

## Epilogue

### Notes Towards A Socially Engaged LAIC

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During the Third Reich in Germany, the literary critic Victor Klemperer documented the ways in which Jews and ‘non-Aryans’ were categorised and produced by Nazi language. His diaries also documented the day-to-day life under the regime and provided the basis for his majestic work *LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii (The Language of the Third Reich)*. He understood his role as a witness and was meticulous in his ethnographic documentation of language, lecturing in the post-war period on his observations about the Third Reich’s effects as communicative terror.

In considering the focus, and nature of the engagements of the authors of the papers collected in this special issue, the work of Klemperer in *LTI* is a spectre. He documented, analysed, critiqued and demonstrated a sensitivity to language which was later to be found in the theories and methods that settled in the field of Language and Intercultural Communication, in Discourse Analysis, Applied and Sociolinguistics, as well as in literary criticism. The focus on everyday life, grassroots and also the language of power were prevalent themes in Klemperer’s extraordinary compendia. His documentation and analysis did not prevent the Holocaust. But they acted as witness. They were profoundly socially engaged, in minute details.

In reflecting on social engagement at the moment in history when this Special Issue and the research it encompasses are produced, Klemperer’s work is also sobering by way of comparison. Where the authors are working in contexts where political will favours intercultural dialogue and does not outlaw criticism of foreign or domestic policies, then the authors are able to show how LAIC can be positively working with engagements in a range of social contexts – Scotland and Aotearoa/New Zealand, for instance. But where the contexts frustrate these efforts, including the academic contexts themselves, then perhaps the best researchers can hope for with their engagements is a holding back a little of the tide: a struggle with many others for reason and evidence to win through the irrationalities of fear and rising xenophobia and permissive racism.

‘I want my research to make a difference’ is the common refrain we hear from our research students in the field of migration and refugee studies in LAIC and if truth be told, in these times, the difference it can make under prevailing conditions might often be close to negligible, whether it be socially engaged or not. The best we can perhaps hope for in our critical and engaged focus in LAIC is to witness, to lay down evidence, to document accurately and fiercely the good, the bad and the ugly of these times, such that scholars like several of those in this volume might take this work and subject it, in time, to due historical analysis.

Academics have undertaken a large amount of socially engaged research in this field over the past five years at least. If political leaders and electoral will, where elections are part of the make up of governance, do not wish to hear or engage with the evidence, then there is little hope of it making a difference. Research on how effective communication strategies

proposing cruelty are – through, for instance, the caging of children, the separation of families at borders, the inflecting of systemic daily humiliations of racism on migrant populations as sanctioned and performed through the media, leaders and society – and what makes them effective, is still largely lacking. As Deleuze and Guatarri, citing Wilhelm Reich, in *Anti-Oedipus* (2004, p. 279) stated ‘The masses were not deceived, they desired fascism and that is what has to be explained.’

In the meantime, and simultaneously, not as an either/or but as both/and, we contend, based on the questions, approaches and also the limitations these articles collected here reveal to us that in working towards a socially engaged LAIC, the following qualities will need to be added to frameworks on Research Integrity.

- Our work must continually seek to represent and include those who are not the subjects of normative lines of study.
- Our work must be meticulous in documenting socially and communicatively destructive practices.
- Our work must decolonise alongside decentring.
- Our work will require us to join and engage in action, advocacy and activism as a result of the conclusions we draw, not as a lone endeavour but with others and with critical reflection and guidance.
- Our work may need to keep silence, for the sake of safety and inclusion, or it may need to speak out.
- Our work will need to be astute in its use of language, in its slippages into imperial forms.
- Our work will need to resist overly clarifying, or seeking coherence, as resistance may require obfuscation, even mess.
- Our work will be embodied and we should write about this.
- Our work may take us into spiritual activism, ritual performance, and ceremony – all areas of engagement and social action which are outwith the zones of comfort for Western epistemology.
- Our work will need to consider the central role of ethics in each intercultural encounter and the uses to which ethical frameworks should or may be put in pursuit of both research and action or change.
- The hyperlocal may need to come more fully into view as a locus for action and grassroots work.
- The environmental dimensions of our work, and human ecological models, will need to be considered as contexts for social action.
- The elements of rhetoric, aesthetics, artistry and performance in language as vehicles for social action, as well as forms where social action is represented, will need to find a stronger place.
- We will need collective resources of care to ensure the burn out, which is prevalent in people engaged in social activism, is handled responsibly and we learn how to live with these new contexts for our research.
- Our work will operate on the edges of grief and as resources for hope.

- We should always be aware that there is no pure place to stand, no argument that is a hundred per cent correct and that researcher integrity, in these times, may also be complicit on some level, and broken. Without this humility there can be no knowledge worthy of trust, or action that is truly engaged and engaging.

## References

- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (2004) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. London and New York: Continuum
- Klemperer, V. (1947) *LTI Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen*. Stuttgart: Reclam.