to try and straighten it, but then they were saying that she's so young why must she if this is her natural hair? Uhm, but schooling ja was…after a while…You know **apartheid was so deeply entrenched** that we never really questioned its effects on us. So we **conformed**, we did what we had to do, cause if we didn't then we were punished  in some – not physical punishment - but in some form in some way you were punished and then ostracised or your name was read out in assembly or something…being a **good student** meant to **conform**…*

*Uhm the first time that I actually became consientized was when I went to university, when it was Natal University and uhm, and it was in my sociology classes and my English classes, mind you, through the **poetry** and South African **short stories** and uhm then those kinds of things. We had student councils and stuff, so we had Black student council and so ja and it was really…. But once I started teaching it was like back to this kind of bureaucratic way you had like this **regulation** and you had to conform to certain **principles** and certain **imperatives** in **policy** and **institution** and stuff. You know what schooling is like. You've got these policies and these dates, you've got these times that everything has to be done, but really it was Foucault that changed my mind and in a way that I would certainly open my mind to **new possibilities** and new ways of being and how in doing certain things, how we constitute certain people and thinking and…then I came here… I was the first Indian person in this faculty, and Bloemfontein was also a very **difficult place**, because I think I could count the number of Indian people in Bloemfontein. So my **racial identity**…the first thing they would ask: **are you Muslim?** And uhm and I'd hear these like silly questions and stuff like that that we eat with our fingers. That we*

*eat curry for breakfast, lunch and supper. I mean really! And then asking questions about what…the clothes and the music and the culture and… My first experiences with students, it was very difficult because it was English and Afrikaans. So uhm I was teaching in English and we make use of interpreting services and then uhm the students would go and complain to the dean and uhm and it came to my head of school and he went to the students and he explained to them that this is the person that is the most highly qualified… Eventually when the students came to know me, you **know the person**, as a person, **rather than** as this **lecturer**… I have Afrikaans students coming into my class up until today, they choose my class and I have such good relationships with my Afrikaans students.*

*But our students **don't want to talk about race**, because they feel…and I'd be very honest with you, even our black students, and it's the black middle class, and when I say black I mean coloured, Indian, African students…the middle class black student feel like…I got a white friend, so **I'm ok and it doesn't affect me**. Issues of race and racial inequalities don't affect me and then one time when we were discussing race, we were discussing it in their blogs and one of the coloured students got up and said: "**I want to talk about race**…and I know you all for four years, it's my fourth year and I've been sitting with this Afrikaans class", because she is Afrikaans, but **she is coloured**, and she said: "I've been sitting with you all for four years. But how many of you know me, **what my name is even?** And so I want to talk about race and I want to talk about how I feel a sense of, well you know like - I don't feel a **sense of I belong** in the classroom space and is it because of me being coloured?" What other reason could it be? And she never came back to the class after that… **she never came back**, because she just felt that if **nobody wanted to hear**, listen to her voice what is the point of being in this space…*

*Now when it came to issues of **sexuality** the first thing they were **quoting was the Bible**…and you know…like in the Bible it says homosexuality is prohibited, but how do you invalidate somebody? Because you might have children in your classroom that come from a **same-sex parents. Boys who would want to dress up as girls**, and how would you deal with it? How would you cope with it? But it ALWAYS came back to **religion**.*

*And the reality of it is that in the classrooms the majority of our children are learning in a **language that is not their own**. English is a colonial language anyway, but it is also a **language of power** and it's the **language of access** for our students, so they need to know English - that's it. I know there are not many Indian people of my age that know any of our language, 'cause then we made choices about that…*

*Yes there are a lot of times when I do bring my own **assumptions** into the classroom and then I have to constantly step back and say you know –does this **reflect the way** that I want…or the way that students SHOULD be thinking about teaching and learning… Because we can give them all **these idealised ways of teaching** second language children, but then the children themselves are subjected to so many other social problems...what I am saying is we give all these ways…and we talk about being a critically reflective teacher, if this doesn't work and if this happens what could I do, what could happen next…but get into the classroom, and you're sitting with fifty in the class, half of them don't understand you, half of them DON'T want to understand you, because you're young and they feel that you are too young… I have this student and it is her first year of teaching and she's already like really **frustrated**…because there is no point in me teaching them the total physical response, shared reading and all of that if you have children so hungry they are probably falling asleep in the classroom. Yes, and they will say to her I will not listen to you **because you are white**…and then what do I say to her? Because I don't know what it means to be **white in this black space**?*

*So I feel like, I'm sort of this character, but like Alice in Wonderland, you know? Like, like constantly **searching** for something… But, but I'm not, like kind of getting there. So like I feel all this sense of uncertainty and I'm like looking at myself and I'm wondering – am I doing the right thing, even in my teaching…you know like…even you know like, like I constantly feel like I'm in this space where I'm like asking…if this works? Why didn't it work, or did it work? So there is this **constant state of flux** that I'm in. So like I'm constantly feeling like I'm… **I don't know…like I'm not doing the right thing.** You know am I giving...uh…do the students have sufficient knowledge of what it means to teach language?*

*You know often you leave a classroom and wonder: what just happened there?*

Daisy knows that feeling quite well. She puts the mirror back down on the desk and looking down at her feet she notices that she is standing on what seems to be a trapdoor. She pulls the trapdoor open to find a staircase leading down into the darkness. Daisy is a character in a story and so naturally she goes through the trapdoor and down, down, down until it ends in a narrow, low passage. At the end of a passage is a door slightly ajar with a sliver of light dancing around its side. She goes through the door and once outside she is standing in a dusty street, which is lined with small houses that all look similar. Celine is standing in a doorway and waving to Daisy.

Figure 21. *A portrait of Celine,* Marguerite Müller, 2015, collage

*Daisy, what are you doing here? Are you in the story? I was just about to leave, so why don't you come with me… I have a meeting on Main Campus with my supervisor, I just registered for my PhD last week.*

As they get into Celine's car a few small children approach to ask Celine: "*One Rand for sweets - please Aunty*".

*If you drive a car then they think you have LOTS of money. There's never a time when I visit my family, or my relatives, and not one person didn't ask for money. I grew up in these dusty streets… But now my situation has changed. I think that I learned from my mother's experiences - don't live from month to month, because that's what we were doing, you know, we were living from month to month, but I just refused to…it was not a very nice life, so I just refused to live like that, you understand? I just said to myself I will NOT, you know by the 25$^{th}$ you have stress of what're you going to eat or don't even have fifty rand, I just don't want to live like that. So, finances have played a very huge role, and things are better now. Things are much better, but family **expects** a lot, not my mother, but the extended family, they expect so much from you, when you come they will tell you: I don't have sugar, I don't have tea, I don't have this, and I don't have that and I always ask them, but why don't you have it? Because honestly, when they see me they see an ATM machine…*

*But I grew up in the dusty streets, in that small little house you know, it was just myself, my mother and my sister, just three ladies in the house, so that was… I think it had pro's and con's, for me as a child you know, because uh, in my house we never used to wear towels when you come out of the bath…we didn't even have a bathtub, we used those small basins, plastic basins, you know? So growing up it was **just three females** in the house and you know that can be quite tough… Well I didn't see anything abnormal with **not having a male** in the house. I think while growing up I remember just bits and pieces of my parents staying together, and it was not good memories where my father was abus…physically abusive, also cheating and then just that's when my mother decided to leave, and you know when she left we've never seen a male in our house, you know. That also affected how I take my decisions now - it's ok to have kids, it's also **ok not to have a husband**. I think that's just how it shaped me as a person. I think one of the other things which she also said…not out in so many words, but she would articulate that you become your own person, you don't need to...you **don't need a man** to get to where you want to go. So that's how I started becoming this **Miss. Independent.**

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*Growing up we struggled like…any other house, because that was normal. Sometimes you would ask for things, but you wouldn't get it, not because mommy didn't want to, but simply **there was no money**…and going to school you're immediately confronted with things that you were really not aware of, where you get kids at school that would carry **very nice lunch boxes**, and then when it's school concerts and things like that, both parents come and **my mother cannot** even come for that. So then you get to school you hear of kids talking about 'my parents' and I'm talking about 'my mother'. So why is my talking about my mother not ok? A school would portray a family as having a father and a mother. I think from, you know the first thing when you were not in class, they would ask you: **who's your father?** And I would be defensive, **I don't have a father**…and they would say no, no one can come into this world without a father…and you know coming to think of it back then if you didn't have father, you were stereotyped in some way…like they would want to know, why don't you have a father…and I just felt like they would **look at you differently** even though some of the **teachers were being abused** themselves, we would see one coming with a blue eye on a Monday, you understand? And for me that would say…because I remember my **own mother being abused** and she walked out of the marriage. If a marriage does not work just walk out… So when they would ask, I just HATED that question, "who's your father?" and you just say I don't have a father, then they would start to look at you differently, well that's the impression I got, and I felt like… And I remember one girl in class she didn't have parents, she was with her grandmother, and every time they would ask her about who are your parents, she would **start to cry**. Ja, you know, even with my own surname they used to **tease** me, because it means chair in Sotho… they would just call out my surname and when I look they would say no, I'm not calling you I just need a chair…and **teachers would allow it**, and it used to annoy me so much, but **back then I was not as vocal as I am today**.*

*In my entire family with all my siblings and my cousins, **I was the first one** to finish matric; both of my grandparents didn't go to school, so getting higher education... I was the first one. It was sort of a motivator to say: **I'm the first one to**… I'm the first one not to have kids, I'm the first one to go to university, all the good things I'm going to be the first. So that was, it was a challenge that I gave to myself to say that this is what I want to do, and I know that I am going to do something great with my life. I just need the right kind of people to show me the roads and the direction, you know?*

*I came to this BIG world you know and I had to leave my family. I wanted to go to UCT, but my mother just said to me: "You're not going there. My money can only pay the University of*

*the Free State, you're not going to Cape Town or Joburg, not at all". She thought I would do drugs or have a baby if I went too far away. So I had to…it's her money so let me just get that damn degree and then when I work **I will take myself** to Cape Town, to UCT, you know. I think getting to Bloem from a small town like Thaba Nchu was quite an adjustment… I've never seen such a tall building. I've never seen so many malls. I'm, you know, even the food, even the restaurants, I quickly had to learn **how to fit in**, you know especially at restaurants and ordering food and all of that...ah...eh… Thaba Nchu we don't even have…we only have KFC. And so you can just imagine the **huge adjustment** I'm coming to this **big world** and now it's very nice, kind of like **getting freedom** a bit. But my mother sat me down that first day and she said: "You know that I don't want you staying in Bloemfontein, I would prefer you to travel home every day, but I'm only going to allow you on one condition, you don't come back with a baby", and I said ok THAT is VERY much done, don't worry about that. So now I had to learn how to be responsible and grow up, because you know it's very difficult, it's very difficult if you're a girl. There's so much **pressure on your side as a girl** just to say I'm not gonna get pregnant, because remember if you get pregnant, you terminate your studies. Whereas if you're a guy you act like nothing is wrong.*

*So you know, you grow up, you meet people. You're doing things never done before. Like I remember the first time I went to Naval Hill and just looking over Bloemfontein and thinking IS THIS POSSIBLE? You know it was, for me, it was just such a big deal, you understand? You would hear people talking of Naval Hill, but I just didn't think that **I would get there myself**. I remember the first year we were sharing one bachelor flat for four girls. And then also trying to find a job on the side you know because I could really see that it was being too much on my mother financially, a part time job, you know, at least that could assist me with getting maybe just one Roxy t-shirt for special occasions because we were after labels at that time. But the biggest lessons I leant was, money will not even get you where you want to go, your brains will, you know so it sort of motivated me to see all those students that were from the very well-off backgrounds, repeating the same modules with me and some of them I was even passing more than they were, you know, and I just set my deadline that you know in three years' time I'm getting my degree, which I worked very hard for, you know, there was a lot of sleepless nights, and **what motivated me was always seeing my mother** when I send the results home that I did well, the pride that she would have and my sister as well.*

*In my final year I applied and got an internship at the university. So now I was sorted, not only **taking care of myself**, but also **taking care of my younger sister**. So that was nice, and then*

*you know I could see things developing, slowly but surely, you know things were becoming ok. So at least once in a while I could also buy my sister **some nice shoes**, cause I wanted her to look much better than I did, you know, at least so that she could fit in, I don't know if that makes sense, but you know at least she didn't struggle as much as I did when I was still an undergraduate.*

*I remember leaving work early on the day I got my first pay check to buy myself a nice bed and when it came I went to buy new pillows, new everything. And it was on a Friday and I remember it was cold on that day. The first thing I bought was a **comfortable bed**. As a student I had the most **uncomfortable** bed, and I shared it with my sister, I don't know how old it was, it was a very small bed, and I just asked my mother can you please just buy us two separate beds - single beds. She said, "I'm not going to do that, if I do that, you guys are going to get so comfortable you will sleep and you won't study, so with this **uncomfortable** one when you think of sleeping, you'd rather sit and study."*

*Things were fine, but I wanted a challenge, and one day in the office I see an email in red – URGENT- and then congratulations… I didn't even read the whole of that thing, I just started crying I took my phone, called my mom to say **I'm going overseas** and she said "You're lying", and I just said, "I'm not lying I'm leaving" and she just said, "You're not leaving". And I said "No I am leaving" and she said "Who do you know there?" Now I'm printing the letter and I'm just sitting there and thinking oohph, let me just read this, so I read this - you have been rewarded a full time scholarship, and all I had to do was to go there and sign and the rest was taken care of. And here is the girl form the dusty streets of Taba Nchu, who has never been on a plane, never left the country, now all these emotions come, you know. I've never been to Poland, where is Poland? I have to go check on the map and I just hear that Poland is the coldest place on the map and if this is where God wants for me to go I'll definitely go. And the strange thing is suddenly people **look at you differently**, people who never noticed you before at the office, and you know you start **getting respect** from people and you start being interviewed and you started getting called for coffees and all of that , and things that were never done before…so it was a big thing, and unfortunately my grandparents had already passed on at that time, so they couldn't see their grandchild, you know **first one to matriculate, first one to graduate university, you know first one to now go overseas with a scholarship**, and it was very nice, you know, the excitement and getting on the plane and you always hear people saying they're jetlagged, and the layover of the flight was four hours so now I'm going to be doing all of that!*

*Look there is the picture I wanted to show you…it's one of two pictures that I wanted to give to you, because this is **where the journey began**. It was taken at UCT during a pre-departure event before I left for Poland… So I remember vividly, because that was my **first time in Cape Town,** that was my first time in UCT, and you know the first… So here's this young girl, first time going overseas, first time in Cape Town, so I think for me it opened up a whole lot of possibilities, you know most of the things that **I never even dreamt of** myself….and this is the other one, this picture was taken on my first day in Poland and it just felt like I was walking in a movie, or I was in a book, but also **writing my own life story**… Yes, I got there on a Thursday, no I got there on a Friday morning.*

*I had a Canadian roommate she was there for two weeks prior to me and she took me around, and I remember getting on the tram, you know you get in and it's just so full and you don't want to move and now to make matters interesting, not worse, but interesting, here's this **black woman** and she's in a WHIITE… **Just white people,** some of them have never seen a black person before I promise you I remember the one lady just came to do this* [Celine runs her finger over her cheek] *to see if **my skin would peel** or something.*

*There were challenges, but nothing that I couldn't handle, you know. Which for me it was a whole new experience and I wanted to travel as much I could, I took myself to Paris. I remember seeing the **Eiffel Tower for the first time and I started crying,** that's how big it was, because I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would take myself to Paris. I remember when I was a little girl. I used to say to myself, you know I'm going to get married and my husband is going to take me for a honeymoon in Paris. I want to see the Eiffel Tower. That has always been **my dream**. I had never thought in my wildest dreams that I would, I would actually study overseas. **Because in the black community**, **studying overseas was for white people** that were very rich, or if you were black and you studied overseas we considered you to be a boffin, you know, you're the cream of the crop. And so in the end I **took myself to Paris**.*

*I came back after that and I was much more outspoken then I had been. I was **more confident.** Now I work here and I enjoy my job. I am more outspoken. I still have challenges. Sometimes I think people are just trying to paint a perfect picture of the University of the Free State…like how at the university we are so diverse and we work together – that's nonsense, because I walk from my car to my office – people will not greet you… You sit in meetings and people are talking in Afrikaans and – hallo! I'm as black as you can get them, my surname is not Seekoei or Leeu, it's a Sotho name! People tell us that university has changed, but even the treatment*

*that you get as a staff member, let alone as a student – it's **different**. Of course it's not all people, it's not all white people. I think people are just so **scared** of losing the language, losing the culture and what not, and the second thing is that I somehow blame Mandela, because when he got out of prison he painted this picture that we are all **going to live together**, but people were **still HURT**! People are wounded, and some people want, try to make themselves feel better, but at the expense of others. You know people are scared because they are born white…it's sort of a **shame** in South Africa…even if you give them that space, like you can ask me anything then they start to be open, but you can still **see the fear**. And I remember my one colleague, white colleague, asked me she wanted to go to downtown on a taxi, but too **scared** to go, and I just said let's go, and once I allowed her into my space, then she started asking questions, but you can still see that she's a bit reserved. I have dated a white person so I know what that was like, but I cannot say all white people are like that. When we were dating and walking in the mall **people were just looking** at us like…both black and white. My friends were like: how could you **kiss a white man?** And his friends would ask him, how could you **kiss a black girl?** And for us it was just normal, you know, he is a person before he is white… I lost some friends, because to them I was a snob…why on earth would you want to date a white man, while there are so many black…and I would ask but does he not have the same things as all men do? And my friends were just labelling me like: "Oh now you're acting like a white person, you're kissing in public" But I was like if he's my boyfriend I'll kiss him, I don't need anybody's…but obviously if we were to go to my family we would not kiss, not at all. And then his family was, the dad was actually very nice, the mother was just something else. I remember getting out of the car in the driveway and the mother was just like…and the dad just grabbed her hand and held it like…like just whatever you going to say, just zip it. And as we were walking up I just saw the faces and I asked him so did you tell them that you're bringing a black girl? He said no he didn't. That woman made my life difficult. She was just making very nasty remarks, and she even called her neighbours to come see that her son is bringing this 'thing' into her house. She was calling me **a thing, not a person**…ja, how do you **date this thing**? And I think he was the favourite son, and she was overwhelmed with emotions…not only is this girl black, but she is going to take away my son, and my son is so madly in love… But I asked her the one time, but why do you hate me so much? I'm not going to take your son, I will never take your place in his heart, he loves you, and sometimes, even if you guys fight, I will tell him not you need to talk to your mother, because for me **family is very important**. His dad once mentioned that, you know, the reason why he approved of the relationship, was because as black people we value family so much and the fact that I was willing for the kids to take their*

*surname it's also important for him. And I told him I mean that culture plays a role for me, because I'm taught that when you get married you lose your surname, and your kids will have their dad's surname, it's not debatable…**although I feel differently, that's how it is**… But I said our kids will have two names, they will have a Tswana name and they will have an English name, it doesn't matter which one comes first. And obviously the surname will be his. You know we spoke, because the relationship was quite serious, we spoke about moving, you know, just going to England. And I said the kids will speak both English and Tswana. We talked about the language issue because some of my family members are not educated – older generations and they also had a problem with me dating a white man, and they would make him feel…sometimes when we went, I remember the one time we had a ceremony at home and I took him with, and they just refused to speak English, he understood Afrikaans, he was bilingual, but they just refused to speak English and Afrikaans, so they were **not accommodating to him**, so we both struggled on both ends. Anyway the relationship didn't last… he was studying medicine, and after finishing medicine he just decided to go to the US, and his mother was thrilled, but I was still studying, so I couldn't move at the time and my mother was just like, "You are not moving now…you're just not moving now…"*

*Here at UFS I just feel that it's only a minority of the group that speak Afrikaans on this campus, and if you say that we are a diverse university and we are looking at human **reconciliation** and those sorts of things, why should we have Afrikaans, because I just feel that when we are at institutions of higher learning we are also **disadvantaging** those students who take the classes in Afrikaans, because after they finish here, where are they going to work. They won't be employed internationally, because they speak Afrikaans. And if the university has to **accommodate** all of us, then let us all do our degrees in our own mother tongue, which is going to take forever… I remember as a student we were given a scope for the exams, it was a very long list, and then you go to the Afrikaans class…guess what, the question was exactly what we were going to write about…it still happens up to this day, where you get, I don't think, I know I'm being biased, or being called a racist…but white Afrikaans speaking students were **treated differently** with their marks, you could see it like we don't get the same marks even though we all did the assignment together, and the white student will get ninety percent and you will get forty three percent. Which I don't have a problem of getting forty three, but just tell me where I need to correct myself, and how I should improve, instead of you giving me forty three and telling me I don't know how to write.*

*Now when I see this student sitting in front of me in my office, I see myself at that time and you know, knowing very well that this is a once-in-a-life-time-opportunity, that's why I preach it to them that **it's your one chance** and you cannot afford to mess it up, because this is the only programme in South Africa that gives you access in terms of going to university in the UPP (University Preparation Programme) programme and that I started as a UPP student myself, and I went to study overseas, and look where I am today.*

They have come to the end of the journey. Daisy gets out of the car and steps into the green campus gardens where somewhere out of sight a bird is singing a sweet song. A little way off Daisy sees a strange cat/dog like creature jump up on a garden bench and from there straight through an open office window. As Celine heads off to her meeting Daisy walks over to the open window through which the cat/dog had disappeared moments before. She peeps through the window to see a spacious office with a large table in the middle. The cat/dog creature is sitting in the middle of the table. The walls are lined with books and photographs. One photograph is of a smartly dressed man which Daisy guesses to be around her father's age.

*That is me*, says the catdog creature.
*You can call me Chubby.*

Looking closely at Chubby Daisy notices he has a little pig tail and one broken ear.

*My wife likes that photograph. It was taken for a function last year when I got an award for twenty five years of service here at the University. It is sort of a formal photograph, but I gave it to my **grandchild** to play with and that's why it's so crumpled. I think it shows me at a sort of calm and content time of my life. I was more restless when I was young, working through the night and that sort of thing.*

Figure 22. *A portrait of Chubby*, Marguerite Müller, 2015, collage

Against the wall is another framed photograph of little boy around the age of two.

*That one is of me as a child. We **moved** around quite a lot, I think I went to seven different schools. My father worked for the municipality, but he was always looking for a better life for us, and better work often meant **moving**… I remember as a small child of around five, I wondered why there were **separate entrances** at the shop and the post office. We went through one entrance and black people through another. I was small, but I remember wondering about that. My father worked on the roads and I think it was a rough life…if a guy didn't do his work he would be punished…so I think there was sort of **racism** in the **background** of my youth, but I think in our home it was different. Racism wasn't an issue there. But I remember wondering about the separate entrances… I never became an activist or anything, I suppose we were **comfortable** in our own lives. I grew up in a **protected** environment, I had a **happy childhood**. Sometimes we lived in the countryside and other times in the city. Like I said we moved a lot and I had to learn to be **adaptable** and to make new friends each time. When I went to University it was at Stellenbosch and one of my subjects was Rugby with Danie Craven. But in my second year I felt a **calling** towards Theology and went to study that through UNISA. So ended up coming here to Bloemfontein to work in a small evangelical church with about twenty five members. It was a struggle financially and I realised I needed to do something, so I did a teaching qualification and got a post there at the university in my final year. I really never taught a day of school, but I did get a lot of experience working with youth in the church. And then I did post-graduate studies. I went back to Stellenbosch to work for five years and there I would make arrangements to visit schools and **observe** what was happening in the classroom. I remember my university classes as being pretty much **lily white**, but I did have **contact with the coloured and black** communities through the church work I did. I think that exposure also helped me be more adaptable. I don't mind **change**. I've never been a very **political** person and I remember when I got here it was an environment very strongly influenced by the Broederbond. If you didn't belong to the Broederbond you couldn't become a head of department or anything like that. The dean at that time was a Broederbond guy and I got strong opposition because I didn't want to join. I didn't think people should be **privileged based on their political beliefs**, but perhaps it is still like that in a different way. But you have to be adaptable…there has been a lot of changes in my time here at the University. Now I am working with the **cut and paste generation,** they really don't write well and we struggle to develop **critical thoughts**. I think the school system is responsible because students are **spoon-fed**. But it is also because the teachers have a lot of pressure to **coach** these students to do well in Grade*

*12. I don't think we are on a good path. We need students and lecturers that can look beyond their subject knowledge and see something from **different perspectives**. The ideal student is one who can **think critically** and work **independently**, but these days everything is so **rushed**, and you have **big classes** and not a chance to work closely with the students… I accept the situation in the country and that we must have **affirmative action**, perhaps I am not affected by it because I am close to retirement, it might be different for others… But when I think of accepting certain status quo's like **sexual orientations** then… At one stage in my life I was very critical of that. I come from an Afrikaans background and people were very **critical about gays and lesbians**, but you know through the years I've had gay and lesbian students…and I once had a gay couple for neighbours; the one would stand with the dishcloth over the arm while the other mowed the lawn. One was an accountant and the other a chemist, and they were **lovely people**. So I think I realised they were **normal people**. And then also through my son, he has a girlfriend and he will marry her, but he also has **gay friends**, and then you realise these are lovely people and their sexual orientation might be different, but your **perspective starts to change**. I can interact with my gay students without being **pretentious**… I think that is one of the changes I went through in the last ten to fifteen years. I became **softer in my judgement…** I accept… A lot has changed but some of the textbooks are still very one-sided, and now I am **aware** of that….I think all these things make you **aware**, like when people use terms like manpower…I think it's all about **awareness**…There are things I don't know about and I might be **stepping on people's toes,** but then I do I think there should be a space to talk about those things. We are all on a journey in this new South Africa… I make **mistakes, or say naïve things**, but don't run to the Rector…come talk to me and make me aware.*

*Sometimes I say something – and then I realise how it might be interpreted. For example one day I was standing in a lecture hall - it had two doors and I was standing with my back to the doors. But you cannot actually see the doors, because there is a little alcove. And so as I was teaching and I heard the one door open and when I turned around there was no one. I said…this was about three years ago… I said "O die spook van Donkergat" (translated it is something like 'Oh the ghost of Dark Hollow' and is a reference to an 1973 Afrikaans movie). And then the next moment the person comes in and I see that it is a black student and my blood runs cold. I realise how this can be interpreted. I must **seem like a racist**. And I try to explain the reference. But sometimes we say the wrong things – and that is why in my portrait I have this broken ear. I don't think I ever act like a pig, despite my tail, I try to **be reasonable**, and to be unreasonable is not in me… It's like the Muslims who take offence when cricket supporters*

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*around the field wear a fake Hashim Amla beard. I would have thought it's nice to see these white South Africans show support and associate themselves with a black cricket player, but the Muslims feel that they are **making fun** of the **beard** and fun of their **religion**. So one has to see it from **both sides**. I have never walked around with a Hashim Amla beard, and now I will be **sensitive** to the feelings of others… I think we must make each other sensitive to these issues. Here at the faculty we have had workshops about typical stereotypes, and we had to say how we see different groups like black and white. One of the black professors said that **white people always walk fast** and we said that **black people are always so relaxed** – these are stereotypes we have of each other…and then we had a talk about the **statue issue** the other day…I'm sort of **in the middle** of the table on that one… I don't think one should be too radical…we must get a **balance** between things…**be informed**, be informed, but follow the **right procedure**…if those things must go, they must go…if they really offend people. But I think even from a radical perspective there must be insight that those things are valuable to other people…why must **one side always give in**... But I am **in the middle of** the table… I keep a balance between things. I think of myself as a sort of cat/dog, because I **want to be perfect**, but cannot be perfect, that is why my one ear is broken. I'm **not a perfectionist, but I like order.** Perhaps it's my **Western linear thoughts**, but like when I walk in a mall and people just walk all over the place I get irritated, if you follow the lines of the tiles there are certain **logical lanes to walk in**, but people just ignore those. Or when my car has some fault I have it fixed immediately, I don't drive around with a faulty car. I get very angry on the road sometimes... It is difficult to be **perfect**. But I can keep my calm, I don't falter in a crisis. This is important as a lecturer and a teacher – to **keep your calm**.*

*I like to treat people with **compassion**, I used to work in the coloured community in the Cape and I think I worked with people in difficult circumstances. Now I think I handle black and coloured students **differently** than some of the other lecturers. I try to think where the student is coming from. But you know I **cannot be perfect**, I make so many mistakes, we all do… On Friday there was a group of students who had to write an exam and when they got to the venue the question paper was only in English, and some of the Afrikaans students walked out…and that is their right, but when the secretary phoned them to make arrangements for another opportunity I asked her to request that they do not make a **language political issue** out of this…it was just an administrative mistake - one of the lecturers made an error when getting the paper copied, that's all... I think when it comes to the whole **language debate** here at the university. I am again sort of in the middle of the table…from an administrative perspective it*

*would be easier if it was just English. When I was growing up I read a lot of English commix, I always say I have a lot of 'commix-sense', and from that I realised that the Americans spell some words differently from us, it gave me the awareness that* **language is different in different contexts**. *But also I went to parallel medium schools in the Cape and I had English girlfriends, so my English was much better than most of my colleagues when I came here, so it empowered me in a way… So if the university would go English I would be ok, but the other day I had a student in here telling me that he could not do an assignment because the source was in English. Can you be so linguistically challenged? But sometimes I think it is also just trying to be difficult…and many of the students can't spell properly anyway, in school we had language rules that* **we learned off by heart**, *but these guys are totally confused and it is the schooling system…their* **writing is clumsy** *and they struggle to give the facts and write systematically…it is because they do not read…growing up I read a lot, even my sister's Saartjie books.*

Daisy follows Chubby through the door of his office and into a large lecturing hall where he settles down in a sunny corner. At the front of the lecturing hall is a clown juggling on the stage. The clown is wearing a heavy costume and his face is made up in bright clown make-up, with a smile fixed to it.

Figure 23. *A portrait of Mick*, Marguerite Müller, 2015, collage

*Is that you Mick?* Daisy asks the clown. *I hardly recognised you, what are you doing?*

*I am busy with a juggling act, Daisy. I am trying to **make the world better**, but I have to juggle all these things: relationships, friendships, work, studies… Trying to **make people happy**…and my work is **social justice**; my work is to work towards a society which is **equal, fair** and…uhm, so **transformation** is part of that huge agenda. So I'm a little bit like a clown, because the clown tries to make people happy, and I'm trying to make society a place where people…there's **equality** and there's **less pain** and there's **less hurt** and there's **less discrimination**. But it is **heavily emotionally** taxing. So it's not like I **can always be smiling**….*

*Last week in class it was the students that brought up the topic and we ended up talking about race and then students **got angry**… And then a **whole group of white students** said like they are **so tired of this whole race** thing and everything and the **black students kept quiet** in the classroom and then you could just **pick up the tension**. And I was standing there in the front and I was teaching them and I thought: **what did I do here?** And so when I noticed what was going on I told the students: "Ok just take a minute to think about what happened in the last five seconds in this classroom, just **process it** and make sense of what happened",  and then I asked them to speak to their group members and then I asked them to **give me feedback** and there was this **backlash** about how this is terrible that we keep talking about this race thing and…so I walked out of that classroom feeling extremely **confused, frustrated** and I was questioning **did I do hurt** more than I tried to do anything about **healing** in that classroom, will these students come back next week, **what happened here?***

*What made those students get so **frustrated so angry?** Because they were **angry**, what made them feel so **guilty?** They felt like I was calling them **racist**, they felt like I was telling them they're **bad people**, they felt like I was **categorising them** as everyone who is bad in society…*

*It is like **I'm trying to make them leap** across a cliff you know? They have to leap and they might **get hurt** and they don't even know what is on the other side of familiar. The **familiar** side is where students are **comfortable**, everything is **normal** and they know everything and nobody is rocking the boat and I think when we started to talk about the **issue of race** and we didn't move away from it, it was like now I made them to **be in that space**, that **dangerous space** where there is nothing and I actually pushed them to a **foreign place**, so it's like going to **another planet and** someone just drops you off there. 'Cause suddenly they were hearing **different perspectives**, black students were talking about their experiences and it was like now*

*what's happening? And the black students were also hearing the perspective from the white students so they were in a very **foreign space.***

*Let me show you this picture.* Mick walks off the stage and sits down next to Daisy. He takes out a photograph from one of his many pockets. *This is a picture of me. It spoke to me… This is a picture we took, we were in Thailand with my students, and my student took this photo, and we visited this village…then we got to meet these kids, who were playing there. I used it as my Facebook and someone commented on how the one child is just staring at me, just looking at me with these eyes, which I didn't really notice at first. In a sense it represented the experience of being in Thailand, where I was…we were the other, my students and I represented diversity in a different way. So being black, we were **the only black people**, four of us, so this was very common for people to **stare at us** like this… Or to want to touch us… Not so often, but there was that curiosity to want to be near… Like at KFC it was the same, I think people stopped eating and it was weird, because for them it didn't seem like it was rude…it was just like really **staring at this different***…

*I always want the students to make that leap to the other side of the cliff, to the foreign space. But I think in this picture it represents me also constantly having to make that leap, because this for me it was also a **foreign space** where I was **othered,** and I had to force myself to stay in that space in order for my own learning to occur… Emphasis on my students, my work being about moving the students to that other side, but actually a lot of this work is about **moving myself** over that cliff, so it's like I'm **moving with my students**. So I think for me it's also if I had the choice I would probably just not teach in this area, but when I'm teaching in this area I have to move myself from a space **where I'm comfortable**. I think it is both ways - the cliff, and not just students but also me, of always having to be on that side all the time… What Jonathan Jansen always says: "Be a stranger to yourself." I don't know if you've heard him speaking of how we really need to start **being strangers within ourselves**, and for me that's what anti-oppressive education means, it means how do I become the other in even within myself. So it's about moving myself from everything that I'm comfortable with, and placing myself in spaces where people are considered othered, where probably I'd be the one who is othered and he speaks about how then it **means I must pray with people who pray differently to me, I must eat with people who might eat differently to me, converse with people who speak a different language to me.** So in that sense I become the other within even myself…*

*I often wonder how do I teach about racism in a way that does not trap black people into this already disadvantaged position where people find it easy to say oh **it's because I'm black** and then…for instance if you are teaching about gender – teaching about how sexism disempowers women to the extent that **females start to feel powerless** and oh…ok, so there is nothing I can do actually, everything is so… It could be so easy for people to just fall into the trap then and say oh **it's because I'm gay**… And it's normally easy for me…it's easier to focus on the one that's disadvantaged, and talking about the disadvantage, rather than talking about bringing up…you remember that conversation we had at the session we had with Thabo Msibi the other day and we were talking and he showed that documentary, and he showed that one girl who said: **so what does gay mean? So it means that I'm me, or something…be comfortable with who I am**…and so going back to the experience of the student asking me if I'm gay, **that's all caught up in language**, the whole gay/heterosexual thing, cause that's why I don't – I feel so **uncomfortable with saying no I'm heterosexual**, because that comes with so many **loaded stuff**, it's like loaded with a whole lot of things, I don't know, but I imagine with being referred to as white, or being white, because it comes with so many loaded… And that's why it's so **uncomfortable.***

*You see that's the other thing which in the work gets me so **tired and emotionally exhausted**, cause there's a forgetting that it IS ugly - this work, the disrupting is very key to this work, cause often when you're **working with someone's core, when you're disrupting**…you're working with people's **values and how they see themselves**, and if you change that… so for me sometimes I forget, when I'm in the classroom that this is obviously not going to be easy, it's not like I'm going to speak to the students and then they are going to see it immediately then, because I am **working with religion**, which is how some…how people define themselves, that's not gonna be easy for me to tell you that **men and woman are equal** if you believe that GOD has SAID…and that's gonna be quite **painful, so that's disruptive**…*

*In the classroom we had a lot of African male students**…cultural…traditional…**and they were very vocal in class about their thinking of women's role in society and men's role, but in that class I was the one that always spoke to that…responded directly to those male students, and I was the one who always wanted to tell them how wrong…challenge their thinking… I wasn't aware that it was also coming from a **male privilege of mine**, cause in that class there were female students…I never allowed the space for them to be the ones that do the challenging, so I'm the one…I'm going to be the **fighter for women** again…that's still…it's male privilege, like why am I not letting voices of those female students be the ones to speak directly to these…*

*so in that case for example…like you said, to say I'm the teacher, I'm… **I need to fix this.** You know I think perhaps we need to… I need to start thinking about **IT as being a shared responsibility between myself and my students**, rather than making it all my…so let me think about it, it is my responsibility, just as much as it is yours as it is for the students for everyone to feel… Share that responsibly rather than put it all on myself. But it is hard, because as the teacher you already have so much privilege and control in the classroom…you control the time, and you control the groups and…*

*Uhm and some of the things in the textbook as well…like my student's understanding of race in a South African context is very different to this book here, but very often I get told you know this is the theory, this is like the theory and I'm struggling… My students can't identify with this theory, my students still see, for example, according to this book here, race is something that is very white and black…my students very often see coloured or Indian as privileged, but that's a contextual reality for most young people, but that's also a historical thing in South Africa, cause race was structured in these different levels…**it's like now you must come back and fit it to the theory** and so ja that's the problem that I'm having a lot… How do I?… This race theory of oppression, there's parts of it which I'm **uncomfortable** with, there's parts of it which does not make sense to my students in South Africa, …'cause it's not a reality for them…the **grand narrative, grand theory** that I'm using…*

Daisy and Mick leave the lecture hall and walk towards the campus coffee shop.

*For people who are saying that they are committed to social justice and to anti-oppressive education I think it would be an injustice not to engage in reflective practice, because **how do you know that your work is still relevant to changing society**… Work should be informed by our experiences, lived experiences, work experiences, our practice should inform our research…*

The coffee shop is busy and noisy as they enter. Mick meets up with some friends and Daisy takes her coffee to a table in the corner where FridaFreire is waiting for her.

*You look a little tired Daisy. I know how you feel, I also sometimes find the research process **so draining**. I mean with my research I had a student who dropped out of university, and it was just… I know it wasn't my fault, but I felt just so helpless, and this student is just not here anymore, and he missed a chance to get his degree, and I just knew him so well and I just **can't do anything**… Circumstances are beyond me… And it's tough because you get close to people and yet you don't really have any control… This idea of the **cognitive development** in higher*

Figure 24. *A portrait of FridaFreire,* Marguerite Müller, 2015, collage

*education, but there's also then the **body and the identity** of the person which has everything, I mean **it has everything to do with learning**, and I'm realising it more and more.. .I just can't split those two things out. I just think, I wish there were more spaces for lecturers to really engage with students like that, to really get to know their stories… Ja the body is important, the body brings into the research process for me, uhm, things that curricula, and classroom spaces just completely ignore.*

*I think I see education as this **massively liberating tool** on a very deep level and it's something I've tried to bring through in my own teaching with limited and varying success. But my Frida side always reminds me that it's not just all about class consciousness, you know? **Class also intersects with race, gender, ability, sexuality**, etc. We must look closely at **intersectionality** when it comes to oppression. **Body and embodiment** is so important, because in a way there's this kind of dialogue between a very cognitive **cerebral approach and the body on the other side.** So that's why I have created myself as a sort of character that is trying to balance a very **intense idealism** of how education can be based on snippets of experiential knowledge throughout an entire lifetime of how it COULD be, but being held back on the other hand, by kind of **logistical constraints** and kind of deep seated inequalities that go back into education. So I imagine that it could be completely different, but at the same time I know that it has to work within the **limitations of not only the body** but also the **limitations of the mind,** but at the same time the **limitations of society** - so it tries, this character tries to imagine how to… to **transcend these, you know, using body and at the same time using mind** but knowing that eventually we aren't yet collectively ready to **flatten all these oppressive hierarchies**. My Frida side has the ability to overcome something tremendously debilitating, which I probably see as a kind of metaphor for **working within institutional constraints** - like being disabled in a way. The Freire side I think is more rational, **radical but rational rigor** - this is saying: look you can be as impassioned as you want, but at the end we need to learn these things in a reasoned and a rational way…*

*One institutional constraint that I just…which became really clear to me again this afternoon in a meeting was that they are using, you know, **big data** to track students and to try and retain them and get them through the system, which of course is a noble cause, but the problem with that is you are pushing students, not pushing, but helping them through a system to get to the other side, where the **outcome is graduation**, but what does that even mean? You know you've got a degree then, but what level of engagement with knowledge have you had, what **engagement have you had with your own identity,** with your becoming as a student?*

*It's **frustrating** when you find what makes a difference for the individual is real, one to one, **human connection** in the way that really **enables learning** and growth and this becoming of who you are…it's **not about sort of squashing knowledge into your head** and going off and doing some meaningless work, it's about something more than that…**these are the stories of humans**… But policy makers don't want to hear that, **they want statistics**, they want big data sets and that is maybe…convince them to change things but they…where have we learned to **devalue the stories of people** and why isn't that enough of an impact as they love saying in the policy world to make a difference… I think that's a tragic shift within, not just academia, but within society as whole… I mean I need funding to make an impact and if you want **to make an impact you need these massive data sets, but what do they tell us about people?** What I'm finding you know across international contexts is how big data is becoming the way to go, at least in higher education research…maybe there is a little oasis of different kinds of funding structures…the ultimate **outcome for them is just for a student to get a degree… I don't think that's the aim simply of higher education**. I think there's so much more that these institutions have to offer…especially for vulnerable students…who don't have private resources to get these things elsewhere…this is like this fantastic space, but I just don't think a lot of the students are really able to **convert those resources** into, into functioning…*

*I think I came from such a conservative background that in terms of my family and all the discourses that I grew up with that **university was incredibly liberating** for me… So I think perhaps in the early years I was not as critical of the institution as I could have been, because in comparison to childhood it was just **freedom**; there were ideas and poetry and art, professors, so but if I think back to my childhood and my adolescence I mean I went to a school which illegally allowed children of colour entry before 1994, because I mean the administrators just believed that this is, obviously it's wrong to have segregation and so those…that in terms of race I was **fortunate to grow up in these integrated spaces** that **challenged very strongly the us/them binary in terms of racial** difference BUT in terms of **religion for example the us/them binary was very much set in stone,** and kind of hammered into our experiences and so it was **ok to have racial difference, but I mean religious difference was just absolutely unacceptable**, and so that was the biggest thing I really had to critique for myself when I eventually escaped…I see it as an escape…that life and that world and was able to emerge myself in different forms of knowledge…*

*And you know then there were silences, I mean **sexuality to me was silenced,** it wasn't…it was not even…it **was NOT spoken about and it never even crossed my consciousness EVER**, uhm so that kind of binary was not even kind of visible, for example.*

*Only later as post-graduate student I think I started realising, you know when I stepped into a township school environment…it was part of teaching practice… I realised, ok here are **socio-economic divisions** that go beyond anything I've been able to understand before, how on earth do I negotiate, how do I teach when **children around me are hungry**, how do I do that, I didn't have, I felt like absolutely **horrified at the inequality**, but also I felt **disgusted at who I was**… And obviously **the idea of privilege and of being absolutely unequal** and having to perform an educational function and just me thinking, this is not possible…it's just not possible in any way…and so that I think really hit it home.*

*Now as a PhD student, I can really start seeing what hierarchy means and in terms of who creates knowledge… I just really enjoyed learning before…now I can really ask questions about where does this all come from…and **why are we reading this and not** this, you know and why is this **empirical positivist stuff always** being held up as this wonderful, clever, scientific thing and the **rest of the stuff been pushed aside**…but I think now it's really, now when I work in a research context that really to me THAT is the strongest us/them binary for me. I think the **empirical versus the experiential** just to say that…uhm and within that is sort of…is contained I think so much of the clues of what we need to build social cohesion… Because we don't listen to other people's stories… most South Africans don't 'cause we are we doing…we're **busy doing research that makes money or whatever**… are doing **cultural tourism** and doing all these **development projects** that do what? Other… just **cement those otherings**…*

*I don't know if you read that whole analysis of the Franschoek debacle where the black writer Eusebius McKaiser made headlines by saying he wouldn't attend such a festival again because he felt like a sort of anthropological curiosity with a mostly white audience and still predominantly white festival culture. And a white woman in the audience got upset and asked how much longer must **she feel guilty about her white skin** and what about her charity work and what must she do, and McKaiser said to **stop doing charity work in townships and to go home and confront white privilege** in the spaces where we live, around the dinner table and in our home… I think perhaps it mirrored some experiences I've had, when I was still forced to go on **mission trips** to Botswana and wherever, and I saw angry young men, uhm, just walking around just saying you know, **why are you here? You know what are you doing in***

*our space? Why do you think you've got the answers…which to me was kind of the death spyker* (nail) *in the coffin of my Christianity, just thinking ja you're right, I don't have any answers for you at all… One guy said you know: "What do you come here for, you come and pray, you don't have jobs for us, you don't have food or employment, you just come here with your religion", so I mean, ja that's…and how do we change that. We are kind of complicit,* **we are all kind of** *complicit in keeping those boundaries there from both sides, I think that it's like a dance we have to…we haven't really* **learned to dance differently**, *we still… We fall* **into those old habits,** *almost* **out of respect sometimes** *How do you treat people really differently without* **making them uncomfortable**, **how do you cross barriers of race AND gender AND sexuality AND ethnicity AND language**, *without making a complete mess and embarrassing your colleagues. You know I work with colleagues who are from across the African continent and many of them male, I think the issue here is not race, the issue is gender, I'm a younger woman, in their communities they are respected as older men, now I'm* **addressing them in a way that I'm sure must be completely disrespectful**, *but I'm negotiating all these different barriers, and it's exciting, but it's also…I don't have a translator to help me you know translate these kind of capitals that I must understand, that they must understand, for me I'm a* **gay woman**, *what do they think about that, I mean do they…we* **don't talk about it** *I mean some of them are very* **religiously conservative** *… We are not having those conversations 'cause it's* **not appropriate.**

*I think we have to destabilise the hierarchy – this moves us to* **discomfort**, *but also to a space we can share. Identity politics are sometimes not very helpful… I have this friend who always says: "***Don't be a social justice bully"***….and we must remember what Foucault tells us – that* **power is everywhere***.*

*I think the main thing is that through my research I come to see students sitting in front of me,* **not as students, but as lives and stories***.*

Daisy takes her leave of FridaFreire and steps out of the din of the campus coffee shop onto a neat square of institutional lawn. She is starting to get the feeling that she might be in a dream; that none of this is real. She notices that autumn is starting to turn yellow and brown. Dried leaves crunch under her feet. She feels a little light headed. Her hand reaches for an orange at the bottom of her handbag and she sits down on a sunny patch of grass to peel the sweet skin away from its juicy flesh. A familiar figure steps into the picture; behind him the sky is a brilliant Bloemfontein Blue.

*You know in social justice speak I am a white, heterosexual, middle class male. Did I leave anything out?*

*But what if I am I, but never quite I?*

*I may have been, but I always turn out slightly different.*
*I become many, a woman, a chair, a child, a tree, the breeze, the sea, a word…*
*If I am many, how can I speak with one voice?*
*What am I allowed to tell or share?*
*If I'm not one - not I…*
*Then who or what are you?*
*What might we become?*
*Or rather, when might we become different?*
*And in this becoming may we strive for justice?*
*But what will such justice be?*
*How should we be THEN, if we can only be NOW*
*There's NO utopia on the horizon.*
*It's just us, here in THIS moment…*


At that moment their five year old son Josh comes running towards them: *Mamma, Pappa, kyk vir my!* (Mommy, Daddy look at me!). He is blowing soap bubbles and trying to blow the biggest one in the whole world, no, the very biggest one in the whole universe! The bubble floats through the air to glister in the sun before it gives a quiet pop and dissolves. Just like life, thinks Daisy. She notices that the square of lawn they are standing on suddenly looks slightly overgrown and forgotten. The day has turned chilly and the wind is biting at her ankles. The seasons have changed since the beginning of the story and she wanders away from the spot, where Frank and Josh are playing, towards the small office which still smells of turpentine and good quality drawing paper. She shivers as she opens the door: Dot is gone. Dot is dead. It is only her memory of Dot which fills the room; she can almost reach out and touch it. The walls of the room fade away to reveal a clear night sky. We are standing under that sky and we are dressed in black. We are sad. In my one hand I am holding a red helium balloon with a flickering light and in the other the funeral letter. On the cover is a cropped image of Dot, reaching out to draw herself. Above her image hangs a print of the Great Wave.

I open the letter to read an extract from Dot's diary. *"Ek... voel soos 'n karakter in 'n boek... Miskien was ek in 'n ander leeftyd daardie karakter, maar tans dwaal ek in 'n fiksie".* (I… feel like a character in a novel… Maybe I was that character in another life, but now I feel like I am wandering around in a fictional story). I let go of the balloon and watch as it gently floats into the night sky. The sky is lit up with little flickering lights as the balloons make their journey into the unknown. We are left behind. Walking away into the chill of the Bloemfontein night I think about what it means to be here, to be present, to be embodied. Dot has left this world, but I do not think she has left this story. Our story is not one with a beginning or an ending. Our story is one of becoming rather than one of being. It is one that **might** help us discover, "…the intricate interweavings of class, race, gender, education, religion and other diversities… None of us knows his or her final destination, but all of us can know about the shape makers of our lives that we can choose to confront, embrace or ignore"(Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005, p. 967). Or it might just be a messy and interrupted story of many people who come from different places and happen to share a few pages for a very short time.

*So Daisy is standing in a messy space. She feels uncomfortable. Her story is disrupted. She is disorientated, troubled, and sad. Fiction interrupts reality and reality interrupts fiction. She lets go of her balloon. She lets go of her categories and watches them float away. She is falling, falling, falling in to a deep darkness of the unknown "along with an entire paragraph of letters!"* (Milne & Shephard 2011) *and a rat called Past.*

*And down there in the darkness it is only Daisy, Past and the letters of her story. "Tell me your story", says Past. As Daisy tells her story the letters form a ladder for Daisy to climb out.*

*So*
*she*
*uses*
*the letter*
*ladder*
*to climb*
*out*
*of*
*the pit* (Milne & Shephard 2011)
*Outside the world was different.*
*Or actually **she was** different.*

*Daisy realises that she has left some of herself behind in that deep, dark pit. Some of her letters. No longer Daisy, now just D. The bird named Future is singing its tune as D walks into the forest once more. D is still stuck on the island. In the middle of the forest is a little cottage. D opens the door to find the room where the story first began. A kitchen table with a pile of unmarked student essays on one side and a photo album on the other. There are people sitting around the table. Some are drinking tea and talking whilst others are reading or busy on their smart phones. Two chairs are empty. D sits down on one and says with some relief:*

*"For a minute there I thought you were all just figments of my imagination."*

*Out of her massive red handbag D takes the portraits she had been working on and hangs them on the bare walls of the little room for everyone to see.*

*"I would love to get your comments on these."*

This the treasure: it is a story, but not a fairy-tale happy ending sort of story. It is a story without a beginning or an ending in which ordinary, mortal people do work which is sometimes difficult, confusing, exhausting and other times joyful and meaningful. These are mere snapshots of their lives, partial pictures, unfinished portraits framed in that which lie beyond these pages. Not really data, nor an analysis, rather a creative act of interpretative experimentation.

**CHAPTER 6. Let's see…**



Figure 25. *A white canvass,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

Chapter 6 is a visual representation of the story – in other words, how I see the various elements in the individual portraits come together as one visual story. This might be termed 'analyses' in a traditional construction of a thesis. I do not want to 'explain' or 'discuss 'findings in this chapter as I think it should speak for itself. This is in line with arts-based methodology and visual approaches that informed this thesis. In this chapter I am sharing my artistic journey alongside notes I made while I was busy with the creative process.
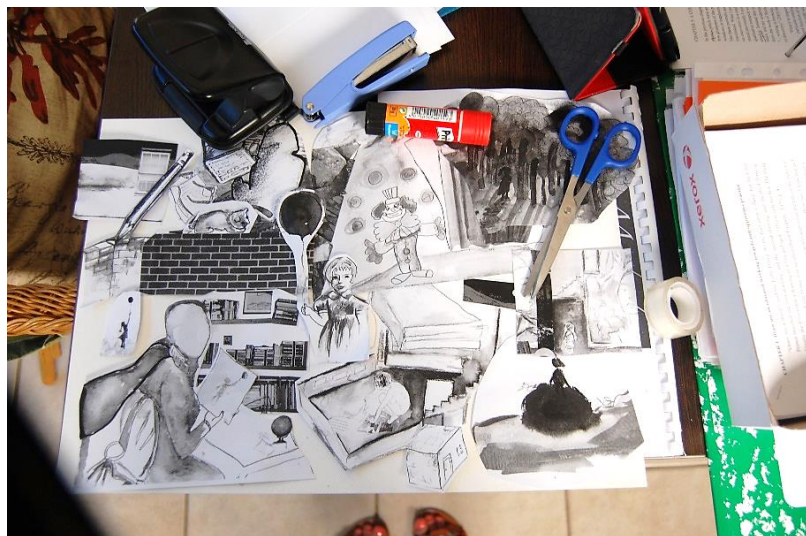


Figure 26. *Collage of final painting,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

Throughout this thesis I continually engaged in the creation of visual images as I storied my way through literature, theory, methodology and data. Some of these are drawings based on photographs of my immediate environment, others based on childhood photographs, whilst others still were inspired by existing artworks or children's story book pictures. In the previous chapter I presented the interpretative portrait collages I created for each 'character' (participant) in the story using their narratives, artworks and photographs. In this chapter I bring all the elements of the individual stories together and present the process in a visual manner. I initiated this phase of the research by asking the participants to look at their character collages and to select parts that were significant to them. I also did this with my drawings of Daisy. I cut out these 'significant parts' and used them to create a new integrated collage. This collage served as inspiration for a 'final' painting. I started with a blank canvas and allowed the collage to 'jump' into this new and open space and in doing so formed interpretative connections. I painted with acrylic paint which permits quick drying and painting layers in quick succession. While I was painting I kept going back to the collage, to the thesis, to earlier artworks and to photographs in order to connect existing visual elements on this new surface. I also kept a notebook at hand to document my process. Some of these notes will be shared alongside the images in this chapter.



Figure 27. *Detail 1,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*The smell of paint lifts my spirits after I had been feeling the thesis had reached a dead end. Painting gives me a way out and a way to go on. As I am priming the canvas the thick white texture is comforting and soothing me. It is a new beginning; a new canvas. I started the thesis*

*with the metaphor of a box and so I started the painting in the same way. A box in-between the space of my paintbrush and my pencil. I go back to chapter 1 to read Daisy's story. She is a little Daisy in a garden with a red balloon. There is a high wall around her – this all flow from the paintbrush.*



Figure 28. *Detail 2,* Marguerite Müller, 2015
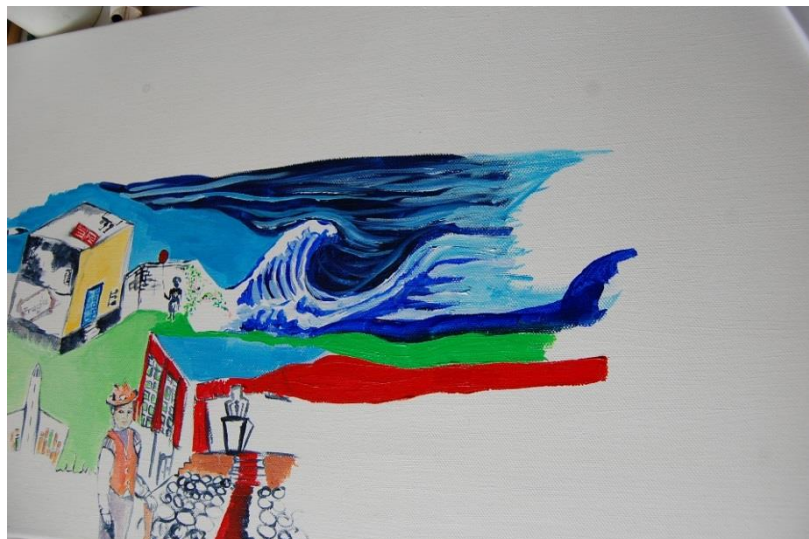


Figure 29. *Detail 3,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*Parallel to this narrative is another which pours from the pencil: it starts with a church and goes on to a picture of me in pre-primary school. I am dressed in a cowboy outfit and holding a wooden gun. I suddenly wonder why I chose the image of the little girl in a white dress with a red balloon instead of this one – the one with the same girl in a cowboy outfit with a gun. Was my choice influenced by wanting to present myself in a certain way – childlike and pure and innocently feminine? Thinking of this I draw the image of myself in the cowboy outfit much*

*bigger on the canvas than the one of the girl with the balloon. I am trying to make visible the parts that I seem to have denied in the story. The girl is facing the viewer. Behind her is a school assembly. The colour of the carpet and the stage is a dark red, perhaps to signify authority and importance. The children become unidentifiable circles in little rows as the principal towers above them.*



Figure 30. *Detail 4,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*The painting now breaks into different panes of flat colour. The red represents education and formal socialisation, the green represents the living spaces and informal spaces and informal socialisation, and the blue represents movement and change and travel and exposure. The rigid separation between the colours disappears as they start to blend into the next part of the canvas. I turn the canvas upside down. The figure of a lone silhouette is shown - walking towards the impenetrable forest. On the other side of the forest a neat square of lawn is a bright summer green.*

Figure 31. *Detail 5,* Marguerite Müller, 2015
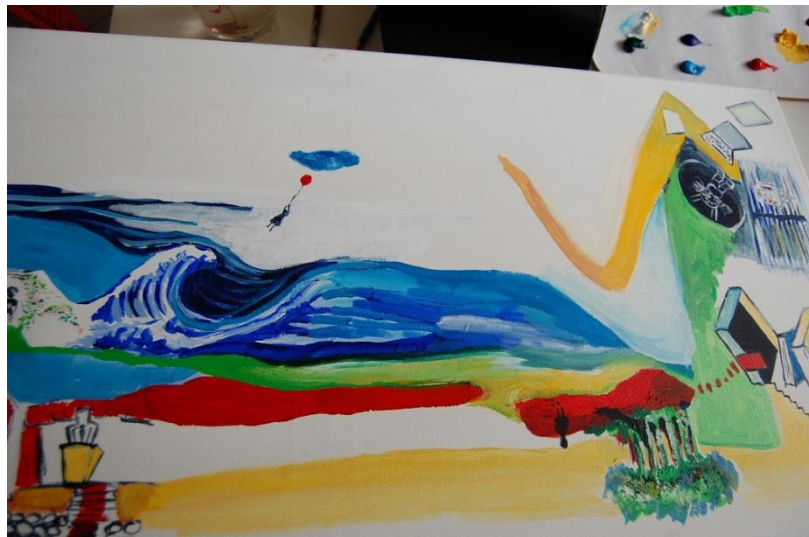


Figure 32. *Detail 6,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*I turn the canvas on its side. The tower of books represent the grand theories and overarching institutional culture and tradition of the higher education context. The books seem to be stacked at a dangerous angle as if they might topple over any second. The steps lead from the books to a room above. The steps represent institutional hierarchy and how we are always trying to be one step ahead or get one more qualification or one more publication in the academic rat race – trying to get ahead or to the top. The two parts of the image show the private/public split, but also the split between art and science or reason and emotion. There is a black and empty space where Dot use to be. Her body is absent from the gallery space to show her artworks which remain even after she left.*

Figure 33. *Detail 7,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*The green stroke of paint leads to the top right corner of the painting where it ends in Alice's office. The window shows how the past filters in through the blinds as a church is partially visible in the distance. Against her wall is the mirror in which she feels trapped and in the space in front of her computer is just a hole – a rabbit hole and a girl with very curly hair is falling down into the unknown. 'Am I doing the right thing?' she wonders as she disappears from sight.*
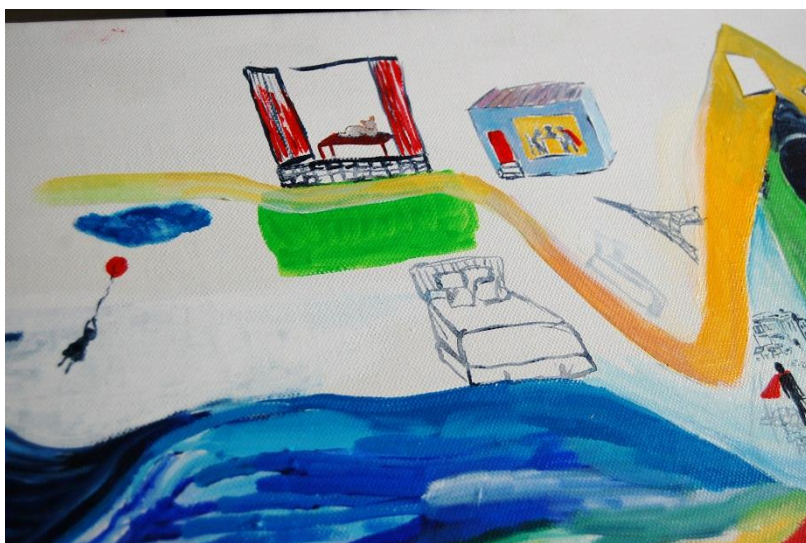


Figure 34. *Detail 8,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*The road also passes Chubby's office where he is sitting in the middle of the table surrounded by books and photographs, looking out into the world. Both Celine and Chubby stressed how their parents placed a huge emphasis on education. Celine's mom was a black woman and a single mother and saw education as a way out of poverty. Chubby's parents were white and came out of the depression years so they also saw education as a way to gain economic advancement. Chubby selected his 'wall' from his collage because he said that the wall shows his protected childhood and the guilt he sometimes felt about his comfort and not having done enough….*



Figure 35. *Detail 9,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*The red curtains of authority and status give way to a stage on which Mick the clown is giving his performance. His hands are brown to show his race consciousness in this performance. Next to him is the cliff which he is trying to cross – he wants to take the audience with him – to move to an unknown and foreign space in order for learning to occur.*
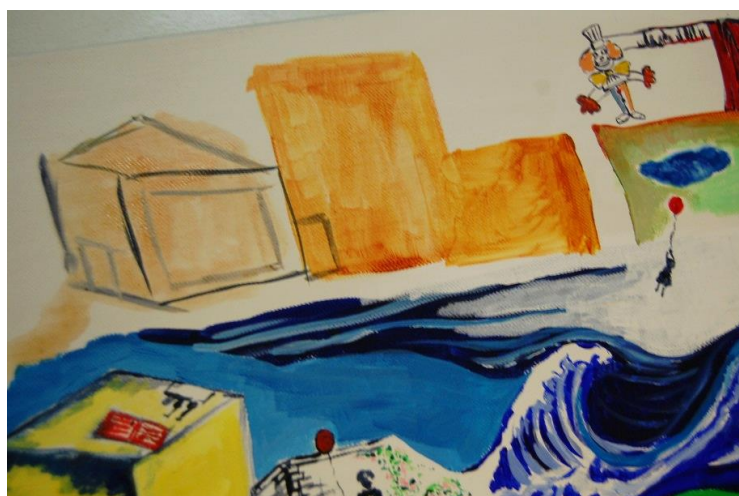


Figure 36. *Detail 10,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*On the other side of the cliff a staircase leads down into a space where a two-headed person is standing; trapped in the confines of the academic institution. It is FridaFreire – anima/animus as she is pondering the space between emotion and reason. Her body and mind are searching for unity in the work that she does.*



Figure 37. *Detail 11,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*A door leads to a room in which all the participants are gathered to share their stories. Behind them a number of doors and staircases show the different readings that might be possible and how the story is never finished. From the crowded room a lone figure walks back to the beginning of the story as a balloon floats away overhead. The figure is staring out of the picture frame to something beyond the borders of what we can see.*



Figure 38. *Detail 12,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

Figure 39. *Detail 13,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

*I stand back and look at what has become a messy and uncomfortable sort of painting. One that is fun to make but hard to look at. There is no focus point and perhaps the painting is more like a doodle as one image flows into the next. The circular reading that I offer is in line with the circular map that Daisy finds in chapter 4. She has to walk and explore her world to find other stories in order to circle back to the beginning – yet then, she is different. The bright colours compete for attention and sometimes clash. Along the border the rat named Past and the bird named Future are following the story, and connecting it to external events which are outside the frame. Finally I put down my brush and step into the canvas, I walk down the red carpet and past the walled garden of my childhood, I swim through the stormy sea and grab hold of a balloon that takes me on a journey past all the other stories until I find myself in the room where all the characters are gathered. Here we write chapter 8.*

Figure 40. *Final Thesis Painting,* Marguerite Müller, 2015

**Chapter 7: Thinking about how to read the portraits**

In chapter 5 I shared the co-constructed portraits as they have been woven into my interpretative creation. I further explored the visual narrative of the connections between these portraits in chapter 6. These visual representations provide merely a few glimpses of the participants (including myself): slices of our lives, snapshots, shadows, windows, and trapdoors. I want to pause for a moment at the metaphor of the trapdoor. In children's literature a trapdoor usually leads to something else, just like these portraits and stories always lead to something else in the way that they are interlinked. What I present here can therefore be seen as both *data* and *analysis* based on *interviews* in a traditional understanding of qualitative research practice. However, as stated previously, I consciously distance myself from these terms, because I view them as more rooted in a positivist and empirical paradigm than I wish to follow. Instead this is a creative exploration fuelled by curiosity and a desire to know in new ways. My understanding of what 'data' and 'analysis' can be (or not be) stems largely from the work of Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p.967) who say that "…writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery". St Pierre goes on to argue that:

> "First it is important to understand that data appear, come into being, exist (or not) in a particular ontological, epistemological and methodological structure. The meaning in and function of data depend on the meaning and function of a constellation of other concepts with which it is imbricated, for example, the concepts *reality, evidence, warrants, claims, reasons, knowledge,* and, of course, *truth*" (St. Pierre 2013, p.223).

When we move away from that constellation into the murky and messy world of multiplicity and blurred reality the traditional understanding of what constitute data must also be questioned. We will find that, "[p]oststructuralism took away positivism's claim to a God's eye view of the world, that view which said objective observers could turn the world and its happenings into things that could be turned into data" (Denzin 2013, p.1). St. Pierre (2013) criticises the logical positivist empirical unconsciousness of what counts as scientifically based or evidence-based research in the social sciences. The argument is that qualitative research methodology has consequently, "encouraged some bizarre combination of interpretivisim and positivism in thinking about data by insisting, with interpretivisim, that data be textualized, and, with logical positivism, that words in those texts can be brute, sense data" (St. Pierre 2013,

p.224). The implication being that, "Once the empirical is transformed into real, visible words on a page – brute, sense data – these researchers strip the words from context, manipulate them, order them in binaries and hierarchies and categories, label some words with other words (code data), and even count the words. Words become quasi-numbers" (St. Pierre 2013, p.224). And, "complicit too are those who call for the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software" (Denzin 2013, p.1) No! That is not where I am heading at all. I am not interested in research practices that require me to count my words, or feed my stories into computer software to do the counting for me. What I am trying to do is to make the, "mundane, taken-for-granted, everyday world visible" and to "seek performative interventions and representations that heighten crucial reflective awareness leading to concrete forms of praxis" (Denzin 2013, p.2).

I create so that I can think differently, see differently and do differently. And in this act of creation I am conscious that, "[l]anguage and speech do not mirror experience. They create experience and in the process transform and defer that which is being described. Meaning are always in motion, incomplete, partial, contradictory" (Denzin 2013, p.2). And so as we emerge from the fog of positivism there are philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari who can help us reject binary logic in favour of a logic of connection. "The verb *to be, is,* is anathema in Deleuzian ontology because it stops thought. Once equilibrium and identity are established – I am a woman – becoming and difference are impossible" (St. Pierre 2013, p.226).

This chapter will lay the groundwork for chapter 8 where I will narrate some of the connections between theory and story in a collaborative interpretative exploration of possible meanings in our portraits. Not to say – this is who we are, but rather to think how we can be different. This process was facilitated by sharing the theory and research questions with the participants. By doing this I aimed to initiate a collaborative process with the participants to explore new ways of being and becoming educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education.

I understand oppression to be "the citing of harmful discourses and the repetition of harmful histories" (Kumashiro 2000, p.40). So in working towards anti-oppressive education we are trying to disrupt, question and rework the harmful discourses and harmful histories in our classrooms, but also in our lives. In chapter 3 I discussed Kumashiro's theoretical framework of anti-oppression in terms of four different approaches. In chapter 8 I will be using these four approaches to formulate some questions which will help shape an anti-oppressive lens through which to engage with my research questions. I use the questions as my theoretical base while consciously trying to make the educator/researcher/artist **visible** in the research. In the creation

of the portraits I purposefully extend the research story beyond the classroom into the lives of the educators; into our childhood memories, our personal anxieties, our spiritual beliefs, and our different bodies as they exist in this space and time. By doing this I have come to the understanding that anti-oppressive education is not just about *how* we teach or *what* we teach but about *who* we are and about the educator's *being and becoming*. In chapter 8 I will extend the theory of anti-oppressive education into my methodology, not in an attempt to necessarily answer the research questions, but rather to construct a creative artwork in which the characters engage with the questions. I will base this written story on my visual representation in chapter 6.

So this research is an attempt to make the educator visible in the theory of anti-oppressive practice through narrative and character portraits. For me the best part of creating is right at the start of the process when you have the blank page or canvas in front of you. That blank page or canvas has endless possibilities and although you might have some idea of what you want to write or paint you have no idea what the end result will be. In a way research is also like creating a sculpture, because you are using existing material to create something new by trying to release the artwork 'hidden' within the material. Collaborative research is perhaps more like an installation, an interactive installation in which participants are invited to co-construct the meaning making process. In traditional painting and sculpture the end product is important, because that is what the viewer will see and evaluate in the end. However, when it comes to interactive art there is a shift and the question is no longer: *what do I see?* or, *what does it say?* but rather *what does it do?* or, *how am I part of it?*

## 7.1. How am I part of it?

Many of the participating educators mentioned their emotional involvement in their work. For example Mick mentioned how he was fuelled by a desire to make society a better place – to 'heal', and also how this type of work could be emotionally draining:

Mick: "*And my work is social justice, my work is to work towards a society which is equal, fair and…uhm, so transformation is part of that huge agenda. So the clown makes people happy, I'm trying to make society a place where people…there's equality and there's less pain and there's less hurt and there's less discrimination. But I think possibly, ja…so it is a mask… Because in this process of trying to make people happy, it's heavily taxing, taxing on me the individual who is doing this. There is a lot of uhm [pause] hurt and um [pause] it's emotionally draining…* Later he talks about a specific episode in the classroom and says:*" So I walked out

*of that classroom feeling extremely confused, frustrated and I was questioning did I do hurt more than I tried to do anything about healing in that classroom…"*

Chubby also talks of his character as being caring:

*"I think I am one of the lecturers who sometimes gives in more easily, because I am a people's person. I have my roots in a background in theology and I worked in a coloured community in the Cape, where I had the opportunity to lead sermons and work with them. So I think those roots of working with people in difficult situations make that you handle your black and coloured students very differently than some of the other lecturers here."*

Cubby makes the connection between theological work and education in that they both involve caring. Yet he almost denounces his own feelings of vulnerability and emotional involvement, by saying that he is a guy who does not '*lose his head'* easily in a crisis and that he can *'handle'* difficult situations. The importance of 'allowing' our emotions into our teaching spaces is discussed in chapter 3 (3.1). When I started my postgraduate studies I encountered a similar approach to what researchers are expected to do – stay rational and do not let your emotions cloud your vision. It was only as an artist that I felt continually encouraged to be in touch with my emotions and to bring that into my work. Using self-study and arts-based methodologies I no longer feel it necessary to keep these boundaries in place. Now I find it crucial to be open to emotion in all my roles: artist, teacher and researcher. Mick refers to the '*emotionally draining'* work of teaching. I found the same to be true of research and often felt emotional during the process of collecting the stories and writing them up. For instance, in our first interview Celine recalled how one day she opened an email which said she was awarded a scholarship…and she became emotional. Sitting there I started to feel teary eyed as she told me how she phoned her mom to say she was going overseas and her mom just wouldn't believe her. Why was I crying? I had been listening to her story of how she had grown up in a single parent household and how her mother had struggled to keep them financially afloat; I had heard of her struggles at university to keep head above water as she shared a small bachelor's flat with four other girls and a bed with her sister. In all this I was acutely aware of my own privilege in growing up in a house with a bathtub and going through university with financial support from two parents who both held stable jobs.

To be present in the research I have to be open to emotions, and I cannot do research in which I am not present. FridaFreire spoke about how important it is to have a "*dialogue between a very cognitive cerebral approach* [which she describes as the Freire side] *and* [on] *the other*

*side the body which she* [Frida Kahlo] *represents for me kind of perfectly."* FridaFreire is placing anti-oppressive theory and art at opposite sides of a spectrum even as they inform each other, and the 'art' side (also the female side) is the side in which emotion and embodiment is significant.

Dot also spoke about the apparent contrast in practice between the body and research. In the middle of the story Dot slipped out of our *real* world and into another place. Her death left me with a paralyzing sadness. It disrupted me as a person and interrupted my research. It also affected FridaFreire, who had been friends with her:

*FridaFreire: "She was just an incredible person…it was just so…I don't' know I haven't lost someone close to me like that, for many years, so it was just such a blow, I didn't expect it to be like that…"*

It led me to question my own existence and the work I was busying myself with. Life suddenly seemed short and fragile. I had to question if I was spending my life in the best possible way. She had been a participant in my research, but also a person who shared a little piece of her life with me. We had shared meals, and wine, and laughter. I could not detach myself from her and did not want to because "[t]he call for detachment actually dehumanizes the people being researched; it expects them to interact with an inhuman, 'objective' questioner; it denies them humane responses to their emotions, their desires, their insecurities and even their bodies" (Honeychurch 1998 as cited in Kumashiro 2002, p.15).

So how do we bring our bodies into research? I felt the need to create portraits as a way to SEE and become VISIBLE in the research. Through our artworks and memories and narratives we begin to embody the theory, but also trouble the theory, which brings us to an understanding of social justice as both a process and a goal (Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman & Peters 2000). Let me explain it this way: I open a textbook with readings on social justice and it is neatly divided into categories: there is racism, classism, religious oppression, sexism, heterosexism, transgender oppression, ableism, ageism and adultism. These are categories which the participants also sometimes use to frame their experiences. But are WE visible in those categories? How do we negotiate the categories in our story and construct ourselves within those boundaries?

The question of *how am I part of it?* is one way in which art and research has the potential to change, move, disrupt and interrupt. If we pause for a moment on Tracey Emin's (1998) messy bed – she did not give us a reflection of reality, but rather an interruption thereof. It was a

messy bed in an art gallery rather than in someone's bedroom, and therefore it no longer served the purpose as a bed, but rather became a portrait of Tracy Emin's life. It opened up a new space in which we could interrogate and question our assumptions about life and art; about public and private. Emin showed us that art (and research) do not reflect the world, but rather disrupt and interrupt what we know in order to negotiate new spaces, in-between spaces, and messy spaces in which we can be different.

## 7.2. Being interrupted in a messy space

Dennis: *"The point is there is no neatness, even in semi-structured interviews. People will miss interviews, or be in a bad mood on that day, or leave the research…or die. And your work really just foregrounds the messiness of research. That we are working with people who are living humans and that working with self-study, rather than quantifying numbers etc. tells us a lot more…and why this is important for the participants is that they themselves work with people, they themselves work with diversity. The research process is not detached from life and this is what is important to your methodology."*

I started this research with a plan. But a plan can be interrupted, it can change shape and form. There were so many methodological challenges. For example, I had initially planned to use Facebook as a sort of collaborative site for the participants to share stories. But to keep the anonymity of the participants I would have had to create 'false' Facebook pages for each character. After I created two or three pages, using my own cell phone number, Facebook started blocking me and giving me warnings about creating false identities. So in the end I used email as a medium to distribute the story to the participants. However, for the most part I had to rely on face-to-face interviews for input.

D: *"So what I DID learn is that if you get people with full time jobs, and mostly studying as well, as participants it is actually almost impossible for them to do sort of extra things, like do some creative writing or creating artworks…."*

FridaFreire: *"YES...with my terrible deadlines and stuff I have…cause what happens is I see an email from you and can't write then, and after five days I think it's too late now… Even I, in my research with my students, I had a little journal…but only one of them decided to do anything with the journal, they don't like writing, but also they didn't have time…"*

So while I had hoped we would co-write a story in virtual space it did not work out. In the end the face-to-face meetings and conversations were crucial to the research, because it was here,

rather than the textual interactions, that I felt people were really willing to share, discuss and talk. Many of the participants told me that they found writing about their experiences more difficult and time consuming than talking about it.

*Celine: "When I read the story it just connected very well and I was actually surprised - wow MY story is part of this! And you know when you talk you just don't realise how somebody is listening to what you are saying. And to be actually… Because you know we are so used to reading other people's stories, but when you are part of the story you just…ok, ok that's interesting. But the saddest part for me was not being able to respond… I think because of my job and not having time…and for me, I prefer to talk and then you write."*

Some of the interviews lasted thirty minutes and other ninety minutes. At times scheduled interviews did not take place. For example, Alice had to cancel an interview because she was sick, and for a while I did not hear form FridaFreire at all because she was overwhelmed with her own deadlines. Once I made a faulty entry into my diary and when I arrived for a meeting with Celine I discovered that I was an hour late and she had already left. I mention all these 'barriers' to highlight the fact that the research process itself was rather messy and interrupted. I had to schedule interviews in between work hours and many times in the late afternoons; sometimes I couldn't get anyone to take care of my four year old son, and so he often had to hang around while I did interviews. I hoped to have a final group interview in which all the participants could come together to discuss the final portraits and scheduled this meeting months ahead of time. Yet, in the week we were supposed to have the group interview two people had to cancel and one person forgot, so it did not work out at all. I tried rescheduling the interview but every time it was simply impossible to get everyone free at the same time. In the end I had to change my plan and arranged to see each participant individually in order to get their responses to the final version of the portraits.

These stories, conversations and interactions, therefore, is not separated from our lived realities in a magical space called the 'research interview time'. They actually take place as part of our everyday lives. Sometimes interrupting or inconveniencing us; sometimes creating a pleasant few moments to have a cup of coffee and talk to someone about our experiences. We are people, we get sick, we have deadlines, we have kids, we get PMS, we get hungry, we get grumpy, we get tired, we die… Research does not ever stand separate from life, just as the researcher never stands separately from the research.

Bearing this in mind my research methodology changed and grew as I went through this process. The questions I asked changed as well. Life changes. I changed. What I came to realise is that this is to a large extent the whole point of self-study. I might have started out by looking for the stories of educators working towards anti-oppressive education, but I ended up looking for the ways in which anti-oppressive education is embodied by educators working in higher education. Theory does not only interrupt life, rather life interrupts theory, and these interruptions change us. Perhaps each interruption is like a secret door, a trapdoor, which can potentially take us somewhere else. In the same way that art is a secret door that can take us into a different world of wonder.

I want to illustrate my thoughts about the messiness and interrupted nature of research with two snippets from interviews with FridaFreire. During our first meeting we were in a coffee shop where I received a phone call that I had been successful in my application for the position of residence head at one of the on-campus residences at UFS. I subsequently moved onto the campus with my family a few weeks later. The next two interviews with FridaFreire were conducted in my 'new office' in our on-campus apartment. Josh was home on both occasions and being a four year old he interrupted the interviews to demand my attention. Besides his interruptions there were occasional knocks at the door from students who wanted me to sign forms, or complain about everything from roommates to blocked sinks. These interviews were constantly interrupted as is evident in the extracts below:

Frida Freire: *"So I really wanted to put that in there and then I wanted to capture the anima/animus male/female…so that she was an important part, but yes she is an extremely strong figure…"*
Josh: *"Mommy"* (opening the study door and poking his head in)
Marguerite*: "Uhm?"*
Josh: *"My story is finished, Uhm, and my ice cream is finished."*
Marguerite: *"Ok, mommy is coming, just give me five minutes, ok?"*
Josh: *"Not five, that is long."*
Marguerite: *"Ok, ok."* (I giggle as Josh holds up four fingers)
Josh: *"Only four."*
Marguerite*: "Al right, that is fine."*
Josh: *"Four is almost over."*
Marguerite: *"Ok, its fine..."* (Josh leaves) *"Sorry, I'm always busy with a negotiation…ja so please go on…"*

FridaFreire: *"Uh ja I think so getting back to Frida, so that was. I THINK ja, what I really like about her is the, the kind of ability to have overcome something tremendously debilitating, which I probably see as kind of a metaphor for working within institutional constraints like being disabled in a way…"*

During the second interview:

FridaFreire: *"But I mean I understand their constraints I mean they are dealing with thirty thousand students, for them the best they can do…"*
Josh: *"Mama, I know a different dragon…"*
Marguerite: *"Ok."*
Josh: *"I tell you".*
Marguerite: *"Can you tell me later? No? Ok quickly then."*
Josh: *"Fast Stinger, and he sting you do like this"* (Josh illustrates with his finger) *"But he lives in the world of dragons, not here by us…"*
Marguerite: *"Ok Love, mommy will come see in a little while"*
FridaFreire: *"He is SO cute!"*
Marguerite: *(laughter) "THERE is a whole different level of knowledge for you… The absurd surreal side of things that you have to consider…. Like the world of dragons for instance."*
FridaFreire: *"It's actually quite real."*
Marguerite: *It's very real, especially for him, but anyway, so ja please go on*
FridaFrerie:" *Ja so uhm, because it's frustrating when you find what makes a difference for the individual is real, one to one, human connection in the way that really enables learning and growth and sort of this becoming of who you are…it's not about sort of squashing knowledge into your head and going off and doing some meaningless work, it's about something more than that…"*
Josh: *"Mama, the colossal squid, that guy with the ship…. Mamma jy mis die storie!"*(**you are missing the story!)**
Marguerite: *"Ok, I'm coming just give me a few more minutes ok?"* (Josh leaves) *"Sorry about that it's been a bit of a long day now…so he just needs me…please go on."*

So in between interruptions from dragons to colossal squids I was trying to do serious research. I could easily have airbrushed these interruptions out of the text, but I bring Josh into this story for a specific reason: I want to make him visible in my research. I am the mother of Josh. I am

also a student, and a lecturer and head of a residence where 255 students live. Given these different roles I am always performing a juggling act as Mick illustrated in his character portrait of the clown. In all this I am also a child deep down; a little girl with a red balloon, or perhaps a little prince. Why are academic spaces such grown-up spaces? Quiet and serious spaces where children are strangely absent. Is there such a divide between the grown-up world of reason and the child-like world of wonder? Do children interrupt the serious work of grownups? Do children threaten the TRUTH with all their imaginings? Yes of course. The university is a grown-up world. A serious world. A rational world. It is place for grown-up people while they go about the serious business of being grown-up, and clever, and right. I have sat in conferences and listened to serious academics throw big words and important names at each other - much like a bunch of kids taunting each other with 'my toy is better than yours' or 'I know something you don't know'. And yet it is not a space where we tolerate the knock of a little hand on the door or the interruption by a dragon or a colossal squid. Children as philosophers? Fiction as research? Grow up!

During a critical conversation on patriarchy (De Wet 2015) held on campus recently I listened to the presenter share her experiences of being a female academic and how the fact that she was also a mother was seen as a stumbling block by many of her colleagues. She told how she had felt guilty about taking maternity leave and how people made comments 'that she was always on maternity leave' after she had two children in close succession. She also told how she was asked to imagine where her academic career would have been had she not had children. The potential 'threat' of a child to the success of female academics especially came out very clearly in Celine's narrative. She makes a strong connection between a successful career and not having had children:

*Celine: "But my mother set me down the first day that…she said, "You know that I don't want you staying in Bloemfontein, I would prefer you to travel, but I'm only going to allow you on one condition, you don't come back with a baby" (laughs) and I said I said ok THAT is VERY much done, don't worry about that. So now I had to learn how to be responsible again and how to grow up, because you know it's very difficult, it's very difficult if you're a girl. There's so much pressure on your side as a girl just to say I'm not gonna get pregnant, because remember if you get pregnant, you terminate your studies. Whereas if you're a guy you act like nothing is wrong.*

Children interrupt serious work and studies. Being a mother means that I AM interrupted - constantly. Why should this be denied or hidden or smoothed over in my writing? My writing was interrupted continually by conversations, by comments, by observations and life. Sometimes, I would write something and after a conversation with my supervisor I would change it completely. Below is an extract of such a conversation:

Dennis: *"I think you need to re-think how you will present this chapter. On the one hand you are challenging the traditional conventions of thesis writing and yet here in this chapter you seem to completely conform. The content of the chapter is fine, but it reads like more of a traditional analysis. Re-think the way you present it, and reconsider the question answer approach you are currently following. As it is it does not seem to gel with the rest of your thesis."*

I want to answer him but I am having a coughing fit, because I have been battling a miserable cold for weeks. I am having trouble concentrating because I am feeling wretched.

Dennis: *"Shame Marguerite you don't seem well, shouldn't you go see a homeopath to get something to boost your system?"*
Marguerite: *"I suppose so, but I am scared of taking anything as I am pregnant."*
Dennis: *"Well that is wonderful news, congratulations…"*


After our conversation I reflect on my feelings about what used to be chapter 7. When I make a painting I can feel when it 'works' - I am connected to it and it speaks to me. When I do not get this feeling I often just paint over it and start again. Initially I said I would approach this thesis as an artwork and yet when I wrote the first draft of chapter 7 I did not feel the inspiration or connectedness that one ideally must feel when creating art. It did not speak in the way it should. It felt more like a chore, like 'I must do this to make this thesis academically valid'. I fell into the trap of trying to 'validate' my arts-based method to fit into traditional structures for an academic audience. But this was a compromise on my original intentions and it did not align with my methodology. This chapter started as a question/answer type of chapter – with the questions that stem from Kumashiro's framework of anti-oppressive education outlined in chapter 3 followed by the participants' responses to these questions. However, after the conversation above I purposefully changed this to create a chapter which would become part of my story and not stand separately – and so a new part of the story was conceived.

### 7.3. Interruptions are messy

*"in een land waar de toekomst vecht met het verleden"(Bos, n.d),*

**(in a country where the future fights the past)**

In the section above I illustrated the messiness and interruptions of my personal life in the research process. I am also a person living in a specific context, and this context continually changes my story. In this section I make reference to contextual and broader social interruptions that occurred as I was working on this thesis.

It was towards the end of my thesis writing journey and as I was now pregnant I was trying to wrap up and finish my story before the baby was due. At the same time a new movement was born in the larger South African context: #FeesMustFall. Many see the movement as a continuation and extension of #RhodesMustFall which occurred earlier in 2015 (see chapter 2). hooks (2003, p.46) talks of how educational institutions such as universities are "founded on principles of exclusion". In South Africa this exclusion is often linked to economic inequality and poverty.

> "Recent research shows that a worker with an average of three dependents - all else remaining the same- will need to earn a wage of R4, 125 (£200) a month to live above the poverty line. A shocking 60% of black African workers earn less than that, confirming that poverty, inequality and race in South Africa go hand-in-hand. Although state funding and university scholarships do exist, for many families university fees that can cost upwards of R40 000 (£2,000) make higher education an unattainable dream" (Baloyi & Isaacs 2015).

This unattainable dream of higher education became the source much anger and frustration amongst the South African youth as became evident with the FeesMustFall movement of 2015. On Wednesday the 21st of October 2015 hundreds of students "stormed the gates of Parliament chanting 'fees must fall' as Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene started to deliver his medium-term budget policy statement in the National Assembly. Students hurled water bottles and kicked at riot police, who in turn fired stun grenades and used pepper spray as they struggled to contain the situation" (Phakathi, 2015, para. 1 – 2).

"The unprecedented movement of student activism has been sweeping South African university campuses and cities, culminating in a march on the historic Union Buildings on Friday 23 October, the seat of the South African government. Not since the Soweto Uprising of 1976 have this many youth arisen to demand the right to quality and accessible education. The students have won their demand of a 0% increase in tuition fees, with planned fee increases of up to 11.5%, at the heart of the protests. However, as ongoing demonstrations prove, the students' demands have been deeper than this. They have called for the "decolonization" and "transformation" of higher education institutions, the insourcing of outsourced workers (mostly cleaning, security and support staff, often the most vulnerable workers), and the release of their classmates arrested earlier in the week" (Baloyi & Isaacs 2015, para.1 – 2).

Some compare the student protest to the anti-apartheid uprisings of 1960, 1976 and 1985. The protest highlights the inequalities that persist in South Africa where a minority of privileged individuals have access to the resources of the country while the majority live in poverty. "While we fought for freedom and wrote our own radial Constitution, the entrenchment of a post-apartheid neo-liberal economic system has locked South Africa into a system wherein the rich only get richer and the poor poorer" (Moodley and Shabodien, 2015, para. 8).

As this movement described above unfolded across the country I witnessed it first hand on the Bloemfontein campus of the University of the Free State. For a few days many of the students in my residence were involved in this action. I witnessed as they took shifts to study and protest. The protest was concentrated around the main gate of the campus were students gathered to sing protest songs and wave banners. The atmosphere seemed almost festive. From time to time I could not get on or off the campus as the gates were locked, and the campus was shut down for 3 days. I never witnessed any of the violence reported in the media and when the 0% increase was announced there were cheers throughout the residence and that night we all (on campus staff and students) celebrated. The next day I heard the protest was going on at other universities and I asked the students if it would also continue here – one said "no, we have already celebrated our victory". In the week following the students handed over a memorandum to the rectorate which had fifty two demands, some of them are listed below:

- The C.R. Swart and Steyn statues must be removed from campus before the end of the year.

- Registration should be free for students with financial problems.

- There should be more psychologists on campus.

- There should be more black faculty members in top management positions.

- Free and unlimited Wi-Fi access on campus.

- The cleaning staff must get the same benefits as other staff members.

- The law faculty should be renamed as well as other buildings that still give the impression that the university is only for White Afrikaners (Waldeck 2015).

The rectorate responded to the students' concerns in a general assembly. Afterwards I asked the students if they were satisfied with the outcome. Some students replied positively, but said they not sure if anything would actually materialise. The student protests at UFS did not continue and examinations finally started after being postponed by a week. In other parts of the country the protests continued well into November and flared up again as universities opened for registration in 2016.

*Lily is part of the cleaning staff in the residence. For two hours every weekday she cleans my apartment and office. Today she comes in looking stressed and worried. "What is wrong?" I ask. "I am very worried. The students had their strike on Monday. Now they are saying we must strike. We don't work for the university, we work for outside companies. I earn two thousand one hundred rand per month. They say we must demand three thousand eight hundred. I am employed by an outside company. They say we must demand the university employ us, but the Rector says there is not enough money to employ all of us. But I am very worried, because I don't belong to the union. I don't want to join the union, but none of the other ladies know I don't belong to the union. So what if I strike and then the company just fire me and get someone else to do my job. There are people queuing and waiting for this job. I don't know what to do, I cannot lose this job, because I also support my daughter and her three kids. She has matric, but she cannot find a job. What must I do? I did not sleep last night, because I am so worried about this thing? They told us we must all strike. If we don't strike they will know, they will come here to check who is working on Monday".* I don't know what to tell her, on the one hand I cannot believe that she is earning two thousand one hundred rand a month on which she has to support her daughter and grandchildren and I feel she must definitely protest. On the other hand I know what she says is a reality – this is South Africa and there are so many poverty stricken people that her job can easily go to one of them – the

company she works for undoubtedly knows this too, which is why they get away with paying her two thousand one hundred rand a month.

I include this section about the student and cleaning staff protests because I think it underlines how oppression is played out, and challenged, in institutions of higher education in South Africa. Furthermore it illustrates the fact that this thesis and this work always 'resists finality.' The South African context of higher education is extremely volatile and I am living in the midst of it.

Just like my personal 'interruptions' help shape and steer my research so did the contextual 'interruptions'. I view these interruptions as crucial to the research as they serve as reminder of why I am doing it in the first place. These are the trapdoors that help me connect life and research. It helps me infuse the world of fiction with the world of reality; infuse rationality with wonder. Like Mick I also want to make the world a better place – but obviously in thinking of a better place I always have Josh in mind. It would be dishonest to deny that. I would like him to grow up in a world where he can make choices about his identity and express himself freely regardless of gender prescriptions which inhibit us in so many ways. I want him to grow up in a world where he can form healthy relationships with people of diverse racial, sexual, gendered and religious identifications. I want him to grow up in a world where difference is celebrated and not policed. A world where he can be what he wants to be…rather than labelled and categorised into a predetermined set of social identities which will rule his entire life. I want this for my child, but I also want it for the young boy who comes to my car window as I am stuck in rush hour traffic - his little hand outstretched, hungry eyes and bare feet. I also want it for the student who comes to class with a broken arm after he had to defend his little brother against a street gang. I want it for the numerous students who come to my office to ask how they can apply to get support with food as they simply do not have enough to eat and their parents have even less. I also want it for the transgendered woman in the residence who could not participate in the female Kleinsêr (singing and dancing competition) at UFS because the Afrikaans Language and Culture Association specifies that females can only participate in one section and males in another. I want a better world for every student that crosses my path and for every colleague and for every friend. The question is how?

## 7.4. What are the answers we seek?

In this messy and interrupted space called research I started out by looking for answers to these questions:

1. How can educators, through a collaborative self-study, 'trouble' their own social identities and experiences of anti-oppressive practice in higher education?
2. How can the collaborative process of art, narrative and fiction facilitate or hinder educators to move toward anti-oppressive practice?

I try to engage with these questions throughout this thesis. However, this is a collaborative self-study and therefore I also asked the participants to engage with my research questions. In the next chapter I will narrate the conversations that grew out of Kumsahiro's framework of the four conceptualisations of anti-oppressive education. These conversations were initiated by sharing the questions that stem from the four conceptualisations with the participants. The four approaches and questions are discussed in chapter 3, but I will briefly outline them here as I shared them with the participants:

a) How do we focus on the negative experiences of the other?

b) In way are we looking past the privileging of normal?

c) Do our stories tell of experiences of being othered or othering in a way that keeps the us/them binary intact?

d) In which ways are our knowledge stereotyped and partial?

e) How is the other excluded, silenced, invisible, distorted and marginalised in our stories?

f) In what ways do our stories disrupt?

g) How is the self privileged in the story?

h) How do our stories talk of unlearning of what was previously normal?

i) How are we critical of ourselves in the stories?

j) What are the contradictions in our stories?

k) Where are the fluidity and multiplicity of our identities visible?

l) What do we overlook?

m) In what ways can we deconstruct the self/other binary to involve unknowability?

n) What do we desire to ignore in the story?

o) What do we leave unsaid?

*Marguerite: Wait, stop… answer the questions? Isn't a question and its answer in itself a binary opposition that stems from a type of positivist logic?*

*D: "What I also know now, and I know it for a fact…no nothing is a fact…a lot of these questions don't have answers…like you said…what is like….what is like the right way to do something? But then even if the question doesn't have an answer…the question should…we should still try and answer the question…something like that…"*

*Mick: "Isn't there a quote where they say if we stop asking the questions the learning…uhm stops…so even the question where we think there is no answer, it doesn't mean we shouldn't be asking. When we stop asking that's where I think it becomes problematic…"*

Somewhere in the midst of this research I started to think that perhaps a question should not be thought of as something in need of an answer, but rather as something in itself – a first step on an exploration of the unknown. The questions set me on a course of discovery in which I sometimes got lost and other times found treasure. It was not a solitary journey. I went on this journey with the participants who I asked to help me engage with the research questions as we used Kumashiro's theoretical framework of anti-oppressive education to 'read' our stories. These 'readings' will be presented in chapter 8.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

*Dear 'Mick',*

*I hope you are well. Thank you for your participation in my research up to this point. I have used the conversations we had along with the images/artworks you shared to create a character collage for Mick (as I showed you the other day). Attached to this message you will find a document containing the visual and textual portrait. You are welcome to look at this at you leisure and to send me any feedback or comments that you might have.*

*Best,*

*Marguerite*

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

*Dear Marguerite,*

*It was like reading my thoughts rather than me thinking them, not often I get a chance to see my thoughts. It was a pity you did not include the parts where you also were helping me think through these thoughts because I think that was important for me as someone who is also committed to this work, not sure if this makes sense.*

*Regards,*
*Mick*
……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Mick's response to his character portrait alerted me to the fact that the portraits as presented in chapter 5 were really 'sanitised' in a way the narratives were constructed as monologues. Of course this is not how the interviews went, there were discussions and questions and responses that I filtered out of the portraits. Most importantly I filtered out my own 'part'. So in chapter 8 I try to bring myself back but also to open up the portraits in a way that they can 'talk' to each other and to the theory that informs this study.

Dennis: *"Yes I think just be careful not to truncate it and sort of smother it, the best way is to go with his sort of cubist metaphor and going through different spaces and different angles and walking through the painting. Keep it flowy and create a coherence."*

Keeping this advice in mind I wrote chapter 8 distinctly differently from chapter 5 in which I presented the portraits. The portraits stood alone and although they were part of a narrative they did not really 'speak' to each other. In chapter 8 the characters climb out of their individual portraits to have conversations and become part of each other's stories.

*In the middle of Daisy's island is the forest in which I now stand. In front of me is a door. I open the door to find the room where my story first began. A kitchen table with a pile of unmarked student essays on one side and a photo album on the other. But the room is different. A group of people are sitting around the table. Two chairs are empty. I sit down on one and notice the tail of Past poking out from under the empty chair. "Why are you here in my story?" I ask the people around my table. "We are the portraits you created and we would like to discuss the story with you - after all it is about us". I take out my notebook and write 'Chapter 8' at the top of a blank page before I start doodling in the margin. I look up to see Future sitting in the tree outside my window.*

**Chapter 8: Talking Portraits**

This chapter is presented as a dialogue between the different character portraits as they sit around the table and discuss the questions derived from Kumashiro's four conceptualization of anti-oppressive education. Some sections in this chapter are a repetition of the character portraits which were presented in chapter 5. However, here the 'stories' are not presented as individual monologues, but rather as a dialogue between characters. The purpose is to 'read' the portraits through an anti-oppressive lens as they overlap and 'talk' to each other.

Marguerite: *In Kumashiro's framework, the first conceptualisation of anti-oppressive education is education for the other which is where we try to improve the experiences of those we read as other in our classrooms*. **I wonder how we focus on the negative experiences of the other in our stories.**

Mick: *I'm also quite worried so…when we're teaching our students, when we're doing heteronormativity, heterosexual privilege and we're talking in class, we showed them a video of a transgendered girl, but what that video does is that it shocks students, like what the hell is happening, ja what is wrong with girl, what is wrong with that girl's parents, and so I've started asking questions, because we are showing this video because we want to trouble what's normal. But in our attempt to try and trouble the norm are we not using people's identities to shock people? So for me I'm uncomfortable with the fact that it shocks people so much, and I don't want to use someone's identity to shock someone into a learning experience. So I'm slightly troubled with that, because their response, it's of disgust, it's of extreme confusion…. It's very tricky, but I see the positive in it because then at the end when the students did their projects they actually did their projects about transgendered identities which I was shocked about… That they actually did think about… But in the moment in that class when I get those responses, 'cause I'm thinking, what if there are students who identify as transgender in the classroom, because I'm sure that space is not comfortable for that student so what does it mean?*

*I mean another example that I have, we teach another module where we look at culture as one of the themes and I showed them a video of Somalian African men, that get taken from Somalia and they get taken…it's a National Geographic documentary that they did, and they get taken to America, and the culture shock these people experience, but I was… The first time it happened I didn't pay attention, but I showed it to the Afrikaans class, and I remembered laughing that happened in the class, laughing at these men eating potato baked chips for the*

*first time from a bag, and crisps and making use of the toilet, I remember the laughing that happened, and then I remember feeling so uncomfortable at the end, 'cause I was like ok, are we learning about culture at the expense of African black identity here, and why is there so much of laughing, and it was the same thing that happened in the English class, so it's those things for me, are we focusing so much on the negative.*

Marguerite: *So when we talk about education for the other there might be certain systemic and structural aspects of oppression that stay intact. It does not trouble power or privilege, but rather just gives information of the other's experiences. I suppose the contradiction here is that as educators we might be using the experiences of those we view as othered to reinforce the idea of the othered experience as negative.*

FridaFreire: *Yes, in doing this we are cementing those otherings. So we must rather ask **in what way is our story looking past the privileging of normal?***

Marguerite: *Even in writing this thesis I am making myself guilty of looking past the privileging of normal. I am using a specific language in a specific format to tell the story, but as Alice pointed out language is never neutral. Language is gendered. Language is sexist. Language is racist. The English language itself is a symbol of power with footprints of imperialism and colonialism trailing behind it.*

Alice: *Yes, you must remember that English is a colonial language anyway, but it is also a language of power and it's the language of access for our students, so they need to know English, that's it…I think university…if you want a job, where you gonna go? Unfortunately it does mean we want to let go of certain things. I know there are not many Indian people of my age that know any of our language, cause then we made choices about that.*

Marguerite: *As a high school teacher I often heard my students say "that is so gay" which was a way to signify that it was something outside of the norm and something negative. And all this is embedded in the same language I use to tell this story. I think it is important to stay conscious of this. For example, before doing this research I had never really given much thought to the way that gender pronouns are used to categorise and police gender, and impose hierarchies like he/she, him/her, etc. Now I am consciously aware of it, and also of the alternatives that exist like s/he or ze. Yet in many ways, despite that knowledge, I still impose pronouns on the people around me and make use of gendered language to describe the world I live in. The way I use language is tied up with the way I have grown to understand the world, but this research is helping me to trouble previous ways of knowing.*

FridaFreire: *But what about the institutional constraints we have to work in?*

Marguerite: *You mean that sometimes new ways of knowing seem so divorced from the environments we live in? That makes it really difficult. For example, before a student reaches my office the university has already classified them as either male or female in the registration process. In working in a university residence I am made acutely aware of the gendered environment we work and live in. Even though it is a co-ed residence there are strict separations between male and female residents and corridors. Yet what is seen as a 'normal' separation by the university does not always make much sense, for example when a transgendered woman is placed on a 'male corridor'.*

Dennis: *As long as people do not fit into these categories then the university sees this person as the problem, yet it is the university who creates these categories.*

Marguerite: *It seems to me that as an extension of the wider social context the residence is a heteronormative environment in which patriarchy and male privilege are seldom questioned. I remember, for example, of a conversation I had with a group of men about the smoking section in the residence, and how they assured me that only males in the residence smoked, even though about 150 females live there! Many conversations I have with female students are about 'fears' that male students will come into their rooms at night, or onto their corridors. Females can use their student cards to swipe in on any female corridor and males on any male corridor, but they cannot swipe into a corridor of the opposite gender. So there is such a lot of sexual policing around heterosexual relationships and yet the same-sex relationships are completely ignored, rendered invisible and denied. Even though I work in the space and feel intensely troubled by so much of this I find myself sometimes lacking the language to address all the intersecting forms of oppression that exist. So many things are going on simultaneously that sometimes it feels like the moment you try to address race then gender pops up and as you turn your back to address sexuality then class privilege demands your attention and so on and so on.*

Dennis: *So you must be careful not to privilege one form of oppression over the other and at the same time be aware and critical of intersectionality.*

Alice: *How do we talk about the privileging of the normal if it is so embedded in our institutions and our lives?*

Marguerite: *Mick, do you remember that presentation by Robert Pattman (2015) on qualitative analysis? And during the presentation he showed a picture of a younger version of himself and some other boys in a school rugby team photo. He talked about his schooling experiences and said that he went to a school where you had to have a penis to attend, and then your parents had to be wealthy too. He said that he never noticed that everyone was white until he looked at the picture later on, and he also realised that women had been absent in this space, but were much talked about, provided they were your girlfriend and not your mother. I found his way of using language to describe the 'obvious' very useful in deconstructing assumptions about the 'normal' by making them explicit. When we describe our seemingly ordinary experiences in this way, they seem rather absurd. Perhaps in working towards anti-oppressive practice we are tasked with describing 'normal' to see its absurdity.*

Alice: *This makes me think of the school principal who insisted to see my birth certificate to determine my race and really just the absurdity of racial categorisations. I've told you that on the first day I went to this new school in the afternoon the principal wanted to see me and she asked: "What are you? What is your race?" I was not sure…so she said: "Are you coloured? She just said: "Are you coloured or are you Indian?" and I was like so uncertain about what I was (laughter)… You know so I said I'm coloured (laughter)… And so she called my mother that day and she asked for my mother to come to see her and to bring my birth certificate. And on the birth certificate it said Indian and I, uh, you know then she told my mother that: "You know she said she's coloured." So my mother said: "You know you need to understand in the school that she came from they never made an issue of the race, because we were mixed…"*

Marguerite: *But one has to consider the origin of these categories and also their functions. For example, racial categorisations in South Africa have roots in colonial history, were strongly engrained with apartheid, and are still used widely in our present day context. In many ways racial categories are used to talk about the existing inequalities the South African society and were also used by many of you to situate yourself in this story.*

Mick: *Yes I remember when I was drawing my clown and I was…as I was drawing the hands… that was something that was towards the end and I was selecting a colour for the hands, and then I selected brown, which represents my race. So when I put that down I really thought about my race, because I think my race…particularly in my work environment is something... that I'm CONSIOUSLY aware of, you know, most of the time and probably because of the work and…*

Celine: ***It seems to me that a lot of our stories tell of experiences of being othered or othering in a way that keeps the us/them binary intact.*** *I think of my own experience of being this black woman in Poland. It was WHITE… Just white people, some of them have never seen a black person before. I promise you I remember the one lady just came to do this [Celine runs her finger over her cheek] to see if my skin would peel or something….*

Alice: *I have this white student now and she is working in a black school. And you know then she talks to me and you know I'm like ok fine I know it must be difficult being a WHITE teacher in a school where there's black children because for her… Yes, and they will say to her I will not listen to you because you are white…and then what do I say to her? Because I don't know what it means to be white in this black space. But also I remember as a child when I came back to Pietermarizburg and I went to that INDIAN school….I didn't look typical…like a typical Indian you know? And I had this kind of accent that was not Indian. So I remember I was in grade 7 and I came to the school for the first day….uhm. Everybody…you know I felt so out of place, because they had obviously been in the same school together and they kind of knew everybody or uh, you know and I felt different and I was MADE to feel different, because I had come from this other kind of school… But the first day that I arrived there, my uh, everybody thought that I was coloured, ok, because I had this curly hair and I had this different accent and, uh, maybe I looked coloured. Probably I looked coloured (laughter) and so I was made to feel… It was hard… difficult for me to make friends…*

Marguerite: *Alice, when I think of how that school principal asked you: "What are you?" not, "Who are you?" the question highlights the way in which social identity is often seen to precede personal identity. But if we really want to push beyond the us/them binary the question must also change from "Who are we?" to "What can we become?" In a way you troubled the principal's understanding of racial categories by refusing to identify what you are, or claiming an identity which she would not accept.*

FridaFreire: *When we talk about the us/them binary I also think of how these might be challenged and enforced in the same space. I mean I went to a school where, which illegally allowed children of colour entry before 1994, because I mean the administrators just believed that this is, obviously it's wrong to have segregation and so those…that in terms of race I was fortunate to grow up in these integrated spaces that challenged very strongly the us/them binary in terms of racial difference BUT in terms of religion for example the us/them binary was very much set in stone, and kind of hammered into our experiences and so it was ok to*

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*have racial difference, but I mean religious difference was just absolutely unacceptable, and so that was the biggest thing I really had to critique for myself when I eventually escaped… Uhm, and you know then there were silences, I mean sexuality to me was silenced, it wasn't…it was not even…it was NOT spoken about and it never even crossed my consciousness EVER, uhm so that kind of binary was not even kind of visible. But I think now in the academic space I am becoming more aware of the binary that exists between empirical and experimental research approaches. You know why is this empirical positivist stuff always being kind of held up as this wonderful clever scientific thing and the rest being pushed aside…, but I think now it's really, now when I work in a research context that really the strongest us/them binary for me I think that remains is the empirical versus the experiential just to say that…uhm and within that is sort of…is contained I think so much of the clues of what we need to build social cohesion…because we don't listen to other people's stories…*

Marguerite: *Listening to each other's stories can help us fill the gaps in our knowledge, but also help us trouble our existing knowledge which links to Kumashiro's second framework of anti-oppressive education. In troubling existing knowledge we need to ask **questions about how our knowledge is stereotyped and partial.***

Chubby: *I remember we once had a workshop on stereotypes here at the faculty. One of the black professors said how white people always walked so fast and we said that black people are always so relaxed…these are stereotypes we have of each other.*

Alice: *When moving to the Free State I became aware of how little we know of each other. It was a very difficult…and you know people would look at you….because…and then you kind of realised how little, and what apartheid did to us and how little we know about each other, because people immediately would assume that because I'm Indian, I'm Muslim… And my race has absolutely nothing to do with my religion… So my racial identity… and the first thing they would ask is: are you Muslim? And, uhm and I'd hear these like silly questions and stuff….things like do you all eat with our fingers and I…well that made me realise how divorced the Free State was from other spaces. And eating curry for breakfast lunch and supper… Bollywood – I mean everyone knows Bollywood in the world! And then here you would kind of realise how very separate and divorced people were and how deeply entrenched apartheid still is…*

Mick: *So our lack of knowledge can lead to stereotyped and partial knowledge, but I also wonder* **how the other is excluded, silenced, invisible, distorted and marginalised in our stories.**

Alice: *Yes, because you know our students don't want to talk about race, because they feel…and I'd be very honest with you, even our black students, and it's the black middle class, and when I say black I mean coloured, Indian, African students…the middle class black student feels like…I got a white friend, so I'm ok and it doesn't affect me. Issues of race and racial inequalities don't affect me and then one time when we were discussing race, we were discussing in the…class and there were one of the coloured students that got up and said I want to talk about race…and "I know you all for four years, it's my fourth year and I've been sitting with the Afrikaans…", because she is Afrikaans, but she is coloured, and she said "I've been sitting with you all for four years. But how many of you know me, what my name is even. And so I wanna talk about race and I wanna talk about how I feel a sense of, well you know like I don't feel a sense of I belong in the classroom space and is it because of me being coloured?" Is it, because, what other reason could it be? And she never came back to the class after that…It was easier to for them to speak about issues of gender, because they could see, particularly in an early childhood classroom how very gendered…some of our spaces even in early childhood classrooms and the kind of, of, of roles that we allocate to children and responsibilities, and it can be quite gendered, but biased. Now when it came to issues of sexuality the first thing they were quoting was the Bible…And you know…*

FridaFreire: *I think we silence somethings just by falling into those old habits, almost out of respect sometimes, how do you treat people really differently without making them uncomfortable, how do you cross barriers of race AND gender AND sexuality AND ethnicity AND language, without making a complete mess and embarrassing your colleagues, you know I work with colleagues who are from across the African continent and many of them male, I think the issue here is not race, the issue is gender. I'm a younger woman, in their communities they are respected as older men, now I'm addressing them in a way that I'm sure must be completely disrespectful, but I'm negotiating all these different barriers, and it's exciting, but it's also, I don't have a translator to help me you know translate these kind of capitals that I must understand, that they must understand, for me I'm a gay women, what do they think about that, I mean do they… We don't talk about it, I mean some of them are very religiously conservative… We are not having those conversations because it's not appropriate.*

Marguerite: *It is almost like when we try to fill one gap another opens up. Our knowledge is always partial and we can never fully know. We can only disrupt and trouble what we think we know to allow difference into our stories.*

Celine: ***But how do our stories actually trouble or disrupt?***

Marguerite: *In chapter 7 I wrote about the various interruptions that were part of this research process. I view these disruptions as necessary to open up new trapdoors and to lead us to new readings and new understandings. However, disruptions in any form are taxing and tiring and messy. During this research and especially after the death of Dot I felt – emotionally drained. I came to a point where I simply couldn't really keep the balls in the air anymore. Where I couldn't sleep anymore and where I couldn't really be present while I was awake. In every situation I felt like I was elsewhere. On the one hand I felt the pressing urgency to <u>be PRESENT</u>, but in reality it was becoming increasingly difficult to do so. I felt like I was constantly floating away like the little girl with the red balloon as the research process took me deeper and deeper into the maize of words and thoughts and feelings. Floating, getting lost, wandering aimlessly, losing focus…these are all important in this type of research.*

Alice: *I remember telling you that I also felt so lost and uncertain a lot of the times – that is why I used the Alice in Wonderland metaphor – constantly searching for something.*

Marguerite: *But I think this feeling of being lost is also useful. I recently attended the Arts in Society Conference and went to a session about Theorising Creative Practice-led Research through Indigenous Concepts (Nepia 2015). The author is of Maori origin and explained how at one point during his PhD his supervisor told him to focus, and then he phoned his grandmother and she said you can never find anything if you don't get lost first. To do research in which you give up control and truly allow yourself to get lost is not so easy. It means you have to be emotionally involved in what you are doing, which at times can be really difficult…. And emotion disrupts reason. It makes us pause to feel what the other person is feeling, rather than think what the person is saying. The problem is that as educators many of us were trained (formally and informally) to tune out our emotions, to remain in control and impartial. But when we want to teach in anti-oppressive ways we cannot ignore the uncomfortable moments, or the times where we feel distress and dismay or that we need to react. It is precisely in these moments that our emotions open up the trapdoor and a possibility for change presents itself through an awareness of something that was previously concealed or suppressed which is now bubbling to the surface. Challenging oppression is therefore a disruptive, uncomfortable and*

*difficult process as pointed out by Mdunge (2014, p.61) "…despite having knowledge about oppression and how crippling it is to those who are affected by it, I still had great difficulty in challenging it in public spaces".*

Mick: *Sometimes when I am trying to challenge oppression I feel it is like making the students leap across a cliff, you know? They have to leap and they might get hurt and they don't even know what is on the other side of familiar. The familiar side is where students are comfortable, everything is normal and they know everything and nobody is rocking the boat and I think when we started to talk about the issue of race and we didn't move away from it, it was like now I made them to be in that space, that dangerous space where there is nothing and I actually pushed them to a foreign place, so it's like going to another planet and someone just drops you off there. 'Cause suddenly they were hearing different perspectives, black students were talking about their experiences and it was like - now what's happening? And the black students were also hearing the perspective from the white students so they were in a very foreign space. I always want the students to make that leap to the other side of the cliff, to the foreign space, but I think it is also about me constantly having to make that leap, because this for me was also a foreign space where I was othered, and I had to force myself to stay in that space in order for my own learning to occur… my work being about moving the students, to that, to the other side, but actually a lot of this work is about moving myself onto that cliff, so it's like I'm moving with my students. So I think for me it's also if I had the choice I would probably just not teach in this area, but when I'm teaching in this area I have to move myself from a space where I'm comfortable. I think it is both ways the cliff, and not just students but constantly also me, of always having to be on that side all the time…what Jonathan Jansen always says: "Be a stranger to yourself." I don't know if you've heard him speaking of how we really need to start being strangers within ourselves, and for me that's what anti-oppressive education means, it means how do I become the other even within even myself. So it's about moving myself from everything that I'm comfortable with, and placing myself in spaces where people are considered othered, where probably I'd be the one who is othered and he speaks about how then it means I must pray with people who pray differently to me I must eat with people who might eat differently to me, converse with people who speak a different language to me. So in that sense I become the other within even myself…*

Marguerite: *Mick, I am thinking now of the time we had lunch with the other postgraduate students in our cohort. Peter said that he had been a student in your class and you said: "I remember you, Peter…you once walked out of my class. We did a class on privilege and we*

*asked everyone who had a car to stand up. And all the white people were standing and I asked the class what they noticed, and a coloured girl put up her hand and said that all the white people are standing. And you got so angry, didn't you Peter? – You said something like: 'Well if you don't have a car, why don't you just go buy yourself a car??!!!' And you stormed out of class'' And I remember there were a few moments of intense discomfort around that otherwise politically correct table and then we started talking about the discomfort. We asked Peter why he had reacted that way and if he would have done it differently now. We talked about him being triggered by his white guilt, but also how even though in that moment it seemed like learning was suspended it was actually just a seed being planted for something else and now, years later, we could sit around the table and talk about it. The learning moment was happening around that table long after that class was over. Sitting at that table I thought that it was so interesting that what we think might be a lost moment in the class can grow to become something different at a later stage. It was also evident that it was the discomfort that helped all of us to move into a space of learning where we could use our shared experiences to theorize and try to make sense of what might have remained just a disruptive and uncomfortable event.*

*However, the question is not just in what way our stories disrupt, but in what way they are disrupted? I remember a conversation you and I had towards the end of the research, FridaFreire. It went something like this:*

> Me: *I'm going to send it to you [it being the portraits], I'm going to email it you and you know from there on you're welcome to say… to say anything or to say, you know - take it out!…if you want me to add something or…and and and then you know I'm just going to sort of go on with the story and see how it develops…*
> FridaFreire: *Ok*
> Me: *So, but it really is A STORY.*
> FridaFreire*: A story story? The characters are…*
> Me: *A story story…*
> FridaFreire: *The characters are DOING things? Like killing each other…*
> Me: *They might, I think they might kill each other (laughter) I don't know, I don't always have control over them…*

Marguerite: *I think what we were talking about was really giving up the desire to 'control' the research. Once you enter into a collaborative, narrative and fictional space you have to be open to the characters and how they shape and change the story. And how the context changes*

*and this also alters the story. At the same time you have to be conscious of how the 'story' is created by real live people – real mortal people like Dot who died before the research was complete, but who continues to contribute through her presence in my memory and readings and re-readings of our one interview. I also realised how I had to give up control in the research process for it to evolve and become something else, much in the same way that an artist lets the artwork take shape without necessarily trying to control the process. I couldn't plot out every detail of what would and should happen. Sometimes I just had to follow my gut, or my intuition, or just look up from the screen at what was going on around me to make sense of the world. So our stories seem to have the potential to disrupt by opening a 'trapdoor' in the familiar which might lead to emotion and discomfort and help us leap across the cliff to the unfamiliar side. But our stories do not just disrupt, they are disrupted as they take us down unexpected paths which we could not predict; on a journey we cannot control, even if we want to.*

Chubby: *Uhm, one has so many things you want to do perfectly, but you cannot do everything perfectly. You really… One really makes mistakes and sometimes you say something and feel yourself go cold… Uh, perhaps it is my personality, or perhaps one can be so busy sometimes…because like a cat I want things perfect, a cat will lick himself clean and make sure he is fed…uhm sometimes a guy has so many things he wants to be perfect that you cannot do everything perfectly… I am a calm person, uhm, I do not lose my head easily, in a crisis I can actually keep my head above water and raise above the challenge. So losing my head is not part of who I am.*

Alice: *In all of this I just wonder how **the self is privileged in the story?** Again I think of my white student teaching in the black school and how they will say to her I will not listen to you because you are white…and then what do I say to her?*

Marguerite: *Uhm, but I mean for me that's sort of part of…now when I go into the classroom that's something I have to be very… I have to interrogate the fact that I am white and I'm teaching black kids and why is that? And I have to be sort of open and honest in my role with them…ok the reason I'm here is probably because of apartheid and I've been privileged in a way that I can be here…and you know why is it that I'm a teacher, that's something you sort of…you have to bring that into the room as well… But is it possible, not to privilege ourselves? That's what I'm wondering, like the only way that I can think not to privilege yourself, is where*

*you see absolutely no more distinctions between you and the people that you're working with. So is that, is that the space that we're working towards?*

Mick: *Yes it's difficult, I don't know if it is possible? I'm trying to think how do I even get to…it's something I would like to work towards.*

Marguerite: *I mean the title of lecturer…or teacher, already puts me in a privileged position.*

Mick: *Exactly ja control of time, how we use the time, how these students sit, I'm already in a very privileged position…it's so difficult and I actually don't want to let go of some of that privilege. I want to have control of the time, because I have a curriculum, I want to have control of the groups cause I'm thinking if I let them decide groups they're gonna…it's so difficult, so there's a strong desire from me to hold on to some of this power that I have over these students, but I think there are other elements in which we can be able to relinquish the privilege we have…uh in terms of being who we are as teachers…so for example as being male, able bodied, I need to be able to be aware of those privileges that I bring in my identity…*

Marguerite. *But really this frustration of not really being able to **get this right** seems to be something we all struggle with. Could this feeling of being the one who CAN get things right be yet another way of privileging the self?*

FridaFriere: *I have a friend who always says "Oh, don't be a social justice bully."*

Marguerite: *So in trying to do the right thing we may be making ourselves guilty of a sort of social justice policing in which WE know and OTHERS need to be informed? I often get irritated by how people use Facebook as a sort of platform to preach their point of view (which they perceive as the right point of view) and then also use it as a sort of way to point fingers or blame others for not sharing this point of view or not liking their post or whatever – I call it 'Facebook social justice' and I am not really convinced of it's worth - it is like a naming, shaming and blaming type of exercise which probably makes the person doing all the posting feel really righteous, but so what? I think something I am starting to realise, it is not…as a person and as teacher it is not MY responsibility to fix this thing right? Like I have to make it right, I have to fix it… I have to make sure everyone is fine… But THAT's actually hanging on to a lot of control, and it's like thinking, I'm the person… I'm the person with the power and the responsibility, but that's still in a mind-set where I'm not actually enabling…I hate that word: enabling, cause it is also such a…You know I'm gonna enable you to do something…*

Mick: *To say I'm the teacher, I'm… I need to fix this. You know I think perhaps we need to… I need to start thinking about IT as being a shared responsibility between myself and my students, rather than making it all my…so let me think about it, it is my responsibility, just as much as it is yours as it is for the students for everyone to feel…share that responsibly rather than put it all on myself.*

Alice: *So developing students to be a bit more critical is a difficult… I find that to be very difficult… But this is what I have to constantly ask myself…uhm…what am I saying? In what I am saying am I creating….uhm…do I think of students as being deficit because they don't think in the way that I do. So I have to constantly like think about what I do and what I do and what I say. You know sometimes you leave a classroom and wonder: what just happened there?*

Marguerite*: I know that feeling well - the feeling that we get when we cannot control everything and we simply do not have the answers.*

Mick: *Yes like the other day I was standing there in the front and I was teaching them and was like hmph what did I do here? And there was this backlash about how this is terrible that we keep talking about this race thing and…so I walked out of that classroom feeling uhm, uhm extremely confused, frustrated and I wondered if I did more hurt than healing in that classroom, uhm will these students come back next week. What happened here?*

Marguerite: *So if we go from this space of uncertainty and move to Kumashiro's third approach we have to ask how some groups are favoured, normalised and privileged. **How do we become critical of privilege and othering in our stories?***

Celine: *Marguerite, when you came to university I imagine your father brought the bakkie and a fridge for your room. I was just dropped off. No one ever saw me. I did not even know what a Rector was. My school didn't prepare me for university as your school did.*

Alice: *She is right you know these white girls just don't see their privilege.*

Marguerite: *You are both right, as a white female student I certainly didn't see my privilege. So much of the work seems to centre on our own learning and unlearning of what we might consider to be normal. I went to a school where everyone passed Grade 12 and everyone went to university. My father had started working for the university when I was small and I consequently grew up listening to research terminology around the dinner table. As a child I had more books than toys. I had always known who a Dean or a Rector were. I always knew that I would go to university and I never thought that going to university was special or*

*extraordinary - it was just 'normal'. There were many things I just took for granted and I am sure there are still many things like that. Things I don't even question, because I think it is 'normal'.*

FridaFreire: *Because we don't listen to other people's stories… Most South Africans don't…we're busy doing research that makes money or whatever…are doing cultural tourism and doing all these development projects that do what? Other, just cement those otherings… I don't know if you read that whole analysis of the Franschoek debacle where the black writer Eusebius McKaiser made headlines by saying he wouldn't attend such a festival again because he felt like a sort of anthropological curiosity with a mostly white audience and still predominantly white festival culture. And a white woman in the audience got upset and asked how much longer must she feel guilty about her white skin and what about the charity work and what must she do? And McKaiser said to stop doing charity work in townships and to go home and confront white privilege in the spaces where we live, around the dinner table and in our home… I think perhaps it mirrored some experiences I've had, when I was still forced to go on mission trips to Botswana and wherever, and I saw angry young men, uhm just walking around just saying, you know: "Why are you here? You know what are you doing in our space? What do you think you've got the answers?" Which to me was kind of the death 'spyker' (nail) in the coffin of my Christianity, just thinking ja you're right, I don't have any answers for you at all…one guy said you know: "What do you come here for, you come and pray, you don't have jobs for us, you don't have food or employment, you just come here with your religion." So I mean, ja that's…and how do we change that?*

Marguerite: *Ok, so the question is then **how do our stories talk of unlearning of what was previously normal?***

Chubby: *Look I am older than most of you and I remember as a small child of around five, I wondered why there were separate entrances at the shop and the post office. We went through one entrance and black people through another. I was small, but I remember wondering about that so I think there was sort of racism in the background of my youth, but I think in our home it was different. Racism wasn't an issue there. But I remember wondering about the separate entrances….*

Alice: *I also grew up in apartheid and I mean even when it came to things like the movies or going to certain places, we knew that there were certain places that were only reserved for certain people you just like kind of went with the flow… Because that's what our parents did*

*anyway, and then we just went wherever we had to go with them. Uhm the first time that I actually became consientized was when I went to university. I went to Natal University, UKZN when it was Natal University, and uhm, and it was in my sociology classes and my English classes mind you, though the poetry and South African short stories, and uhm then those kinds of things like the issues around race and equality and stuff came about…*

FridaFreire: *I think I came from such a conservative background that in terms of my family and all the discourses that I grew up with that university was incredibly liberating for me… So I think perhaps in the early years I was not as critical of the institution as I could have been, because in comparison to childhood it was just freedom, there were ideas and poetry and art, professors… I started realising, you know when I stepped into a townships school environment, it was part of teaching prac, I realised ok here are socio-economic divisions that go beyond anything I've been able to understand before. How on earth do I negotiate…how do I teach when children around me are hungry? How do I do that? I didn't have… I felt like absolutely horrified at the inequality, but also I felt disgusted at who I was…And obviously the idea of privilege and of being absolutely unequal and having to perform an educational function and just me thinking…this is not possible.*

Marguerite: *So it is like moving from your 'normal' space to a different space lead to experiences of intense self-doubt and discomfort. Discomfort arises when what you take for granted is suddenly challenged* (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1072). *The value of discomforting emotions might lead educators to critically examine their constructed self-images and also critically examine how they have learned to perceive others. Work in the field of peace education has pointed to the fact that teachers can be the ones to stimulate prejudices and stereotypes and thereby contribute to normalize particular beliefs* (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1073).

Chubby: *But when I think of accepting certain status quo's like sexual orientations then…. at one stage in my life I was very critical of that. I come from an Afrikaans background and people were very critical about gays and lesbians, but you know through the years I've had gay and lesbian students…And I once had a gay couple for neighbours. The one would stand with the dishcloth over the arm while the other mowed the lawn. One was an accountant and the other a chemist, and they were lovely people. So I think I realised they were normal people. And then also through my son, he has a girlfriend and he will marry her, but he also has gay friends, and then you realise these are lovely people and their sexual orientation might be different, but*

*your perspective start to change. I can interact with my gay students without being pretentious… I think that is one of the changes I went through in the last 10 to 15 years. I became softer in my judgement… I accept… A lot has changed but some of the textbooks are still very one-sided, and now I am aware of that… I think all these things make you aware, like when people use terms like 'manpower'… I think it's all about awareness… There are things I don't know about and I might be stepping on people's toes, but when I do I think there should be a space to talk about those things…*

Marguerite: *So really the discomfort makes us aware and helps us to become critical of ourselves in the stories?*

Mick: *Well for example I think of a classroom discussion where we had a lot of African male students…cultural…traditional…and they were very vocal in class about their thinking of women's role in society and men's role, but in that class I was the one that always spoke to that…responded directly to those male students, and I was the one who always wanted to tell them how wrong…challenge their thinking… I wasn't aware that that was also coming from a male privilege of mine, 'cause in that class there were female students… I never allowed the space for them to be the ones that do the challenging, so I'm the one… I'm going to be the fighter for women again…that's still…it's male privilege, like why am I not letting voices of those female students be the ones to speak directly to these, so in that case for example…like you said, to say I'm the teacher, I'm… I need to fix this.*

Marguerite: *Well I also have an example, and maybe you can help me think this through? You know when I taught high school students I had the students clean out the room at the end of the day, because it's an art room and we have to just sort of pack things away and sweep and take out the bins, and this is like, you know, we did it in school, so I wanted to implement this system. So it was a group of black students and the one guy said to me no he won't do it, he won't sweep the floor, 'cause he's been to the mountains and so… I didn't even know like what is he saying to me, you know - I don't know, so I immediately felt like…ok it's gonna be racist of me now to insist that he has to sweep the floor, because now I don't understand what he is saying here, and then, so after that the guys never swept the floor…the girls would sweep the floor and the guys would take out the trash…And I just left it like that and then…so when I started doing the research I thought of that and I thought it was because I was being scared of being racist or seeming insensitive, or culturally insensitive, but then I was actually sort of keeping*

*this weird gender thing going, where the girls had to do one…so I don't know, what do you think of that?*

Mick: *So you're seeing it from a race lens whereas I'm seeing it from a very cultural lens, 'cause this is a cultural way of doing, or way of life for these young men coming back from the mountains…And you would probably know if you took the time to learn about the culture you would probably have a different way of responding to such a situation…There's the other part of it as well, because if you do force the boys to sweep, when does our social justice become an injustice? When you start to impose our… 'no, no, no you CAN sweep the floor even though you are a boy, it doesn't matter about your culture…'*

Marguerite: *That's what I'm asking, and I had to question myself…if this was a white boy, I would have said to him: "I don't care, you're going to sweep the floor", but why I couldn't say that…I had to…I was sort of like, then I thought it's not, it's like I have double standards, because like you said it was fear about something I didn't understand, and I thought, so what does it mean? So if for this child now…or a man now, not a child…so he's not supposed to do this, now I'm going to make him do this and it's because I'm this ignorant white person.*

Mick: *Let me ask you how would you deal with it now?*

Marguerite: *I still don't know and I'm writing this whole thesis trying to find an answer. I don't know. I think I would have just, I wouldn't have said…I think I didn't ask him, I didn't really ask him, tell me about that, what does it mean, why do you think that? And perhaps just ask the girls as well, what do you think, do you think this is. 'Cause I just ask…it's just something I don't know…I didn't ask about it. I just have to try and now do the right thing, but now I'm thinking there's no right thing, you know? It wasn't the right thing that I did and going back and making him sweep wouldn't be the right thing either…So I'm always trying to… 'Cause I think in South Africa for me its uncomfortable, I always feel we're trying to balance this racism, sexism and these two things are sometimes colliding with each other. And from a female point of view I'm always, you know, - EQUALITY – everyone should sweep the floor and no one gets away with it, and then from a white perspective…am I just…am I just being like a real idiot?*

Mick: *I also don't know, but as you are talking I'm seeing…it was such an awesome opportunity for even that student to reflect, it's actually a good learning opportunity that was there if you had engaged with the student in a discussion and I think that's all we can do, it doesn't matter at the end whether he sweeps or not…so tell me why don't you sweep? Ok, so do you think that sweeping is going to make you less of a man? Because I think most of the time*

*with culture we say things without having reflected on them at all. 'Cause I think taking a broom and sweeping just because he'd been to a mountain… but he probably never had a chance to process, to think about it in a reflective way and I don't think there's a right or wrong answer…but when we are confronted with those moments, and I'm now talking about myself as well, probably that's the way to go, to rather engage…*

Marguerite: *I think that's what I'm trying…where I'm now with my students it's like you know, something happens, something uncomfortable….That makes me uncomfortable as well, and then not to just run away from it, to say let's talk about it… I think that's what…that's what…how this is helping me in a way, although sometimes I still do run away and I think… but I didn't want to, I shouldn't have done, I should have... It seems to me **there are so many contradictions in our stories?** Like what we say and what we do…*

Celine: *I think that in a way growing up in an all-female household meant we had a lot of freedom. My mother in a way always emphasised how you don't need a man, and I became this Miss. Independent, but yet…its very tough when you're a lady because you have to buy your…your perfume, your you know stuff that you use monthly and all of that, which was, it was difficult. To say well my pocket money is one hundred and fifty rand I need to do my hair, I need to look, not good, but better... There's so much pressure on your side as a girl just to say I'm not gonna get pregnant, because remember if you get pregnant, you terminate your studies. Whereas if you're a guy you act like nothing is wrong.*

Marguerite: *You construct yourself as this strong and independent female. In your portrait I even made you a sort of superwoman, because that is how I see you. But perhaps there is an idea that to be a strong successful female one must assume a sort of traditional masculine role? That the institution we work for is still very much a patriarchal space and as females we must sort of be these superwomen figures to 'make it'.*

FridaFreire: *I once again want to go back to the institution and how there are so many contradictions in working for the university. Freire kind of speaks of education as the practice of freedom…but for me it's been, I mean freedom is a very holistic term: so intellectual freedom, the freedom to imagine and to create, I mean I've always seen…personally I've seen education as this massively liberating tool uhm…I think the character that I've created is trying to balance a very sort of intense idealism of how education can be based on snippets of kind of experiential knowledge throughout an entire lifetime of how it COULD be, but being held back on the other hand, by kind of logistical constraints and deep seated inequalities that go back*

*into education…Frida, so that was, I THINK ja, what I really like about her is the, the kind of ability to have overcome something tremendously debilitating, which I probably see as kind of a metaphor for working within institutional constraints like being disabled in a way…like she was physically but at the same time going like f-you to the system, I'm gonna do this anyway.*

Marguerite: *So the contradictions are within our stories, but also within our context. The stories cannot be divorced from the context. Who we are and where we are is connected. But what does that mean for **making the fluidity and multiplicity of our identities visible?***

Celine: *In my culture, in the black culture, you are not allowed to ask, you know, old people questions. You have to submit…so you know being in a very open environment, small environment in the house where we would ask anything now I start asking questions: "But mommy why don't I have…why is our dad not staying with us?" She had to be very honest with us you know to say: "Uhm, you know your father and I we divorced, the reasons are one, two and three, you know: he's cheating, he's doing… he was abusive, so I just decided to leave him". Ok so now it gives me the confidence…*

Marguerite: *On the one hand you point out that asking questions to grownups is not allowed in the 'black culture', yet you mention that because your father was absent you had a slightly different relationship with your mother and could ask and get answers. So in your story there is an intersection between culture and race, but also between culture and gender. When you talk of 'black culture' you talk of 'patriarchal black culture', and growing up with a single mother enabled you to challenge that. Many of my students also use the term 'black culture' or 'white culture' to speak about perceived racial differences, yet there seem to be such a lot of movement and fluidity in these identity categories. One day in the art class I was watching a black student paint a picture of a white man. Suddenly the student stopped painting and stared at me intently. I started to feel a little uncomfortable under the obvious scrutiny and went over to him to enquire:*

> Me: *Why are you staring at me?*
> Student: *I am trying to see your colour ma'am, what colour are you? I was looking at you and I realised your colour is not white, you actually seem to be a sort of light brown and pink sort of colour.*

Mick: *Yes I think of Celine's encounters in Poland where she is the only black person on the tram and a white woman ran her finger over Celine's cheek to see if the colour would come*

*off. Or Marguerite's experience of being a white person in Korea and having people come to take a picture with her or touch her hair. Or my own experience in Thailand where we were the only black people and people just stared at us.*

Marguerite: *We make judgements about a person's race based on their appearance. It is such a 'visual' judgement, but when it comes to sexuality it is more complicated.*

Mick: *For example I was in class and a student asked me but are you? You know - are you straight or gay? And I wondered what to say in this situation. Should I answer the student? If I said, "I am heterosexual", that might play into the student's homophobia and come with all the privilege. So I said nothing.*

Marguerite: *You resisted the desire of the student to place you in a category. But if I think of the story then some of you really had strong identifications with a particular identity, like Celine your narrative strongly centres on your female identity.*

Celine: *Yes, we never used to wear towels when you come out of the bath… So when I grew up it is just three females in the house and you know that can be quite tough …well I didn't see anything abnormal with not having a male in the house… I think one of the other things which my mother has also said…not out in so many words, but she would articulate that you become your own person, you don't need to...you don't need a man to get to where you want to go. So that's how I, I, I started becoming this Miss. Independent…*

Marguerite: *So in your character construction you bring in race, gender, culture, class and sexuality. These are some of the categories which come to mind when talking about oppression. We use these categories when talking about our experiences. But do we really trouble the categories or challenge them in any way? During one of our postgraduate research weekends I had the privilege of listening to Thabo Msibi (2015) speak about how problematic the categorisation of sexuality can be. LGBTI categories should be understood as part of a western knowledge project and are in many cases insufficient to address the experiences of people in an African context. It is not just categories of sexuality that can be problematized. During an earlier postgraduate research weekend I had listened to a talk by s.j. Miller (2014) who pointed out how over-simplistic gender categories of male and female can exclude and silence the experiences of so many people who do not wish to identify with either, and how these categories privilege cisgender people. Categories to some extent function in a hierarchical and positivist worldview were truth can be known and it is possible to sort our experiences and label them in neat little boxes. It leaves little room for fluid human experience. In textbooks on social*

*justice I have often seen neat tables and columns which explain to me that our world is divided in dominant and subordinate categories of power. In these textbooks there are lots and lots of academic articles. But that is not what I am looking for. I am looking for the stories, and for the experiences of people to connect me to these theories and trouble those categories. I am looking for the story of Olivia Chung (2013) who got pressured by her own mother to get eyelid surgery to make her Korean eyes look bigger; a story which is categorised under the heading of racism in the textbook. But could this story also tell us about sexism? Because I know for a fact that Korean men are not pressured to widen their eyes. Is it also classism? Surely eye surgery is only an option for the wealthy and perhaps a way to indicate one's class status. Or is this perhaps a story about heterosexism in the underlying presumption that women should beautify themselves to attract eligible males? Or are there other things that come into play? In fact it seems to me that categorizing ourselves and our stories might reduce us to essentialised beings and hinder an understanding of identity as fluid and ever-changing. If recipes and tables of how to be socially just in our classrooms were all that we needed to move towards anti-oppressive practice then surely we would be living in a completely transformed society by now? And if I hadn't lived in Korea for a large chunk of my life and known many friends who had subjected themselves to that sort of eyelid surgery then the title of that article would probably not have caught my attention, and I would have chosen to read something else. So where do I come into this story of anti-oppressive education? I must question how my experiences, and own social identity change the way I read these stories. This is where I think Kumashiro's fourth approach really comes in handy, because he says:*

> "Critical pedagogy needs to move away from saying that students need this/my critical perspective since such an approach merely replaces one (social hegemonic) framework for seeing the world with another (academically hegemonic) one. Rather than aim for understanding of some critical perspective, anti-oppressive pedagogy should aim for understanding for effect by having students engage with relevant aspects of critical theory and extend its terms of analysis to their own lives, but then critique it for what it overlooks or for what it forecloses, what it says and makes possible as well as what it leaves unsaid and unthinkable" (Kumashiro 2000, p.49).

*This can be done through disrupting, reworking and supplementation, rather than repetition. We should look beyond what is being said to the contradictions and silences and omissions in our stories. It also means we have to revisit our desire to ignore certain things. Part of this process is deconstructing the self/other binary which involves unknowability and*

*uncontrollability. So what are the silences in my own story? Why do I desire to ignore certain aspects of my identity and privilege others? I choose to focus on issues of race more than any other form of oppression. Perhaps living in his context I have become more comfortable (or used to) being critical of race and racism than of other forms of oppression? Even though my story touches on gender issues from time to time it doesn't say much about sexuality. Why am I less critical of my complicity with heteronormativity than with whiteness? Or why am I more concerned with my white privilege than with my cisgender privilege?*

*In trying to understand this I think back to a three day 'seminar' we had as grade 7 students which served as a sort of sexuality education. This was before the days of Life Orientation and it was up to the school to take such initiatives. The girls and boys were separated during the 'talks'. There was great secrecy and consequently great excitement about what was being discussed with the two groups behind closed doors. Thinking back now I realise that it was more a biology lesson on procreation than anything else. Sexuality was not discussed in the least. Desire or pleasure certainly didn't come into it. Sexual orientation was not even mentioned and heterosexuality was taken for granted. I think of another time where during a meeting of what was then known as the CSV (Christelike Studente Vereniging /Christian Student Organisation) at school we were asked to pledge not to succumb to the sin of pre-marital sex. Not signing the little paper would make anyone the object of stares and frowns and whispers. So my education did not only deny me any knowledge of sexual diversity but it also emphasised (often through Christian teaching) that sex and sexuality were issues to be silent about and that conformity to a norm was not only expected, but that the failure to do so would lead to complete social isolation and punishment. My own identification as heterosexual has made it relatively easy for me to 'fit in' to this society and for this reason I am probably partially blind to heteronormativity. As a cisgender person I have never had feelings of discomfort when being forced to choose between the 'girls' room and 'boys' room. I had always felt comfortable to identify as a girl even though I felt the need to challenge some of the roles doled out to me because of this identification. Yet now as a residence head I am challenged in new ways and my story can no longer ignore cisgender privilege. For example, when a transgendered woman moved into the residence the Prime (student head of the residence) decided to put this person on a male corridor, but in a single room. When I asked about this he replied that the 'girls' had felt uncomfortable having her on the corridor. Yet from my observation the girls are much more comfortable around the transgendered woman than the men.*

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*The thing is that our stories are always leaving something (or someone) out. Even in trying to recognise oppression I am paying more attention to one part of my identity (racial identity) and less to others. For this reason educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education must continually look for the gaps and the silences in their stories if they want to see and be in new ways. And storytelling is a way for me to 'see' in new ways. It helps me to* **SEE what I might otherwise overlook.**

*There are many things I would rather prefer to remain hidden about my own experiences as an educator, but I find it easy to expose some of the more troubling experiences through employing the character 'Daisy'. For example, when I write about the time when she as a young student teacher had mistakenly thought that the three back boys in class had stolen the key she is helping me write about something I would otherwise have kept locked away. I am not keen to paint myself as a racist or a bad person in any way and this is why I need Daisy to reveal things I would rather hide – she can show me things about myself I would otherwise avoid or be blind to. When I tell this story of Daisy I can see how her social construction of us/them and black as other influenced her actions as a young student teacher. I can also see that somewhere in her mind she had made an unconscious connection between black and thief. The fact that she experienced the boys as 'challenging' or as trying to undermine her authority again ties in with her socially constructed binary world view of us/them and 'them' being out to get 'us'. Before this incident she had never considered herself racist, in fact far from it, she always made a point to criticize her friends for saying obviously racist things. Her parents, despite being products and beneficiaries of apartheid themselves, always emphasised the equality of all people before God and spoke out against racism. So where did this obvious act of racism stem from? Is it that racism lies beneath what we view as logic and controllable thoughts that jumps out form some unconscious place just like sexism, heterosexism and all the other isms? When she got confronted with a situation which she experienced as threatening she fell back on what she had internalised rather that what she thought she believed. Daisy thereby showed me that when we speak about oppression the unconscious often trumps the conscious and that even when I know my social justice textbook off by heart I am likely to act and teach in ways that are oppressive.*

*There may be so many forms of oppression I am not even aware of. I can only try to interrogate my actions on a continuous basis. For example, I had never given much thought to gendered pronouns as this is the way I know the world. But after a presentation and discussion on Queer Literacy Framework* (Miller 2014)*, I suddenly became conscious of how I use and impose*

*pronouns on those around me. I became aware of how Daisy is cisgender and more conscious of how she is 'gendering' those around her. In the narrative she often mentions the gender of a specific student in a manner of description. But how can she know if that student actually identifies as the gender she is imposing on them? She makes her assumptions based on dress or physical characteristics, which is naturally what she had been socialised to do. By doing this she is placing those around her into categorised boxes informed by a binary understanding of identity. So even as she tries to resist her own 'labels' she is labelling others. And labelling denies the diversity of experiences and identifications people might have.*

Mick: *For me looking beyond also means looking at the contextual realities in South Africa which are sometimes at odds with anti-oppressive theory. Like some of the things in the textbook as well…like my students' understanding of race in a South African context is very different to this book here, but very often I get told you know this is the theory, this is like the theory and I'm struggling…my students can't identify with this theory, my students still see, for example, according to this book here, race is something that is very white and black…my students very often see coloured or…Indian as privileged, but that's a contextual reality for most young people, but that's also a historical thing in South Africa, 'cause race was structured in these different levels…it's like now you must come back and fit it to the theory and so ja that's the problem that I'm having a lot…how do I…this race theory of oppression, there's parts of it which I'm uncomfortable with, there's parts of it which do not make sense to my students in South Africa, … 'cause it's not a reality for them…the grand narrative, grand theory that I'm using…*

Marguerite: *So the danger of trying to 'fit' the theory to our lives is that we might actually overlook what is happening in front of us. Our lives and our students' lives do not necessarily fit neatly into the theory of anti-oppressive education, and because of that our stories and experiences can help trouble the theory. Instead of overlooking or devaluing our own stories we must consider how they can help us engage with **ways to deconstruct the self/other binary to involve unknowability?***

*Here I think of hooks (2003, p.10) who says that "Whenever we love justice and stand on the side of justice we refuse simplistic binaries. We refuse to allow either/or thinking to cloud our judgement. We embrace the logic of both/and. We acknowledge the limits of what we know". In our stories we all spoke about moving from a space of comfort to discomfort, from being in control to feeling unsettled, and in the end it is about moving from doing things right to doing*

*things differently. For example, I remember Dot speaking about how as educators we are constantly moving – like nomads from one place to the next and how that movement can make us feel disorientated; almost like aliens.*

Alice: *I feel like, I'm sort of this character, but like Alice in Wonderland, you know? Like, like constantly searching for something… I'm not, like kind of getting there. So like I feel all this sense of uncertainty… I feel very unsettled and I feel like I'm really…uh…uhm…I'm lost kind of and I searching for something, I don't know what it is I'm searching….*

FridaFreire: *When I think of what we are trying to do here, of the purpose of higher education…it is something that lies so deep beyond this test or this information, there's something that kind of goes into the soul of why we are on earth and if you can try and find that and you try and conscientize yourself in a way then this learning is going to change the very structure of what you are.*

Mick: *Leap across the cliff with your students.*

Marguerite: *So if we are moving toward anti-oppressive practice then it means we cannot stay in a space of comfort and familiar 'normalcy', but we must constantly be searching for a rabbit hole or a trap door or make a leap to a dangerous, unknown space in which we must embrace discomfort and unknowability and in doing that we will become different. And then ask ourselves what is beyond, what are we not saying, **what do we desire to ignore in the story?***

*If we start within the frame of the interview we are actors performing roles: the researcher and the participant. We are performing this act in a specific setting and perhaps we even have a script in our heads (for example I had my theoretical questions I wanted to share) - on the table is a recording device and in my hand a notebook. We fill the recorded space with constructions of ourselves. We are constructing our memories and thoughts about what and who we are in that moment; the moment of the interview. Looking back to the transcripts of my interview with Dot I see the following:*

> Me: *Basically I want to know…the name of your character, and besides that I would like you to tell me about this character…*
> Dot: *And just like that you go over into an official tone of voice.*
> Me: *Yes [giggle]*

*Dot observed that the tone of my voice became more formal the moment I switched on the recording device. I was quite unaware that my tone of voice had changed until she pointed it out to me. She was calling attention to the constructed nature of what was taking place; how we had moved from a friendly conversation about art and teaching in general to a more 'official' conversation which was being recorded for research purposes. It was an interesting shift in which I was shifting from a 'friend' role to a 'researcher' role. In the interview Dot also talks about how we are constantly moving between spaces, and how our identities are always shifting from one setting to another. This constant change or move troubles the notion of fixed identities, or of identity as something consistent.*

*When I think of the second round of interviews they were very different from the first round. The conversations were less formal. During the second round I started to ask more questions and share more of my own experiences. So as I moved through the research process my relationship with all of you changed. We are constantly shifting and changing, not only in our relationships, but in our identities. As educators were are always moving between spaces; personal and academic. Dot stated how it is both challenging and exciting to always be moving between spaces. She saw herself as a nomad traveling between spaces outside the university and then in coming back to the academic world she almost felt like an alien. As an educator I find that it is impossible to just walk into a lecture and walk out as the same person, in the same way that it is impossible to walk into an interview and walk out the same person. The reason for this is human contact and the engagement with stories. This constant movement is the juggling act Mick also talked about. Whatever happens in the classroom changes us and whatever happens outside the classroom is reflected in our teaching.*

Mick: *I go into the classroom every time, and it's not like I go there because now I know everything… I learn something from the classroom and I learn something when I walk out of my classroom…so I…it's that continuous process. There is constantly a need for me to change roles in order to be able to be effective in the classroom.*

Marguerite: *And yet despite pointing out the disorientation and challenge of changing and juggling our roles both Dot and Mick also spoke of how they find their work exciting and joyful. Dot said: "But really I love my work, sometimes I cannot even believe how lucky I am to do this work…"*

Mick: *Yes, and I think…as much as all of this seems like it's a lot and it's overwhelming, for some reason I enjoy doing it.*

Marguerite: *Sometimes we feel happy and joyful and lucky. Sometimes we feel sad and angry and lonely and frustrated. We fluctuate between emotions. We embody different roles. We juggle different things. We are nomadic. We move between spaces. We get disorientated. Sometimes we enjoy the work, but we never feel that it is finished and we are constantly searching for something else. This work is never done, but rather a continuous process, a conversation taking place, an artwork being made or a story being told.*

At this point in the conversation Frank enters the room with fresh coffee for everyone.

Frank: *A better future is in the present, not in the future. It is in what you do NOW and how you handle THIS situation in THIS context.*

Marguerite: *Yes, you know this morning I was painting my toenails and Josh wanted to paint his nails as well and for a moment I hesitated and wondered if the other boys would tease him, but then I painted his nails anyway and he loved it!*

………………………………………………………………………………………………

D: So Marguerite, **what have you left unsaid?**

I have presented this chapter as a conversation between the participants sitting around my table. I am repeating some of the sections already presented in the character portraits from chapter 5, but here in chapter 8 I am framing the text as a dialogue between characters, rather than presenting 'portraits' or monologues. It is a construction or an artwork. In a way I am framing the portraits within the interview space. I use what the participants said within this frame to weave the portraits of their characters together and then bring them 'to life' as talking characters. What I do not include is everything that was happening outside the 'frame'. I already wrote about the 'interruptions' in earlier chapters, but now I would like to explore some of the unrecorded conversations and memories and feelings which I noted in my research journal. Keeping a research journal helped me keep track of what was happening outside the "recorded" frame of the interview. A lot of things were said informally - as I came into the room or before I left - which could also be of significance in addition to the recordings. For example, after the interview with Dot we spent some time talking about her difficulty with being a practicing artist within the academic space. Dot said that she was worried because there was an expectation of her as an academic to publish articles, yet she was so busy with practical work and exhibitions that it was really hard to find time to write. She said that a fellow academic had suggested she should just write an article about each exhibition, and she said:

"Well, why don't you just make an exhibition about every article you write?". Thinking back to this conversation I realise that we were also talking about the hierarchies of power that exist between science and art; text and image. Art research is often expected to follow and fit into the pattern of scientific research and the written text is seen as superior to visual representation in the academic context.

Another example of a conversation which took place outside of the interview space was at the end of my first recorded interview with Mick. We talked a bit about my new position as head of one of the co-ed on-campus residences and I told him how I really found the male/female power relationships in the residence extremely interesting and how it was so interesting to work with students in their living spaces, because the classroom is often so far removed from these. I had taken on this position while my research was under way and here I came to see how oppression was lived every day by all of us and how we collectively chose to uphold the status quo. Stepping into this position also made me reflect on my university years where I had lived in a female on-campus residence. On the day of our arrival the Prime (student head of the residence) had informed us that the residence was known for producing 'trouvrouens', which can be translated as 'suitable wives', and I remember how my young self had shuddered at the idea of coming to university for the sole purpose of becoming a 'suitable wife'.

In thinking about that which occurred outside the interview frame I also want to point to the power relationships that exist between the interviewer and the interviewee. Many of the participants were my age and friends or social acquaintances; however, Chubby was an older man I had only met formally. In interviewing him I used his title, whereas I did not use titles with any of the other participants. My Afrikaner upbringing compelled me to address this older man by using a title, and I would have felt very uncomfortable to use his first name. In my journal I wrote:

*Interviewing this participant was actually more difficult than the others. I felt less bold to bring in issues of social justice because I was unsure if he would feel comfortable with it (yet he did bring it in on his own account). I think I perceive him as an authority figure and my use of his title (instead of his name as I do with other participants) creates a distance between us. I am more reluctant to share my own viewpoints with him as I worry he won't agree. He speaks in the lazy Sunday voice of a dominee, which probably adds capital to my reading of his authority.*

I never tried to separate my own feelings and emotions from the research. Keeping a research journal helped me to go back to critically evaluate my reactions. When I read about my

reactions to the older white Afrikaans male participant I realised that these stem from my white, female, middle-class, Afrikaner upbringing. I was socialised to avoid conflict, to respect authority, to avoid talking about sensitive issues when it will make others uncomfortable, to be 'ordentelik' (decent), respectful and nice. As an educator working towards anti-oppression I also realise that I sometimes have to break that mould to challenge oppression in order to become different.

Our stories do not provide answers. We leave things out. We might be the main characters but we are not always the triumphant agents of change that we might wish to be. Mostly, we are caught up in complex systems of oppression that we recognise but struggle to challenge. Yet, in writing this story and co-creating the portraits with the participants I was able to trouble my social identity, it helped me challenge presumptions I had had about myself - presumptions that I was 'good' and 'right'. It helped me to see my own collision with oppression and also to question the categories I had been socialised to conform to. Furthermore, it made me see my colleagues differently. I knew some of the participants before the research, but the conversations helped deepen my understanding of the people I work with. Drawing the participants and writing their stories forced me to sit down and 'see' the world through their eyes, to cry with them, and to laugh with them and to share things that we had kept hidden. Art and narrative open trapdoors that bring us into the story, and enable our stories to become different.  But there always exists a space beyond our stories – and therefore our stories resist finality.

*I look up from the table to see Past disappear through a small door in the back of the room. I hadn't noticed that door before, it is like a trapdoor. "Excuse me for a minute", I say to those around my table as I get up to follow Past. I crawl through the tiny door. Past slips out of sight for now so I head in the direction of the sweet sound of Future, who is singing somewhere outside. I open the door at the top of a staircase which takes me back to the beginning of the story. High above my head I see a balloon float away as I walk towards the edge of the canvas to try and see what lies beyond its frame.*

**Chapter 9: This is not a conclusion**



Figure 41. *The Treachery of Images (This is not a pipe)* René Magritte, 1928 – 29, oil on canvas

In academic writing we teach students that a good conclusion should redress your thesis statement and summarise your main arguments. As an artist it is a little more complex to conclude an artwork. You usually get a gut feeling that it is complete. You stand back from the canvas and look. You go back and make a few changes, sometimes years and years later. As this thesis was approached as an artwork and deconstruction of the traditional notion of a positivistic masculine thesis it rather follows an approach which stems from a feminist stance of 'speaking back' which is evident in the scholarly work of bell hooks. As such the work is not just about *Teaching to Transgress* (2004), but about doing *research to transgress* and if I had tried to 'conform' to traditional thesis writing conventions it would have been problematic and contradictory to the content. Furthermore, the theoretical notion of 'troubling' which comes out in Kevin Kumashiro's work is also central to the work. While some critical readers might have desired a conformation to a more traditional way thesis writing the point of 'troubling' is to take us out of the familiar and out of our comfort zones (Francis 2016a, Francis 2016b). In line with the resistance to traditional conventions like 'concluding' Kumashiro reminds me to resist finality in working towards anti-oppressive practice. I am ready to hang this piece on the wall, but this does not mean that it is concluded or finished.

**9.1. What is this thing that I have created?**

This artwork (or thesis) can be read on different levels; it is a written story, a visual narrative, an academic exploration, an experiment in research, or a journey towards anti-oppressive

education. It is all of these things at once. One part cannot exist independently from the others. I began this creative journey by drawing a picture. It was a drawing of the table I was sitting at as I was trying to write about educators working towards anti-oppressive change. Here is that picture:



Figure 42. *Where the story began*, Marguerite Müller, 2014, charcoal on paper

As I looked at my table all the elements surrounding me started to take on symbolic meanings and somehow became part of the story. I wrote:

*Now I feel the late autumn sun on my back, hear the comforting silence of the early morning, and smell burnt coffee as it lingers where my fingers are waking up the cold keys of my laptop. My thoughts unfold in a scattering of objects that cover the surface of the kitchen table, cluttering my space and threatening to push me out altogether. To the right a leaning tower of theory brings Kumashiro (2000), hooks (1994), Freire (1985), Pithouse (2009), Zembylas (2007), Clough (2002), Clandinin and Connely (2000), McCourt (2005) and Winnie the Pooh (Glebas 2003) into the picture. Behind the theoretical tower is a larger, solid mass of unmarked student essays which seem to be looking indifferently past the theorists and directly into my guilty teacher's conscience. I choose to ignore them and turn my attention to the over-sized handbag with its gaping mouth where my eyes come to rest on the flickering light, and I resist the temptation to Google WhatsApp on Facebook. Towards the middle of the table Where The Wild Things Are (Sendak 1963) is open on the page were the walls become the world all around Max. Next to it a photo album from the middle eighties is struggling to keep my childhood inside its yellowing pages. My portrait gives way to my son's wax crayon scribbling of a*

*rollercoaster in the margin. At this point in my story the leaning tower of theory suddenly tumbles over as if to draw attention to itself and when the dust settles I find I am no longer alone at the kitchen table. De Lange and Grossi (2009) are the first to speak: It seems like you want to do an arts-based thesis so can we suggest that now you stop to think about the "How and the Who and the Why of the I?" (De Lange & Grossi 2009:187).*

I thus began the story by opening up that photo album and going back into my childhood memories of education and socialisation. I used one of the pictures of myself holding a red balloon to develop the portrait of Daisy as she stands in the garden with high walls. This grew into the textual narrative and visual portraits of Daisy which is presented in chapter 1.
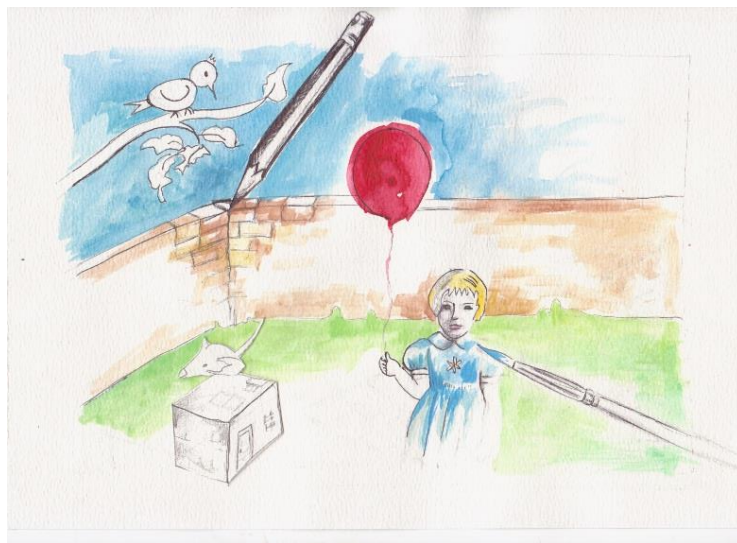


Figure 43. *Daisy,* Marguerite Müller, 2014, watercolour and pencil

In the portrait above I included a box. This box became symbolic of the story that Daisy started to unpack as she discovered various objects and memories inside.

*Inside the old box there are bundles of newspaper, bubble-wrap and masking tape which conceal objects of various shapes and sizes. I find the one I am looking for and unwrap a small terracotta tile, painted and glazed. A sunny memory of a faraway day when I was out in the green grassy Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal making ceramics with some of my Grade 12 students. It is a simple picture of a paintbrush and pencil and a space in between them. As I unwrap this memory I see myself standing in that space; in-between art and education. It is from this space that I write, create, learn, understand and wonder. It is in this space that I now unwrap other parts of myself.*

*Unwrapping myself*
*Reading in-between my lines*
*to learn*
*who I am,*
*why I draw*
*what I see and what not.*
*Where does it all fit into the plot?*

In chapter 2 Daisy moves beyond the walls of her story to see the stormy seas beyond her 'safe' world. She becomes a teacher and is confronted with the complexity of oppression in her classroom and her life. Holding on to the red balloon she floats away on a journey to search for educators working towards anti-oppressive change. On the journey she is accompanied by Past (the rat) who continually connects her story to the contextual realities of the higher educational landscape and history in South Africa. She is also accompanied by Future (the bird) who guides her story in new directions. The tension between past and future takes her on an exploration in which she must re-evaluate her identity to become more critical of her own social identity and 'categories'. The chapter also explores the current context (University of the Free State) to see how this space connects to the arising issues in the broader South African higher educational landscape. As Daisy investigates the complexities and tension between the landscape and her identity she starts to move to an unknown space in which she can look for new ways of being and thinking.

*A drop of purple paint falls on the nearly complete, nearly perfect picture of a green tree with red apples next to a house with smoke billowing out of its crooked chimney – six year old eyes shoot full of tears. I become aware of the teacher's hand on my shoulder, and watch her take the brush and put two wings on the purple splatter. "What a lovely purple bird", she says, as my tears dissolve in a proud smile.*

Figure 44. *A purple splatter or a purple bird,* Marguerite Muller, 1986, fabric paint on cloth.

hooks (1994) tells me of engaged pedagogy which emphasizes well-being and the 'wholeness' of the teacher, because "[..] teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (hooks 1994, p.15).

*So to care for my students*
*I must care for me*
*a class is a community*
*each voice to be heard*
*emotion not feared*
*hear my voice*
*see my tears*
*let my purple bird fly*
*teach me that a mistake*
*can be the best possible thing to make*
*But know I cannot learn alone*

*along with others*

*runs my path*

*so we can see*

*a purple bird*

*a splatter COULD be*

In chapter 3 Kumashiro (2002) reminds me that to work towards anti-oppressive change I must also be willing to confront myself in my story: "...confronting my desires, working against my resistances, and working through the resulting discomforting spaces of uncertainty and instability can help me work against the repetition of common sense that often hinders anti-oppressive change" (Kumashiro 2002, pp.131 – 132).

*Confronting oneself is a difficult task*

*It is much easier to wear a repetitive mask*

However, "[e]ducators resist change because of the a desire for repetition and to learn only that which affirms that we are good people and therefore we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia and other forms of oppression" (Kumashiro 2000, pp.43 – 44).

*This is where of FEAR*

*makes us stand in straight lines*

*separate and blind*

*to see colour is not neutral*

*and never was*

*"normal' is problematic*

*and difficult to see*

*this is what my challenge will be*

Chapter 3 is an exploration of how emotion, discomfort and crisis might help the educator move to a space in which difference becomes possible. It then goes on to look at Kumashiro's four approaches to anti-oppressive practice and uses these as a framework for 'reading' the story as it evolves.

In chapter 4 Daisy looks for the "How and the Who and the Why of the I?" (De Lange & Grossi

2009, p.189).

*as to the How*
*I must start with me:*
*my emotions,*
*bodily senses,*
*and memory.*
*Little pieces of I*
*moulded into one*
*come undone*
*become*

This study is rooted in arts-based practice and explores how this research methodology can inform social change. The use of art in the thesis is thus purposefully connected to a theme of anti-oppressive change as it engages with not only different ways of being, but different ways of learning and knowing. Art opens up new spaces for the researcher to explore the social context and educational landscape. In this exploration I used a collaborative self-study to connect the theory to the experiences of the educator where it can open up an in-between space in which difference and change become possible. So Daisy realises that her story will come to a dead end unless she goes out to meet other stories that will become part of her story and also change it. There are thus strong influences of narrative inquiry, fiction writing, and arts based inquiry in the multi-method approach used in this study. These are all situated in a poststructuralist framework in which oppression is read as intersecting, situated and multiple.

The portraits of other characters are constructed in chapter 5 as their stories become part of Daisy's narrative. These portraits are presented as collages which are made up of visual artworks by the participants and textual transcriptions of conversations which were all woven into interpretative creations and a fictional story. This chapter plays with the traditional idea of interview 'transcriptions' by creating character portraits instead. By doing this I draw connections between self-study and self-portraiture and how these two can inform each other. I also play with the truth/fiction binary by weaving bits of recorded conversation into a more creative and interpretative creation.

Chapter 6 brings a visual analysis of this story in which the process of creating and painting is presented through photographs of the creative process. By having a 'visual' chapter I try to

show how the story grew visually and how the visual informed the textual. At the end of the chapter I include a section of my own thought process and impressions as I tried to make connections between the various visual elements of the story.

Chapter 7 is a discussion of how the portraits can be read, what connections can be made between various elements of the narrative and how the layers of meaning can be explored. The messiness and interrupted nature of the research process are also explored and linked with the theory. This chapters prepares the reader for the narrative exploration of meaning which follows in the chapter 8.

The characters all come together in chapter 8 which is constructed as a conversation in which they 'read' their portraits using the questions that stem from Kumsashiro's framework of anti-oppressive practice. The focus of this exploration falls on the final approach in which we try to see beyond our stories to look at the silences, omissions and things we overlook.

## 9.2. What is the point of this thing I have created?

As I look at the artwork (thesis) again some questions come to mind: Is it good? Do I feel a connection to it? Will others feel a connection to it? Does its existence change anything? Do I feel different after making it? Why does it matter? What contribution does it make? What is new here?

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) were not with me when I started this research. I only met them somewhere along the way as I did so many others. They gave me four criteria to evaluate what I had done (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p.964):

1. Does it make a contribution to our understanding of social life?
2. Does it have aesthetic merit in being artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring?
3. Is the author reflexive so that the reader can make judgements about her/is point of view?
4. Does the piece have emotional and intellectual impact and generate new questions?

### Does it make a contribution to our understanding of social life?

Listening and sharing our stories might help us discover, "…the intricate interweavings of class, race, gender, education, religion and other diversities…None of us knows his or her final destination, but all of us can know about the shape makers of our lives that we can choose to

confront, embrace or ignore" (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p.967). Through making visible the 'shape makers' of our lives, art and narrative provide a platform to share our experiences with oppression, and also to critically engage with those experiences.

I used self-study to explore educator experiences with oppression. This was a collaborative effort in which art and narrative were the glue that held our story together. The extension of self-study into anti-oppressive theory made it possible to explore the contextual realities through the eyes of the educators. Art proved to be a catalyst for initiating conversations in some cases and in other cases it proved to be a barrier to expression when people felt uncomfortable with the medium. This only emphasised that humans learn and understand in different ways and that research must address the multiplicity of human experience and knowledge creation. In writing this thesis I set out to do something different, and in a way to challenge traditional conventions of thesis writing. How could I write about anti-oppressive practice in anti-oppressive ways? Art helped challenge certain academic conventions, but it also helped me to make connections to the theory that would otherwise have been impossible. It helped me move myself into the frame, but also draw the stories of other educators into the frame to create a 'new' and 'different' story. Through the story and the narrative I came to different understanding of what anti-oppressive education is or must be. I became sensitised to the complex and messy nature of this field of study. The methodology guided me theoretically until I could see that difference grows in uncertain spaces.

Creating the portraits helped make individual educators became visible in the research. This visibility is important to resist easy categorisation of identities or a textbook type of social justice. Often when we talk about social justice we talk about social identities and constructed identities. But these neat little boxes can actually make us disappear by reducing us to measurable and quantifiable units which function in set hierarchies which can never be disrupted or troubled. Therefore, I worked from a poststructuralist understanding of research which ran parallel to an engagement with critical theory. Here the neat lines become a little blurry and the characters resist easy categorisation or hierarchies. Arts based practice is useful to make visible the complexities, the contradictions and the constant shifting of our identities, and how these impact on our pedagogy.

Operating in a space of uncertainty is no longer a problem. As researchers and educators we must give up some control in order to change. Using a collaborative methodology means that

you have to give up quite a lot of control as you often depend on others to move forward in the process. I really needed input from the participants to continue with the study. I could not always be in perfect control of the way the research was taking shape and this was something I had to learn to accept. The methodology informed me theoretically as working towards anti-oppressive change also involves giving up some control so that we can learn from uncertainty and crisis in order to trouble existing knowledge. The implication being that as educators we cannot learn or be 'told' how to work towards anti-oppressive practice but have to build such knowledge through our experiences – and our creative engagement with those experiences.

The portraits contribute to social life because they foreground educators as complex beings dealing with complex issues and resist the idea that there is a correct way to be or to teach. In this way they trouble prescriptive recipes for how to teach in anti-oppressive ways but rather explore creative avenues of exploring one's identity to become different.

## Does it have aesthetic merit in being artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring?

The presentation of the research journey is very important in this work. The aim is to make the journey visible, but also to make it accessible. That is to say, I tried to move into the realm of fiction writing so that the work would be accessible to readers outside of the academic realm. I wanted the work to be enticing and interesting and to create a story that might draw in an audience outside of the academic space. I always thought writing a PhD thesis would have to be terribly boring until I saw a video on YouTube called 'Dance your PhD', which showed how people performed their academic work through dance. This caught my attention as an expressive and interesting way to engage with research and set me on a path of exploration of different arts based methods. I ended up drawing and painting my PhD by using mostly visual art in my research, because this is a medium in which I have received training and in which I feel comfortable.

I tried to draw on a variety of different media in constructing this thesis: painting, drawing, collage, poetry, fiction, photographs, existing artworks, lyrics, etc. However, it is important to remember that the artistic expression is framed in a research context. I created the portraits purposefully to visually present the educators and to open up conversations around some of the ways we are grappling with issues of oppression in our everyday lives, but also in our histories and memories. By doing this I learnt how oppression was experienced and constructed by the

participants, but also by myself. I used parts of the stories and discarded others. I cut and paste to create a collage, and this process of learning was constantly interrupted as I have mentioned. At first I was tempted to smooth over these interruptions because of a vague notion that research should function in a bubble, divorced from real life. In the interpretive phase I realised that these interruptions were not only shaping the visual representations but also my research journey as they informed me theoretically. What the interruptions showed me was that working towards anti-oppressive practice is not a smooth process, but rather a disruptive and interrupted process. Therefore, I see the aesthetic merit of the research as being intertwined with the theoretical content.

**Is the author reflexive so that the reader can make judgements about her/is point of view?**

Writing this story was painful at times. I had to confront myself in a very honest way. I had to admit mistakes, uncertainty and discomfort. I had to admit that I do not have answers. I had to give up control. I had to change. Losing Dot was painful on a personal level, and it also influenced the research journey. At times the research led me into a dark pit, but it also gave me a way out, a way forward. Writing the story made me realise that my story goes on. Making the portraits helped me connect to other stories and become part of them. My story changed and I changed as well. I tried to share my experiences and thoughts in a reflective manner throughout the thesis, which I also understand as being an important part of self-study and research that aims to transform the self and society.

Mick: *For people who are saying that they are committed to social justice and to anti-oppressive education I think it would be an injustice NOT to engage in reflective practice, because how do you know that your work is still relevant to changing society… work should be informed by our experiences, lived experiences, work experiences, our practice should inform our research.*

Many of the participants spoke about moving from a space of certainty to uncertainty, from a space of comfort to discomfort, from being in control to feeling unsettled, from doing things right to doing things differently. If we are moving towards anti-oppressive practice then it means we cannot stay in a space of comfort and familiar 'normalcy', but we must constantly be searching for a rabbit hole or a trapdoor or make a leap to a foreign, unknown space in which must embrace discomfort and unknowability.

**Does the piece have emotional and intellectual impact and generate new questions?**

The emotional side to the work and the research is foregrounded in all parts of this story. Emotions are often the catalyst for our engagement with certain issues. The value of discomforting emotions might lead educators to critically examine their constructed self-images and also critically examine how they have learned to perceive others (Zembylas et al. 2012, p.1073). Our emotions trigger memories and also feelings of discomfort or crisis. For this reason the engagement with the stories of others is a crucial part of this study. FridaFreire speaks about how an engagement with the stories of others change the way we see them:

*It's frustrating when you find what makes a difference for the individual is real, one to one human connection in the way that really enables learning and growth and sort of this becoming of who you are…it's not about sort of squashing knowledge into your head and going off and doing some meaningless work, it's about something more than that… these are the stories of humans… but policy makers don't want to hear that, they want statistics, they want big data sets and that is maybe …convince them to change things but they…where have we learned to devalue the stories of people and why isn't that enough of an impact as they love saying in the policy world to make a difference….I think that's a tragic shift within, not just academia, but within society as whole… I mean I need funding to make an impact and if you want to make an impact you need these massive data sets that what do they tell us about people?*

What this research offers is "knowledge as a process, a temporary state, [which] is scary to many" (Eisner 1997, p.7).

<div align="center">

*Waar je voelt dat er niets*

*Is gemaakt om te blijven*

*Waar je omkijkt en ziet*

*Hoe je sporen verdwjnen*

*Want de golven die komen*

*En de golven die gaan*

*Die de zee beweegt*

*Op de maat van de maan*

*In een land waar de toekomst*

*Vecht met het verleden*

(Bos n.d.)

**Where you feel that here nothing**

**Is permanent**

</div>

*Where you come to see*
*How your footprints disappear*
*Because the waves come*
*And the waves go*
*The sea moves*
*To the rhythm of the moon*
*In a country where the future*
*Fights with the past*

I teach in classrooms where the past is in conflict with the future. I wonder how these spaces can be transformed. Yet I understand that I am part of the space and must thus be transformed. As I change the space will change, I am not separate from the landscape I work in. Some of the questions that might grow from this understanding are:

How can arts based practice play a role in the transformative agenda which is currently being pushed at all South African universities?

How can self-study helps educators gain agency as they connect practice and context in anti-oppressive practice?

How can academic research be made accessible to non-academic audiences through arts-based methodologies?

## 9.3. How could I have made this thing differently?

One of the major constraints of this study was really the logistics of the collaborative process. The approach I followed could have been different. I could perhaps have started with a workshop in which participants had the chance to explore how to expressively create a character in an art medium. I simply took the materials to the participants and asked them to be creative, but many participants felt uncomfortable with the art medium. Participants were also hesitant to contribute in textual from to the emerging fictional narrative. I think this was for the most part due to time constraints, but also here I should have thought of ways to ease them into writing. In the end the contents that came out of the conversations were rich and sufficient for me to use in my portraits and character constructions; however, I would have liked to have a more collaborative experimentation with different ways of making and presenting information.

**9.4. How does this thing make us different?**

This research shows how we work in-between spaces of uncertainty and discomfort and self-doubt as we try to heal while very often we are broken. Our experiences are disruptive, interrupted, messy and uncomfortable. We are troubled and haunted by our own identities as we try to move our experience into a new frame in which education could possibly be the practice of freedom.

For many of the participants there seem to be a disconnect between what they want, who they want to be and what really happens in the classroom. Alice describes the feeling as being 'deficit', Mick describes it as being 'frustrated' and Chubby as "trying to be perfect". Yet most often it seems that we leave the classroom with feelings of confusion and worry that we didn't do things right. We privilege ourselves in a hierarchical understanding of what it means to teach: that we must be *good* teachers and not *bad* teachers. Are we all trained to think that being in control means we will automatically be good and right? And that if we are uncertain we are wrong and not bringing about the right kind of change. Anti-oppressive change is our responsibility, right? Perhaps change is not out there in society but here inside of us. If there is no 'right' or 'better' but only 'different' we might stop trying to get things right and start trying to do things *differently,* which means we will need to embrace the uncertainty and imperfection and confusion of the space we work in. When we grapple with issues of oppression we leave our classrooms feeling disorientated because we are different, because we have allowed ourselves to lose a little bit of control and to move away from doing things right and perfect to asking: How am I different?

Richardson and St Pierre (2005, p.956) remind us that stories can "evoke deeper parts of the self, heal wounds, enhance the sense of self – or even alter one's sense of identity". So in making these portraits and doing this research I am trying to move myself to a different space. I am trying to make the, "mundane, taken-for-granted, everyday world visible" and to "seek performative interventions and representations that heighten crucial reflective awareness leading to concrete forms of praxis" (Denzin 2013, p.2). I create in order to think differently, see differently and do differently. I think that the creative approach to this project helped me think of myself in a different way. It helped me find unity between my diverse roles as researcher, artist, teacher, mother, etc. I had to delve into so many different memories and experiences from different times of my life in order to connect these to the theory, and this helped me disrupt and trouble what I thought my identity was.

I began this journey a long time ago in a dusty classroom where a group of grade 9's were yelling and screaming and taking over the learning space in a way that made me feel completely disempowered. I felt invisible, like I didn't exist. I sat down then and I started writing: what I saw, how I felt, what I thought. I started putting myself onto paper – I started creating. That simple act of creation helped me more than any amount of teaching theory or pedagogy ever could. It helped me *become* at a time when all I wanted to do was walk out and shut down. It helped me *be* in an uncomfortable space. It gave me a purpose. It made me present.

Art and narrative helps us on this journey as it does not reduce us to measurable and quantifiable units which function in set hierarchies which can never be disrupted or troubled. We are not generalizable. We are mortal people living with complexities and contradictions in our fluid identities, and this influences our pedagogy. This story resists finality in recognizing the journey as much more important than the destination. Because the destination is now, and in every other moment of our lives.

*And now? Am I better? Not better no, but different. I am no longer an uncomfortable white, Afrikaans, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian, female…I am Marguerite, I am Daisy, I am D, I am me, I am not me, I am the person sitting here and writing this, looking at the Bloemfontein dust which has gathered on my desk, breathing in the smell of the summer air, feeling a little kick inside me, feeling a slight craving for a salty snack and a hot cup of tea. And as I get up I notice the box which I opened at the start of all this. It is empty now and I turn it upside down. When Josh gets home from school we might use it to make something. Perhaps cut out windows and a door to make a house. Perhaps use it to build a train station or a dinosaur, or a dragon, or a squid, or a sheep…*

**Maybe an epilogue…or something like that**

What lies beyond what we can see? This is perhaps the central question in this story, the one that propels it forward. I had originally been frustrated and disappointed at not being able to get all the participants together for a final group discussion; however, in the end it afforded me the opportunity to visit each participant one last time for a final concluding discussion in which we could talk about new, arising issues in the higher educational landscape, some of which were not even present at the time I started with the research. Throughout the thesis I purposefully made the 'messiness' of the research explicit to show how it is not a smooth or sanitised process. In writing a piece of academic work which sets out to 'trouble' I had to therefore engage with the 'cut offs' and pieces that don't fit. This epilogue is thus a rendition of some of these conversations which took place beyond the 'conclusion' of the research and to me it highlights the unfinished and messy nature of the research process in its refusal to 'end' or be 'finished'.

Mick: *I think it is a pity actually that I couldn't be there for the get-together….it would be nice to hear people speak…*

Marguerite: *It didn't work out anyway, because only one person showed up…so it was just like a conversation between us and then I realised it is also part of the limitation of working with people who are professionally employed in this space and studying at the same time…it was really hard to get everyone together…it would have been nice, but it just didn't work out that way, so I also regard that to be part of the process…*

The only person who showed up for the 'group' session had been Chubby. We had cake and coffee at my apartment and here is some of the dialogue between us:

Chubby (as he is looking at this portrait): *Who is this girl with the balloon?*

Marguerite: *That is me, I think there is a little piece of me in every portrait I create.*

Chubby: *If I had to choose the things that stood out for me in this portrait that you made it would be the cat, the little house, and all these books. I think my parents, having come through the Great Depression placed such emphasis on studying and education. Also this wall, it says something about having a solid foundation, but also being protected in a way.*

Marguerite: *I think I also want to know about your experiences as a participant in this research and how it was for you.*

Chubby: *I think it really made me think about my own experiences…and as I told my whole story I realised, it is true that as I grew up rather naively, I also went through life like that, even though I noticed certain things, but I never had a fighting spirit, I think us whites don't have it in general…to fight against things, because it does not affect us…we do not protest against things like racism and…yet we are aware of it. I think the little pig's tail of my catdog creature made me aware of this…last week I had a conversation with some students, black and white, and we talked about racism and how as whites we have this past and how we sometimes say the wrong things, but how it is important to speak about it then, and not to run to the Rector every time we make a mistake, because then you just alienate people…*

*And you know we change…in the past I would have frowned about it, but last week I went to a conversation about the spaces on campus and there was a suggestion that there should be a space for the transvestites on campus…like maybe one of these big containers that is made nice with lights and everything…and some people frowned about it and I thought well are we not really trying to move to a space which is inclusive for all, and now to have this separate space for them….? Are there not other ways to make them feel welcome on campus? I remember long ago we had a student assistant here, Peter Smith, and he was a cross dresser and he used to dance on the tables and…but we loved him so much, I remember that we went to a conference in the Netherlands, me and a colleague, and Peter was studying in Germany at the time, and we went 200 km with the train to go stay with Peter for the evening and see him and he took us all over, but a month later he was dead.*

Marguerite: *How did he die?*

Chubby: *They found his body 6 o'clock one morning on the pavement… they said he died around 3 am. Maybe a mugging… anyway I would never have thought earlier in my life, not that I was aggressive or anything, but my thoughts were negative and I would never have imagined to travel 200 km with a train in a foreign country to go to a person who was precious to us… I think my point is that stereotypes also disappear with time…if you get to know the person behind the stereotype.*

We finish our coffee and milktart and Chubby leaves. A few weeks later I am on my way to Alice's office for our last research conversation. It is a hot summer's day and I walk slowly as my womb is growing steadily with the new life inside it. She gives a little kick. The campus is

unusually quiet now as the exams finally started after being postponed because of the #FeesMustFall movement…

Alice: *Before I forget you must come to my graduation party, the graduation is in December so after the whole ceremony my friend, you know her, is throwing this party. You and Frank and Josh must come.*

Marguerite: *Thank you, we will be there… For me this whole process has been so interesting, because everyone spoke about very different things and you all had different, I mean, I'm also very interested in the medium of art, you know my whole thesis was about how can we use art to share or to create knowledge. And I think you were one of the people who sort of resisted using…art* (laughter). *So I don't know if you want to… Because it is also about IF it's useful, or….*

Alice: *No, I am sure that it is and it is just that I didn't want to because I'm not very artistic. It's easier for me to have a conversation rather than draw pictures. So I have no problem with the picture that you've drawn of me, cause it kind of like depicts who I am at this moment in time, the uncertainty, am I in the right space? Am I just stuck? And I do believe that there is this constant going back and forth and it is the most difficult thing, because I have to constantly ask myself am I doing things this way, is it my viewpoint being pushed forward? So I don't think I would have been able to do this (pointing to the portrait I made of her). But you know even the conversation is an artistic creation so even though it might have not been a picture that was drawn, just the conversation that we had is an artistic creation as well.*

Marguerite: *So while I was busy I had these portraits, but sort of against the backdrop of what was happening in the higher education context and as I was writing #RhodesMustFall happened and then just as I was finishing up with it #FeesMustFall…, and I mean the language policy which we had to vote for last week. And so for me I think research can never be finished, because it is constantly evolving and interrupted. The context is so sort of…alive*

Alice: *Volatile*

Marguerite: *Volatile, ja.*

Alice: *Look I do agree with the whole thing about the fees, because I do believe higher education should be accessible to students who have the potential…because there are many students out there who might not have, who can't come because they can't afford it, they don't have access to… I do believe it needs to be accessible so that the gap between middle class and*

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*working class can be…not widened, it becomes closer rather, uhm, I also think that I was disappointed with the….it became like a black people's fight and student's fight…like "these students shouldn't be". You know it is exam time and…but not realizing that it in fact influences every one of us…*

Marguerite: *You mean white people were saying…?*

Alice: *Ja, and like my tutor saying she thinks it's quite pathetic and I said…we had to have this conversation, which she still does not see and I said to her well it's easy to speak if you come from this position of privilege and it's a bit more difficult for somebody who doesn't – and have to try and get into that space. And so, uhm, yes the language policy I did vote on the language policy last week and I did say that English should be used mostly. Ja so I voted for this because I do think we do not have the chance to interact with each other in the classroom and so the Afrikaans students just sit together…so it's not as simple as even if we do mix the classes - is there going to be engagement? But at least it's some sort of step also for people to start seeing things from different perspectives 'cause I mean we can't deny the fact that even though democracy is here it doesn't necessarily mean that racism had gone, and how we see and engage with one another… So I did vote on the language policy, so yes, these have been exciting times and how it will translate into practice is a different story, uhm, but I must say even when the students were talking about, you know with the #FeesMustFall thing and the students were talking and they were saying that, the black students in particular were saying that the lecturers were not there, they were not visible really I mean my… I mean I went on the Thursday afternoon and then I went on Friday and there was nothing happening , it was over, but we should have been there from the beginning to show that this is also our concern.*

*But I do think there needs to be conversations around how, uhm, this will happen but definitely I think we need to have some policies in place for students who don't have the financial means to get into university. I also think it's very interesting times, because for us as educators, it will mean that we would have to change our pedagogical practices, because now we would have to…you have to be aware that certain students might not have access to certain kinds of educational experiences. So the way that we teach and kinds of resources we use I do believe that there will have to be more engagement with the students in the classrooms, particularly between the different students in the classrooms. I think for a lot of our middle class students it's going to be a time of challenge because suddenly they are going to have a different kind of student amongst them who is gonna work hard, because they have this work ethic and their*

*circumstances… It's going to be quite interesting to see… And I also think us as staff and the way that we conceptualize teaching…it is going to be quite interesting….*

Marguerite: *I think I will have to do a follow up study, I think even after this conversation if we had another one in a year what would have happened? And even with the cleaning staff now…*

The next day I buy the *Volksblad* (the local Afrikaans newspaper) because the heading reads "Onmin oor taalplan" (**"Discord over language policy").** The article is about the suggestion that English will become the official language at the University of Stellenbosch. Wim de Villiers the rector said that: "Siende dat Engels die gemeenskaplike taal in Suid-Afrika is, sal alle onderrig by die US in Engels gefasiliteer word, en wesenlike akademiese ondersteuning sal, na gelang van studente se behoeftes in ander Suid-Afrikaanse tale voorsien word" (Van den Berg 2015, para.4) (**"Seeing as English is the communal language in South Africa, all teaching at the US will be facilitated in English and substantial support will be provided in other South African languages according to the needs of students").** The article goes on to highlight the unhappiness some feel around the fact that this would mean Afrikaans would lose its 'equal' status and become a 'randtaal' (**'marginal language')** like isiXhosa at the US.

On page 5 of the same newspaper is an article which reports on how Prof. Jonathan Jansen, rector at UFS, promised workers at the university that they would not receive less than R5000 per month in the future (Chabalala 2015). This follows a memorandum that was given to the university by the workers after the #FeesMustFall movement, which sets out as one of its aims to end outsourcing of cleaning and grounds staff by the university.

I show the article to Lily who works as a cleaner and ask if she was at the meeting. She says yes, but that she cannot believe it is true yet, because that would mean her current salary would almost double. "The students have really helped us", she says.

The next week I have my last research conversations with Celine and Mick respectively:

Marguerite: *I never expected everyone who participated to be artists or even to like art, but for me it was a way to make sense of anti-oppressive theory. I was sitting with all these readings and then trying to think what does it say about me, and be more reflexive. But then I don't think that art is the way for every person to do research, just for ME I think it is A way to do research. It was also a way to write the story and bring things together…I had a story line…*

Celine: *For me it was also interesting to read what I had said and I know I get irritated when someone says "uhm" a lot and I used "you know?" all the time* (laughter).

Marguerite: *I know what you mean, I noticed that I use the words 'sort of' way too much!*

Celine: (laughter) *Just if you look at it and how many times did I say "you know?" and, you know, and again I JUST said it, but seeing my brain was working faster than... and sometimes I didn't even finish my sentences and I just jumped on to the next one and I wanted to tell as much as I could, and then even after we finished with our interview it would give me time to reflect on myself on the questions we had... I think it made me realise I want to write a book one day in my next lifetime. It would be something I would want to do. I hadn't thought of that, but then the questions that you asked were questions that made me uncomfortable in a good way to think of...how did my childhood influence the person I became...it is not something you think of on a regular day...it comes and then later on you have to...and then when I saw all of this (pointing to the portrait), it's like you read my mind even this (window with bars) it feels like you are closed in and you want to get out and yet when you get to this space, you are totally different....and (pointing to the bed) for somebody this might be something small, but for me it was that day... and you get to reflect on your life...and I think I enjoyed the questions and telling my story and seeing how someone else put this out into art.*

Marguerite: *I think for me it was good because it forced me to have conversations I would not normally have had with people, and so how that changed the way I see my colleagues... But I used this sort of against the backdrop of higher education... and even as I finished suddenly #FeesMustFall happened and the language policy and then I can never finish with this and that is why I am going to all the participants now again and asking: "But what do you think about the implications for higher education?"*

Celine: *I think we are seeing a new generation of students. It is opening up a whole new movement, where it is no longer about black and white...there was a picture in Cape Town and they asked white students to stand in front of them and for me that raised a lot of questions about higher education. But we are still a developing country. You see countries in Europe with this, but they are still trying to make that system of free education work...yes, we should have free education and all, but are we also not creating...because if we have free education then most institutions would not be able to survive on the state subsidy. You need tuition and whatever fees to keep the uni running and I thought in the process of it all that our students at UFS are just crazy, they are just jumping on the bandwagon, because most of the stuff that WITS students were fighting for...we have employees, cleaners, who their children are studying for free and then just before all this the application fee was waived and I think it was just... I*

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*think they want things for free, they are not willing to work hard. I am not against, you know, free education, because I saw how my own mother struggled, based on my fees, but I think there should be…also be a sense of accountability… I spoke to my mentor in Poland and he said what is happening there in South Africa? Because in Poland they have free education, but now most of the students have masters and PhD degrees, but they do not have a job…and even if you find a job it might not be a good paying job…you can have four masters' degrees and then what? You are going to be a cleaner or a waitress… I think our students are not really thinking through about this and what I was also challenging is…ok you are saying that fees…black students are suffering, but it is not all black students, it is not all white students… I see some of our white students that work eight to five jobs, they miss classes… I like the fact that it is free education for all, but let's not label…yes we know that a lot of black students suffer and don't have money, but what about those that can? It is a very interesting space to be in…I wish I was out of the country to see…you know when you are out of the country it is very different than when you are in… 'Cause when they wanted to strike here I said to them, before anything I am an employee of the university….my opinion at this point does not count, because the university pays me…and then you know I was seen as a traitor, like "You should be supporting us", and I said "Who said I am not supporting you? It is just that my first and foremost obligation is to the university and what I think of what you are doing is irrelevant", you know what I say? So I thought if I could just be somewhere else and then also see what is happening… I think when you are in the situation, you don't reflect as well as when you are outside… For me it is also the group that came here to strike, some of them, one guy even did not pass his first semester and he had a bursary and he lost that bursary, but why didn't he study to keep that bursary, now he is here and he is striking for free education?*

The following day I go to Mick's office.

Mick: *I have this argument with my sister at the moment, because she says I keep quiet too much.*

Marguerite: *Quiet about what?*

Mick: *Like injustice. Like over the weekend I had to drive around some of my family members because my grandfather had died and it was his funeral. And I was driving two older guys around and they were talking of this incident where a woman cheated on her husband and then the guy shot himself and they were saying he should have shot her instead and I just listened*

*and didn't say anything, and I told my sister and she said why didn't you say something, but…maybe sometimes I just keep quiet.*

*And that same weekend I went out with my sister to this place and then when they brought the bill the waitress gave it to me and actually my sister was paying so ja… I asked the waitress why she gave the bill to me, and she said it was because usually the guy pays…so…*

Marguerite: *I know what you mean, whenever I go out with Frank they always give him the bill, you know, what is the assumption here? I can't earn a salary? It is very complicated… I was thinking of you one day and I thought I should ask you….we had a meeting with the students and I went into the meeting and these guys from one of the older traditional residences were there and when they saw me and they immediately brought out a chair and I also wanted to help unpack the chairs but they were like…no you sit down, we will…. And then we had this discussion in the college of how each residence can contribute and these guys said that what they have to contribute this that they sort of teach their first years how to be gentlemen…and then they gave examples*

Mick: *Oh I am cringing*

Marguerite: *And I was cringing in the meeting and I think I pulled such a face, but then I thought actually I shouldn't be so negative, cause these guys…it is actually a very difficult space for them, cause all the other residences are co-ed and they are sort of this men's residence and so they give these examples of how they open doors for ladies and pull out chairs. But then at the same time I know for a fact that this is a residence who would not even allow a female into their space…so then I just thought this whole thing with gentlemen and it made me so angry. But at the same time I understood that they were trying to be nice, that they really thought that this is something they can bring to…to contribute…*

Mick: *Oh no….*

Marguerite: *It was such a confusing thing for me, I don't know… I just pulled a face and then I looked at the other people and then everyone else seemed to be ok…it is bizarre, and they are NOT gentlemen and then after that I got so…and I thought when a guy opens the door for me should I be angry 'cause he is saying I cannot open it myself and then I'm thinking of Josh and he is going to this boys' school and they are teaching him these things…like he is going to be this polite gentlemen…and then on the one hand I don't want to discourage him from it and on the other hand it is hugely problematic…*

Mick: *No there is a lot of problems with it. What happens if it is a man and a man or a women and women? I can't help but… I had this argument with my girlfriend the other day, we were walking at Woollies and she was carrying the plastic bag like a handbag and then I asked her why she was doing it and she said well it is because 'I am a lady' and then we started talking about well if you carry it differently does it mean you are less of a lady and…*(laughter)

Marguerite: *These things are bizarre…I think we can drive ourselves nuts….*

Mick: *For me, like you, writing does actually help…'cause in the moment I don't always react, but then later…that is when I start writing…it is like my blog….but now I have stopped writing it again…*

Marguerite: *But you can always go back…you seem to have sort of a love hate relationship with it.*

Mick: *I do, but for me it is like sometimes I can write something and then it is like now it is out there, but it is actually my personal journey and someone can misunderstand me and that is what I am always scared of…*

Marguerite: *I am giving you copies of the other portraits, but for me it was really about using art, and not forcing other people to use art, 'cause someone the other day criticised me and said but you can't now assume that art is a good research methodology for everyone…and I am not…it was just that for me, it was really the only way I could do this…if I had to do this in another way I would have never done it…and then through this process of trying to connect with other people, which I think it is about really, and then meeting these other characters and they all bring something different…for example, Dot, what she sort of said right at the beginning was sort of the private and the public and as a lecturer and an artist, your private becomes your public, because you cannot do art and then not bring your private issues into it and I think how problematic it would be for me to not be able to bring in the private into the public…*

Mick: *Ok can I ask something…what about this balloon here?*

Marguerite: *Ok so everywhere I have myself, so I am on this journey and my portrait is the girl with the balloon, because it is my interpretation, so it is almost like a signature, but it is also an image that I borrow from other artists, I don't know if you know Bansky…there is a famous graffiti piece on the Palestinian wall…so the image itself is sort of a loaded image…but and then it also comes from this childhood photograph…and the balloon for me is like even though*

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*I am stuck it is a way out…it carries me to the next page…and then the next person (pointing to Alice's portrait) asking 'am I stuck?; and 'am I doing the right thing?' and 'am I doing to my students what I am teaching them not to do?' 'Cause she said sometimes it feels like she is Alice in Wonderland and sort of being sucked into the unknown. And then obviously childhood influences, racialized identity and church and that sort of thing…and this (pointing to Celine's portrait) lady had this story of sort of having to overcome difficult circumstances and that is why I put the cape, because she is almost like this superwomen and then she said it was like breaking out, for her out of this place where she was stuck and becoming this very successful academic…and this guy (pointing to Chubby's portrait) is more sort of this more traditional white Afrikaans male and sort of very comfortable in this space…and some people contributed art and this guy actually made this catdog thing, cause he said he is like a cat, 'cause he wants to do things perfectly but then saying the wrong thing sometimes…so a lot of self-doubt and then being…coming from this sheltered environment and being too comfortable and not having to move out of it. And then this last one is FridaFreire because she has this rational male side and then this emotional female side and then the conflict and conversation between them and then she is sort of this radical activist person, but she has to work within the institution and then the conservative religious background…*

Mick: *There are actually a lot of similarities between them…*

Marguerite: *But of course all of this happens in a context, at UFS…so I was finishing just then #FeesMustFall happened and the language debate…so I am sort of at the end adding a bit now and saying, but it can never finish…cause it is such a volatile space…*

Mick: *I was excited for #FeesMustFall, I was, I was really…and I was there protesting with the students 'cause I felt that students were standing up for an injustice and I knew so many students who started with me and just did one year and then could never finish… I was also slightly worried or disturbed at the fact that what I saw from our university there was very little support of #FeesMustFall from white Afrikaans students, because most of the times when students would walk around campus the other students would just look out from the residences…and then it went to social media and people were very vocal about it must stop…these 'hooligans' must stop…and so it brought out a whole lot of this…and one student also observed the same thing and this student noticed this racialized…*

Marguerite: *Well everything in South Africa is racialized. Why do you think the white students were absent from that space?*

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Mick: *I think one of the reasons is possibly because some of them they are not affected by it because the parents can be able to afford fees…the other one is…uhm…protesting is something that is seen probably as disruptive…hooliganish…and so it is portrayed in that sense and it is probably something people want to distance themselves from…but I think most of it is being sheltered so much that you just can't identify with other people, 'cause I think if they truly did understand the pain and the suffering that goes on… I think those students were the ones who did support, because if you can't identify with what the struggle is you can't be there in solidarity…*

Marguerite: *So what do you think is next?*

Mick: *I am sort of disappointed actually, 'cause on our campus there was a whole…when the memorandum was one of the things they listed was outsourcing….but I was so sad then that last week the staff who clean, apparently they were fighting now the outsourcing by themselves and then I was thinking where are the students now, they were suddenly absent… I feel like they get the right momentum and for us to have conversations, but then they lose that momentum…it was the same thing with #RhodesMustFall…it was like such a good momentum and then after they took the statue….if feel like we have these moments of sparks that could ignite, but now it is these pockets… I am ready for bigger institutional change than just statues… I mean this university, you can't say that students must stay in male and female residences and it is absolutely ridiculous…*

Marguerite: *I have such a difficult situation now I have a trans women in res and now I have to think how I am going to do her room placement….sharing with a guy or a girl, in a male or a female corridor…and what is going to be comfortable, and obviously I need to speak to the student first, but it is such a difficult….but then even when one brings it up in meetings…it is just like no... One time I thought ok why can't we just have a mixed corridor guys and girls…but it was just like I said like the worst thing ever and people were so shocked that I had even suggested it….it was staff and students…and it was just like an impossibility…there is just no way….*

Mick: *I don't have hair, but I would be pulling them out…*

Marguerite: *Ag it doesn't help…I listen and I understand my voice is very small and it is a very strong…like my experience is that male/female identity is almost like unquestionable, like people are almost more willing to question racial identity…gender is like you just don't go there…but that is my experience…..*

Mick: *I can sympathise with you, but I don't know what I would do…but that is why I think #RhodesMustFall or #FeesMustFall…it must go further. The trans students that is really the reason they must throw out this male/female thing….*

Marguerite: *You know it comes from the university, but also from the parents and the students.*

Mick: *I don't think a university space is to make parents or students comfortable, and I am sadder if the university does not see or is not hard on these things… But that is why I am saying the students must push…it might not change now but maybe after…*

*But here we are facing the language one and I wonder what is going to be the impact on the university if we go English. I do think a lot of students would leave… Do you want a jelly sweet?*

Marguerite: *Yes please. I do think a lot of students would leave…but they would be running out of places to go to because the policy keeps changing everywhere… I read that Stellenbosch is also…but I do think that a lot of white Afrikaans students will come to the realisation that it is beneficial to study in English…I came to that realisation 15 years ago…but I think some would leave but in their case it is where language becomes very political and it is not actually about the language and then where are you going to go and what are you going to do with your degree in Afrikaans?*

Mick: *I think you are right there is a lot of political agenda behind it.* (Looking at the copies of the artworks I gave him) *I would like to have these framed….*

Marguerite: *You can do with them whatever you want…in the end I made a painting of all the things mixed together and it is really messy and big and I was wondering how to put it in the thesis…and this hard copy thing is really making it difficult… I think it is going to change…but I think it has to do with the type of research the university produces…it is also for me like if you want to use a different way of knowledge creation you have to defend yourself and work within these boundaries and then for me it is like a different dimension to oppression… I love these sweets…*

I walk home chewing on the jelly sweet. I sit down at my messy desk and add a few finishing strokes to the painting. Josh comes to sit down next to me and says he also wants to paint. He looks carefully at my painting and copies what he sees onto a white piece of paper.

Marguerite: *What are you drawing?*

Josh: *I am drawing the same thing as you, Mamma. It is a tree, and a girl with a balloon, and she flies up to the sky, and the balloon bursts, and then she falls down and she lands on her bum, and a big waves comes and crashes on her head.*

Figure 45. *Josh's drawing of my thesis,* Juha Kruger, 2015, paint on paper

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**Appendix A**

Dear *(Participant's Name),*

I am writing to you because I am interested in your 'story'. At present I am in the process of writing a narrative (as part of my PhD studies) of the experiences of educators who are working towards anti-oppressive practice in higher education in South Africa. I view this process as "…less of a triumphant change from oppression to liberation, and more as a scaffolding of a difficult entry into a new and still imperfect discourse" *. Of course I am just one person with a very specific set of experiences and I think that such a story should be told from different angles and perspectives. Therefore, I am using a collaborative approach and hoping that you might want participate in writing this story by sharing your experiences in a creative way. Basically I am asking you to be a character in my story. My research is narrative and arts-based and I intend this to be a creative process of co-constructing a narrative from multiple perspectives and reading it though an anti-oppressive lens. If you are interested please let me know and we can set up a meeting at your convenience so that I can share the project outline with you in more detail and answer any questions you might have. If you are not interested but know of someone else who might be, please let me know. I am very respectful of your time and promise not to take up much of it and of course you can withdraw from the pat any point. I cannot promise, but hope that the process of sharing and co-constructing such a narrative will be an interesting, creative and rewarding experience. I would really appreciate and value your contribution and look forward to your reply.

Kindest Regards,
Marguerite Muller

*Francis, D. & Hemson, C., 2007. Rainbow's end: Consciousness and enactment in social justice education. Perspectives in Education, 25(1). Page 100.*

# Appendix B

18 August 2014

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION:

*READING IN-BETWEEN OUR LINES. A COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY OF EDUCATORS WORKING TOWARDS ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

Dear Ms Muller

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence, is:

**UFS-EDU-2014-033**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for three years from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension in writing.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted in writing to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Barclay
Faculty Ethics Officer

**Appendix C**

INFORMED CONSENT:

Dear Participant

I would like to invite you to take part in the following research project:

**A collaborative self-study of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in Higher Education.**

This study is about educators experience with anti-oppressive practice in a collaborative self-study project.

I would like you to participate with me in this research because as an educator in Higher Education you have experience and knowledge that is valuable to the development and understanding of educator development and growth and educational research in relation to anti-oppressive practice

The reason I am doing this study is because I think there is a need for a space where South African educators can share their experiences, discuss educational theories and grow through the creative and collaborative process of art, narrative and fiction.

A possible risk to you in taking part in this study is that your identity might become known; however, I have taken the following step to protect your identity: a pseudonym picked by you will be used all times instead of your real name, you will also be requested to choose pseudonyms for any other person you might mention during the research process. All data gathered during interviews will be kept in a secure location. All online discussions will be done using avatars (a fictional online identity) on Facebook and will be conducted on a group page to which only the researcher and participants will have access. The Facebook identity you will use will be created by the researcher and will not be connected to your 'real' Facebook identity in any way.

I hope that you will benefit from this study by having the opportunity to share your experiences, thereby making a contribution to educational research and strengthening the knowledge base the of your professional community.

While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further repercussions.

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study supervisor (indicated above).

Should any difficult personal issues arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to see that a qualified expert is contacted to assist you.


Yours sincerely,


_____

Marguerite Muller

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Study: *A collaborative self-study of educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in Higher Education.*

.

Researcher: Marguerite Muller

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Name and Surname: _____

Age: _____

Employer: _____

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: _____          Date: _____

**Appendix D**

<u>**Letter 1**</u>

Dear *Participant,*

Hope you are well. With this email I am sending the first draft/part of the research story I am writing (attached), as well as the start of chapter 2. You are obviously a part of it, so thank you for sharing your character in our interview. In painting the character portraits I used mostly what you showed me and some of what you said, but I did 'fictionalise' here and there and obviously interpreted your character to fit in with my story line. Please read and make any comments you wish about the story line, or about the character portrayal. You can email me your comments or make comments on the dock itself, save it and send it back to me. If you work on the doc, please highlight or underline your comments/input in a colour so that I don't miss it. In Chapter 2 you are welcome to share any experiences that you might want to add to the story. I would appreciate any input as I really want this to be a collaboration of sorts. Once I have worked through all the comments and input of all the participants I will sent out the next instalment and so the process will continue. Once again thank you for participating, I really hope it is a fun, meaningful and interesting experience.

Best,
Marguerite

PS. I originally said I would use Facebook, but due to the technical challenges of creating fake identities (as well as legal issues) I have decided against it. I actually want participation in this process to be as easy as possible for you and I hope that by using the email route I will save everyone time and effort.

**Attachment to letter 1:**

We *Educators working towards anti-oppressive practice in Higher Education*

*Preface*

In South Africa our constitution includes the Bill of Rights which promotes equity and protect all citizens against discrimination which include, "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. 1996). Perhaps the Constitution paints a sort of a paradise for us, because our real lived experiences are sometimes far removed from this ideal. For those of us working at university level this is of particular concern as the Soudien (2008) report found racism and sexism to be pervasive in institutions of higher education, not in the institutional policies, but rather in the lived experiences of students and staff (Soudien et al. 2008:13).

In South Africa all education acts and policies post 1994, "call for teachers to advocate social justice, human rights and inclusivity (Francis & Le Roux 2011). This implies that teachers should actively seek to teach in anti-oppressive ways which means opposing racism, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression in their classrooms. For this to happen educators need to become more flexible, critical and thoughtful than they were socialised to be (Francis et al. 2003:137).

As educators working in higher education we carry a constitutional commitment to teach in anti-oppressive ways. For many of us it is also a personal commitment. However I view this process as **"…less of a triumphant change from oppression to liberation, and more as a scaffolding of a difficult entry into a new and still imperfect discourse"** (Francis and Hemson 2007:100). Even in our commitment to social justice we still come with internalised oppressive baggage. Many of us were not trained to challenge oppression in the classroom. Most of us were raised an oppressive society.  In the following sketch/story I have woven together some of the shared thoughts and experiences of 8 participants (including myself) who are currently working as educators in higher education into a single narrative. I hope that this story will help us engage with social justice as a real and experiential discourse, rather than a 'textbook' utopia, in which we can 'read' the many, messy, intersecting forms of oppression that form part of our everyday lives and therefore also impact on our work as educators.

*Chapter 1*
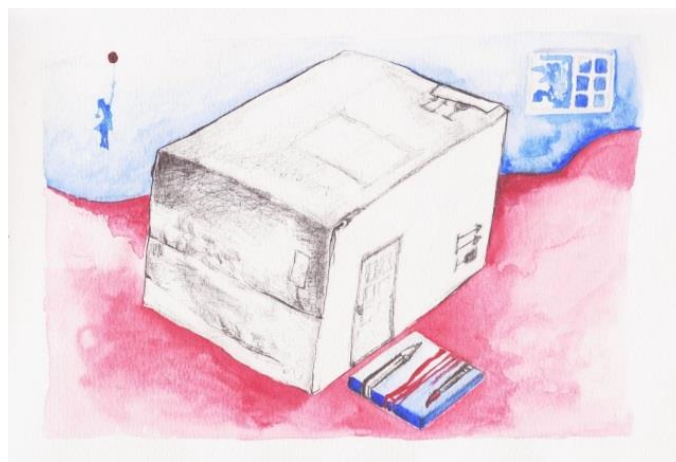


*In front of me is a box. It is a box filled with memories. Inside the box I find a small terracotta tile, it is painted and glazed. It is a simple picture of a paintbrush and pencil and a space in between them. As I unwrap this memory I see myself standing in that space between art and education, and it is from this space that I am now writing; the pencil is writing the story and the paintbrush is painting the picture. In the space between anti-oppressive theory and arts-based methodology my story is told. And you are now part of it.*

In the box I also find a picture of a little girl holding a red balloon. Her story begins in a safe and comfortable place. Her name is Daisy and she is playing in a green suburban garden. The air smells of Jasmine, sunshine, watermelon, birthday cake, washing powder, ironed clothes, mowed lawns and this is A PORTRAIT OF DAISY:
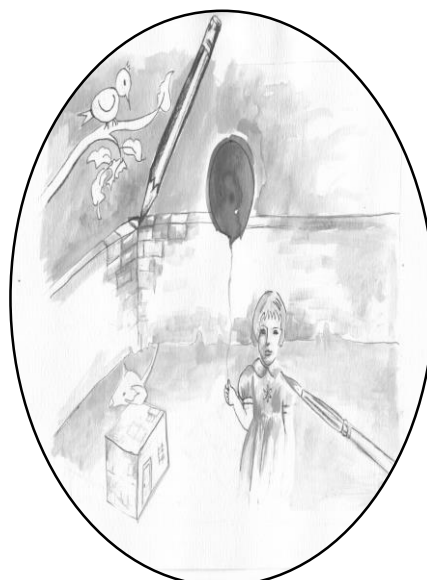
But now the portrait is changing. Daisy's known world reveals stormy seas behind the walls of her childhood garden. She is forced to look beyond what she had taken for granted. Slowly the world she thought she knew is changing and all she can do is hold on to that red balloon and float away to an unknown place on the horizon.



The world turns upside down. And what was once a cloud is now an island. From this angle the massive wave looks like an impenetrable forest. Daisy is stuck on an island of her own creation. The balloon, now deflated, becomes a sort of oversized handbag. She picks it up, throws it over her shoulder and walks on into the deep dark forest. She has no choice, because she is a fictional character stuck on an island and either she walks into the forest to look for something, or else her story is over.



So there she is walking into the deep dark forest and as she comes closer she notices that the untamed undergrowth gives way to a neat square of freshly mowed lawn. It is a hot summer's day and she feels the sweat running down her brow as she opens the door of a small office which smells of turpentine and good quality drawing paper. Daisy sits down to watch Dot where she is busy drawing A PORTRAIT OF DOT:

*You know Daisy I think the problems is that there is a disconnect between our bodies and the research that we do. I think I am always moving - physically moving - between spaces; you could say I am a nomad. I move between the university and spaces outside the university and then I constantly have to make a switch in my mind too. I have to translate my experiences of 'outside' back into this system.*

*But if you think about the body and text and how it all fits into an academic environment it is sort of applicable to what I do. I teach small groups of students and get up close and personal, more like a mentor really. And sometimes it's a challenge to keep that boundary, because students bring their personal issues into the work and it influences their work, and yet I do not feel it is my place to address those issues.*

As Dot is speaking her body becomes a drawing and her voice becomes silent text. Against one of the walls is a dusty mirror and Daisy walks over to look in it. The face looking back at her is not her own, it is <u>A PORTRAIT OF ALICE:</u>

*I am stuck in this mirror. The thing is I'm not sure if I practice what I preach. So like I feel all this sense of uncertainty and I'm like looking at myself and I'm wondering – am I doing the right thing? So there is this constant state of flux that I'm in. Does it make sense? I'm constantly feeling like I'm….I don't know…like I'm not doing the right thing. I teach language. So the students need to ask what language is. And they must be critical and reflect on their role…I always say to them that it's much more than reading and speaking, that we*

*use language and literacy for particular purposes… and if we don't reflect on how or why we use language then we create these deficits of children…*

*But this is what I have to constantly ask myself… in what I am saying am I creating… do I think of students as being deficit because they don't think in the way that I do? So I have to constantly think about what I do and what I say.*

*Well you know what it's like - I'm like looking at this thing which can be like the metaphor of teaching. For me teaching is like a kind of mirror and looking into this and whatever's going on in the classroom is reflecting …back on me. So in a way I am stuck in the mirror.*

Daisy turns away from the mirror, the room is now different. It's not really an office anymore, but more like a bedroom. Celine is standing in the room and she is looking at the bed; it is A PORTRAIT OF CELINE:



*You know I bought this bed when I got my first real salary. As a student I had the most uncomfortable bed, and I shared it with my sister, I don't know how old it was, it was a very small bed, and I just asked my mother can you please just buy us two separate beds, single beds. She said, "I'm not going to do that, if I do that, you guys are going to get so comfortable you will sleep and you won't study, so with this uncomfortable one when you think of sleeping, you'd rather sit and study". So with that first pay check I bought this bed.*

*I grew up in the dusty streets of Thaba Nchu. It has always been just, myself, my mother and my sister - just three ladies in the house, you know, so that was…I think it had pro's and con's, for me as a child you know, because in my house we never used to wear towels when we come out of the bath or anything. So when I grew up it is just three females in the house and you know that can be quite tough (she laughs). But growing up was…well I didn't see anything abnormal with not having a male in the house. Because here's my mother and she's a single parent, and some of the people that I know have two parents, so for me it was just, I don't think that I questioned that, because, I think while growing up I remember just bits and pieces of my parents staying together, and it was not good memories where my father was abus...physically abusive, also cheating and then that's when my mother just decided to leave. That also affected how I take my decisions now. You know to say…it's ok to have kids, it's also ok not to have a husband, you know?*

*When I came to Bloemfontein my mother sat me down and she said, you don't come back with a baby and I said I said ok THAT is VERY much done, don't worry about that. So now I had to learn how to be responsible again and how to grow up, because you know it's very difficult, it's very difficult if you're a girl. There's so much pressure on your side as a girl just*

*to say I'm not gonna get pregnant, because remember if you get pregnant, you terminate your studies. Whereas if you're a guy you act like nothing is wrong.*

*I remember when I was a little girl. I used to say to myself, you know I'm going to get married and my husband is going to take me for a honeymoon in Paris. I want to see the Eiffel tower. That has always been my dream. I had never thought in my wildest dreams that I would, I would actually study overseas. Because in the black community, studying overseas was for white people that were very rich, or if you were black and you studied overseas we considered you to be a boffin, you know, you're the cream of the crop.*

*And there in Poland I remember getting on this tram, and it's just so full and you don't want to move and now to make matters interesting, not worse, but interesting, here's this black woman and she's in a WHITE world… just white people, some of them have never seen a black person before I promise you. I remember the one lady just came over to me and ran her finger down my cheek, as if to see if my skin colour would come off or something.*

*I took myself to Paris. I remember seeing the Eiffel Tower for the first time and I started crying, that's how big it was, because I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would take myself to Paris you know?*

Celine stops talking and looks out the window to the green campus gardens. A bird is singing a sweet song outside her window. Under the bed Daisy sees a little curly tail poke out, like a pig's tail. She gets down on the floor to get a better look at the owner of the curly tail. Attached to the tail is a sort of half cat/ half dog with and one broken ear. What she is looking at is <u>A PORTRAIT OF CHUBBY:</u>



*I am not really one thing or another. But mostly I'm a cat. Because I like things to be perfect, I'm a bit of a perfectionist. But I'm also a dog – loyal you know. But you see my one ear is broken, because no one is perfect. It is difficult to be perfect. But I can keep my calm, I don't falter in a crisis. This is important as a lecturer and a teacher – to keep your calm. I like to treat people with compassion, I used to work in the coloured community in the Cape and I think I worked with people in difficult circumstances. Now I think I handle black and coloured students differently than some of the other lecturers. I try to think where the student is coming from. But you know I cannot be perfect, I make so many mistakes. Sometimes I say something – and then I realise how it might be interpreted. For example one day I was standing in a lecture hall. It had two doors and I was standing with my back to it. But you cannot actually see the doors, because there is a little alcove. And so as I was teaching and I heard the one door open and when I turned around there is no one. And I said…this was about three years ago… I said "O die spook van Donkergat"(translated it is something like Oh the ghost of Dark Hollow and is a reference to an 1973Afrikaans movie ) And then the*

*next moment the person comes in and I see that it is a Black student and my blood runs cold. I realise how this can be interpreted. I must seem like a racist. And I try to explain the reference. But sometimes we say the wrong things – and that is why I have this broken ear. I don't think I ever act like a pig, despite my tail, I try to be reasonable, and to be unreasonable is not in me…*

Chubby gets up and walks out of the room and Daisy follows the feline canine through a door of a large lecturing hall where it settles down into a sunny corner. At the front of the lecturing hall is a clown juggling on the stage. The clown is wearing a heavy costume which seems to drowning him in a way. His face is made up in the bright clown make-up, a smile fixed to it. She is looking at A PORTRAIT OF MICK J:

*I am trying to make the world better, but I have to juggle all these things, relationships, friendships, work, studies… Trying to make people happy …and my work is social justice; my work is to work towards a society which is equal, fair and…uhm, so transformation is part of that huge agenda. So the clown makes people happy, and I'm trying to make society a place where people…there's equality and there's less pain and there's less hurt and there's less discrimination. But it is heavily emotionally taxing. So it's not like I can always be smiling….*

*Look my hands are brown and I think my race…particularly in my work environment is something that I'm CONSIOUSLY aware of, you know, most of the time and probably because of the work I do. Last week in this class it was the students that bought up the topic and we ended up talking about race and then students got angry … and then a whole group of white students said like they are so tired of this whole race thing and everything and the black students kept quiet in the classroom and then you could just pick up the tension. And I was standing there in the front and I was teaching them and I thought: what did I do here? And so I when I noticed what was going on I told the students: "Ok just take a minute to think about what happened in the last 5 seconds in this classroom, just process it and make sense of what happened",  and then I asked them to speak to their group members and then I asked them to give me feedback and there was this backlash about how this is terrible that we keep talking about this race thing and…so I walked out of that classroom feeling extremely confused, frustrated and I was questioning did I do hurt more than I tried to do anything about healing in that classroom, will these students come back next week, what happened here?*

*What made those students get so frustrated so angry? Because they were angry, what made them feel so guilty? They felt like I was calling them racist, they felt like I was telling them they're bad people, they felt like I was categorising them as everyone who is bad in society…*

*It is like I'm trying to make them leap across a cliff you know? They have to leap and they might get hurt and they don't even know what is on the other side of familiar. The familiar side is where students are comfortable, everything is normal and they know everything and nobody is rocking the boat and I think when we started to talk about the issue of race and we didn't move away from it, it was like now I made them to be in that space, that dangerous space where there is nothing and I actually pushed them to a foreign place, so it's like going to another planet and someone just drops you off there. Cause suddenly they were hearing different perspectives, black students were talking about their experiences and it was like now what's happening? And the black students were also hearing the perspective from the white students so they were in a very foreign space.*

Mick turns around and walks of the stage and then disappears behind a heavy velvet curtain. Daisy follows him. She opens the curtain to find a sort of double portrait, which seems to be in a state of constant shift and change. The figure in the frame is looking at Daisy and says I am A PORTRAIT OF FRIDA FREIRE:



*Sometimes I'm Frida and sometimes I'm Freire, but mostly I'm both: an anima animus kind of thing. I think I see education as this massively liberating tool on a very deep level and it's something I've tried to bring through in my own teaching with limited and varying success. But my Frida side always reminds me that it's not just all about class consciousness you know? Class also intersects with race, gender, ability, sexuality, etc. We must look closely at intersectionality when it comes to oppression. Body and embodiment is so important, in a way there's this kind of dialogue between a very cognitive cerebral approach and the body on the other side. So that's why I have created myself as a sort of character that is trying to balance a very intense idealism of how education can be based on snippets of experiential knowledge throughout an entire lifetime of how it COULD be, but being held back on the other hand, by kind of logistical constraints and kind of deep seated inequalities that go back into education. So I imagines that it could be completely different, but at the same time I know that it has to work within the limitations of not only the body but also the limitations of the mind, but at the same time the limitations of society - so it tries, this character tries to imagine how to to transcend these, you know, using body at the same time using mind but knowing that eventually we aren't yet collectively ready to flatten all these opressive hierarchies. My Frida side has the ability to overcome something tremendously debilitating, which I probably see as a kind of metaphor for working within institutional constraints- like being disabled in a way. The Freire side I think is more rational, radical but rational rigor - this is saying look you can be as impassioned as you want, but at the end we need to learn these things in a reasoned and a rational way. As a teacher I am informed by this kind of underlying philosophy –I try to show my students that there is something that lies so deep*

*beyond this test or this information, there's something that kind of goes into the soul of why we are on earth and if you can try and find that and you try and conscientize yourself in a way then this learning is going to change the very structure of what you are.*

FridaFreire moves out of the frame to reveal a steep cliff behind her. Daisy steps into the frame and walks to the edge of the cliff. She leaps. Her red bag opens up like a type of parachute and a gentle breeze blows her safely to the other side. She is standing once again on the neat square of freshly mowed university lawn. Daisy is starting to get that feeling that she might be in a dream, that none of this is real. She notices the autumn leaves are starting to yellow overhead. Dried leaves are crunching under her feet as she wanders aimlessly. She feels a little light headed. Her hand feels around in the bottom of the red bag and finds an orange. So she sits down on a sunny patch of grass to peel the sweet skin away from its juicy flesh. She looks up at a statue of President Steyn to see that someone has wrapped him in pink plastic. Behind him the sky is a brilliant Bloemfontein Blue. *Can I have some?*

*Only if you tell me about yourself* she replies looking up at a familiar face. *You see I collect stories and I would like to collect yours. I want to paint your portrait of you. You are a poet right?* <u>A PORTRAIT OF THE POET:</u>
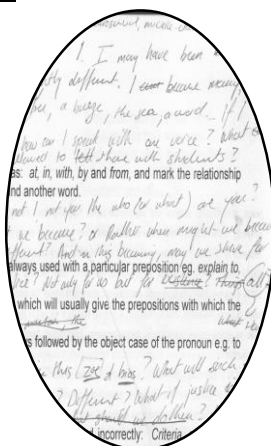


*In social justice speak I am a white, heterosexual, middle class male. Did I leave anything out?*
*But what if I am I, but never quite I?*
*I may have been, but I always turn out slightly different.*
*I become many, a woman, a chair, a child, a tree, the breeze the sea a word…*
*If I am many, how can I speak with one voice?*
*What am I allowed to tell or share?*
*If I'm not one - not I…*
*Then who or what are you?*
*What might we become?*
*Or rather, when might we become different?*
*And in this becoming may we strive for justice*
*but*
*What will such justice be?*
*Or justices be?*
*How should we be THEN, if we can only be NOW*
*There's NO utopia on the horizon.*
*It's just us, here in THIS moment…*

*Chapter 2*

*So how did I get here to THIS moment?* Daisy ponders this question as she is sitting there on the institutional lawn in the autumn sun with the white, heterosexual, middle class male poet.

*Suddenly she is back in the garden of her childhood. She goes to a 'good' Afrikaans medium school and gets a 'good' education. Sundays her family goes to the Dutch Reformed Church where her father is a Dominee (minister) and after the service she attends Sunday school. She is part of a close-knit community where similar views on religion, politics, history, and a shared language serves as the glue that binds them as white Afrikaners. The only people of colour she knows work as cleaners or gardeners. She listens to them speak a language (languages) she cannot understand. Although they are grown-ups she does not call them 'Oom' or 'Tannie', as she would call white grown-ups, but rather by their names. She knows that they have children, because unused toys or outgrown clothes are often sent home with them, but she never sees their families, or their homes. They seem to only exist in her world, with their own world somewhere beyond hers, out of her sight.*

*Look there is another picture of Daisy, dressed as up as a cowboy. The picture was taken by her pre-school teacher who, unlike other teachers, did not seem to mind when she refused to do ballet with the other girls or chose to be a pretend 'lion' rather than a 'fairy princess'.*

*As she progresses through the school system the freedom of pre-school evaporates in strict patterns of right and wrong. In primary school and finds herself marching in very straight lines. Strict rules define the boundaries of this semi-militant world. Sunlight filters in through high windows and the dust dances around like little specs of freedom before it disappears in the folds of heavy velvet curtains. Her memories are not unpleasant and smell of sharpened pencils, wood polish, industrial cleaning detergent and order. Look - there is the principal, male and important, addressing the assembly of uniformed children in straight lines, boys to the right and girls to the left, no talking, no moving, breathe if you really must. He is explaining that the first child of colour will join their straight lines tomorrow, she is in standard 4 (6th Grade), and there will be no trouble thank you.*

*Around the same time there is a request that a child with Down's syndrome should be allowed to attend the primary school. The request causes a rift in the otherwise uniform community. Should a child with 'special needs' be allowed to come to our 'normal' school? Daisy overhears the grown-ups argue and debate this issue around the 'braai' with a game of Rugby flashing on the television screen in the background. Surely it is the right thing to do some say, but surely 'such' a child will slow down the learning of the other children, say others. Eventually the request is withdrawn by the child's parents and everything goes back to 'normal'.*

*Sexual orientation is not a topic that ever comes up but somehow they are all aware that heterosexuality is the norm and that homosexuality exists (somewhere OUT THERE in some shadowy place far away). Daisy is in the Biblical study class of one of the male teachers rumoured to be homosexual who is now making them copy down some bible verse that says homosexuality is a sin……*

So Daisy is socialised in a certain way into a certain story, a single story. She would like to invite the other characters to share move of their stories. So that we can write a collaborative story, a multiple story.

**Letter 2**

Dear *Participant,*

I would like to ask you to contribute to the next part of my story. Just like Daisy shared some of her childhood experiences in the first instalment, I am hoping that you would like to share some of your childhood experiences with oppression in education by writing about them and sending them to me. It seems that so much of our understanding of the world stems from childhood. Bobbie Harro (2000) writes about the cycle of socialisation which we sometimes perpetuate sometimes interrupt. I asked you to introduce your character and from there I made the portrait, but now I want to understand where your character is coming from. Some of you already spoke about your early childhood experiences in the first interview. If you have and experience, or memory or thought which could help me develop your character then please send it to me.

I also want share something else. It seems that just like fiction can interrupt real life, real life can and does interrupt fiction. In the first instalment of the story you met the character Dot. Dot is a character created by the late Dot Vermeulen who lectured in the Art Department at UFS. Last week I sent her the first instalment of the story as I did with all of you, and I could see she had opened the message. Tragically a few days later on 30 April I received news that she had passed away in a fatal car accident. I am overcome with shock, sadness and confusion at how a person can be here one day and gone the next. We were not close friends, but had socialised a few times and (as with many of you) I had gotten to know her more intimately through the research process. She was in fact the first person I interviewed. On the day of that interview we shared a lunch of Power Ade and Biltong, and she showed me the Art Department, her student's artwork, and her office/studio space. With her permission I used one of her artworks for the PORTRAIT OF DOT. She also asked that I use her real name instead of a pseudonym and I respected that wish. After hearing of her death I thought about it deeply and decided that I will not write Dot out of this story, but rather include her through what she had contributed before her death. I think it is a way to honour her. She is dead, but her story is not; she lives on through her art, through memory, and her creative contribution to so many things, including this. I will honour her contribution in this way. I am also suddenly so aware of irreplaceable value of each and every contribution you make. This story is about real people and each person has experiences which are theirs alone. I will never be able to ask Dot to share her childhood memories with me, or comment on the outcome of this story and I am thereby reminded that the research process must be so respectful of those who participate and co-create in it. Life is fragile and can be gone in a second and this makes every contribution and every story so valuable. For this reason I am more convinced than ever that this type of research is necessary: research that values our experiences and our stories. Thank you for participating and sharing your memories, stories and time with me. In closing I would like to remember Dot in the following way: Before we began the interview I said something like "I know it is hard work, but you are so lucky because you teach the thing you love and you get to make art as well"…" Yes she said, "Sometimes I cannot even believe how lucky I am". I like to think that she had lived a fulfilled life and I will miss her very much.

Best wishes,

Marguerite

**Letter 3**

Dear *Participant,*

I hope you are well. I would like to schedule the second round of interviews for the last week of May (25,26,27,28,29) or alternatively the second week in June (8,9,10,11,12). If you could please let me know if any of these dates would suit you I would be so grateful.

I really appreciate the fact that this is such a busy time of year and you may be struggling to find time to participate in the research. Thank you for your contributions, every little bit really helps me understand your 'character' better, but please do not feel pressure if you do not feel you can reply every time. In the <u>first part</u> of the story I sketched portraits of the characters using your contributions. In the <u>second part (last week)</u> I asked for some childhood experiences. In the <u>third part</u> (attached to this message) I am asking you for some experiences from life outside the classroom. And finally in the <u>fourth part</u> (next week) I will ask for things pertaining specifically to your experiences with students. During the face-to-face interview in May/June I will ask you to help me 'read' and talk about oppression by looking back at our collaborative story.

Thank you for your time.

All the best,

Marguerite

**Attachment to letter 3:**

*Chapter 3*

*In this section Daisy ponders about her relationship with colleagues and also about issues around culture and identity.*

*It is bell hooks who reminds Daisy to be critical of the us/them binary by saying that "Whenever we love justice and stand on the side of justice we refuse simplistic binaries. We refuse to allow either/or thinking to cloud our judgement. We embrace the logic of both/and. We acknowledge the limits of what we know (hooks 2003:10).*

*Daisy asked her grade 11 homeroom to tidy up the class before leaving at the end of the day. Mr. Peters the grade head came in while the students were busy with this task. He was very unhappy that the students were not seated and quiet as he liked them to be at this time of day. He immediately told them that he would keep them after school the next day as punishment for being noisy and moving about. So the morning of the next day Daisy crossed the invisible line in the staffroom. There are a number of invisible lines in a staffroom, but this particular invisible line divided the male staff in the back from the female staff in the front. She crossed the line and immediately felt she was in foreign territory. She went to sit down next to Mr. Peters and felt the other male staff members' eyes on her. She understood that this was unusual behaviour for a young female teacher and they were curious and a little tense. She told him that the students didn't deserve the punishment he had planned as they had only been doing what she had asked them to do. He started with 'juffroutjie' (an Afrikaans term often used to refer to younger female teachers and meaning something like 'little miss') and telling her in a loud voice (for the benefit of the surrounding male audience) that he was the grade head and that the students knew very well what he expected of them and that regardless of her orders they should have been seated and quiet as he expected them to be.*

*Daisy feels that Mr. Peters is acting in a sexist way, but she realises that his actions are framed within a larger patriarchal society. The fact is that Mr. Peters was undoubtedly also educated in a system of Christian National Education where authority was presented as inherently good, masculine and somehow connected with God. In this hierarchy learners (of all colours) were encouraged to accept their identity and hierarchic place. In such a system critical consciousness had no place. Underlying this ideology was the idea that the 'white man' in Africa had to lead African people to a better life (Francis & Hemson 2007a:41).*

*In a way it is perhaps tempting to envision ourselves, as being critically conscious, shaking off our oppressive baggage, and becoming triumphant agents of change. However Francis and Hemson (2007) point out that teacher education in social justice should be seen, "...less as a triumphant charge from oppression to liberation, and more as a scaffolding of a difficult entry into a new and still imperfect discourse" (Francis & Hemson 2007:100).*

*In an article about the stories shared in collaborative memory work on racial mixing Pattman (2012) writes "how frequent references were made to 'culture' and the pursuit of shared cultural interests which were seen to cut across race. So closely tied were 'race' and 'culture' that in some of the stories cultural differences seemed to signify presumed race differences" (8).*

*She suddenly remembers a day out at the popular Disney-like theme park in South Korea called Everland. It was a school outing and a giggling group of her Grade 11 students talked her into a ride called 'Jigu Maul' (Global Village) which is apparently similar to 'It's a small world' at Disneyland. She got onto a smallish unsteady boat which sailed through very shallow water past a dusty display of 'the cultures of the world' represented by freakish little miniature dolls dressed up in their country's 'national attire' and singing 'national songs'. She can't remember much about the South African display but she is pretty sure it involved a scantily dressed all-black cast with drumming sound effects, colourful beads and Zulu shields.*

*The danger of multiculturalism is a "rehearsal of racially –based cultural stereotypes that have little resonance with the lived reality of young South Africans (Francis & Hemson 2007a:43). So in terms of social justice teaching this approach can be criticised for its Disney-like qualities, which, for the sake of pleasantness, shy away from any uncomfortable exploration of conflict or differences in power. In a sense, the rhetoric of the Rainbow Nation has fostered a celebration of the differences outside an assumed norm.*

*She goes to an exhibition of Peter Magubane's work on campus. "A struggle without documentation is no struggle at all" is the title of the exhibition. It is an emotional experience as the photographs show some shocking images from South Africa's apartheid past. She realises that many of these pictures were taken around the time that she was playing with her red balloon in the green suburban garden of her childhood. While the awareness of this uncomfortable and tragic history washers over her in all its visual intensity she overhears a conversation at the other side of the gallery. A white woman, a black woman and a black man are talking about the exhibition and the white woman says: "you know I feel so ashamed that people of my skin colour were responsible for this..."*

*The woman's words jolt her memory and immediately takes her back a few years earlier to when she was a high school art teacher in Pietermarizburg. It was an urban school and her students were predominantly black. There was one student who was very active in class discussions. Whenever Daisy raised a concern about class discipline or clean-up duties, or tardiness, or homework not done, he would say – "This is Black people, Ma'am" as a way of*

*explaining the problem to her. He said it in a joking manner and no one seemed to take him up on the comments. One day he was helping her carry supplies into the store room and during an informal conversation his 'this is Black people' – remark slipped out again. So this time she asked him why he was so keen to put down all black people in this hurtful manner. Standing out of earshot from the other learners he said – "Sometimes I feel ashamed of being black, Ma'am". To her own surprise she said – "Well sometimes I feel ashamed of being white".*

## Letter 4

Dear *Participant,*

This is the last and final part of the story I will be sending. I would love to arrange a face-to-face meeting to talk over the portraits and the story and some of the emerging themes. Can we have a face to face interview sometime in June? Any day between 8 and 26 June would be great. I would really appreciate it. Thank you for your time once again, I fully understand that this is such a busy time of year and that your time is very precious.

Best,

Marguerite

**Attachment to letter 4:**

*Chapter 4*

*Daisy feels irritation with Veronica who is one of her grade 12 learners. Veronica black Zulu girl who likes to take control of classroom discussions and Daisy is not always sure how to handle her overbearing personality (or her own lack of authority over Veronica). Veronica makes her feel powerless. At present they are doing a section of art history which deals with the resistance art by black South African artists during the struggle. Veronica seems especially agitated. She won't allow Daisy to continue with the lesson and is now screaming at her: "I hate white people! I hate white people!" Veronica storms out of the class and Daisy is left with a group of wide eyed grade 12 learners – looking at her inquisitively. She feels dismay - how did she prompt this outburst? How should she have handled it? Was it her, or the content they are dealing with, or both?*

This is artwork they were discussing in class that day

Image 7 *The Brother is Dead* (1998) by Sam Nhlenghtwa
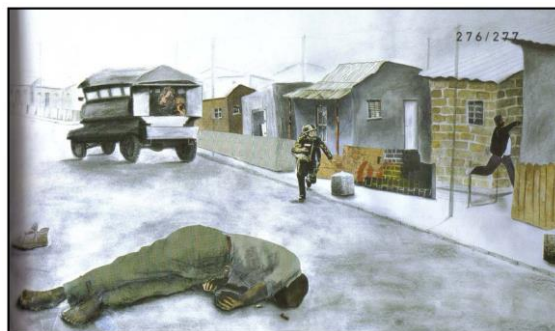


Freema Elbaz-Luwisch posed the question: "How is education possible when there is a body in the middle of the room?" (Jansen 2009:258).

On another day Veronica comes to her to ask when they can start doing their practical work since they (she speaks for the rest of the class) are sick and tired of the art history. Daisy replies that once they finish with the history they can do the practical and the more cooperation she gets the sooner that will be. Veronica then stands up and addresses the rest of the class in Zulu, and Daisy understands almost nothing of what is being said. For the rest of the lesson an otherwise lively class is deadly quiet and give her their full participation and attention. At the end of the lesson she is perplexed and asks another learner what Veronica had told them, "She said that your cat had died and that you were sad and that we should therefore go easy on you as we all know how attached white people can get to their pets". This really takes the wind out of her sails – she had never owned a cat in her life.

In the art room she draws up a clean-up roster. She does this because it is how things were done when she had been in school. Every week two learners are responsible for sweeping the class and taking out the trash during the register period at the end of the day. In week two her system fails. One of the grade 11 boys inform her that he had already been to the mountains and can therefore not sweep the class as that is a woman's work. The girl whose name is also on the list that week intervenes to say that she will sweep and he can take out the trash. This quickly becomes the norm and everybody seems to accept it. Girls sweep, boys take out the trash. Daisy does not challenge the 'new' system. She worries that forcing the boy to sweep would make her seem culturally insensitive. And at the same time she feels irritated by what she perceives as sexist behaviour.

Many years later Daisy finds herself teaching a literacy class at the University of the Free State. The discussion on "Teenage suicide" (the reading for the day) is floating around the room and for a moment comes to rest on the high suicide rate in a country like South Korea, where she explains that she had spent some of her earlier teaching years.

> Student: But they are highly stressed people.
>
> Daisy: Who?
>
> Student: The Chinese.
>
> Daisy: You mean the South Koreans?
>
> Student: They look the same.

There is a moment of silence before protests erupt from elsewhere in the class. The discussion moves to stereotyping and she tells the class how her South Korean students sometimes had trouble understanding how she could be from South Africa, and not be black. "Where are you really from?" they would ask her.

The class is silent for a bit before a black girl in the front row poses the question: But why are you white, Ma'am? She feels herself go a little red with embarrassment and change the subject without answering the question.

## Letter 5

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in the research up to this point. I have used the conversations we had along with the images/artworks you shared to create a character collage for (insert character name here). Attached to this message you will find a document containing the visual and textual portrait. You are welcome to study this at you leisure and to send me any feedback or comments that you might have. In the last step of this research

project I am hoping to bring all the participant together for an informal session whereby we can discuss the portraits and the connections between our stories, and also some of the connections to the theory. I would also like to get some comments on what we can possibly do with these portraits, i.e. publish them online etc. As this is a participatory research project you input is vital and I really hope you will be able to attend the final session. As a preliminary date I would like to propose Thursday the 1$^{st}$ of October to come to my house and enjoy coffee and cake with the other participants? Let's say about 16:30 so that it is just after work and not too much of a hassle. If you could give me feedback on this date and time I will try to move it accordingly until everyone is able to attend.

Once again thank you for sharing your experiences, stories and art with me.

**Attachment for letter 5:**

The attachment here were the individual character portraits/collages as they are presented in chapter 5 of the thesis.

## Letter 6

Dear Participant,

It seems that my ideal for a final group session to discuss the research will simply not work out due to everyone's extremely busy schedules. Consequently I have decided to rather schedule individual meetings with everyone so that we can talk about the outcome of your 'portrait' and also just to end off the research journey from my side. Please send me a date time and place of when I can meet you at your convenience.

Best,

Marguerite