4 Liquid Anxiety: Social Uncertainties and Isolation

As the term 'theatre of anxiety' already implies, I consider anxiety a pervasive factor in many contemporary British plays. While there are various broad reasons for these anxieties (see chapter 1.1), the focus of the following analysis chapters primarily lies on anxiety that is related to a possible economic collapse, to ecological crises and technological surveillance, as well as pandemics and diseases.[104] Although they should not be thought of as divided in a strict sense, these different categories show how anxiety is ingrained in many aspects of public life. The focus of the theatre of anxiety often oscillates between the individual and society. This has to do with the overall structure of fear and anxiety. As Bourke observes, "emotions such as fear do not belong only to individuals or social groups: they mediate between the individual and the social. They are about power relations. Emotions lead to a negotiation of the boundaries between Self and Other or One Community and Another. They align individuals with communities" (354). It is especially this alignment of individuals with communities but also the opposite, the individualisation of a society through fear and anxiety, that are at the core of the following chapter.

Drama and theatre can be viewed as art forms that illustrate the way emotions, including anxiety, shape and are shaped by the private and especially the public sphere. Jill Dolan, for instance, suggests that theatre and politics belong together and that social actions can be influenced by emotions evoked by theatrical performances (10).[105] In this regard the description of fear in the Global North by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman mirrors what is depicted in the theatre of anxiety. For Bauman, we are currently living in frightful times, where "[o]ccasions to be afraid are one of the few things of which our times, badly missing certainty, security and safety, are not short. Fears are many and varied" (*Liquid Fear* 20) and while fears often differ according to class, gender, race or age, some fears and anxieties

104 The reasons for the different global sources of fear and anxiety are manifold and their borders often blurred. For instance, the mechanisms at play when looking at the political and social side of fear from a sociological perspective often overlap with the reasons for the ecological destruction of the planet. At the same time, ecology and pandemics are closely connected, where the ecological destruction fosters the spreading of diseases.

105 In general, whether on the level of the individual or society, the political is often "deeply stirred by affect and emotion" (Szanto and Slaby 478) – often, it might be added, by negative emotions like fear and anxiety.

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can nonetheless be shared by whole populations.[106] It is exactly those fears – fears that are widely shared – that are the focus of the following analysis of plays that can be described as belonging to a theatre of anxiety. Furthermore, while a phenomenological understanding of fear and anxiety sheds light on how these negative emotions can be experienced and, as a consequence, represented on stage (see chapters 2 and 3), the choice of 'anxious' subject matters for such plays is influenced by social and cultural developments such as those observed by Bauman. Intriguingly, Bauman's sociological observations of what he calls 'liquid fear' have a number of similarities to a phenomenological approach to anxiety like that of Ahmed. Both are predicated on the notion of the 'free-floating' and difficult to grasp, or liquid nature of anxiety.[107] This is why a brief overview of Bauman's concept of liquid fear in the light of a phenomenology of anxiety seems necessary as a starting point for the discussion of plays that are informed by both approaches.

4.1 A Sociological Perspective on Anxiety

Crucially, both the phenomenological and Bauman's socio-political understanding of anxiety (and consequently most dramatic representations) focus on the phenomenon's genesis in time and space (for phenomenology's alteration of time and space, see chapter 2). Both time and space have been extended in modern, globalised societies, where the human sphere seems to have expanded endlessly and rapidly, leading to the impression of infinite growth and wealth without taking into account the finite resources on Earth.[108] This is what Bauman describes as

106 Anthony Oliver-Smith explains how "social systems generate the conditions that place people, often differentiated along axes of class, race, ethnicity, gender, or age, at different levels of risk from the same hazard and of suffering from the same event." (28) and how these social systems are connected to vulnerability. Kate Rigby complements this list with "dis/ability" (14). Nonetheless, as anxiety is not a rational feeling based on facts but directed towards a potentially painful future, the intensity of fear and anxiety often does not differ in people from diverse backgrounds, although their lived realities can be quite different.

107 Bauman chose the term *liquid* fear, as derived from his notion of liquid modernity, amongst other reasons because liquids and fluids "neither fix space nor bind time. While solids have clear spatial dimensions but neutralize the impact, [...] fluids do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change it" (Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* 2). The metaphor of liquid fear thus not only describes an anxiety that arises from liquid modernity's fast-moving society, but it can also stand for Ahmed's approach of anxiety that likewise describes it as unsteady and not containable.

108 According to Christian Attinger, who focuses on instances of globalisation in the plays of Philip Ridley, the relationship between globalisation and contemporary theatre "can be roughly divided

liquid modernity: the evolution of modern societies into global capitalist economies that are characterised by continuous growth and the continuous alteration of living conditions (*Liquid Modernity*).[109] Paradoxically, it is this vast growth, seemingly an expression of human strength and ingenuity, that fans fears and leaves the individual in a state of vulnerability and uncertainty: the permanent process of change societies are undergoing as a result of this growth introduces insecurity and uncertainty into the lives of individuals. "[T]he most awesome and least bearable of our fears" for Bauman thus lie in "the insecurity of the present and uncertainty about the future" (*Liquid Fear* 128) – which need to be tackled by isolated individuals without appropriate resources (see also Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*). Therefore, Bauman proposes that we not only live in times of liquid modernity, but also in times of liquid fear, in which we are no longer able to govern local and global affairs due to the insecurity, uncertainty, loneliness and isolation these contemporary societies create.[110]

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into three different categories" (55). The first category describes the "production process of contemporary theatre and its conditions" (55) and focuses on the influence of globalisation on more material (i. e. technical) or sales-oriented (i. e. marketing) aspects of theatre and performance. The second category highlights the connection of globalisation and contemporary drama considering their aesthetic representations within the dramatic text. Finally, the third group represents a general overview on the topic. Other books that give such an overview are Dan Rebellato's *Theatre and Globalization* – for whom "[t]here is an ethical impulse in the theatre's aesthetics, regardless of how globalization may wax and wane, whose singular moments of beauty allow us to glimpse the breadth and intensity of the cosmopolitan community" (85) and, focusing on Irish Theatre, Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (2010).

109 Liquid modernity and the negative scenarios that accompany it are not the result of enforced "dictatorial rule, subordination, oppression or enslavement" but, as Bauman explains, "the present-day situation emerged out of the radical melting of the fetters and manacles rightly or wrongly suspected of limiting the individual freedom to choose and to act. *Rigidity of order is the artefact and sediment of the human agents' freedom.* That rigidity is the overall product of 'releasing the brakes': of deregulation, liberalization, 'flexibilization', increased fluidity, unbridling the financial, real estate and labour markets, easing the tax burden, etc." (*Liquid Modernity* 5). The metaphor of liquidity does explain exactly this liberalisation from all kinds of limits and restrictions that leads to scenarios of constant change and insecurity, as the following chapters will outline.

110 Related concepts in sociology and philosophy are those of precarity and (existential) precariousness. Both are closely connected to anxiety, as precarious living conditions may increase insecurity, uncertainty and often also isolation in individuals. Due to political programmes like austerity, scholarly interest in precarity has increased over the past years, as Emily Hogg observes: "[f]rom temporary work contracts to imminent environmental catastrophe, from state violence to pervasive anxiety, in recent years a diverse range of experiences and affects have been analysed using the cluster of related terms 'precarity,' 'precariousness' and 'the precariat'" (1). In discourses on precarity and precariousness two strands emerge: one that understands precarity as referring to primarily economic hardship caused typically by neoliberal capitalist policies and one that sees

It is little wonder, then, that uncertainty and isolation play a crucial role in the theatre of anxiety, not only where the current political situation and/or future perspectives are described, but also when states of fear and anxiety are represented on stage. In other words, uncertainty and isolation further add to the conglomerate that is anxiety. In the following, four similarities between the phenomenology of anxiety and Bauman's description of modern societies will be analysed in more detail. All four are connected to uncertainty and isolation: firstly, anxiety's nature as a conglomerate of many fearful objects that has its origin in Husserl's description of moods is mirrored in Bauman's description of liquid fear as well as his description of what he calls *derivative fears*, which likewise show a structure of overwhelming objects and situations that put the subject in a fearful mood or, as I suggest, anxiety. Secondly, anxiety's temporality that combines present and future, especially when thought of as the anticipation of a painful future by Ahmed, is mirrored by Bauman when he writes about the temporality of insecurity that leads to a sense of uncertainty. Thirdly, the examples Bauman gives that describe the reasons and symptoms of liquid fear not only show the same accumulating nature that can be found in phenomenological descriptions of anxiety but also shift the focus to the public realm and look at society as a whole as opposed to an individual subject (as is often done in phenomenology). Finally, the fears and anxiety described by Bauman lead to a sense of isolation and likewise increase the already felt anxiety within society; thus, his notion of singularisation complements the phenomenological understanding of anxiety.

Anxiety vs Liquid Fear vs Derivative Fear

"Most fearsome is the ubiquity of fears" (4) – this quote from Bauman's *Liquid Fear* already anticipates the political dimension of anxiety as found in the theatre of

precariousness as a broader ontological condition of our exposure to and dependency on other human beings "for shelter and sustenance," which in turn puts us "at risk of statelessness, homelessness, and destitution under unjust and unequal political conditions" (J. Butler, "Precarious Life" 148; see also *Mourning and Violence*). This is also reflected in research on contemporary theatre. The edited collection *Of Precarity: Vulnerabilities, Responsibilities, Communities in 21st-Century British Drama and Theatre* (Aragay and Middeke), for instance, explores the existential precariousness/precarity of twenty-first-century society by reading contemporary drama and performance in the light of theories of precariousness by thinkers like Emmanuel Levinas, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy. While Aragay and Middeke's anthology focuses on both the written playtext and its performance, Jenny Hughes's *Precariousness and the Performances of Welfare* offers an overview of different theatre practices, like activist theatres, to "research into experiences of homelessness, the community work of regional theatres, arts-led social care initiatives, theatre in contexts of higher education and corporate training, people's theatres and youth arts initiatives" (4). For another recent analysis of precarity and performance, see also Costa and Field.

anxiety. The "ubiquity of fears" is exactly the kind of anxiety that can be found in many recent UK theatre productions. As opposed to most philosophical accounts, Bauman does not differentiate between fear and anxiety. Liquid fear, for Bauman, is "diffuse, scattered, unclear, unattached, unanchored, free floating, with no clear address or cause; when it haunts us with no visible rhyme or reason, when the menace we should be afraid of can be glimpsed everywhere but is nowhere to be seen" (2).[111] This description of liquid fear already reveals several resemblances to the phenomenological account of anxiety (see chapter 2.1). Ahmed's notion of anxiety, for instance, similarly shows that the object of fear is "not quite present" (*Cultural Politics* 65) because in anxiety "the detachment from a given object allows anxiety to accumulate through gathering more and more objects, until it [anxiety] overwhelms other possible affective relations to the world" (*Cultural Politics* 66). In other words, the objects in anxiety seem to be everywhere but cannot be located anywhere specific. A similar understanding of fear and anxiety can also be found in Kolnai, who, in his phenomenological approach to both aversive emotions, states that "one can understand by anxiety in a narrower sense a kind of unmotivated, more or less 'free-floating' state of fear, not strictly related to any object" (36).[112] What all these notions of fear/anxiety have in common is their description as an unfocused and omnipresent entity. In this, Bauman's account of liquid fear is strikingly close to these phenomenological descriptions of anxiety, which is why I would argue that Bauman's liquid fear can also be understood as a type of *anxiety.*

While Bauman acknowledges that fears do accumulate into a cloud of "free floating" fears, he also notes that "those fears do not easily add up" (*Liquid Fear* 20). He argues that, if they were to add up, it would be easy to reveal their joined origin. This can, again, be explained by looking at the phenomenology of anxiety. To find the origin of anxiety is not possible because, although the accumulation of fearful objects as described by Ahmed does originate in a fearful object, this object does not seem present. What makes anxiety so overwhelming is the *accumulation* of objects, and not the objects themselves. According to Ahmed, "[t]here is nothing

111 Bauman also describes one primal fear – the fear of death – which "is perhaps the prototype of archetype of all fears; the ultimate fear from which all other fears borrow their meanings" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 52). This fear of death is prominent in all plays from the theatre of anxiety.
112 Kolnai continues that, although he uses both fear and anxiety interchangeably, what he is interested in is more a wider sense of "the full, 'redundant' feeling of fear ('*pavor*'), in contrast to the concept of fear as a mere 'worrying' about an unwelcome event or as a presumption of a danger ('*timor*'). In general, [he has] in mind only the 'normal', object-directed anxiety as such, anxiety *in face of something* (even if it is not in every case proportional to that thing)" (36) and it is in this wider sense – fear as brought about by (dangerous) objects – that he uses the term anxiety.

in the object that renders fear a *necessary consequence* of the object" (*Cultural Politics* 80). Therefore, it is also not possible to trace anxiety back to a single object. As this is the case, the subject is unable to prevent a possible future threat. As Bauman comments, fears "are all the more frightening for being so difficult to comprehend; but even more horrifying for the feeling of impotence they arouse. Having failed to understand their origins and logic (if they do follow a logic), we are also in the dark and at a loss when it comes to taking precautions – not to mention preventing the dangers they signal or fighting back against them" (*Liquid Fear* 20). Simultaneously, as Bauman argues, fears do not add up because, although they might impact the many, they are only fought back against individually and it is neither assured "what our defence would gain" if they were to be combined nor how this can be achieved (20–21), leading to the individualisation he increasingly observes in the Global North. These notions of uncertainty and inability to react to those public and private fears as well as the isolation they create are then often connected to the fears and anxiety of entire populations.

In order to further explain his concept of liquid fear,[113] Bauman introduces *derivative fears.* While for him humans and animals alike can feel fear as a response to "a menace threatening their life" (*Liquid Fear* 2), only humans can feel derivative fear, or second-degree fear, "a sediment that outlives the [harmful] encounter and becomes an important factor in shaping human conduct even if there is no longer a direct threat to life or integrity" (3). It is this notion of derivative fear that in many ways resembles the notion of anxiety that connects sociology and phenomenology. Derivative fears not only mirror Ahmed's notion of fear as being "linked to the 'passing by' of the object" (*Cultural Politics* 65) but also her notion of anxiety as being the accumulation of various (fearful and ungraspable) objects. Furthermore, derivative fears also describe how moods like anxiety colour all objects in the fore- and background in the same mood, as described by Husserl (*Wahrnehmung* 177). Bauman continues that

> 'Derivative fear' is a steady frame of mind that is best described as the sentiment of being *susceptible* to danger; a feeling of insecurity (the world is full of dangers that may strike at any time with little or no warning) and vulnerability (in the event of the dangers striking, there will be little if any chance of escape or successful defence; the assumption of vulnerability to dangers depends more on a lack of trust in the defences available than on the volume or nature of actual threats). (*Liquid Fear* 3)

113 In the following, I will continue to use the term *fear* in reference to Bauman's terminology. However, as argued before, his concept of fear in many ways shows more resemblances to anxiety as understood by phenomenologists like Ahmed, Kolnai or Waldenfels.

What makes secondary or derivative fear uniquely human is that it results from the reflection on past negative experiences and has the potential to shape entire societies or cultures. Guided by insecurity and vulnerability, derivative fear leads to a persistent feeling of threat and anxiety, even if no menace exists. Bauman's description of derivative fear then resembles in many ways the phenomenology of anxiety described by Waldenfels, who sees in anxiety the fear of an event that might strike at any moment and pass the subject by without any means for it to defend itself (24). In other words, the subject is afraid of an unforeseen event that may happen fast and at any moment in time and change the future without the subject being able to develop an adequate solution to prevent it (see chapter 2.3).

At the same time, the description of derivative fears as *secondary* fears also introduces a notion of temporality to Bauman's description that echoes the importance of the temporal dimension in phenomenological accounts and is encapsulated in Bauman's paradigm of liquidity. Anxiety is the consequence of the accumulation of fearful objects and hence represents a temporality that comes *after* the single fearful object and is in this sense secondary. In quite a similar way, time matters in the context of fear and anxiety not only because both aversive emotions are directed towards the future, but also because the threat (or conglomerate of fearful objects) might strike at any moment and is thus neither predictable nor calculable. In Bauman's words, "by far the most awesome and fearsome dangers are precisely those that are *impossible*, or excruciatingly *difficult*, to anticipate: the *un*predicted, and in all likelihood *unpredictable* ones" (*Liquid Fear* 11) – a description of dangers, or fearful objects, that closely echoes Waldenfels's epistemological account of anxiety (see chapter 2.3). What these accounts of anxiety have in common is their free-floating nature that gives these negative emotions an atmosphere of omnipresence and absence at the same time. Because of their lack of an object, their origin cannot be detected, leaving the subject unable to prevent these feared events from happening – events that might strike suddenly and at any moment. Therefore, it is not only Bauman's description of liquid fear as free-floating and difficult to comprehend but also his notion of derivative fears as causing feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability that combine a sociological understanding of fear with a phenomenological understanding of anxiety.

The Temporality of Insecurity and Uncertainty

What is important for the theatre of anxiety is not only the description of anxiety as the accumulation of several (fearful) objects but also the temporality that accompanies anxiety (see chapter 2.3 and 3). The temporal dimension of drama is closely connected to its political scope, as drama, according to Klaić, "probes the

future of politics and at the same time enters the contemporary political debate about the desirable quality of the future and the political choices available that will determine its shape" (95). This political probing of "the future" – and, one might add, occasionally also the past – from a "contemporary" vantage point is predicated on similar temporal structures as feelings of anxiety, which, incidentally, are themselves often caused by political events. Drama's probing of politics in this sense is also often a probing of anxiety, and both depend on complex temporalities. In order to understand the temporality of anxiety from a sociological perspective, and the consequences this might have, the differentiation between insecurity and uncertainty is important. The theatre of anxiety, and most certainly the plays at the focus of the following two analyses, show near-future scenarios to reveal the uncertainty – understood as the "liability to chance or accident" (OED, "Uncertainty") – of the future. At the same time, this uncertainty reveals the insecurity that informs the present. As outlined in the previous section, anxiety is directed towards an uncertain future that makes any prediction and preparation impossible. Threats might strike at any moment in such enormity that the subject is not able to react accordingly. This uncertainty of the future then leaves the subject in a constant state of insecurity, that is, the subject is in "a condition of danger" in which it is liable "to give way, fail, or suffer loss or damage" (OED, "Insecurity"), or, in other words, in a situation that must provoke anxieties.

The insecurity that leads to feelings like fear and anxiety is then closely connected to the notion of liquid modernity that presents an environment of constant change, uncertainty and "*a setting that is irregular in principle*" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 99), which further fuels feelings of uncertainty. This notion of uncertainty is closely connected to one-sidedly negative globalisation, a highly selective and transborder "globalization of business, crime or terrorism, but not of political and juridical institutions able to control them" (135; see also 96). While globalisation, in general, promised and already accomplished to create some sense of security through prosperity, it has not been and never will be able to avert all fears altogether (130; see also Zevnik 236). Modern society established several ways to bypass these remaining fears and attempts "to make life with fear liveable" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 6). This can be done, for instance, through consumerism: "[t]he consumer economy depends on the production of consumers, and the consumers that need to be produced for fear-fighting products are fearful and frightened consumers, hopeful that the dangers they fear can be forced to retreat and that they can do it (with paid help, for sure)" (7). One of the 'products' that promise a sense of security are then insurances that seem to diminish private risks.[114] The idea of

114 While in the following, the focus lies on the negative side of risk, (successful) risk taking can

consumerism to bypass fear and anxiety is thus closely connected to the concept of risks.[115] Although risks do not change anything about the situation at hand, they trick the subject into a believed anticipation of dangers. "Risks are the dangers whose probability we *can* (or believe that we can) calculate [...]. Once so defined, risks are the next best thing to (alas unattainable) certainty" (10). However, this approach only relates to a felt certainty and avoids the problem, as "'calculability' does not mean predictability" (10); in other words, risks only measure the probability that any of the anticipated dangers might happen.[116] In a consumer society, anxiety's uncertainty of the future and insecurity in the present is met with attempts to calculate risks and to gain a sense of safety through (private) insurances.[117]

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also be perceived as positive and even admirable (Giddens 3–4). In contrast to Giddens, Furedi sees risk taking as generally positive. For him, "[t]oday's sad attempt to pathologise risk-taking has the effect of undermining the spirit of exploration and experimentation" (*Culture of Fear* xx).

115 The idea of consumerism to bypass fear and anxiety, amongst other human needs, also stems from neoliberalist thinking. The neoliberalist agenda then strives to privatise both individual and state activities and provides "the conditions for the private sector to find ever-new sources of profitable activity. Neo-liberalism seeks to minimize the role of the state, [...] because it is presumed that states will always be inferior to markets in 'guessing' what is necessary to do" (Urry 202). The notion of "guessing what is necessary" is then not only important for a neoliberalist and negatively globalised society when it comes to the ostensible prevention of dangers and thus fear and anxiety but can also be applied to other fields of daily life, for instance the stock market, individual consumption or the job market.

116 In order to further understand how risks can shape societies and are connected to the temporality of anxiety the concept of *risk society* is inevitable (Beck, *Risk Society*; *World Risk Society*). While, throughout history, life has been hazardous or even dangerous (see also Bourke 5), these dangers were perceived as given and either controlled by God or as a natural part of the world. Throughout time, these kinds of dangers were substituted for the notion of risk, which "is bound up with the aspiration to control and particularly with the idea of controlling the future" (Giddens 3). The crucial aspect of the risk society is then not a world that has become increasingly dangerous, but "[r]ather, it is a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk" (3). It is no surprise that risk societies are primarily concerned with the future, as the sense of anxiety that is inevitably connected to the sense of uncertainty and insecurity within risk society is likewise related to the future. Risks are therefore a way to circumvent anxiety's uncertain futurity and its insecure present with money (for instance through private insurances bought to protect an individual from future risks). However, all these measures to prevent anxiety and uncertainty cannot cure societies from anxiety (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 130).

117 For an analysis of collective risk management in contemporary British drama, focusing on Kirkwood's *The Children*, see also Hoydis ("Slow Unfolding").

Society and its Fears and Anxiety

In order to better understand how the spatial and temporal aspects of an anxiety that afflicts societies affected by negative globalisation presents itself in daily life, it is important to look at its sources. While the next chapter will further investigate external sources of anxiety that seemingly are not related to or not directly caused by human activity – for instance natural disasters, even though these are often caused by the human-made climate catastrophe – this chapter focuses on causes for anxiety that spring primarily from human economic interactions and influence human cohabitation.[118] For Bauman, "[d]isasters brought about by human actions arrive from an opaque world, strike at random, in places impossible to anticipate, and escape or defy the kind of explanation which sets human actions apart from all other events: explanation by *motives* or *purposes*" (*Liquid Fear* 86). One of the reasons for this opaque world and its fears is the *open society*[119] which, although it promises a free society, is most often more concerned with its own borders and the security within them– a paradox in itself (especially since the free society can never succeed as long as the world as a whole is not free and safe) (see 97). Within this open society it is especially three kinds of dangers that arouse (derivative) fears:

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118 In this regard it is also important to consider the differentiation between public and private spheres and their interplay. Here, Bauman claims that "[i]n a liquid modern setting [...] it is the personal and the individual [...] that becomes 'political' (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 47). In this context, Slavoj Žižek, who in his book *Living in the End Times* predicts that "the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point" (x), refers to the *public use of reason.* Drawing on Kant, Žižek distinguishes the private from the public insofar as the private refers to the "communal-institutional order of one's particular identification; while 'public' designates the trans-national universality of the exercise of one's Reason" (*Dreaming Dangerously* 3). He postulates that, living in a society, we have to think on a public level (using public reason), but at the same time obey on a private level and, if in doubt about the justice of the current order, demand reforms (3–5). In the concluding chapters of Žižek's *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* he refers to the current apocalyptic tone surrounding us. He is concerned with how ecological catastrophes and economic downturns can lead to social change instead of fearmongering. In this context he is establishing the French words for future: *future* and *avenir.* While *future* stands for the continuation of the present, "*avenir* is what is to come (*à venir*), not just what will be" (134; see also chapter 2.3). As an answer to apocalyptic tendencies (here, he refers to Jean-Pierre Dupuy's dystopian 'fixed point' which describes the absolute ecological, economic and social collapse), he suggests changing the course of events to "open up a space for something New 'to come'" (134).

119 For Bauman, the *open society* evolved from a self-determined and autonomous "free society proud of its openness" into a society that is primarily associated with "the terrifying experience of heteronomous, vulnerable populations overwhelmed by forces they neither control nor truly understand, horrified by their own undefendability and obsessed with the security of their borders and of the population inside them" (*Liquid Fear* 96).

> Some threaten the body and the possessions. Some others are of a more general nature, threatening the durability and reliability of the social order on which security of livelihood (income, employment), or survival in the case of invalidity or old age, depend. Then there are dangers that threaten one's place in the world – a position in the social hierarchy, identity … and more generally an immunity to social degradation and exclusion. (3–4)[120]

These three dangers – body/possessions, livelihood and identity – in many ways resemble the fearful objects Kolnai describes when he writes: "[t]he agent in fear flees the object which he feels threatened his survival, safety, welfare, or any of his vital interests – the integrity of his possessions, body, or status in any sense (including chances or prospects)" (97). This once again highlights the intersection of phenomenology and sociology and shows how both have their *raison d'être* for the analysis of the theatre of anxiety. However, while all three kinds of dangers can be the cause of fear and anxiety, the anxious subject is often unable to connect the fearful anticipation and its threat where "'derivative fear' is easily 'decoupled' in the sufferers' awareness from the dangers that cause it" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 4). Similarly, Torin Monahan argues that, although they might have a "factual basis," fears "do not simply represent objective conditions" (145). At the same time, "[f]eelings of insecurity are actively cultivated by politicians and the media on one hand, and sustained by urban fortification, technological surveillance, and economic vulnerability on the other" (145), which further increases the ubiquitous nature of fear and anxiety. In other words, there is hardly any escape from these fears and anxieties that affect globalised societies: human-made economic insecurity cannot be escaped by building up physical defence or surveillance mechanisms, as these only serve as reminders of the very vulnerabilities they are supposed to protect against (on anxiety and technology, see also chapter 6.1).

The origin of these fears can then arise from other people, from nature and from a third zone Bauman describes as

> a sense-numbing and mind-chafing grey zone, as yet unnamed, from which ever more dense and sinister fears seep, threatening to destroy our homes, workplaces and bodies through disasters – natural but not quite, human but not completely, natural and human at the same time though unlike either of them. […] Day in, day out we learn that the inventory of dangers is far from complete: new dangers are discovered and announced almost daily, and there is

120 These various fears, especially the fear of exclusion described by Bauman, in some sense mirror Kierkegaard's understanding of anxiety "in the face of an abyss of meaninglessness" (Coe 46). For Kierkegaard, "[d]eep within every human being there still lives the anxiety [Angst] over the possibility of being alone in the world, forgotten by God, overlooked among the millions and millions in this enormous household" (65).

> no knowing how many more of them and of what kind have managed to escape our (and the experts'!) attention – getting ready to strike without warning. (*Liquid Fear* 5)

This third danger zone then resembles Ahmed's notion of anxiety, and especially its accumulating nature where "[o]ne thinks of more and more 'things' to be anxious about" (*Cultural Politics* 66). It is anxiety's nature as overwhelming or free-floating, its nature as striking at any moment and leaving the subject in a state of uncertainty and insecurity that render it unpredictable – for the individual as well as for society as a whole. However, these dangers do not necessarily arise from external objects but rather from society itself – from society that is not prepared for these dangers.[121] In this context, Bauman speaks of the *Titanic syndrome.* Referring to the catastrophe of the Titanic ocean liner, for Bauman the horror does not arise from the iceberg itself but from the unpreparedness of the people on the ship to react to the iceberg, and from the suddenness with which the event took place although the danger was lurking in the background all along (*Liquid Fear* 17). What makes the story of the Titanic topical is that this catastrophe could have been prevented, similar to many of the various crises the world is facing, including the ecological catastrophe (see chapter 5.1). However, this and other catastrophes are often not prevented because they do not seem plausible – they are, firstly, not anticipated and, secondly, they reveal the failings of human intervention during crises and catastrophes. This is then further enhanced as the people on the ship (and in society in general) are not working together but act as singular entities, where everyone is fighting for themselves. Therefore, derivative fears are primarily caused by dangers concerning body/possessions, livelihood and identity, and they suddenly meet an isolated and unprepared subject, which prompts the comparison with the Titanic disaster.

The Fear of Loneliness and Isolation

While the fears that result from the Titanic syndrome are ubiquitous and happen randomly and unexpectedly, they are not the only fears that haunt modern societies, as there are also "fears of being picked out from the joyous crowd *singly*,

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121 All the dangers that are described by Bauman can be seen as the result of a neoliberal society that changed its consumer behaviour, especially in the rich Global North, in the last century: "[t]hese shifts have involved moving from low-carbon to high-carbon economies/societies, from societies of discipline to societies of control, and more recently from specialized and differentiated zones of consumption to mobile, de-differentiated consumptions of excess" (Urry 192). In other words, many of the fears and anxieties that afflict contemporary societies stem primarily from the Global North and disproportionally affect the poorest of the global population.

or severally at the utmost, and condemned to suffer *alone* while all the others go on with their revelries. Fears of a *personal* catastrophe. [...] Fears of *exclusion*" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 18). Therefore, the dangers that arouse fears in modern societies mostly stem from human coexistence and primarily take place on three levels – body/possessions, livelihood and identity – and once again mirror the notion of anxiety as ubiquitous and omnipresent. The Titanic syndrome further exposes that these dangers are often fought individually and without the necessary tools to counteract them (see also Bourke 191). This increased level of isolation is one of the side effects of negative globalisation. "In the liquid modern society of consumers," as Bauman observes, "each individual member is instructed, trained and groomed to pursue individual happiness by individual means and through individual efforts" (*Liquid Fear* 48). This heightened focus on individuality that accompanies the fears and anxiety of globalised citizens is problematic for Bauman for various reasons. Firstly, in a globalised world, individual actions are always connected to other people, in the negative and positive sense, and therefore individualisation only takes place on a theoretical, cognitive level. In a globalised world, Bauman argues, it is not only the world order that has been liquidised but also interpersonal relationships (70). Instead of building long-lasting interpersonal connections with other people who are affected by the same insecurities and anxiety, the subject in a globalised world builds a network of friends that is as fluid and unreliable as the economic and political situation (see also Urry 200; Bude 28–38). At the same time, the increased interconnectedness experienced makes every individual a 'citizen of the world' whose actions at all times and in unpredictable ways may "affect the prospects, chances and dreams of some *others* whom we don't know or even know of" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 98).[122] This interconnectedness leads to a world of "*non-calculable* probability" (99), in which we have no control over the effects of our actions. Therefore, we are all, in one way or another, responsible for each other's happiness or discomfort, which further liquidises the divide between friends and enemies.

However, this network of potential friends often proves unreliable, especially when it comes to solving long-lasting and complex dangers. Therefore, secondly, isolation does not allow for long-lasting solutions that might overcome the source of fearful dangers that cannot be tackled individually. For Bauman, the individual is politicised and at the same time the tasks assigned to politics are imposed on the individual, as "it is left now to individuals to seek, find and practise individual sol-

122 This lack of control shows resemblances with Sartre's notion of the "Other's infinite freedom" (270) which ultimately limits one's own personal freedom in order to preserve the freedom of the other.

utions to socially produced troubles [... using] resources that are blatantly inadequate to the task" (136). This is even more the case as the problems that have risen through capitalism and the excessive consumption of natural resources cannot be controlled by capitalist forces anymore (Urry 193). Thus, while an open society should provide the individual with more freedoms and more securities, it fails to do so and instead creates isolation and loneliness, where individuals are left to defend their own fears through private means. This means that, instead of working together on global dangers to reduce their impact, the negatively globalised world is more concerned with distributing the risk among the individuals (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 81). This becomes especially clear with the climate catastrophe: instead of working together to prevent climate change, global nations are more concerned with maintaining the status quo and leaving the consequences of natural catastrophes to the individual (see chapter 5).

While natural catastrophes like hurricanes or floods physically affect all people in the same way, only those wealthy enough to insure their livelihood or to rebuild it are relatively safe from the insecurity, again shifting the risk towards the private individual.[123] The side effects of negative globalisation, like anxiety, uncertainty and individualisation, are then, for Bauman, often not noted as such and only perceived as "unanticipated 'side effect' of the new lightness and fluidity of the increasingly mobile, slippery, shifty, evasive and fugitive power" (*Liquid Modernity* 14). In other words, individualisation further strengthens negative globalisation which further strengthens fear and anxiety. Finally, negative globalisation is also connected to individualisation and loneliness in another way – by causing fears of exclusion. For Bauman, "the horror of being *excluded*" is caused by "a life of undying suspicion and unrelenting vigilance" (*Liquid Fear* 47) rooted in liquid modernity. Therefore, while on the one hand everyone is fighting for themselves, negative globalisation also induces fears of being excluded – especially excluded from a certain group of people that might promise prestige and wealth.[124] Isolation itself can hence be the cause of further fears and anxiety, especially when in combination with exclusion from society.

123 Part of this trend of individualisation is then also connected to the privatisation of risks. For Bauman, the individual is ever more encouraged to focus on individual safety as opposed to collective efforts to tackle a "potentially dangerous world" (*Liquid Fear* 136). For him, "[o]ffering more flexibility as the sole remedy for an already unbearable volume of insecurity, the messages coming from the sites of political power paint the prospects of yet more challenges and greater privatization of troubles – and so ultimately more, not less, uncertainty" (136). Bauman's notion of individualisation is then closely connected to the concept of risk society.

124 These fears of exclusion Bauman describes are also observed by Waldenfels, for whom anxiety is closely connected to the singularisation of the subject (115).

In general, Bauman's understanding of fear then in many ways mirrors the phenomenological account of anxiety as free-floating and overwhelming anticipation of something dreadful and painful. Furthermore, these fears and this anxiety affect various private levels, from the individual body/possessions or a subject's livelihood to their personal identity. What is more, fears from a sociological perspective are closely connected to feelings of isolation, loneliness and vulnerability, where "*[f]ear is another name we give to our defencelessness*" (*Liquid Fear* 95). This isolation not only enhances the feeling of helplessness but also fuels fears of exclusion. Finally, fears are connected to the anticipation of dangers, which further distributes the consequences of these dangers amongst individuals, opening various kinds of injustice. This shows that modern society is shaped by insecurities and uncertainty, which explains the ubiquitous presence of discourses of anxiety and subsequently leads to the phenomena captured by the theatre of anxiety. Thus, as Bauman summarises, "[t]he new individualism, the fading of human bonds and the wilting of solidarity, are all engraved on one side of a coin whose other side bears the stamp of globalization" (146). In addition to individualism, it is also modernity's uncertainty and insecurity that further fuel global anxiety; in Monahan's words, "[t]he construction of insecurity offers a window into the distinctive problems of modern life in the twenty-first century" (145). In this regard, emotions like fear and anxiety are the effects of pervasive isolation, uncertainty and insecurity, and oscillate between the social and the individual sphere.

In the following, two plays will be analysed that demonstrate exactly this multi-layered appearance of the social and private facets of anxiety. Caryl Churchill's *Escaped Alone* shows four women who, although they meet in order to chat, do not succeed in forming a functioning community. In between their private conversations that reveal fears and anxiety on a private level, Mrs Jarrett confronts the audience with seven dystopic monologues that disclose public anxiety from the past and the future alike. Churchill's play then shows how anxiety can be aestheticized in contemporary drama by highlighting the interplay of insecurity and isolation simply through speech and language. Zinnie Harris's *How to Hold Your Breath* likewise centres on insolation and uncertainty, albeit in a much more political manner. Here, Dana and her sister are surprised by the sudden downfall of the European banking system that leads to the collapse of the European countries and simultaneous closing of borders. Isolated and surrounded by constant insecurity, Dana ultimately loses everything she holds dear and starts to live Western, globalised societies' worst nightmare. With Dana shaken by loss and anxiety and barely alive, the play ends when the real struggle and ever new anxiety arise for her. In both Churchill's and Harris's plays, then, it becomes clear through which topics and aesthetic means (like epic tendencies) the theatre of anxiety may

address the pervasive conditions of anxiety diagnosed by Bauman to be a central part of our modern world.

4.2 Caryl Churchill: *Escaped Alone* (2016)

The interplay of uncertainty and isolation that accompanies feelings of fear and anxiety in globalised societies is central to many recent plays. One such play is Churchill's *Escaped Alone*, which premiered at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs in 2016. *Escaped Alone* offers a look at apocalyptic moods from the perspective of elderly women and showcases Churchill's "unsurpassed ability to dramatize the anxieties and concerns of the temporary moment" (Aston and Diamond 1). The play's portrayal of apocalyptic scenarios in combination with negative feelings, like rage and anxiety, as well as its overarching topics that include isolation, insecurity and vulnerability from the perspective of a marginalised group not only classifies the play as a feminist masterpiece that highlights "the agency of women" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 25) but also groups it into what I call the theatre of anxiety.

In Churchill's play three septuagenarians, Sally, Vi and Lena, are meeting and chatting in Sally's backyard when Mrs Jarrett (or Mrs J), who is likewise at least seventy years old, joins them. Over the course of eight scenes, all women share parts of their individual stories in chatty dialogues that are interrupted by a series of monologues and show both the uncertainties the women are faced with and their social isolation. Amongst other more mundane topics, like the TV programme or antique shops, the conversation reveals the women's fears and anxieties: Sally suffers from ailurophobia (fear of cats), Vi spent six years in prison for the homicide of her husband and Lena suffers from mental health issues.[125] "Although the tenor of the women's exchange is light and frequently funny," as Elaine Aston observes, "there is an undercurrent of negative, anxious feeling" (*Restaging Feminisms* 102). After each of several dialogues, Mrs Jarrett shares her vision of an apocalyptic future in seven isolated monologues that are in many cases "gruesome and politicized, fantastical yet full of real fear" (Templeton 40). Besides talking, the

125 For Aston, "[e]ach of these anxiety states figures a dimension of Churchill's eco-socialist-feminist critique" (Aston, *Restaging Feminisms* 102), which range from domestic abuse and capitalist workspaces to "a world of predatory behaviour that Sally projects on to the feline species" (102). Aston continues that "these anxious voicings can all be diagnosed as the product of a capitalist system: the 'horror' of its predacious, violent culture which 'kills' the women's joy of home and (former) workplace" (102). It is this capitalist system and its fears that will be at the centre of the following analysis.

other activity the women take part in is when Sally, Vi and Lena begin to sing in harmony, which is, again, joined by Mrs Jarrett. Through these monologues and dialogues, Churchill's play thematises various topics that relate to the future of the planet and society alike – topics like diseases, natural catastrophes or economic collapse that are often connected to negative feelings. The play aestheticises this not only through the stark contrast of its mundane setting with the nightmarish visions, but especially though its (at times ironic) language: while Mrs J's monologues express the uncertainty so typical of living in what Bauman calls liquid times, the isolation of the individual characters becomes apparent in their dialogues. "Throughout the play," as Martin Welton observes, "there is an odd tension between the women's quotidian, almost banal gossip and the regular failure of their individual, matter-of-fact lines of thought to connect in dialogue with one another" ("Dark Visions" 501–02). The mundane world of the four women is then juxtaposed with the global problems Mrs Jarrett utters. It is also Mrs Jarrett who connects both worlds by constantly shifting between the private and the public sphere. When analysing *Escaped Alone* and its depiction of fear and anxiety, the focus must therefore lie on the use of speech and language as well as on Mrs Jarrett's role as a combination of outsider, narrator and metafictional character.

The skilful use of language in Churchill's play can already be seen in its epigraph which, although it only consists of one line, anticipates the main themes of the play and immediately links the play to the theatre of anxiety. In reference to the biblical book of Job and to Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*, the epigraph reads as follows: "I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 141). This quote is then not only the origin of the play's title, but also highlights several ways in which anxiety is central to the play: firstly, the notion of *escaping* is closely connected to uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety. In *Escaped Alone* the presence of anxiety as a conglomeration of fearful objects can be traced in the language of the characters, which frequently displaces anxiety with pain, disgust and abjection, in the play's temporal structure, as well as in the piling up of fear-inducing topics that creates the sense of threat described as derivative fear by Bauman. Secondly, the word *alone* in the epigraph hints at the loneliness and isolation the figures in the play experience. Although the characters are all meeting in order to chat, they still seem to be isolated entities. This becomes particularly clear during Mrs Jarrett's monologues, which take place in total isolation and darkness and further connect anxiety, nothingness, loneliness and isolation. Both insecurity and the isolation are then connected to anxiety as both its reasons and symptoms. And thirdly, the epigraph refers to the act of *(story)telling*, which can be seen as an escape mechanism from anxiety. The different stories that are told in the play – from the book of Job to *Alice in Wonderland* to the very private individual stories of the four elder women – display the intertextuality ingrained in this play and likewise

show how both uncertainty and isolation can be tackled by storytelling. Yet, these stories cannot counteract the fear, anxiety and insecurity the characters experience and only shift these emotions towards other, more outward emotions, like rage. In the end, Mrs Jarrett is the herald that escaped alone to tell us about the anxiety-inducing state of the world and yet she herself cannot escape her own anxious and/or enraged feelings.

4.2.1 Visions of Future's Uncertainty

Escaped Alone addresses various forms of uncertainties that afflict contemporary societies. While the play represents the damage neoliberal capitalism produces on the level of the economic, social and environmental (Aston, *Restaging Feminisms* 99–109), I would like to focus on the connection of these damaging mechanisms with fear and anxiety in my reading of the play. On the level of the characters, Churchill's play portrays fear and anxiety through its liquid style of writing, which emulates the phenomenology of anxiety. The depiction of individual cases of anxiety is complemented by anxieties in the public sphere. Although in Churchill's play it remains unclear where exactly Sally's backyard is located or when the conversations take place, the picture the individual dialogues and Mrs J's monologues paint is of a society that has been affected by the same uncertainty and insecurity that has also been described by Bauman as a consequence of negative globalisation. While the connection between Bauman's sociology and Churchill's writing has already been made by Angelaki (*Political Theatre* 20), I want to suggest that this connection is ultimately based on fear and anxiety. *Escaped Alone* presents this connection of capitalist societies, negative feelings and uncertainty and isolation on both the level of the individual characters and the level of society in general. The uncertainty and isolation diagnosed by Bauman can then be seen as the reason as well as the symptom of the characters' and society's anxiety. In its approach to anxiety through the related sensations of pain, disgust and abjection and its staging of anxiety's temporality, *Escaped Alone* illustrates how anxiety can be staged in contemporary drama.

Labelled as "drama of catastrophe" (Casado-Gual 236), *Escaped Alone* portrays uncertainty and anxiety through its dramatic speech and communication as well as through its topics. Anxiety's nature as a conglomerate of many (fearful) objects is aestheticised in the destruction of syntactic borders. The play's language thus reflects the pre-reflective quality of fear and anxiety, which emerges from too many seemingly painful objects that might happen at any moment. On the level of the individual women, this can be found for example when, during one of the conversations, Sally reveals that she is afraid of cats:

> **Sally:** I have to keep them out I have to make sure I never think about a cat because if I do I have to make sure there's no cats and they could be anywhere they could get in a window I have to go round the house and make sure all the windows are locked and I don't know if I checked properly I can't remember I was too frightened to notice I have to go round the windows again I have to go round the windows again back to the kitchen back to the bedroom back to the kitchen back to the bedroom the bathroom back to the kitchen back to the door, the door might blow open if it's windy even if it's not windy suppose the postman was putting a large packet and pushed the door and it came open because it wasn't properly shut and then a cat because they can get through very very small and once they're in they could be anywhere they could be under the bed in the wardrobe up on the top shelf with the winter sweaters [...]. (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 163)

What this monologue shows is how *Escaped Alone* engrains anxiety's nature as a conglomerate of various fearful objects in its aesthetic form. The way Sally talks about cats shows how anxiety makes various different objects stick together, even if they are usually neither connected nor fearful to begin with. It is rather, as Ahmed observes, the act of "gathering more and more objects" (*Cultural Politics* 66) that causes anxiety. At the same time the monologue reveals how everyday language fails to depict the feeling of anxiety and shows its pre-reflective nature. During Sally's stream of consciousness-like speech, all syntactic borders are blurred. For Sally, no meaningful conversation is possible as she tries to describe the pre-verbal nature of her anxieties. This is done through the repetitive nature of her speech, which keeps circling back to certain words without any real order or meaning. Through this act of gathering and repetition, Sally is stuck in an endless spiral of fear and anxiety that overwhelms all "other possible affective relations to the world" (66). Her fear of cats then reveals anxiety's nature as overwhelming excess.

Furthermore, what this example also illustrates is the overabundance of fearful objects that makes it impossible for Sally to focus on anything, thus leaving her in a state of constant isolation and anxiety. Sally is also reinforcing these fears as, the more she speaks about her fear of cats, the more she seems to strengthen her negative feelings. She thus seems to be caught in an unstoppable spiral of ever new objects and situations to fear, which illustrates Bauman's observation that fear can become "self-propelling and self-intensifying; it acquires its own momentum and developmental logic and needs little attention and hardly any additional input to spread and grow – unstoppably" (*Liquid Fear* 132). In particular, Sally is left alone with her fears by the other women. While the women interrupt each other on several other occasions, no one interrupts Sally in her monologue and tries to calm her down. Although Sally insists that she "needs someone to say there's no cats" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 164) in order to relax and leave this state of constant fear and insecurity, none of the other three

women say these words – the monologue form itself becomes a vehicle that transports her isolation. It is not until she herself shifts the topic away from cats and to people she can trust that Sally can calm down. Thus, the monologue reveals the overall structure of anxiety as a conglomerate of many fearful objects, where the act of randomly gathering more and more objects constitutes anxiety, especially as the word *cat* can be replaced by any other mundane word or object. It is hence not the physical cat that causes these fears – especially as cats are not usually fearful objects – but rather Sally's mentally attributing the property of fearfulness to cats that causes these feelings. At the same time, the way her monologue is designed already hints at the loneliness the four women really suffer during their conversations. In this way, Sally's speech exemplifies how *Escaped Alone* represents anxiety's overwhelming nature through linguistic excess and through the way in which characters are left alone to deal with their anxiety.

Moreover, anxiety is also present in the play on the level of the themes and topics that are communicated. While the play depicts various kinds of fears and anxieties – the fear of old age being one of them (Casado-Gual 237) – the focus of the following analysis lies on globalised anxieties. The most emphatic cases of these global anxieties are voiced by Mrs Jarrett, who "soliloquise[s] her fears and anxieties" (Aston, *Restaging Feminisms* 102) in isolation and speaks of disasters that are "the result of capitalism's exploitation of nature" (103). Her seven monologues, which come at each respective end of the play's first seven scenes, respond to all four categories of the theatre of anxiety – politics/economics, ecology, technology and pandemics – although the focus of the following analysis will only be on the first category. In her monologues, which are "simultaneously energising and draining" (104), Mrs Jarrett describes her version of the apocalypse in a way that combines a sense of being overwhelmed with deeply ironic cynicism:

> **Mrs Jarrett:** First the baths overflowed as water was deliberately wasted in a campaign to punish the thirsty. Swimming pools engulfed the leisure centres and coffee ran down the table legs. […] Yawls, ketches, kayaks, canoes, schooners, planks, dinghies, lifebelts and upturned umbrellas, swimming instructors and lilos, rubber ducks and pumice stone floated on the stock market. Waves engulfed ferris wheels and drowned bodies were piled up to block doors. Then the walls of water came from the sea. Villages vanished and cities relocated to their rooftops. […] Some died of thirst, some of drinking the water. When the flood receded thousands stayed on the roofs fed by helicopter while heroes and bonded workers shovelled the muck into buckets that were stored in the flood museums. (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 150)

While, in Rebellato's words, "there seems to be little order or shape to the various acts of brutality and suffering" in Mrs Jarrett's monologues, which makes them appear as the representation of "chaos chaotically" ("Apocalyptic Tone" par. 56), the structure of these monologues also reveals the excessive nature of anxiety; similar

to Sally's monologue, Mrs Jarrett's speech shows aesthetic and formal aspects of anxiety. Indeed, fear and anxiety are encapsulated by a general aesthetics of excess, of too much, of a too extreme and thus overwhelming nature that lacks any focus. This is illustrated in the at times absurd pictures that show the utter chaos of multiple things happening at once, which, at the same time, make no sense. When Mrs Jarrett reports that "water was deliberately wasted in a campaign to punish the thirsty," this speaks to a sense of isolation, as one group is deliberately targeted and punished by another, better-off group, which must create fears of exclusion. At the same time the "baths overflowed," which itself constitutes a form of surplus that, in the worst case, leads to drowning and death. Similar to Bauman's description of fear as lacking a "clear address or cause" this monologue likewise does not reveal the reason for the apocalyptic scenario and likewise lacks a concrete addressee. Mrs Jarrett's monologues, then, in Churchill's unique style of staging an "isolated woman [...] whose words are an unsentimental register of longing, confusion, fear and rage" (Aston and Diamond 2), mirrors thematically and aesthetically the various fears and anxieties that lurk in globalised societies.

At the same time this monologue shows derivative fears and describes a situation "when the menace we should be afraid of can be glimpsed everywhere but is nowhere to be seen" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 2). Mrs Jarrett shows how the most fearsome setting takes place in the mundane, everyday world that has come out of balance and leaves the subjects vulnerable to threats that may be encountered at any moment. She thus describes, in Bauman's words, "a feeling of insecurity (the world is full of dangers that may strike at any time with little or no warning)" (3), which is characteristic for derivative fears. Besides these descriptions of natural catastrophes, like floods and droughts, the stock market is likewise affected by the event and overflows with objects related to water, which brings the whole market system out of balance. While for Rebellato *Escaped Alone* represents "a kind of nihilism more than anything more expressly political" ("Apocalyptic Tone" par. 46), I would argue that Mrs Jarrett's monologues can be seen as a bleak progression of Bauman's description of the many fears that lurk in globalised societies,

> where power grids go bust, petrol taps run dry, stock exchanges collapse, all-powerful companies disappear together with dozens of services one used to take for granted and thousands of jobs one used to believe to be rock-solid, where jets crash together with their thousand-and-one safety gadgets and hundreds of passengers, market caprices make worthless the most precious and coveted of assets, and any other imaginable or unimaginable catastrophes brew (or perhaps are brewed?) ready to overwhelm the prudent and the imprudent alike. (*Liquid Fear* 5)

Mrs Jarrett's dialogue can be seen as an exaggerated version of Bauman's description of the various dangers that lurk in modern societies and that constantly cause fear and anxiety. Moreover, while the scenarios Mrs Jarrett describes seem highly unlikely, the Covid-19 pandemic did show how fast human-made diseases can spread and affect the whole world order. The way the various (fearful) objects and events are placed in close proximity in Mrs Jarrett's monologues anticipates these contemporary catastrophes and illustrates how anxiety accumulates an increasing number of objects that lead to negative sensations. Mrs Jarrett also seems to imply that, just as with derivative fears, "there will be little if any chance of escape or successful defence" (3), which links this monologue (and all her others) to the title-giving act of escaping.

The ubiquitous fear and anxiety in *Escaped Alone* are also accompanied by pain, disgust and abjection, which often result from border crossings and cause the anticipation of a negative future (see chapter 2.2 and 2.3). This can for example be seen in Mrs Jarrett's sixth monologue where she describes various scenarios that are connected to diseases:[126]

> **Mrs Jarrett:** The illness started when children drank sugar developed from monkeys. Hair fell out, feet swelled, organs atrophied. Hairs blowing in the wind rapidly passed round the world. When they fell into the ocean cod died and fishermen blew up each other's boats. Planes with sick passengers were diverted to Antarctica. Some got into bed with their dead, others locked the doors and ran till they fell down. Volunteers and conscripts over seven nursed the sick and collected bodies. Governments cleansed infected areas and made deals with allies to bomb each other's capitals. Presidents committed suicide. The last survivors had immunity and the virus mutated, exterminating plankton. (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 167)

Again Mrs Jarrett describes a world that has become unbalanced, this time due to illness and diseases that affect the human and non-human world alike and cross the border between both worlds. These border crossings are accompanied by pain and disgust, which are both also connected to fear and anxiety. Since both fear and anxiety are the anticipation of something painful, these monologues can only rep-

126 In a sense, these negative descriptions of the world also reveal Mrs Jarrett's own emotional state. The fact that she anticipates a future that is painful and in which everything that is known and certain, at least in Western globalized societies, is destroyed reveals a cynical worldview that might stem from her own pain. After all, according to phenomenological accounts, in the experience of pain the whole perception of the world changes to a negative one, which colours all other aspects in a negative mood and simultaneously generates other negative emotions like "frustration, irritation, anger, fear, sadness, self-pity or even loss of hope and trust in others" (Svenaeus 543). Mrs Jarrett thus reveals a worldview that is born out of pain and further spreads negative emotions like fear and anxiety.

resent anxiety because they present painful scenarios. The pain in these monologues does then not take place on the physical level, through wounds or blood on stage, but through language and the description of painful experiences. A disease that not only has been developed from the exploitation of animals but that also leads to alopecia, damaged organs and swollen feet and thus shows resemblances to cancer symptoms not only blurs the boundary between animals and humans but also reveals a disease that is cancerous and at the same time a pandemic. In this scenario, then, something crosses the border of the body and induces pain in the whole population without any means to escape.

These diseases are not only painful but also highly disgusting and abject. Mrs Jarrett's monologue reads like a list of various objects that are known to elicit disgust, amongst them: "food, body products, animals, sexual behaviours, contact with death or corpses, violations of the exterior envelope of the body (including gore and deformity), poor hygiene, interpersonal contamination (contact with unsavory human beings), and certain moral offences" (Rozin, Haidt and McCauley 637). In Churchill's play, it is not even necessary to display these disgusting objects on stage as the mere description of such objects is often enough to induce feelings of disgust and abjection (McGinn 8). The monologue starts with food that is poisonous because it is developed from monkeys – a transgression of the animal-human boundary – and continues with body products, like hair, that further destroy the world's ecosystems and kill fish (which is again connected to the food industry). In this way, it shows the close connection between humans and animals and how human interference with nature's ecosystems brings them to collapse. The suggestion that "[s]ome got into bed with their dead" not only implies "sexual behaviour" and close "contact with death or corpses" – extreme social taboos and hence also associated with disgust (Ablett 112–13) – but also shows moral offences which are numerous (not only the violation of nature but also of other people, which take place when governments agree to bomb each other's cities, can be read as moral offences). The illness also leads to "violations of the exterior envelope of the body" and to poor hygiene and the contact with "unsavory human beings," when children must nurse the sick. The entire situation seems inescapable: when in the end the virus finally mutates and exterminates plankton, the implication is that the next global crisis is underway, as usually without plankton the entire food chain must collapse and starvation will follow. As "frightening interactions" (Rozin, Haidt and McCauley 637) are the root cause of all these scenarios, they are inevitably linked to fear and anxiety.

However, these scenarios are not only fearful because they are disgusting but also because the cleaning ritual and the removal of the abject elements and their consequences cannot take place. In general, the abject "both endangers and protects the individual: endangers in that it threatens the boundaries of the self

and also reminds us of our animal origins, and protects us because we are able to expel the abject through various means" (Arya, "Abjection Interrogated" 52). While Mrs Jarrett's monologue describes attempts to expel it, this does not succeed and instead leads to more disgust-eliciting scenarios. Although the "fishermen blew up each other's boats," possibly out of desperation, this 'cleaning ritual' does not solve the problem of dead fish floating in the sea. Although sick people are deported to Antarctica so as not to contaminate others, this does neither cure the sick nor save the rest of humanity. And while "[g]overnments cleansed infected areas" they also "bombed each other's capitals," which increases the suffering for the last survivors and hints at disgust's potential to be politicised (Chanter 3; see also Klein, *Shock Doctrine* 21). As apparently no mechanisms to prevent similar diseases in the future are put into place, the people in Mrs Jarrett's monologues, just like Mrs Jarrett herself, cannot escape from these scenarios. Likewise, the anxiety such scenarios may evoke appears to be inescapable. Mrs Jarrett's monologues thus combine fear, anxiety, pain, disgust and abjection and they reveal a society that oscillates between "excess and scarcity, desperate loneliness and masses, what is escaped from and what can't be survived sane. They are milling with detail but we feel that under this surface is more and more detail, more horror" (Templeton 40).

Along with pain, disgust and abjection, the fluidity of the play's language is perhaps the most prominent aesthetic device that captures anxiety's conglomerate of (fearful) objects, which in turn account for the horror the play portrays. The uncertainty and insecurity that induce and increase these negative feelings can then also be found on the temporal level. According to Vicky Angelaki, in *Escaped Alone* Churchill "takes temporal fluidity to a new level by denying her audience any firm indications of time transitions" (*Political Theatre* 24). This temporal fluidity establishes yet another link between fear and anxiety and a sense of uncertainty in Churchill's play. The uncertainty of the future in many instances leads to a sense of insecurity in the present. This can, again, be seen in Mrs Jarrett's monologues. While her monologues are narrated in the past tense, their temporality is not necessarily decisive and, in many instances, "[t]hese tellings, though in the past, sound less like remembering than like creating" (Templeton 40). It remains unclear whether the situations from the monologues have already taken place in the past and whether they thus represent a form of news report or whether the disastrous events will take place in the future, making the monologues a form of prophecy – which would also imply that the monologues create a near-future dystopia.[127] This might be due to the content of the monologues: Mrs Jarrett

127 In her monograph on *Brecht and Post-1990s British Drama*, Anja Hartl explores *Escaped*

talks about apocalyptic scenarios that seem too surreal for the other women to still sit together in Sally's backyard and chat. As Angelaki convincingly argues, the play consists of two different timelines – the timeline of the women talking in Sally's backyard and the timeline of Mrs Jarrett's monologues – that seem to clash in the play, or, as she describes it,

> [t]here are two major disruptions to the interpretation of the time sequence: one is Mrs Jarrett's existence on both levels – the garden conversation and the metanarrative that forms as she delivers the news of the catastrophe to the audience in direct address; the other is the beginning and end of the play, which realistically depict Mrs Jarrett's self-narrated entrance and exit from the garden, implying that everything that unravels in the interim is an interlude. (*Political Theatre* 23)

The uncertainty regarding the different time-zones and the possibility of various timelines coinciding then mirrors the parallel universes that are mentioned in the play (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 151) and that create a further sense of ontological uncertainty. The uncertainty of the present thus leads to insecurities about the future. As Angelaki observes, this allows for two readings of Mrs Jarrett's "anti-climactic line" (*Political Theatre* 23) at the end of the play, "[a]nd then I said thanks for the tea and I went home" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 179). If this is read as Mrs Jarrett stepping back into the past, this would imply that she did in her monologues anticipate a painful future. In this case, the monologues encapsulate the temporality of anxiety, where, although physically safe in the present, the subject is mentally directed towards a painful event in the future that might strike at any moment and that cannot be prevented. If, however, Mrs Jarrett at the end returns to the present, this would imply that "Mrs Jarrett's accounts of the apocalypse belong to the past and therefore the women in the garden, fenced up in the beginning and ending of the play to indicate a disconnection from the outside world, have been oblivious to the crisis, ensconced, as they were in their insularity" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 23). In either case, all four women are isolated from society and must deal with their worries alone.

Simultaneously, the overwhelming conglomerate of objects that makes any clear understanding of the monologues well-nigh impossible, their transgressiveness that combines pain, disgust and abjection with fear and anxiety and their temporality that, although extending into the past and future, unfolds in the present all show that there is no escape from the situation at hand. The act of talking in which the four women engage then in many ways does represent an action that

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Alone's dystopian mood as "integral to the play's political fabric" and links it to the Brechtian concept of alienation or *Verfremdung* (136).

takes place in the present. The characters are stuck in a world where besides talking about mundane topics, they are also surrounded by (imagined) fearful objects and anxiety. The only character that is able to transgress this claustrophobic and fearful situation is Mrs Jarrett, who can move between different worlds and who might be the one who "escaped alone to tell thee." Her status as a transgressive figure then anticipates the second aspect of fear and anxiety in a negatively globalised world: isolation and loneliness.

4.2.2 Isolation and Anxiety

Escaped Alone not only portrays anxiety through language and themes that are connected to insecurity and uncertainty but it also displays the isolation and loneliness that often accompany and simultaneously increase this anxiety. While for Andrew Burton the play is "inherently political in intent," as "the audience is invited to engage intellectually and critically with the play's exploration of humanity's dysfunctional relationship with the nonhuman world" (Burton), I would argue that this dysfunctional relationship also extends to the human world. Crucially, the anxiety that is so central to *Escaped Alone* is intensified because the characters facing it remain isolated in their anxiety. This reading is in contrast to Aston's analysis of *Escaped Alone*, which describes the women's chatting as "neighbourly networking" that offers "mutual care and support as opposed to a creed of self-centred individualism" (*Restaging Feminisms* 105). Although the four women come together and, as the conversations take place during "[a] number of afternoons" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 142), do so again and again, I would argue that they appear to be living in parallel universes, isolated from each other.

The women's isolation is not only conveyed by the props on stage – the women are sitting on "[s]everal unmatching chairs. Maybe one's a kitchen chair" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 142) – or by the mentioning of parallel universes in association with TV shows, where Sally complains that there are "too many universes for me" (151), but also by the frequent breakdowns in communication. As Ben Brantley observes, when listening to the conversation of the four women, one "sense[s] a specific, isolating unease in each" (Brantley). One possible reason might be that the characters, at times, speak at cross purposes – for instance when Lena talks about Cain murdering Abel, Sally's reply is simply "chimpanzees" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 158) before Lena continues to wonder about the killing. Another reason might be that every woman seems to be caught up in her own, disconnected world so that "their fragmented conversations, which offer impressionistic reflections on their lives, are contextualized in a post-traumatic universe that rather refracts, like a broken mirror, recognizable figments of the quotidian" (Casado-Gual

237). Although the characters seem to know each other and openly talk about their life and worries, there is also a sense of defamiliarization and isolation that accompanies them. The conversations Sally, Lena, Vi and Mrs Jarrett are having are described by Angelaki as "almost yet not quite 'normal' feeling of neo-absurdist verbal playfulness" that reveal how "events of their past are slowly revisited to reveal trauma and phobias that are still raw. Then, unexpectedly, each character enters a monologue" (*Political Theatre* 24). Different from Mrs Jarrett's monologues, these monologues within the women's conversation are expressions of personal fears and anxieties. Nevertheless, they cannot be seen as entirely separate from Mrs Jarrett's visions of social dystopia, whose, as Anja Hartl observers, "growing impact [...] on this private sphere" they reflect (143). In this way, the sense of disconnection that pervades the women's conversation mirrors the broader social isolation and fear expressed in Mrs Jarrett's monologues.

The inexpressibility in *Escaped Alone* can also be found in connection with the isolation of the characters and their (mental) pain. The conversation between the women also reveals how difficult it is to speak about pain. Speech, the only way the women attempt to express their pain, is exposed as a fragile medium that does not give them access to each other's sensations: since, as Scarry claims, "[t]o have pain is to have *certainty*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*" (*The Body* 13), the characters cannot quite understand each other's pain, which results in further miscommunication. Lena, for instance, reveals in her short monologue a mental state that comes close to depression:

> **Lena:** some days it would be all right for weeks but then
> I'd find it coming down again. *You're so far away*
> *from people at the next desk.* Email was better than
> speaking. It's down now.
> Why can't I just?
> I just can't.
> I sat on the bed this morning and didn't stand up
> till lunchtime. *The air was too thick. It's hard to*
> *move, it's hard to see why you'd move.*
> It's not so bad in the afternoon, I got myself here.
> I don't like it here. I've no interest.
> Why talk about that? Why move your mouth and
> do talking? Why see anyone? Why know about
> anyone?
> It was half past three and all this time later it's
> twenty-five to four.
> If I think about a place I could be where there's
> something nice like the sea that would be worse
> *because the sea would be the same as an empty*
> *room so it's better to be in the empty room*

because then there's fewer things to mean nothing
at all.
I'd rather hear something bad than something
good. I'd rather hear nothing.
It's still just the same.
It's just the same.
It's the same. (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 170; emphasis added)

Lena experiences the inexpressibility of pain observed by Scarry, who argues that appropriate descriptions of painful sensations are often missing and thus pain is generally often described though metaphors (see chapter 2.2). In Lena's monologue, these metaphors try to describe a mental and emotional status rather than anything physical and so reveal her anxious state. This can be seen, for instance, in the paradoxical statement "[y]ou're so far away from people at the next desk." Despite being physically close to her colleagues, Lena still *feels* miles away mentally, isolated and disconnected. This isolation culminates in a state of paralysis when Lena says: "[t]he air was too thick. It's hard to move, it's hard to see why you'd move." Such paralysis of course is not only a sign of depression but also of fear and anxiety (see chapter 5.1). The most striking metaphor for Lena's state of depression and anxiety is, however, the preference of an empty room over the sea, "because the sea would be the same as an empty room so it's better to be in the empty room because then there's fewer things to mean nothing at all." This emphasis on nothingness at the end of her monologue, which is stressed by the repetition of her claim that everything she hears is "the same," i. e. nothing, mirrors Kirsteva's "zero time of silence" (see chapter 2.3) and evokes the universal nothingness central to the phenomenology of anxiety. Lena is already in an overwhelming state of nothingness here, where she cannot focus on anything, because everything seems fearful and, like the atmosphere, "too thick," which is why she prefers to not be surrounded by anything. However, this nothingness she feels is hard to explain – as Heidegger already noted in "What is Metaphysics" (see chapter 2.1). The metaphors Lena uses seek to concretise the abstract sensation of anxiety, but ultimately are not very successful at doing so because she returns to the abstraction of nothingness/sameness in the end. Lena's monologue is then a good example of the inexpressibility of the abstract notions of pain and anxiety that cannot be explained through metaphors and speech alone.

For this reason, this scene can also be seen to show interpersonal defamiliarization, isolation and despair. While the information Lena gives about her mental health is very private and reveals her suffering, the other women do not further comment on it. What the three women do is what Scarry describes as typical reaction to accounts of pain: "ignoring other people's pain if there is no body damage or no weapon to make it visible" ("Schoolchildren" 308). Although Sally asks Lena

about her medication and mentions that mental health/taking medication is "not a sprained ankle" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 170), Mrs Jarrett instantly talks about her own hip replacement as if it were related to Lena's suffering. The conversation continues about physical health problems and does not circle back to Lena, who remains silent. Her next words are then "it's not an easy thing to," "not fair really" and "self defence" (171), which is fitting not only for the topic of their conversation at this point, which has now changed to Sally's life as a hairdresser, but also as a description of Lena's own situation. Self-defence and not mutual help might then be the women's only escape from their living situations (Lena, and Mrs Jarrett before her, calls Sally's involvement in her husband's death – the exact nature of which never becomes quite clear – "self defence"). In many ways this echoes what Bauman identifies as the "present-day crisis of trust" where "human relations are no longer sites of certainty, tranquillity and spiritual comfort. They become instead a prolific source of anxiety" (*Liquid Fear* 69–70). While the women might not necessarily be a source of anxiety for each other, Lena already admits that she does not like it here (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 170), Vi was clearly afraid of her husband (172) and she is now afraid and hurt that her son and granddaughter Rosie do not visit anymore (177–78, 143) and Sally's fear of cats also makes her suspicious of other people (164). Thus, although, as Aston observes, Lena's "being part of the group is clearly vital to her day-to-day survival" (*Restaging Feminisms* 105), this does not mean that her feelings of fear and anxiety are met with comforting and open ears by the other women. Likewise, Sally is teased by the others about her fear of cats (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 153), Vi is accused of lying about the killing of her husband and feels the need to defend herself (172–73), Lena's mental health issues are met with ignorance and Mrs Jarrett is referred to, rather impersonally, as "*that* woman" (143; emphasis added) and, in general, takes up the position of an outsider. While for Aston, "their friendship runs deeper than these commonplace frictions" (*Restaging Feminisms* 105), I would argue that these frictions nonetheless increase feelings of fear and anxiety. Therefore, although the women seem to be chatting along as old friends, their conversations reveal their vulnerabilities and expose their fears as well as the fact that ultimately they have to face these fears in isolation. In Aston's words, each woman might be bound "to an anxiety state she may temporarily assuage but cannot fully overcome" (104).

The feeling of isolation and loneliness might be best described by the character of Mrs Jarrett, who is taking a special position in the play. As Angelaki fittingly observes, "*Escaped Alone* deals with two worlds and two experiences: the ordinary and the extraordinary. The character linking the two is Mrs Jarrett (or Mrs J)" (*Political Theatre* 23). She is not only the character that in many instances acts as a narrator figure in the play and the only character that is referred to with her sur-

name – "[t]he difference in the naming indicate the familiarity of the three women who are old friends, and Mr Jarrett's status as the outsider in the group" (23) – but Mrs Jarrett is also the bridge between the private quotidian encounters Lena, Vi and Sally disclose and her own, global perspective on planetary chaos and destruction. Met at times with suspicion (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 143) and exclusion (166), Mrs Jarrett combines the "present-day crisis of trust" with the general feeling of loneliness in globalised societies – especially since she is the character who addresses the catastrophic state of the world in her monologues.

The prevailing sense of isolation and loneliness has also been highlighted in performances of the play. In the 2016 Royal Court production of *Escaped Alone*, Mrs Jarrett, during her apocalyptic monologues, stepped aside from the other women and was captured in a spotlight, with the rest of the stage covered in darkness. The mundane setting of Sally's backyard recedes and Mrs Jarrett stands alone and isolated on stage, sharing her most intimate thoughts with the audience but not with the other women. "When Mrs Jarrett steps outside the frame [where the conversations with the other women take place], the stage is immersed in darkness and a rectangular frame resembling a live, burning cable is the only visual image, other than Mrs Jarrett recounting crisis while standing in close proximity to the audience" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 24). Indeed, the interplay of light and darkness around Mrs J is an apt way to stage the anxiety pervading her monologues, because "[d]arkness is not the cause of danger, but it is the natural habitat of uncertainty – and so of fear" (Bauman, *Liquid Fear* 2). At the same time, the beam of light creates a border and visualises that Mrs Jarrett is trapped in her own world and thoughts. Meanwhile the darkness surrounding Mrs Jarrett also links to anxiety's association with nothingness. For Heidegger anxiety's close connection with nothingness stems from a sense of indeterminacy of the fearful object; "[t]he indeterminateness of that in the face of which and for which we become anxious is no mere lack of determination but rather the essential impossibility of determining it" ("Metaphysics" 51). In other words, the subject experiences anxiety because no fearful object is discernible since there are, according to Ahmed, too many fearful objects that pass the subject by. This indeterminate quality of fear and anxiety has its aesthetic counterpart in the darkness on stage, since "seeing darkness engages a kind of touch or feeling of absence or nothingness" (Welton, "Dark Visions" 506). Paradoxically, the darkened space behind Mrs Jarrett is thrown into stark relief by the glowing frames around it, which as it were highlight the darkness of the void (502) and so transport a sense of nothingness. This interplay of darkness, nothingness, isolation and anxiety is further described by Welton, for whom "[w]hat is at stake in *Escaped Alone* is darkness, a property of nothing but space. To look at the darkness that Mrs. Jarrett appears to hover just in front of is to perceive something on the very edge of

tangibility. [...] Even as the audience sits, bathed in the glow of safety lighting, the onstage darkness feels proximate" (505–06). In other words, the darkness that surrounds Mrs Jarrett and at times even seems to swallow her up entirely (503) further shifts the focus to her words and away from her body and so puts anxiety centre stage.

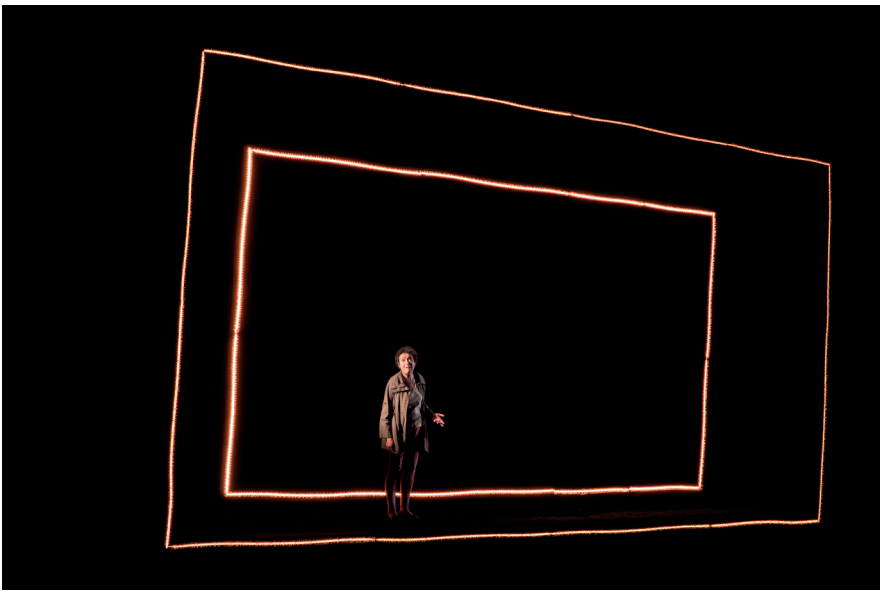

Figure 1: Krulwich, Sara. "Linda Bassett in 'Escaped Alone.'" 2017, *The New York Times/Redux/laif*, www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/theater/escaped-alone-review.html.

Both the playtext and the premiere production of *Escaped Alone* then reflect anxiety's nature as, on the one hand, excess of too many fearful objects, and on the other hand the nothingness that follows cognitive overload. Thus, although the darkness and nothingness feel tangible, they can never be reached. It is through Mrs Jarrett's monologues, which are spoken when she is in isolation and surrounded by darkness, that Churchill's play displays the isolation and loneliness that often accompany and increase anxiety. Besides Mrs Jarrett, the other three characters are not able to overcome their fears and anxieties by sharing them with each other either, which highlights the inescapable nature of anxiety.

4.2.3 Telling Stories (of Anxiety)

The conversations the four women have and Mrs Jarrett's monologues in *Escaped Alone* are connected to feelings of fear and anxiety, uncertainty and isolation. These sensations are repeatedly countered by the four women through storytelling. However, storytelling is yet another way that underscores the inescapability of the anxiety the women experience. Through storytelling the women try to share their emotions and attempt to flee into an idyllic world, which, in the end, does not cure their negative feelings. While the act of storytelling or, in another instance, singing does not really connect the characters, Mrs Jarrett's monologues are replete with intertextual references, most prominently to the biblical book of Job, that speak of anxious states and the accompanying feelings of uncertainty and at times isolation. The terrible rage Mrs Jarrett expresses in what can be seen as the last monologue of the play is a direct reaction to the inescapability of anxiety, which connects both worlds of the play: the mundane and the monstrous.[128] As Mrs Jarrett is the only character who enters both worlds, she is also the only character who can connect the mundane and the monstrous sphere by sharing her rage towards both. Nevertheless, these negative emotions are not resolved at the end of the play and Mrs Jarrett takes these anxieties with her – and so do the audience/readers, who are implicated by her epic tendencies.

In Churchill's play, the four women use storytelling as an (eventually unsuccessful) escape mechanism. This is suggested from the very beginning by the play's setup. Mrs Jarrett chances upon the other three women in a backyard that seems to offer temporary refuge – at least the refuge of the women's chatting and telling each other stories – from a possibly fearful reality. At the beginning of *Escaped Alone*, Mrs Jarrett tells the audience: "I'm walking down the street and there's a door in the fence open and inside are three women I've seen before. […] So I go in" (Churchill 143). In this, the play's story bears resemblance to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as Ben Brantley has remarked: "a voice invites her [i. e., Mrs Jarrett] to step on in, and so she does, a bit like Alice making the leap into Wonderland" (Brantley). Just as Alice follows the White Rabbit into an unknown world, "never once considering how in the world she was to get out again" (Carroll 38), so Mrs J seems to take an impulsive decision to withdraw into another world. Both Churchill's and Carroll's texts thus portray the escape of their protagonists and while Alice flees *from* a garden into the surreal world of Wonderland, Mrs Jarrett seems to flee *to* Sally's garden and hence into mundanity. What both stories have in common is the way they play with reality and fiction –

128 For a more detailed examination of the difficulty to distinguish these two worlds see Proudfit.

in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* through the world Alice encounters and in *Escaped Alone* through Mrs Jarrett's monologues – and how these worlds seem to be an escape from reality.

However, while Mrs Jarrett flees into the garden, she repeatedly returns from there to the bleak world of her innermost fears: she time and again interrupts the conversation with the other women with her monologues. Thus, while sharing personal stories takes up an important part of the play, it does not seem to be a fully successful coping strategy for the four women. This also becomes clear from the nature of the intertextual references in Mrs J's monologues. The book of Job and the Bible in general are alluded to several times. On the one hand, the events reported in Mrs Jarrett's monologues resemble the biblical ten plagues of Egypt,[129] on the other hand, they are also connected to the epigraph, which is a quotation from the book of Job: "I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 141).[130] The book of Job speaks of uncertainty, pain and anxiety: the well-known biblical figure of Job is a righteous and pious man, who has to suffer the murders of his children and servants and his financial ruin due to a bet God has with Satan. While Job is having dinner, several messengers come to him in quick succession and report catastrophic events in which Job lost his family and possessions, always ending their reports with the words "I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (Job 1.15–19). The book of Job then generates feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and isolation as a result of encounters with death and the loss of possessions, livelihood and identity. Due to the way in which Job's story questions divine justice – his misfortune is not deserved in any way –, Bauman calls it "the most insidious of challenges to the assumed order of things and the least easy to repel" (*Liquid Fear* 57). For although Job is "a true paragon of virtue," he has

129 While the biblical plagues are not repeated verbatim in Mrs J's monologues, clear parallels emerge: in the first biblical plague, water is turned into blood (*The Bible* Exod. 7.14–24) and in one of the monologues water itself seems to be a plague where "some died of thirst, some of drinking the water" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 150). The second plague, which consists of frogs (Exod. 7.25–8.11/15), is replaced by pets that "rained from the sky" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 166). The plague of boils (Exod. 9.8–12) is replaced by "chemicals [that] leaked through cracks in the money" (155) and when there is a thunderstorm of hail and fire in the Bible (Exod. 9.13–35), in Mrs Jarrett's monologue "fires were lit to stop the fires and consumed squirrels, firefighters and shoppers" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 174). Finally, in Churchill's play, the death of the firstborn son (Exod. 11.1–12:36) is described as "[m]iscarriages [that] were frequently leading to an increase of opportunities in grief counselling" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 155).

130 The same passage from the book of Job appears as an epigraph to the epilogue of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, where it is followed by the words "The drama's done" (500). Melville's epilogue goes on to describe how the narrator Ishmael escapes alone, as sole survivor of the shipwreck of his whaler, hanging on to a floating coffin.

to face doom and destruction, which is in contrast to the "unbreakability of the sin-and-punishment and virtue-and-reward links" the Bible usually relies on (57). The book of Job hence questions exactly this simple logic and so seems to suggest that there is no security in the world whatsoever. If a pious man like Job can be punished by God and suffer, so can everybody else. Thus, as Bauman argues, the most fearsome of the many fears in modern societies is the unpredictability and uncertainty with which catastrophes might strike at any moment:

> What Job might have been as yet unaware of was that all the earthly pretenders to God-like omnipotence in the centuries to come would find the unpredictability and haphazardness of their thunder to be by far the most awesome, most terrorizing and invincible of their weapons; and that whoever might wish to steal the ruler's thunder must first disperse the fog of uncertainty that shrouds it and recast randomness into regularity. (58)

In other words, the book of Job already anticipates the fears of insecurity and uncertainty at the heart of liquid modernity. This is what makes it such an intriguing intertext for a play like *Escaped Alone* that is a sustained investigation of precisely these fears.

In particular, the intertextual references to the book of Job, whose messengers of doom are paralleled in Mrs Jarrett and her monologues that narrate catastrophes, mean that Mrs J must forever return to the anxiety she tries to flee from. Mrs Jarrett's monologues are in set contrast to the mundane setting of Sally's backyard and remind her that she always takes her anxious feelings with her. She is the herald that narrates the destruction of the world through her own vision of the apocalypse in an act of storytelling. The aforementioned temporal structure of these monologues, which could either report a yet-to-be-realised future or an event in the past, further connects her visions to the phenomenological structure of anxiety. In her monologues, Mrs Jarrett tells her own perspective on the world in her stories and describes her own version of the apocalypse, of suffering, destruction and anxiety. Simultaneously she "vocalizes the narrative of society" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 25) and refers to several economic, social and environmental crises (Aston, *Restaging Feminisms* 99–109). Through Mrs Jarrett's monologues, *Escaped Alone* tells of these various crises from the perspective of an elderly woman who represents a herald that tells/reports, amongst other things, of suffering and anxiety and by doing so reveals their inescapable nature.

The inexpressibility of anxiety through stories and the act of storytelling also becomes clear in the actions of the other three women: Sally, Lena and Vi. Similar to Mrs Jarrett, the three women share their own personal stories and, just like Mrs Jarrett, this storytelling does not cure them from their fears. Although the characters share their own stories, they remain isolated entities. Not even the act of singing can change this. Although they are singing in harmony, "[*t*]*hey are singing for*

themselves in the garden" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 166) and Mrs Jarrett "*joins in the melody*" (166) later – which outlines her status as an outsider. The play thus shows the tension between the private and the public, between being isolated and working as a group; the characters are in many ways isolated while being in company. In this I agree with Hartl, when she does not read the singing as a refuge for the women from the overwhelming dystopian outside world, as Aston suggests ("Recognition" 309), but rather sees it as "intimately embedded into the play's dystopian structure" (Hartl 144). For Hartl this can also be seen in Mrs Jarrett's monologues "directly impact[ing] on the women's retreat in the garden on the level of both content and form" (144), where they are "briefly opening up to, and considering their individual stories in terms of, a broader political context" (144). This act of impacting on other people's thoughts and emotions resembles a colouring of the world in an anxious mood that spreads from Mrs Jarrett to the other women. Thus, storytelling can reveal how a negative emotion or mood like anxiety stems from a cognitively overwhelming state that colours all objects – or subjects – in the fore- and background in this mood but that cannot be overcome or escaped from. In this case the storytelling has the exact opposite effect of an escape from anxiety. It seems that whatever the protagonists do to cope with their anxieties – from sharing their stories to singing – fails.

However, the negative feelings in the play do not necessarily stay the same and Mrs Jarrett's anxiety and fear shifts into pure rage. Most prominently, Mrs Jarrett uses her last monologue, which is embedded into the women's conversation at the end of the play, to express "terrible rage" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 179), twenty-five times in a row.[131] Described as "an apocalyptic breakdown of linguistic invention that sears anguish and fury into the flesh of the play" (Rebellato, "Apocalyptic Tone" par. 57), Mrs Jarrett's reactions towards the world she lives in reveals that there is no escape. In reference to Ahmed, Aston describes this emotional outburst as an 'affective knot' in which negative emotions suddenly break out ("Something's Missing" 23). And erupt they must. While for Hartl, the reason(s) for this emotional outburst are not explained (145), I would rather argue that they stem from the anxious situations she described before and the inability to either act on or escape from them. Her anxiety, it seems, has evolved into rage at the situation of the world in general.

131 For a reading of this scene that changed from "capturing the righteous anger at our failed austerity politics or perhaps warning of those bubbling forces of racism and nationalism" to a more personal rage at "at my fellow citizens, at the cravenness of our political class, at the impenitent stupidity of the media, at the poverty of our public conversation" after Brexit see Rebellato ("Nation").

The general colouring of Mrs Jarrett's anxious mood of her surrounding environment and through her, of Lena, Sally and Vi's world, together with the conversion of fear and anxiety into other emotions is also transferred to the audience. In Churchill's play, it is Mrs Jarrett who is "the person who 'escaped alone' or lived to tell us the story of the apocalypse, narrated in the past tense" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 23). Separated from the other women and society in general, she takes the perspective of an outsider on society and repeats what Job's messengers have done before her: she describes the uncertainty and doom of human civilisation. As such, she is not only a border-crossing entity but also an epic one. Mrs Jarrett is the only character in the play who has this epic function. As an outsider, she can escape from the mundane world of Sally's backyard and is able to communicate feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, insecurity, uncertainty and isolation which are the consequences of the fear and anxiety created from a negatively globalised world. It is also through her "terrible rage" that Mrs Jarrett is able to close the gap between the mundane and the world at large, as both are connected to fear(s) and anxiety, to helplessness and the inability to escape and consequently to rage at their situation. This does not change, when, in an anticlimactic line, at the very end of the play, she says: "[a]nd then I said thanks for the tea and I went home" (Churchill, *Escaped Alone* 179). When Mrs Jarrett goes home, she still takes her moods and emotions with her – and here it is indifferent whether she feels anxiety or rage or a mixture of both. As Kolnai writes, in fear "the threatening object forms the constant backdrop to the moving play of intentions about the person's self" (39), which will most like endure until other emotions take over. At the same time the act of going home narrated by Mrs Jarrett directly refers to the audience – which will likewise go home after the play. This final sentence breaks the fourth wall and strengthens Mrs Jarrett's function as an epic entity. "Mrs. Jarrett's afternoons thus made us sensitive to the very oddness of ourselves as watching, witnessing beings" (Welton, "Dark Visions" 503). It is not least because of this epic function that her monologues make clear that "the crisis has caught up with us" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 25). Therefore, Mrs Jarrett not only takes her moods with her but she also shares them with the audience, which takes them home as well. At the end of the play, storytelling is not only another way that underscores the inescapability of anxiety, but it also reveals how emotions can shift and spread.

Ultimately, then, *Escaped Alone* portrays anxiety in various ways and "offer[s] knowing political commentary for audiences weary of realism, unambiguous messages and deceptive linearity claiming fidelity to the unpredictability of contemporary experience" (Angelaki, *Political Theatre* 25). This "unpredictability of contemporary experience" in many cases resembles anxiety's nature as a possible pain in the future that might strike at any moment. Besides this parallel in the temporal

structures of the play and the experience of anxiety, anxiety is also ingrained in the play in several other ways: firstly, through the language of the play that perfectly describes anxiety's overwhelming state and pre-reflexive nature. Secondly, through the themes that are addressed which mirror the many reasons for insecurity and uncertainty in globalised societies. Thirdly, the play responds to the close connection between fear and anxiety on the one hand and pain, disgust and abjection on the other hand, which collide with the numerous themes that cause anxiety. Fourthly, Churchill's play shows the lack of trust in other human beings that further fuels anxieties and describes the negatively globalised world. In performance practice, the loneliness that accompanies the characters has been further strengthened by the interplay of darkness and lighting that likewise reveals a state of nothingness inherent in anxiety. Finally, the play shows how these anxieties are countered through the act of storytelling, which ultimately does fail and shift the emotions away from anxiety to rage. Apart from giving elderly women a voice on stage, *Escaped Alone* thus also succeeds in granting women negative emotions and showing their perspective on anxiety.

4.3 Zinnie Harris: *How to Hold Your Breath* (2015)

Zinnie Harris's dystopian alternative reality play *How to Hold Your Breath* (2015) sees a similar interplay of insecurity and isolation, albeit on a much more political scale than *Escaped Alone.* The play describes the flight and ruin of Dana and her pregnant sister Jasmine from an economically, politically and ethically collapsing Europe: a conglomerate of dreadful events and tragedies happens at once, crashes into each other and crosses several thematic and aesthetic borders, while feelings of anxiety and pain are increased by and simultaneously cause the destruction of communication and language, which makes the play a prime example of what I call theatre of anxiety.

Harris's play begins with a misunderstanding between Dana and United Nations employee Jarron. While Dana, who is in her late twenties, thinks she has had a casual one-night stand with Jarron, he is under the impression that Dana is a sex worker and therefore wants to pay her for the night. As they heatedly argue over this, Jarron claims he is "a devil, [...] a demon" and that he wants to "play fucky fucky with your head" (Harris 23, 25). Still, Dana persistently refuses the money, but is from thereon obsessed with Jarron and persuaded that he is the personification of a demon/devil, a fearful apparition that is somehow involved in all misfortune that is about to happen to her, an idea that is further strengthened by the physical mark he leaves on her body and that seems to grow over time. After the encounter with Jarron and finding out that her sister Jasmine,

who lives with her, is pregnant, Dana leaves for an interview for a research grant and the job that comes with it. Although this interview does not go well for Dana, she is invited to yet another interview, which this time takes place abroad, in Alexandria. When Dana and Jasmine, who accompanies her, are on the train to Alexandria, the ticket inspector tells them that the bank refused their cards – as they later find out, due to a major financial and economic crash. In lack of cash, Dana and Jasmine must leave the train at a place aptly called Hartenharten. In the course of one day, the two sisters lose all their belongings, their money, their security and physical and mental integrity. During all these catastrophic events, Dana is not only repeatedly having/hallucinating encounters with Jarron but she is also accompanied by a Librarian who seems to follow her and who, unsolicited, provides her with 'how to' books which, however, cannot prevent Dana and her sister's mental and physical annihilation caused by the economic crash, the closing of all European borders and the subsequent collapse of civilisation. When, in the end, Dana has sold her phone to pay for Jasmine's treatment after a miscarriage, her only way to earn money to continue their travel to Alexandria is through sex work. Finally, she manages to go on a refugee boat with her sister to continue their travel. When this boat capsizes and kills Jasmine, Jarron and the Librarian debate about Dana's future, revealing the play's magical realism while Dana is now hovering between life and death.

Harris's play paints the worst-case scenario of Bauman's description of a society that lives in uncertainty and isolation and stages the fears and anxieties that accompany negatively globalised societies. Dana and her sister experience a tour-de-force through a society that, just like a negatively globalised society in Bauman's account, "is no longer adequately protected by the state; it is now exposed to the rapacity of forces the state does not control and no longer hopes or intends to recapture" (*Liquid Fear* 147). In this situation, the characters are left alone to cope with their anxieties. These anxieties then take place on several levels and show the interplay of uncertainty and isolation with anxiety: firstly, on the level of the story-world, where the various horrific events that take place during Dana's journey mirror Ahmed's description of anxiety as the accumulation of too many (fearful) objects or events that take place simultaneously. These various events then also represent the uncertainties, insecurities and fears that accompany negatively globalised societies as described by Bauman. In the end, Dana has been subjected to social degradation and exclusion and has lost all her possessions, her bodily integrity, her livelihood and, after drowning, her life. Secondly, the story of the play mirrors the temporal structure of anxiety where, according to Waldenfels, during anxiety the subject anticipates an event that happens too suddenly before any protective mechanisms can take effect. Likewise, Dana and her sister are in no way prepared for the many catastrophes that happen upon them, linking their journey

to Bauman's concept of the Titanic syndrome – metaphorically and literally. Thirdly, these anxieties take place on the level of the play's language: Dana and her sister are not able to communicate their anxieties to the people around them, which leads to a state of isolation, where the characters must face the catastrophic events on their own. Finally, both sisters have to endure pains that further strengthen their anxieties and show how anxiety is closely linked to other negative sensations.

As is typical of the theatre of anxiety, *How to Hold Your Breath* illustrates the many facets of anxiety through various border crossings, which take place in time and space and affect Dana and Jasmine as well as the society they live in in general. Throughout Dana's journey, she and her sister cross various borders – literally and metaphorically – affecting her body, her mind, her sense of reality and fiction and her sense of security. While these border crossings, at the beginning of the play, oscillate between pleasure and pain, throughout their journey Dana's and Jasmine's sensations shift from pleasure to mere pain, disgust and abjection. In combination with the already shifting borders of what can be endured during anxiety's excessive nature and the coinciding of present, future and future anterior that accompanies anxiety, border crossings are the central aspect of the play's negotiation of anxiety. These crossings are then commented on by the Librarian, who is himself an epic entity crossing the border between reality and fiction and who, instead of bridging the various gaps, increases Dana's suffering. Similar to Mrs Jarrett in *Escaped Alone*, the Librarian is likewise a herald that tells Dana about her misfortunes – however this time not the misfortunes that already have happened but rather the ones that are about to happen. The Librarian, then, in many ways, stands for the insecurities and the unpredictability of future threats Bauman describes as "[b]y far the most awesome and fearsome dangers" (*Liquid Fear* 11) as well as the helplessness and isolation that accompanies citizens from negatively globalised societies. He does this in three ways: firstly, by narrating and commenting on the threats that cause Dana's and Jasmine's anxiety; secondly, by providing Dana with 'how to' books that nevertheless prove useless for her; and thirdly, the Librarian is an epic entity that, together with the devil, breaks the fourth wall and shatters the illusion of reality in the play, which mirrors anxiety's nature as a likewise fictional painful encounter in the future.

4.3.1 The Ramifications of Economic Anxiety

How to Hold Your Breath displays the effects of negative globalisation in extreme cases that are often associated with anxieties. The story of the play takes the protagonists on a journey through the ruins of European society caused by the breakdown of the banking system and reveals anxiety's conglomerate, where too many

catastrophic events happen simultaneously. The "multiple-crisis-layered scripting" (Aston, "Moving Women" 304) of the play portrays a world that resembles Ahmed's description of anxiety as an accumulation and gathering of (fearful) objects or events. While for Ahmed this gathering takes place in the mind – where "one's thoughts often move quickly between different objects, a movement which works to intensify the sense of anxiety" (*Cultural Politics* 66), in Harris's play this usually internal, mental process is exemplified by more vivid examples of pain caused by the economic crash, like the lack of food or shelter that are likewise accumulating and overwhelming all other emotions and thoughts Dana might have. At the same time, these accumulating dreadful events and objects represent the uncertainties, insecurities and anxiety that accompanies negative globalisation as described by Bauman.

There are various situations the two women encounter that induce globalised anxieties – situations that threaten one's body/possessions, livelihood and identity and situations that could happen to everyone who is not rich enough to prevent them. Most prominently, these anxieties can be found when Dana and Jasmine are stranded in Hartenharten after a major financial and economic crash has happened in Europe, leading the surrounding countries to close their borders. In their hotel room, Dana finds out that all banks have shut. Their hotel room is freezing, the heating does not work and neither does the kettle. They have no way to get money or to pay for the room. A succession of disastrous events continues until in scene seventeen they have no money, no water or food, no clean clothes, no health insurance and no safe opportunity to travel to Alexandria. At the same time, they lost their phones and thus cannot contact anyone, they lost their suitcase with personal belongings and Jasmine lost her baby, leading to physical and mental health issues. Therefore, the fear and pain Dana and her sister have to endure occur on a mental and physical level respectively. There are so many instances of fear and pain that Dana is not able to concentrate on any of them, feeling overwhelmed by what in Ahmed's terms may be described as the conglomerate of fears surrounding her and losing track of what she is afraid of. As Julia Boll claims, "[o]n a structural level, *How to Hold Your Breath* points at multiple causal entanglements that not only affect the characters' choices and their trajectories, but also make up the core structure of the society and indeed the universe in which they move and operate" ("Entanglements" 234). These "multiple causal entanglements" are, however, obscure. "By far the most awesome and fearsome dangers" as Bauman observes, "are precisely those that are *impossible*, or excruciatingly *difficult*, to anticipate: the unpredicted, and in all likelihood *unpredictable* ones" (*Liquid Fear* 11), which further explains Dana's desperate situation and her fight for her and her sister's life by adding a layer of insecurity, vulnerability as well as chance and unpredictability to her already anxiety-stricken situation. Dana's

story, then, on an individual level, portrays fear and anxiety in relation to one's own life. As Kolnai observes, "in every genuine case of fear it is somehow the whole self, or the very existence of the self, which is put in question, whether it is one's very life which is threatened, or whether it is the salvation of one's soul, one's livelihood, social position or personal liberty" (38). Dana experiences these anxieties on various occasions during her journey to Alexandria in order to get a job and earn a livelihood, when she is restricted in her personal liberty when the borders are closing (Harris 119) or when she has to prostitute herself in order to escape the horrid situation (134) and her very life is threatened while she is on the boat (152), levitating between life and death. This is ever more striking in contrast to the lives of "relative privilege" (Aston, "Moving Women" 305) the two protagonists of Harris's play seem to have lived before the encounter with Jarron and the crash of the banking system. The play then shows how, as Bauman writes, "evil may hide *anywhere*" (*Liquid Fear* 67) and strike everyone, which resembles the overall structure of anxiety and is also reminiscent of the biblical intertext of the book of Job in Churchill's *Escaped Alone* (see chapter 4.2.3).

The depiction of society in *How to Hold Your Breath* echoes what Bauman warns about in negatively globalised societies and thus the play can be seen as the expression of both a phenomenological and a sociological understanding of anxiety. The insecurity that accompanies negatively globalised societies resembles, in the play, the uncertain political situation. What Dana must endure throughout the play, her pain and inability to express her needs and anxieties, comes very close to what Bauman describes as the three kinds of dangers that induce fear and anxiety:

> Some threaten the body and the possessions. Some others are of a more general nature, threatening the durability and reliability of the social order on which security of livelihood (income, employment), or survival in the case of invalidity or old age depend. Then there are dangers that threaten one's place in the world – a position in the social hierarchy, identity [...] and more generally an immunity to social degradation and exclusion. (*Liquid Fear* 3–4)

At the end of the play, Dana has encountered all three kinds of dangers and their attendant fears and anxieties, as she neither possesses any valuables nor physical integrity, she has been raped and beaten up, she has no employment or stable environment that will secure her future and she has no position in society, being a refugee in a foreign country that is not friendly to immigrants. Although she thinks she lives in something Bauman would call an "open society," Dana experiences the negative effects of this kind of openness that

> now brings to most minds the terrifying experience of heteronomous, vulnerable populations overwhelmed by forces they neither control nor truly understand, horrified by their own undefendability and obsessed with the security of their borders and of the population inside them – since it is precisely that security *inside* borders and *of* borders that eludes their grasp and seems bound to stay beyond their reach forever [...]. (97)

The open society thus can neither bring security nor can it tackle society's anxieties. The storywold of *How to Hold Your Breath* mirrors the many anxieties that lurk in societies due to negative globalisation.[132] In the play, these threats and dangers not only come from various different sources, threatening body/possessions, livelihood and identity, but also coincide with and thus visualise the accumulating nature of anxiety. The play then cynically plays with the end of the open society and illustrates what it means to stay on the outside, facing an uncertain present and future alike.

It is not only the phenomenological understanding of anxiety as a conglomerate of objects that is represented in the play but also anxiety's shattered temporality. Although anxiety does usually take place in the future, as an anticipated pain (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 65), the events that elicit anxiety in *How to Hold Your Breath* also take place in the present as a sequence of never-ending crises. What makes these present moments of uncertainty and insecurity so anxiety-inducing is that the two sisters are not prepared for the economic collapse and thus find themselves in a seemingly infinite sequence of catastrophes. The play then mirrors the temporal structure of anxiety – anxiety before a painful future event for which the subjects are not prepared and that will leave no time to act and prevent/moderate it. Moreover, these sudden events that happen during Dana and her sister's journey and their unpreparedness metaphorically and physically – both sisters are stranded on a sinking boat after all – mirror Bauman's concept of the Titanic syndrome and of a society that is likewise unprepared for the various threats that could happen at any time.

In *How to Hold Your Breath*, Dana and her sister do not experience anxiety as something painful they anticipate but they rather live through what Waldenfels describes as the temporality of anxiety and thereby directly demonstrate the fears and anxiety that lurk in contemporary societies. For Waldenfels, anxiety is the dread of something that might happen at any moment in the future and affect

132 Among the manifold anxiety-inducing crises modern society is facing, capitalism, whose power to shape our society is increasingly coming under scrutiny, is one of the most prominent catalysts for various crises and is also present in *How to Hold Your Breath.* Dan Rebellato has convincingly argued that "the apocalyptic tone recently adopted in British theatre" ("Apocalyptic Tone" par. 58) and its many dystopian plays is the theatre's reaction to capitalism and its crises.

an unprepared subject which does not have any tools or mechanisms to prevent it. Thus, the painful event suddenly passes the subject by and becomes its past – a new and painful past. The subject is afraid that an unforeseen future that may change its way of life could happen too early and become the past without the subject having an adequate solution for it, ideally to prevent it (24). This temporal structure of the future anterior – it will have come too soon to be prepared – can be found in Harris's play: Dana and Jasmine are stranded in Hartenharten in the first place because the collapse of the banking system happened in precisely this sudden and unprepared manner as explained by Waldenfels. When the train inspector tells Dana that "the bank's refused" her card and that she'll "either have to get off at the next station or pay again" (Harris 72), Dana realises that neither she nor her sister have enough cash to pay for their tickets. When the ticket inspector offers to bend the rules and give them a "two-for-one offer" to Budapest for 45 euros, Dana declines suspecting Jarron being behind the discount to pay her for the night. Although Jasmine then buys a single ticket – spending all the cash they have – and Dana decides to leave the train in order to "sort the Bank and meet [Jasmine] in Budapest" (76), they both leave the train at Hartenharten. There, they meet the Librarian, who exposes how unprepared Dana is for the sudden economic collapse. While the Librarian advises Dana to leave the place as fast as possible, he also hands her the first 'how to' book which is titled: *How to Live with No Money.* Dana's encounter with the Librarian reveals how unprepared she is for the whole situation:

Dana: what do you mean, no money?
Librarian: I mean not much money.
Dana: we have lots of money
Librarian: look, do you want these books or not?
Dana: we have lots of money in our bank account
we just need a bank
Librarian: third, *How to Survive an Economic Disaster.* Bit outdated, but -
Dana: if you could just tell me where the bank is
Librarian: fourth book. *How to Find a Bank when They Have All Shut*
Dana: why have they shut?
Librarian: do you read the papers? Watch the news?
Dana: what has happened?
Librarian: it was on the cards for a while, if you care to read
Jefferson's *Economic Reality in Post-euro Europe* you
would have had it all predicted. Or Fresherman's *How*
the Early Twenty-first-Century Economists Got it All
Wrong
the banks have shut their doors
internal collapse, one after the other
just like before. Only they have done it again

Dana: they were fine yesterday
Librarian: they were teetering yesterday. They weren't fine yesterday. If you read the small print, the detail of what was going on
look do you want these books or not?
Dana *takes the books.* (82–83)

At this moment in the play it is already too late for Dana to act or even prevent the crisis from happening and she can now only react and try to prevent further collateral damage. This dialogue also reveals how Dana is always lacking behind and left to cope with a sequence of disastrous consequences she is never able to struggle through. Although the bank refused her card, and although the media already foreshadowed the crash, part of why Dana is not prepared is that she does not believe that the whole banking system is able to collapse. She thus neglects the Librarian's advice to leave the place as fast as possible. This distorted temporality of anxiety – where it is too late to prevent misfortunes – is then also the reason for Dana's uncertainty and vulnerability. *How to Hold Your Breath* thus exemplifies Bauman's observation that "'[f]ear' is the name we give to our *uncertainty:* to our *ignorance* of the threat and of what is to be *done* – what can and what can't be – to stop it in its tracks – or to fight back if stopping it is beyond our power" (*Liquid Fear* 2). Throughout the play and the various fear-inducing situations that impose themselves on Dana, she is competing against a temporality that is working against her: the catastrophe has already happened and she now lives in a world that has to deal with its consequences.

Although Dana, once she understands that the crisis is real, tries to prevent further misfortune to her and her sister, it is not only already too late to do so but Dana also lacks the means to achieve this. This condition of utter unpreparedness in many ways resembles the situation described by Bauman as the Titanic syndrome. For Bauman, the shipwreck of the Titanic liner was especially dreadful because the people on the ship were absolutely unprepared for it (although it was always a possible scenario) and once they realised the severity of the situation they lacked the means to prevent a catastrophe. The Titanic disaster could have been at least mitigated, if, for instance, the ship had carried enough lifeboats for all passengers. There likewise is an implication that the catastrophe that befalls Dana and Jasmine could have been prevented – perhaps by properly functioning controlling instances of the banking system, particularly since there were warnings of a possible looming financial crisis, at least according to the Librarian (Harris 83). As Aston pithily observes, Dana "comes to stand for all of us whose economic privilege occludes the suffering that could be, but is not avoided" ("Moving Women" 305). Of course, Dana herself, before the onset of the disaster, seems to have relied on her privilege and did not "care to read" the predictions and take preventive measures.

The play thus not only shows how anxiety can be represented on stage though a conglomerate of (fearful) events that comprise the worst-case side effects of a negatively globalised society in the present and characters that lack the means to overcome these anxious events, but Dana's reaction towards the collapse of the economy also mirrors the situation on the Titanic, as both do not seem plausible and are thus not prepared for.

4.3.2 Pain and Isolation

The anxiety and insecurity that has been described in the previous chapter is then accompanied by isolation – as can be seen in the relative lack of (successful) communication – and different forms of pain. For Bauman, one reaction towards the uncertainty and insecurity of the future and the present respectively is that people in negatively globalised societies are divided into three roles – each of which is isolated by itself: "perpetrators, victims, and 'collateral casualties'" (*Liquid Fear* 98). The consequence is that "[w]e are all in danger, and we are all dangers to each other" (98). While there is no shortage of the second and third group, who "frantically seek escape and breathe vengeance," the first group "are frightened that their turn to do the same may – and will – come" (98). This behaviour, which resembles the concept of 'survival of the fittest,' not only increases feelings of fear and anxiety – after all, for Waldenfels, anxiety is closely connected to the singularisation of the subject (115) – but through this rivalry increases the pain of those involved. All this is portrayed in *How to Hold Your Breath* through various forms of border crossings that threaten the characters' physical integrity, possessions, livelihood and identity and that, together with the characters' inability to communicate with other people, further increase Dana and Jasmine's isolation.

In Harris's play, Dana and her sister are not able to communicate their anxiety, which distances them from other people, from the Librarian and, in the end, also from each other. The dysfunction and destruction of language is depicted repeatedly, for instance by Martha and Clare, who can only communicate through acts of violence and beat up an already hurt Dana right before she gets on the refugee boat (Harris 143), or by Jasmine, who, after having lost her child, does suffer a form of amnesia and cannot follow any communication (125–26). The interactions between the Librarian and Dana are another case in point. Scene five is the first time Dana contacts the Librarian, asking for a book on demons after having had the encounter with Jarron. This first encounter takes excruciatingly long as the Librarian does not seem to understand Dana's simple request and, by asking detailed questions, complicates the matter without offering real help (39–46). While this seems to increase the comic relief in the play, it also shows that

Dana cannot rely on him to offer any support. In Hartenharten, the very friendly but pedantic and at times importunate Librarian accompanies Dana on her travels and provides her with books. He is then also part of another instance of dysfunctional communication in the play, which takes place when Dana calls an ambulance for Jasmine while she is having a miscarriage. The woman from the emergency hotline does not see the urgency of Dana's call and does a slow and inefficient assessment with her – the situation can be seen to mirror political reactions to various crises –, while the Librarian is providing Dana (who in her utter distress is considering calling back Jarron, "the devil") with well-meaning but utterly useless advice. Finally, at the end of the assessment, the woman concludes:

> **Woman:** twenty minutes now
> **Dana:** twenty minutes, there must be a way to call a devil
> **Librarian:** you can't rush me
> how to keep your cool when your sister is dying
> **Dana:** she isn't dying
> can you get it any quicker than twenty minutes?
> **Librarian:** she doesn't get blood, she'll die
> **Dana:** they'll give her blood then, won't they? Someone give
> her some blood. Give me a book, how to make them
> give someone blood when they need blood
> **Librarian:** how to listen when people are talking nonsense
> **Dana:** what sort of nonsense?
> **Woman:** I am sorry I have to ask, do you have insurance?
> **Dana:** insurance?
> this is an emergency –
> **Librarian:** how to keep your cool when life is stressful
> **Dana:** – I don't need insurance
> **Woman:** do you intend to pay for her treatment in cash?
> **Librarian:** it's got a CD, this one with breathing exercises
> meditation (112–13)

While Dana, for the woman on the hotline, is only one 'customer' out of many, the slow assessment is not only, to large parts, useless, but also wastes valuable time and shows Dana that institutions previously installed to help people in need do not fulfil this task anymore. In this scene, communication is reduced to absurdity because, while Dana becomes increasingly desperate, she does not seem to be able to communicate on a rational level with anyone. Dana's anxiety and pain thus become evident in the failure of communication in the scene. The characters talk at cross purposes, which results in a multitude of sentences that are unconnected and leads to several threads of communication that happen simultaneously. This chaotic coinciding of multiple topics and simultaneous events is an example of what Ahmed describes as a conglomerate of different fearful thoughts that

merge into anxiety (*Cultural Politics* 66). What is more, the Librarian does not show any real support but adds another layer of stress to Dana's condition by suggesting book titles that contain even more horror scenarios. In this way, the Librarian is confronting Dana with more objects and possible events that induce fear and anxiety. Although Dana can prevent her sister's death in this scene, this is not achieved by reading books – as there simply is not enough time to do so – but by enduring the assessment and selling her phone (and thus perhaps the most important tool that connects her to other people and allows her to call help), in order to pay for the treatment.

Being left in isolation to face a crisis they did not cause also increases the sisters' pain. These painful situations are then all connected to border crossings concerning body/possessions, livelihood and identity, which all represent possible loci of threats that induce fear and anxiety. The play's first scene already gives an impression of the physical and mental borders that are crossed throughout the play – through sex, manipulation and commercial interests. In particular, the connection between anxiety and pain (see chapter 2.2) is highlighted once more. Infuriated that Dana did not see their sexual encounter as part of a commercial transaction but was instead looking for the pleasure of a one-night stand, Jarron insists that he is "unloveable," "a demon" and "a bridge that you don't cross" (Harris 23). When, regardless of his warning, Dana crosses this bridge by refusing the money he offers for the night, for Dana the oscillation between pleasure and pain shifts towards mere pain, as she projects the reason for the ordeal that follows back onto this encounter, which can be seen as another representation of the crisis of trust already touched upon in *Escaped Alone* (see chapter 4.2.2). The pain and anxiety she thenceforth experiences become visible in the mark that appears on Dana's body after the one-night stand and that is not only referred to as the "mark of the devil" (46) but that also starts growing and, in the end, is "all over her" (132). Its growth coincides with Dana's descent into the painful chaos of her journey across the continent. While the mark does not seem to hurt Dana, it still infiltrates her body and marks her against her will – it becomes a sign of her growing pain.

Perhaps the play's most direct association between the staging of pain that threatens the body's integrity and anxiety occurs in the scene in which Jasmine loses her child. After the physical pain of the miscarriage, which includes massive blood loss, Jasmine is in shock and blames herself and her supposedly bad parenting skills for losing the foetus. She thinks of ever more surreal scenarios picturing how the baby might have lived and yet died, imagining "how it could have been after it was born" (Harris 115). This transfers her speculation into the irrealis mood that is closely connected to the future anterior and hence to the temporality of anxiety: she imagines a terrible future that she will have caused and will never

have been able to prevent, even though – or perhaps rather because – this future can never materialise as the child will never be born. Jasmine's outburst culminates in an absurd nightmarish fantasy in which she imagines how she might have caused her baby's head to fall off:

> **Jasmine:** What if the neck snapped and the head fell off?
> Then I would have this headless baby, I would have this
> horrible headless baby and what do you do with a
> baby that doesn't have a head? I wouldn't have known
> how to cuddle and comfort something like that. I
> would get cross. I would shout at it because I was so
> tired and it wouldn't feed. It would just bleed. Bleed
> and bleed all over the floor. I would shake it. I would
> hurt it, I would get very angry and shake it. Stop
> bleeding I would say. Stop bleeding. You can't bleed
> like this, you have to stop bleeding and live. You have
> to live. You have to be my boy. You have to let me put
> my arms around you and you have to grow up and ask
> about the stars. You can't ask about the stars if you
> are bleeding like this. You are just blood you aren't a
> child. You put blood in a pot and make a pudding.
> You mop it up with a sponge. You soak it up with
> tissues and flush it down the loo. There is nothing to
> you. You can't be my boy, my precious bundle of child,
> you are just blood.
> Down the toilet you go. Blood.
> **Dana** *holds her.*
> **Jasmine** *opens her mouth but can't make a sound.* (116)

While this outburst has its roots in the traumatic experience of the miscarriage, its odd temporal displacement into a never-to-be-realised future as well as the predominance of blood in her speech establish a link to anxiety (via pain and disgust) that goes beyond Jasmine's own experience. What Jasmine's monologue thematises are near-universal sources of anxiety: losing a child, or not being able to see them grow up and "ask about the stars," is also a conventional metaphorical double for the loss of a positive future. Jasmine's loss, which is already irreversibly past, thus still presents a potential future source of anxiety for the audience – a fearful event that, in Waldenfels's terms, will/would have happened too soon for them/Jasmine to prepare for and avert it. Again, anxiety is represented indirectly here, in a complex and multi-layered aesthetic displacement, both through the odd temporality and especially through the affective displacement of anxiety with pain and disgust. First, the imagined baby's excessive bleeding displaces Jasmine's own bleeding, a sign of her pain, which due to pain's inexpressibility (Scarry, *The Body*

4) can only be verbalised indirectly in this way. This pain is then in turn replaced by Jasmine's disgust when she realises that she does not hold a child but "just blood" in her hands and resolves to "flush it down the loo," in a reaction that is not only reminiscent of Douglas's observation that the human body's vulnerability, as visible in excretions like blood, is a frequent source of disgust (121) but also depicts a cleaning ritual characteristic of disgust and abjection (Arya, "Abjection Interrogated" 55–56). Both Jasmine's pain and her disgust are then affective displacements for the anxiety she projects.

Another prime source of anxiety in *How to Hold Your Breath* is the economic uncertainty Dana and her sister face, when, increasingly, their entire livelihood is at stake. After the encounter with Jarron and before both sisters are stranded at Hartenharten, Dana has her first interview for the research grant she applied for. The anxiety-laden situation of the interview is something the play presents in intermittently recurring scenes. During the interview Dana sits on a chair in the middle of the stage while a bright light is blinding her so she cannot see any of the interview panellists who consist of disembodied voices that surround her (Harris 35). This first interview situation establishes borders by playing with darkness and light – Dana is in the spotlight while the panellists are voices coming from the darkness, hiding from any real contact with her. Dana is separated from any human interaction and the blinding lights that seem to shine through her distract her from concentrating on her presentation. Nonetheless, she is invited to yet another interview to Alexandria. While the interviews do not threaten Dana's livelihood, the research grant interview is the reason why Dana travels to Alexandria in the first place. Fittingly, the people arranging the interview not only hide in darkness during the interview scenes, but they also hide from all responsibility and "leave travel arrangements up to the individuals" (135) although they soon know that the borders are shut. When Dana asks the panellists to give her a document stating that she has "a position to go to" (136) the panellists decline, describing it as an "administrative burden," reminding her that she simply does not have a position but is only invited to yet another interview and referring to the other applicants they can give the post to. However, the more desperate the situation in Europe gets, the more Dana is dependent on the research funding and, with all her money and possessions gone, the more the whole situation is threatening her livelihood.

It is not just the borders of body, possessions and livelihood that are crossed to induce pain and reveal a society's most gruesome anxieties but the boundaries between pain and anxiety are crossed as well, leading to the merging of pain and anxiety on a physical, mental and material level. As state borders close, Dana becomes entrapped on her journey and is forced to suffer hunger, pain and humiliation. These negative sensations are then reinforced with a sense of disgust when

Dana is forced to prostitute herself and in due course is raped by a punter. The play's focus on the crossing of borders – political and private, physical and mental – is nowhere as clear as when the act of raping coincides with an interview scene (Harris 133–38). This constitutes a breach of Dana's physical and mental borders at the same time and causes her unimaginable pains. However, desperate for her life, Dana sees the only way out of her and her sister's predicament in sex work – which is ironic as the whole play starts with a scene in which she defends herself against being a sex worker. In the end, her 'customer' is not willing to pay the 45 euros she demands and rapes her for 10 euros. While Dana is having rough intercourse with the punter, she is simultaneously asked to repeat her presentation for the interview panel. Being in the spotlight, surrounded by disembodied voices that have no mercy for her situation while her body is violated, is the ultimate crossing of borders in body and mind that induces long-lasting pain as well as desperation and anxiety. Pain and anxiety, which, according to Ahmed, is a conglomerate of anticipated pains in the future, are transgressive phenomena as they involve "the violation or transgression of the border between inside and outside" (*Cultural Politics* 65). Thus, in *How to Hold Your Breath*, some of the most dreadful threats are aimed at the body and livelihood at the same time, leading to the accumulation of painful scenarios. The collapse of the banking system, economic crash, closing of borders and breakdown of social structures that make it near impossible for Dana and her sister to get to Alexandria then further increase her pain.

At the end of the play, this becomes a question of bare survival. Dana and her sister are finally on a lifeboat[133] with hundreds of other people, discussing their future perspectives:

> **Jasmine:** we won't ever be going back home, will we?
> **Dana:** I don't think there is anything left for us there.
> *Beat.*
> **Jasmine:** I don't like the idea of not existing.
> Of being a person but not a person. Like the baby
> **Dana:** the baby –

133 The lifeboat in *How to Hold Your Breath* functions as a reminder of the thousands of refugees that not only face violence and assault but also die at European borders each year (International Organization for Migration; see also Quinn; Rankin). This reminder is important because, as Bauman wrote just a year after *How to Hold Your Breath* premiered, "[s]igns are piling up that public opinion, in cahoots with the ratings-covetous media, is gradually yet relentlessly approaching the point of 'refugee tragedy fatigue'. Drowned children, hastily erected walls, barbed-wire fences, overcrowded concentration camps and governments vying with each other to add the insult of treating the migrants as hot potatoes to the injuries of exile, narrow escape, and the nerve-racking perils of the voyage to safety – all such moral outrages are ever less news and ever more seldom 'in the news'" (*Strangers* 2).

Jasmine: is dead I know, whereas we –
we'll just be illegal. I understand.
Dana: when we get there, it will get better.
It will all feel better
There is a sudden jolt. (Harris 148)

Here, Jasmine and Dana discuss what Bauman describes as "dangers that threaten one's place in the world – a position in the social hierarchy, identity [...] and more generally an immunity to social degradation and exclusion" (*Liquid Fear* 4). When Jasmine is referring to "the idea of not existing," she indicates how, in the course of a few days, the crash of the banking system has taken literally everything from the two sisters and made the Global North's worst nightmare a reality. Shortly after this scene the boat capsizes and kills Jasmine. This is the play's realisation of the ultimate fear, the primal fear of death, which "is perhaps the prototype of archetype of all fears; the ultimate fear from which all other fears borrow their meanings" (52). Simultaneously, while the boat capsizes and Dana and Jasmine are drowning, Dana finds herself back in an interview scene.[134] She is holding her breath and at the same time is trying to answer the questions from the panellists. Talking will drown her and holding her breath will diminish her chances of a new life in Alexandria – leaving her with a choice between being dead and being unable to live. This is the starkest way in which Dana's language breaks down, while her body, mind, livelihood and identity are under immediate threat. At the very end of the play, when Dana is hovering between life and death, it is the Librarian and Jarron who decide her fate. This very last scene then not only shows how liquid society "divide[s] humanity into those categories worthy of care and the *unwertes Leben* – the lives unworthy of living" (80) but the play also displays one of the most sinister fears of humanity: the fear of death (29, 41–42). It is then her death – metaphorically and literally – that silences Dana until the end of the play.

The destruction of Dana's language, in combination with border-crossings and the pain they cause, is already foreshadowed in the first scene of the play, which takes on the function of a prologue:[135]

134 In the 2015 Royal Court production, the scene in which the boat capsizes was staged as a literal "tilting of the stage that multiple sea-crossing bodies of Royal Court extras fought and writhed to hand on to" (Aston, "Moving Women" 304) – underscoring the dramatic life-or-death character of the scene.

135 This prologue was not included in the premiere production of *How to Hold Your Breath* (Boll, "Entanglements" 218).

> I am stand at the back. Don't look out. Gets shouted at for looking down. I am eyes closed, head bent in every gathering. I am knees bowed, chest to the floor. I am a flower by the wall, grass in the shade. I am back turned, shoulders hunched, face hollowed. I am a scream. A howl. I am a snake on the plane, a hyena, an antelope. I am ant under a stone, beetle scurrying away. I am beaten at birth, blackened. I am sand. I am soil. I am earth. I am less than earth. I am poor. I'm so poor my skin is my clothes. I am uncovered. Ashamed. The land can't feed me. I am the end. The dead. The carcass by the roadside. I am the abyss into which people dread to fall. (Harris 13)

The annihilation of semantic meaning and language that leads to the isolation of both Dana and Jasmine can thus already be traced in the prologue, in which Dana "speaks to the audience" (13), describing the journey she is about to begin. The entire speech reads like a poem and the density of its poetic language makes the anger but also the fear and anxiety become palpable. This is the first incidence in which language slips from Dana's lips and she claims she is "a scream. A howl" (13), comparing herself to wild animals and natural elements. Furthermore, this prologue also shows the many fears that hide in negatively globalised societies, like the fear of exclusion – "I am flower by the wall, grass in the shade" – or the fear of threatening one's identity – "I am the end. The dead." Thus, the play already foreshadows the painful ending in its prologue and so mirrors anxiety's anticipatory nature.

While the destruction of society is described on several thematic levels that crash into each other and so comment on dysfunctional societies, Dana in *How to Hold Your Breath* hence has to endure the crossing of mental and physical boundaries and the destruction of her language, subsequently leading to and being a sign of her pain, fear and anxiety. As Elaine Aston observes, "[t]he circularity of Dana's journey from ignorance, through the seeing and to non-seeing augers [sic] a cycle that needs to break, but is not broken" ("Recognition" 305). *How to Hold Your Breath* then truly displays these fears that lurk behind the Global North and reveals "the abyss into which people dread to fall."

4.3.3 Reflections on/of Anxiety

How to Hold Your Breath can then be read as a sustained reflection on individual and social anxiety. This can perhaps best be seen in the figure of the Librarian. The way in which the Librarian foreshadows and comments on the events in the play

not only resembles the role of an omniscient narrator in a novel but also makes him an epic entity that has a metatheatrical role beyond mere comic relief: firstly, it is through the Librarian that the reasons for anxiety are reflected on, through the book titles that span from threats affecting the physical integrity or the economic welfare of Dana and her sister to titles that threaten the entire identity of the protagonists. Secondly, the Librarian comments on and ridicules the coping mechanisms the characters in the play use to overcome their anxiety by using the 'medium' of 'how to' books to comment on these anxieties. Thirdly, together with Jarron, who doubles as the devil, the Librarian comments on the inadequacy of the dramatic form itself to stage anxiety through dramatic realism: by being an epic character that transcends the storyworld and thus breaks the border between reality and fiction, the Librarian shatters the illusion of realism in the play and portrays anxiety in the realm of a fiction, as a never realised anticipated pain in the future.

The first and the second epic function of the Librarian are then closely connected to his quirk of communicating through 'how to' book titles. When Dana and her sister come to Hartenharten, "*the Librarian taps her on the shoulder*" (Harris 80) and reports that he has the books Dana ordered and that he added a few new ones – mirroring sales strategies of commercial online booksellers. These suggested readings then comment on Dana's situation without her realising the severity of it. As he hands over the self-help books, the Librarian wryly advises Dana to

> get back on a main-route train as fast
> as you can. My second suggestion is a 'how to' book.
> Always the best, you can't go wrong with a 'how to'
> book. This one, *How to Live with No Money*,
> published a few years ago but still one of the classics. (82)

It is through these book titles that the Librarian is not just commenting on but also foreshadowing the events of the play – at this point neither Dana nor the audience know that the entire banking system is about to collapse and Dana has permanently lost access to the money in her account. This instance of commenting on the play by the Librarian has its sad climax when Dana decides to prostitute herself to pay for Jasmine's treatment in the hospital and asks the Librarian for advice, who immediately delivers: "*How to Stop Gagging with Someone's Putrid Penis in Your Mouth* [...]. *How to Make Sure You Don't Get Strangled. How to Not Get a Disease that Will Kill You. How to Stay Alive during Prostitution*" (129). Thus, the horrendous events that happen to Dana are imagined, commented on and contextualised by the Librarian's book titles.

The way the Librarian then communicates through book titles, more specifically 'how to' book titles, presents another case of miscommunication in the play and re-

veals consumer-oriented market mechanisms that, instead of providing relief from the anxiety-stricken situation, increase Dana's helplessness and shift the responsibility to find solutions to the individual. Designed to provide basic knowledge on a specific topic in a very short time, 'how to' books are predestined to create superficial knowledge that in a state of urgent crisis does not prove helpful.[136] Thus, even if Dana had the time to read them, these books might not be as helpful as the Librarian thinks. In other words, they "symbolise […] a consumerist belief in easy solutions to every problem" (Billington, "*How to Hold Your Breath*"). This also means that the books stand for the 'quick fixes' Bauman describes as avoidance techniques for liquid modern societies that circumvent any real change. These quick fixes, which can be bought with money, only repair the collateral damage, for instance after disaster events caused by the climate catastrophe (see chapter 5.1).

In *How to Hold Your Breath*, the 'how to' books can be seen exactly as this kind of quick fix that can be bought with money and instead of fixing the problems of the economy and the banking system – enduring and tedious endeavours – shift the responsibility of survival to the individual: the self-help books are the only source of help left when social structures are dysfunctional. The play thus stages what Bauman observes for the liquid modern society, where the task politicians and governments perform – the task of protecting citizens from threats to body/possessions, livelihood and identity – is shifted to the individual who needs to "seek, find and practise individual solutions to socially produced troubles [… using] resources that are blatantly inadequate to the task" (*Liquid Fear* 136) – resources like 'how to' books. The result of this consumer-oriented behaviour is an endless negative feedback loop of consumerism and anxiety: "The consumer economy depends on the production of consumers, and the consumers that need to be produced for fear-fighting products are fearful and frightened consumers, hopeful that the dangers they fear can be forced to retreat and that they can do it (with paid help, for sure)" (7). Although the Librarian's books are free, the underlying system of these 'how to' books remains the same. Thus, instead of offering real help, these books and the ever new titles the Librarian suggests further overwhelm Dana in her current crisis. Although the Librarian gives Dana well-meaning advice by warning her of the various threatening situations that might happen at any

136 A comprehensive online list of "50 Must-Read How-To Books" (bookriot.com/best-how-to-books/) contains titles that come very close to the fictional titles the Librarian suggests to Dana, such as *Water Storage: Tanks, Cisterns, Aquifers, and Ponds for Domestic Supply, Fire and Emergency Use*, or *How to Survive a Sharknado and Other Unnatural Disasters: Fight Back When Monsters and Mother Nature Attack* and, ironically, given that a 'how to' book is itself a form of consumption, *The Year of Less: How I Stopped Shopping, Gave Away My Belongings, and Discovered Life is Worth More Than Anything You Can Buy in a Store.*

moment in her life, it comes far too late for her to prevent any of these misfortunes and all the books he gathers for her (which again resembles the act of gathering objects in anxiety) cannot prevent the disasters from happening – firstly, because Dana simply does not have the time to read them nor to apply the knowledge and, secondly, because they only provide superficial knowledge in the first place. The Librarian is thus a near endless source of new events and objects that further add to Dana's anxiety.

The third function of the Librarian and Jarron alike is their capacity to cross the boundary between what Dana perceives as real and fictional. While Dana starts to believe Jarron's claim that he is the devil and sees in him the reason for her suffering after their one-night-stand, the Librarian, who seems to be on her side, although trying to help, is "shockingly ineffective" (Schnierer 206). Both entities add to Dana's pain during the crisis of the banking system and economic ruin rather than prevent/cure it. Through the Librarian and the devil, the dramatic form as a means to portray anxiety is questioned: by breaking the border between reality and fiction, first in Dana's perception, but by extension also in audience expectations towards the storyworld, the Librarian and the devil illustrate that the illusion of realism in the play needs to be shattered for anxiety to be adequately represented. The Librarian and Jarron as the devil are, on the one hand, both border crossing entities. Firstly, although they represent "the *angelus malus* and the *angelus bonus*" (206), as Peter Paul Schnierer observes, they cross the border of these two roles as "[t]here is something not quite right with this demon, a touch of insecurity maybe" (206) and simultaneously "the Librarian is not a proper guardian angel either" (206). Secondly, both are part of the plot and at the same time they possess a role that is beyond mere protagonist. The epic quality both possess, then, breaks the fourth wall of the play and destroys the illusion of reality – like Mrs Jarrett in Churchill's *Escaped Alone*, both the Librarian and Jarron step outside the storyworld.

This becomes clearest at the very end of the play. While Dana is unconscious and on the brink of death after her refugee boat capsized, the devil and the Librarian discuss whether she should live or not and what kind of new life she would be resurrected into. While Jarron brings her to a hospital, where she is referred to as an "unknown woman" (Harris 153) and declared dead by a doctor, the Librarian wants to deliver some books because "where she is going, it gets even more complicated" (155). However, while Dana is technically dead and the Librarian's books are provided to prepare her for her 'last journey,' the devil thinks about resurrecting her:

> **Jarron:** shall I wake her?
> *Beat.*

do you want me to wake her?
Librarian: you can't wake her
technically she is dead
Jarron: technically, her heart is still beating. Faintly but it's
present. She could go either way in truth.
on the one hand, a shot of adrenaline and eyes open.
Some oxygen perhaps if she needs it. On the other,
just leave her on a trolley and it will be over in an
hour or so.
The demon takes a small syringe out of his pocket.
I have it right here
the two gates (155–56)

The two gates between the living and the dead mentioned by Jarron reveal that this scene must take place in a world where two spheres, that of the living and the dead, that of the real and the imaginary, coincide, representing a limbo that resembles Dana's state as a migrant and emphasises the border-crossing aesthetics of the play. While the Librarian does not want Dana to be resuscitated because "she has been through enough" (156), for Jarron Dana is "one of the lucky ones" who "could have everything" (157) and thus he decides to resurrect Dana's inert body. This time, it is the devil that gives life. In this scene, it is also the devil that suggests 'how to' books in order to prepare Dana for her new life: "*What Not to Wear*, *Social Media*, *Twitter*, *Pastry-Making for Chefs*, *Meditation for People who Do Too Much*, *The Work-Life Balance and How to Survive It* […], *Beating Anxiety*" (159). Jarron's suggestion of book titles not only illustrates the reversed roles of the Librarian and the devil but it also anticipates a near endless vicious cycle of Dana's struggle, where she is reborn to fight very similar battles again. Thus, while until the boat capsizes, the play could have been read as a realist story where the devil and the Librarian are Dana's hallucinations, this last scene positions the play in the realm of magical realism that shatters the illusion of reality in the play.

This shattering of the illusion of reality is important for its portrayal of anxiety. The Librarian and the devil make clear that *How to Hold Your Breath* is a parable for the inner workings of anxiety where a "gathering [of] more and more objects [occurs], until it overwhelms other possible affective relations to the world" (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 66). This projection and conglomeration of (fearful) objects becomes increasingly surreal and entangled, until the subject is overwhelmed by it. This anxiety, in the end, is as far removed from reality as the end of the play is, where a Librarian and a devil decide about life and death. As anxieties are never real – they take place in an imagined future that is based on the past and thus will never happen in exactly the same way as imagined – the representation

of these anxieties can likewise never be real. It can only be the imagination of future threats that get more surreal the further away from the present they are. The Librarian and the devil thus highlight the anticipatory and yet not real character of anxiety.

In the end then, *How to Hold Your Breath* portrays the anxieties that lurk in negatively globalised societies. Firstly, the play depicts anxieties through the multilayered storyworld that not only mirrors Ahmed's understanding of anxiety as an accumulation of possibly fearful objects but also provides an example of what Bauman understands as the Titanic syndrome. This is concomitant with the temporality in the play that follows Waldenfels's understanding of anxiety as the unpreparedness for future threats. Furthermore, the play also stages the isolation that results from negative globalisation and the pain that follows the crash of the banking system by inhibiting the communication of the protagonist with the people around her. Isolation, pain and the lack of communication are then also closely related to anxiety. The only hope in the play comes from a Librarian who tries to tackle anxiety through 'how to' books that do not merely prove useless in Dana's situation but even increase her anxiety. At the end of the play, then, Dana, like Mrs Jarrett in *Escaped Alone*, cannot escape her feelings. While Mrs Jarrett goes home and takes her feelings with her, Dana is trapped in a near endless circle of rebirth, continuously living in a society where she is affected by the consequences of negative globalisation – consequences like fear and anxiety.

Both plays, *Escaped Alone* and *How to Hold Your Breath*, address social anxieties in combination with insecurity, uncertainty and isolation. They showcase the many problems of globalised societies and reveal a temporality of crisis that makes any reaction to these problems come too late. This is underscored by the (lack of) communication in the plays, which mirrors anxiety's excessive and at the same time pre-reflexive nature; in both plays, this lack of communication often coincides with atmospheres of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, both plays portray the close connection of anxiety with pain, abjection and disgust – in *Escaped Alone* through Mrs Jarrett's monologues and in *How to Hold Your Breath* through the multi-layered storyworld that consists of a sequence of catastrophic events that cause these negative sensations in the protagonists Dana and Jasmine. Ultimately, both plays also employ coping strategies that, however, do not seem to be successful in reducing their characters' anxiety: in *Escaped Alone* this is done by the act of storytelling that, although it shifts the emotions from anxiety to rage, seems ineffective in tackling anxiety. In *How to Hold Your Breath* the coping strategy is embodied in the character of the Librarian, who distributes 'how to' books that are not only useless in the specific situation but further increase anxiety. Finally, Churchill's and Harris's plays make use of epic characters – namely Mrs Jarrett and the Librarian – who, by breaking the fourth wall, transfer the plays' emotions

to the audience. What becomes clear from the comparison of both plays is that their aesthetic negotiation of anxiety mirrors the phenomenology of anxiety: it is rooted in the coinciding of several anxiety-inducing global crises in a way that may best be described, in conversation with Bauman, as 'liquid anxiety.'