



*Resistance is not Futile:
Badiou, Simulacra and a Story
From the Nazi-Occupied Netherlands*

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Abstract:

How might educators arrange social studies curriculum in ways that address how historical and contemporary evils come to pass in ways that highlight ordinary people working collectively as agents of change? This paper supplies one possible avenue: applying Alain Badiou's understanding of some evils as simulacra to stories of resistance from the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. Through a discourse analysis of interviews with my paternal grandparents, I provide an example of how teachers might supplement the study of the Second World War with the educational aim of encouraging *becoming subjects*, who think independently from authority but interconnectedly with others. In this way, teachers might make historical events more personal in their classrooms, allowing students to explore how ordinary, interconnected people drive societies, as opposed to singular heroes or villains. Stories of resistance interpreted through the philosophy of Badiou provide one ethical springboard for students and teachers to consider how they might act under similar circumstances. Personal anecdotes are powerful tools in shaping knowledge and attitudes; thus, stories of resistance in our classrooms are vital as we seek to make emancipatory and egalitarian changes to our world.

Keywords: social studies education; Alain Badiou; Second World War; secondary education

La résistance n'est pas futile : Badiou, simulacra et un récit des Pays-Bas occupés par les nazis

Résumé :

Comment les éducatrices et les éducateurs peuvent-ils organiser le programme d'études sociales de manière à déterminer comment les maux historiques et contemporains se produisent et de manière à mettre en évidence les gens ordinaires travaillant collectivement en tant que des agents du changement ? Cet article fournit une avenue possible : appliquer la compréhension d'Alain Badiou de certains maux comme des simulacres aux histoires de résistance des Pays-Bas occupés par les nazis. À travers une analyse du discours des entretiens avec mes grands-parents paternels, je donne un exemple de la façon dont les enseignantes et les enseignants pourraient compléter l'étude de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale au but éducatif de leur encourager à *devenir des sujets* qui pensent indépendamment de l'autorité mais en interconnexion avec des autres. De cette façon, les enseignantes et les enseignants pourraient rendre les événements historiques plus personnels dans leurs classes, permettant aux élèves d'explorer comment les gens ordinaires et interconnectés dirigent les sociétés, par opposition aux héros ou méchants singuliers. Les histoires de résistance interprétées à travers la philosophie de Badiou fournissent un point de départ éthique aux élèves et aux enseignant(e)s pour réfléchir à la manière dont ils pourraient agir dans des circonstances similaires. Les anecdotes personnelles sont de puissants outils pour façonner les connaissances et les attitudes; ainsi les histoires de résistance dans nos salles de classe sont vitales alors que nous cherchons à apporter des changements émancipateurs et égalitaires à notre monde.

Mots clés : enseignement des études sociales; Alain Badiou; Deuxième Guerre mondiale; éducation secondaire

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

–attributed to Edmund Burke

So many kids died.

–Johanna, my grandmother

How might we engage with the horrors of history, in our classrooms (and beyond), in ways that are harmonious with our broader educational concerns? By educational, I wish to emphasize the process of *subjectification*—how we “come to exist as subjects of initiative and responsibility rather than as objects of the actions of others” (Biesta, 2015, p. 77). As a former high school social studies teacher and now as an instructor of preservice teachers, I have been wrestling with this question. It is common to hear a rationale along the lines of prevention; for example, that we must learn about genocides so that others may not occur (Marks, 2017). However, in my classes (and at times in myself), I noticed that teaching a bare historical narrative of atrocities resulted in a fixation on cold facts (e.g., death tolls), in a despair that humans have been awful and would always continue to be, and in feelings of powerlessness to do anything about these horrors of history. Accordingly, the questions for me became: *How might I arrange curriculum in a way that fits with my understanding of how evils come to pass, and how might I develop the sense that ordinary people working collectively are agents of change more so than individuals?*

This paper is one of many responses to those questions. Here, I engage with stories from a resistance movement through the lens of Alain Badiou’s (1993/2001) understandings of truths and evils. For this paper I performed a discourse analysis on stories of my grandparents from the Nazi-occupied Netherlands, interpreting and extrapolating the text through Badiou’s ethics. My hope is that teachers and students who engage with their stories are encouraged to see their capabilities as *becoming subjects*—as those who have “enter[ed] into the composing of a subject” where their bodies and abilities are “called upon to enable the passing of a truth along its path” (Badiou, 1993/2001, pp. 41-42). After providing an introduction to Badiou’s philosophy and describing my approach of discourse analysis, I recount stories from my grandparents, and I apply Badiou’s insights to my analysis of their stories. I then outline some possible implications for education. Despite my claims of benefits from working with this approach, there are some cautions, as Brenda Trofanenko (2017) aptly noted: “Understanding what was said and what was heard and how both may, intentionally and unintentionally, elicit an emotional response is often ignored” (p. 151). As such, if educators wish to engage their students with this project, or one of a similar topic, I urge them to consider the emotional aspects of such educational endeavours, a consideration beyond the scope of this paper, but which has been explored in helpful ways by scholars in education (e.g., Boler, 1999; Britzman, 2013; Zembylas, 2007), as well as specifically in social studies education (e.g., Levy & Sheppard, 2018; Sheppard, Katz, & Grosland, 2015).

Badiou’s General Anthropology of Truths

Badiou begins with an ontological premise of equality. The differences that so often divide us ought not to “since differences are what there is, and since every truth is the coming-to-be of that

which is not yet, so differences then are precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant" (Badiou, 1993/2001, p. 27). A *truth procedure* is the process of engaging with a situation once the images and ideas we have learned about the situation have shattered. In this way, a *becoming subject* begins to develop. Such a situation is not an "a-ha" situation; rather, it is closer to an "oh no". The assumptions that had previously gone unchallenged become contested, and the becoming subject is called upon to think, and perhaps act, differently. A comparison here can be made to Dąbrowski's (1964) theory of positive disintegration, whereby certain constraints from socialization/integration need to be disintegrated for individual existential choices to occur (e.g., dissent from authority or the norm), although Badiou emphasizes everyone's equal potential for disintegration and, thus, for processes of becoming.

Such a shattering occurs when we come across an *event*, which is an encounter with the *void*. The void is "the multiple of nothing, [and thus] neither excludes nor constrains anyone" (Badiou, 1993/2001, p. 73). The void is a vanishing point that shatters the legitimacy of what we had thought or desired:

At any given and unpredictable moment one may encounter a person, a thought, a question, that causes an "event" utterly voiding the legitimacy of what we just had thought or desired about ourselves or anything in particular (e.g., how falling in love shatters everything we thought about "our" situation as any-"one" minding our own business before the "event" of "falling" in love). (den Heyer, 2015, p. 14)

An encounter with the void is an opportunity to rethink all the points we took as the realities of our situation; that is, we question what we had taken for granted. Our concept of reality is ruptured and thus creates space for new thinking. A person, thought, or really anything, can instigate such an event, but we cannot predict or manufacture an event. All we can do is be attentive to an event's possibility (den Heyer & Conrad, 2011).

When an event occurs, such as realizing one's status in the context of structural oppression, we must remain faithful to it by thinking about the present situation from the perspective of the event as *becoming subjects*. We can no longer suppress that knowledge and are called upon to act accordingly to dismantle oppressive structures and practices, and to create a society where such oppression becomes impossible. Events supplement our ordinary, day-to-day circumstances. *Becoming subjects* partake in a "trans-individual act" via an event—a subjective experience that ties people together in a way that is radical because "it does not originate in any structure supported within being or the situation, such as the socio-economic" (Critchley, 2012, p. 26). We then must remain steadfastly faithful to this event—the creation of something new—by moving within this novel situation, thinking about it in relation to the event, and finally inventing this new way of being whether it be in love, art, science, or politics. The uncontrollable nature of an event opens up potentialities that we did not previously realize, but, in turn, we must actively strive to honour our truth procedure: "The event creates a possibility but there, then, has to be an effort—a group effort in the political context, an individual one in the case of artistic creation—for this possibility to become real" (Badiou & Tarby, 2010/2013, p. 10). For Badiou, the only prescription is a call to be faithful to the truth procedure; it does not set a firm path for us to follow. In this sense Badiou is not

constructing a philosophical system, but rather “a general anthropology of truth” (Barbour, 2010, p. 253). In other words, Badiou does not prescribe a truth; instead, he lays the foundation for us to identify and follow any one of many truth procedures. You can then choose (or not) to pursue a truth procedure that results from an event and breaks through what you had previously considered to be common sense. Fidelity to a truth procedure is the essence of ethics.

According to Alain Badiou (1993/2001), evil does not exist in a vacuum; rather, evil is a failure of the good. He defined evil as the result of humans failing or perverting a *truth procedure* (i.e., the activity of an emerging truth). His philosophy asks us to consider why some people instigate or participate in atrocities, and why some form a resistance, while others go along with the tide. Stanley Milgram (1963) conducted pivotal research on obedience and found that being around others who disobeyed authority gave people the strength to stand up for what they believed to be right (Milgram, 1965). This observation, then, leads to the question of how we might work towards people standing up in the first place. How might we encourage our students (and ourselves) to think more independently from authority? The task is less about educating good citizens and more about education that is connected “to love for the world” (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2017, p. 19). Education is fundamentally about study which, for Pinar (2015) is “like prayer . . . a stance we assume in the world . . . it is an ethics” (p. 15). Badiou’s understanding of ethics is affirmative—he begins with what is good, and then evil is a failure or perversion of what might be good. Everyone, then, has equal capability to uphold the good.

The Evil of Simulacra

Badiou characterizes evil as resulting from the one of the following: betraying your truth procedure; imposing your truth upon others; or mistaking simulacra for truth procedures. This paper focuses on how we might respond to the latter evil, that of the *simulacrum*, which Badiou defines as a sort of false truth procedure that occurs when a radical break in a situation convokes not the void but the “full” particularity or presumed substance of the situation with which we are dealing (Badiou, 1993/2001, p. 73). The supposed novelty is, in fact, part of the situation already in existence. Thus, the pseudo-event, the simulacrum, “then become[s] *identified* with an already established group” (Smith, 2006, p. 96). These already established peoples, the pseudo-subjects, are the only ones addressed by the simulacrum, in contrast with an event that is open to anyone. A simulacrum only appears to be an event. What the pseudo-subject names as the site of the event is only what superficially appears to be the site, and thus the pseudo-subject remains an individual and does not become a subject because this individual is not responding to an event (Smith, 2006, p. 96). This circumstance denies the possibility of a trans-individual act because of the foreclosure of the possibility of uniting people regardless of their identity or characteristics. An encounter with the void is an opportunity to rethink all the points we took as the realities of our situation; whereas, a simulacrum reinforces something already in existence for a select group of people, thus preventing new thinking, by failing to create space.

As an example of the evil of the simulacrum, Badiou (1993/2001) discussed the German Nazis of 1932–1945. The Nazis subscribed to the same restrictive nationalism that had been growing in the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They did not break with the contemporary situation and thus they did not produce a new truth. The Nazi pursuit of a supposed truth was nothing more than a “continuity with [that which came] before . . . faithful only to the alleged national substance of a people” (Badiou, 1993/2001, p. 73); the Nazis assumed one way to be German, one way to be a Jew, and so on. Furthermore, although everyone is equally capable of a truth procedure, *becoming subjects* could not be created because the Nazis had already preordained who were included (Aryans) and who were not (non-Aryans). The Nazi “event” was a pseudo-event—a simulacrum.

Related to simulacra of truths is Badiou’s notion of *terror*. Terror occurs when those who challenge the adherence to a simulacrum are simply discarded as detrimental to the promised day-to-come. An example of this sort of terror would be the arrests and executions of the White Rose group of university students in Germany for their defiance of the Nazi regime. Those who failed to uphold the simulacrum felt the wrath of the regime, and yet there were those who nonetheless resisted, such as the Danes, who relayed intelligence, sabotaged the occupying Nazis and rescued most Jewish people in Denmark from certain death (Burgan, 2010).

Engaging With Oral and Written Stories

The data for the discourse analysis I performed came from stories told by my grandparents during their time in the Netherlands during the Second World War, specifically their experiences during the Nazi occupation. I define “data” literally from the Latin: *the gifts that have been given*. For this project, these gifts are the stories told to my family members over time. Family oral history “originates with the stories families tell each other around the dinner table, on a long drive, or in response to a query whenever a family gathers” (Brockmann, 2017, p. 273). For many years when they came to visit, my Aunt Carla filmed her parents (my paternal grandparents), Anthonius and Johanna, speaking about their experiences from the Second World War (among other stories of their youth). Also, before my grandfather’s death in 1995, my Aunt Johanna interviewed him more formally about his experiences, and my grandmother allowed my cousin and his wife to film her a few months before her death in 2017. Approaching death heightens our already deep psychological need for symbolic immortality through identity preservation (Becker, 1973; Unruh, 1983), and thus my grandmother’s last interviews, in this case, likely served as a comforting legacy project that emotionally bound her story to those who were listening (and who would later listen). I, myself, travelled to interview her, but arrived only in time to bring companionship and love in her dying days. My grandparents wanted to tell their story—at first to their family, but then to a wider audience, and my grandmother seemed proud to share her experiences with her children and grandchildren, and, on a number of occasions, was pleased that her stories were told beyond the family (e.g., through my cousin’s school project).

Like any method, personal interviews transcribed for a discourse analysis are complicated truths about the past (Freund, 2014). More important than a comprehensive history is the ability of oral history education to produce a grassroots sense of democracy (Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2017). As witnesses to historical events, my grandparents provided relatable stories that sparked an engagement different from that of a broader, nonpersonal narrative. One of the most difficult tasks I

faced was to “determine what constitutes the verbal event” and how the written word as I typed it flattened the speech because of the loss of accent, pronunciation, pauses and other aspects of speech (Brown & Yule, 2003, p. 9). Despite only providing highlights of the stories they told over the years during this project, I wanted to keep the personal aspect, because information by itself is insufficient. People do not change their views or behaviour merely because they are presented with verified evidence. Anecdotal information and personal experience seem to have a more profound impact on people’s opinions, so long as it is in a specific context and not in the abstract (Crocco, Halvorsen, Jacobsen, & Segall, 2017). There is immense power in a story, and therein lies possibilities to explore ways of provoking thought about how we might live together. My interest was in how these stories can function in relation to those who encounter them. These stories, like many oral histories, reveal neglected, or even “unknown aspects of known events” (Portelli, 1998, p. 67), and provide an opportunity for listeners to make meaning in relation with each other. I saw this data as evidence for a society at a particular time, especially experiences that I deemed relevant to present concerns (e.g., resisting fascist actions). This paper focuses on my paternal grandparents’ story of resistance within the Nazi-occupied territory of The Netherlands, and excerpts from their interviews are indicated in italics in the following sections.

Implicating Ordinary Folk

Anyone, anytime, can encounter truth procedures or simulacra. Johanna, the woman who became my grandmother, was an ordinary young woman in the town of Veenendaal, in the Netherlands, who was caught in the middle of the Nazi simulacrum. Although it might be easy to assume that living in occupied territory led to a singular focus on the troubling times, people kept living their lives. Johanna tried to carry on as she always had: *Always the same, I never changed. They said I always smiled, I never looked miserable.* Anthonius, my future grandfather, was just starting his adult life when the war arrived in the Netherlands: *When Germany invaded Holland in 1940, I was a young man working in a wholesale grocery store.* For many Dutch people, the transition was quick and almost felt like it did not happen, which led many to think life would not necessarily change much. Soon, however, Dutch Jews were rounded up, and life for all Dutch people changed: *The Germans took everything—all the food, trucks, cars, equipment, and anything they thought might be of value to them. In fact, because there was nothing left, there was no work and nothing to do.* Many (but not all) folks in the Netherlands had the following options: adapting, collaborating or resisting. Because the Nazis considered many Dutch people to be Aryan, some could become Nazis, if they wished. The reasons some chose to collaborate included motives such as selfish gain or the understandable desire to protect their families. A few, however, chose the harder path. Instead of adhering (intentionally or otherwise) to the terroristic imposition of the Nazi simulacrum, some Dutch people resisted. Some took a principled stance, others perhaps not. This resistance could take a variety of forms. In Anthonius’ case, it took the form of sabotage and violence, and for Johanna, it took the form of smuggling supplies and providing safe spaces for those who needed it.

Resisting a Simulacrum

It is no easy task to resist a simulacrum as it unfolds. Resisting evil is often uncomfortable,

inconvenient and dangerous. After the occupation began, Dutch men between the ages of 16 and 60 were ordered to register with the occupying forces, thus enlisting in the German army. Anthonius and others refused. *Many young men, including myself, decided that we would not register but would form our own underground unit of the resistance army. This meant that I would have to leave home and find a place to live, as well as a place to store equipment and supplies with which to harass the enemy.* Like his fellow resisters, Anthonius hid his identity, using an alias for a fake identification card, and even perming and dyeing his hair to avoid being recognized. While in the underground resistance, he met Johanna and they started dating, and she quickly became involved: *Really, I was part of the underground, too. I can't believe how I did it. . . . I don't know how we survived it.* Anthonius and other resisters operated from hideaways, often literally under the ground, stocked with beds, a stove, and sometimes food that they could redistribute to those in need. Food was often short, and more frequently than they would like, they lived off potatoes and apples. They would snare rabbits to supplement their food stores.

Open fighting during the day would be suicide, so they took action at night when they could. *We would use every possible chance to hit them where it hurt, at night: trains, oil depots, food supplies, cars, gasoline, railway tracks, buildings, hydro. . . . One night we were asked if we possibly could immobilize quite a large bunch of German vehicles, which were parked overnight outside the walls of a castle, which was surrounded by a moat filled with water about four feet deep. Because there was only one soldier on duty, and the drawbridge was up, they felt quite secure. They were having quite a drinking party. We waded across the moat, had a nice chat with the only guard, then proceeded to drain every bit of oil and gas, plus destroy alternators from all those dozens of vehicles, thereby making them rather useless for quite a period of time.*

As fascinating as that story is, it is important to note that a dedication to resisting and subverting a simulacrum does not guarantee a righteous path without complexities. The trite saying, “do the right thing,” is well-intentioned, and yet, can we really know what will be judged as moral (and by whom we will be judged)? Instead, we might ask what the consequences of our commitments might be. In this case, my family history is not about glorifying relatives as perfect heroes. We all are capable of both helping and hurting, and understanding this uncomfortable reality is beneficial for imagining (and perhaps someday applying to) our own (in)actions when faced with similar conundrums. Would we act similarly, or not? Why? And, to what end?

The town of Renswoude had a group like the underground resistance in Veenendaal. They spotted *a German man wandering around the camp, but not in uniform.* He said he had fled the German army. *They asked him, “Where did you get the clothes?” And he responded that he stole them.* The folks at Renswoude felt that they could neither take him in nor let him leave. Anthonius and a few others went to help. They thought to themselves: *What are we going to do? There's only one thing to do.* Anthonius and the others talked with the German man and he seemed sincere, but when the sun came up, they blindfolded him in a gravel pit and shot him. How does one judge whether this execution was right or wrong? At the time, it was difficult, and years later easy answers are still elusive: *What can you do? It sounds awful now.* It was impossible for Anthonius to know if the German man was telling the truth, and—either way—it is debateable if the execution was the

“right” thing to do. As Anthonius’ granddaughter, I cannot decide how I feel about the incident. I ponder this situation much as I consider the famous “trolley problem” from ethical philosophy (i.e., a runaway trolley is about to run over five people, and you have the option of diverting the trolley so that it only kills one). Issues of personal participation versus statistical harm reduction prevent a clear answer as to what is right. How does one decide what a lesser evil is? And, how might we know for sure if killing the one would benefit the five? Badiou’s philosophy shuns the idea of a singular truth, and thus the idea of a predetermined correct response. I can foresee a lively classroom discussion of Anthonius and his companions’ dilemma, so long as the difficult knowledge (Britzman, 2000, 2013) of the situation is taken into account, and the teacher considers what might be necessary emotional and cognitive preconditions in their particular classroom before such a discussion occurs.

Although there were horrors perpetuated by Germans and by the Dutch, there were also acts of kindness and love, as some folks refused to give up their sense of community. They remained faithful to their truth procedures of what it meant to be good. Every day, Johanna’s mother made a big jug of chocolate milk from their farm’s supply and gave it to the nearby school—*We weren’t allowed to do this, but we did it anyways*—despite the chances of being caught and punished.

Consequences of Subverting a Simulacrum

There are consequences to impeding a simulacrum, not only for the resisters, but also for their loved ones. The pseudo-subjects terrorize those who do not adhere to their vision. At one point, a collaborator recognized Anthonius and reported back to the occupying forces. The Germans arrived while Anthonius was visiting his “honey”.

While I was there [visiting Johanna’s home], there was a loud knock at the door. Sensing that something was wrong, I jumped over the table and went out through the back door into the barn. In Holland, most barns are attached directly to the house. This barn was especially dark, but I knew of a small trap door in the high ceiling with a ladder up to it. I scrambled up this ladder, pulled it up after me and waited while I heard the Germans in the house demanding to be shown where I was. My girlfriend fainted and my [future] father-in-law started to raise hell until the Germans told him that if he didn’t sit down and shut his mouth, they would shoot him. They then put my [future] mother-in-law against the wall and gave her two minutes to tell them where I was, or they would shoot her.

They demanded to know where Anthonius was. They put the gun to her chest. She looked them *straight in the eyes* and refused.

My mother-in-law immediately told them that they might as well shoot her right away because she did not know where I was. She then added that even if she did know she wouldn’t tell them. I guess they believed her because they let her sit down. Then they proceeded to destroy everything in the house. I do not believe there was anything of value left when they departed. Dishes, beds, clothing, stoves, basins—just about everything were destroyed. They stayed there all day until late evening. Then, they left saying that they would be back.

Eventually, it was quiet and Anthonius came down. He walked up the street. There were many patrols, so he walked in the ditches. They walked so close he could almost grab their boots. He made

it to a friend's place where they made a hole in the wall behind a cabinet to access the space under the roof. He slept a number of nights there. To help Anthonius return to the camp of the other resisters, Johanna arranged to buy a police uniform. She put the uniform in a potato bag with ammunitions, grenades and other items, in a cart, hidden under wood shavings so she could deliver them to Anthonius.

Near the end of the war, the Nazis were only allowing people in Veenendaal one hour per day to get in and out of their houses because the town was near the front line. One day, Johanna's family's cows were out and very agitated because there was shooting nearby. Johanna's dad was about to set up to gather them, but she offered because she did not think the Nazi soldiers would shoot her. Her brother decided to come, too. The shooting began and she jumped to the ground and began to crawl. She made it to an earth shelter, but there was no room. Johanna convinced those already in the shelter to take her brother in, and she tried to make it to a barn. She was shot. Down on the ground, she crawled along the building to get to the door. She was then shot a few more times. One bullet was just underneath her heart. Her family could see what was happening from their window, horrified as the situation unfolded. Another brother put a white tablecloth on a stick and ran over to her. They took her to the wool factory, where they had made a makeshift hospital. The folks there had to dig for a bullet lodged in her hip and then stitch her up. A few hours later, the factory/hospital was bombed, but Johanna was not ready to be moved, so they took her to the basement. Once Johanna could be transported, her family made a bed for her in the root cellar of their home because, in the meantime, their house had been bombed.

We were happy to be alive.

Just as Badiou (1993/2001) noted a *becoming subject* requires fidelity to a truth procedure, a similar fidelity is needed to continue fighting against a simulacrum and its ensuing terror. A group effort allows for the possibility of good to prevail (Badiou & Tarby, 2010/2013). Those involved in a truth procedure and those resisting a simulacrum must choose between upholding the good or taking the easier path toward evil. It is understandable why someone might betray what is good. In the case of Anthonius and Johanna, they could easily have collaborated with the Germans. They were White, and neither Jewish nor communist, so they could have been absorbed into the new political state of affairs. Instead of taking this path, they chose to remain militant in their ethical commitments. They saw beyond their individual, particular situation and chose to work with members of their community to fight the Nazi simulacrum and its associated terror, which the German army was maintaining. The hope, then, was to outsmart and outlast the simulacrum, and my grandparents, through both luck and skill, were able to do just that. Although resisters put their lives at risk, Anthonius and Johanna survived the war and married, and then, in the 1950s, immigrated with their young family, including my father, to Canada, to begin a new life.

Implications for Education

Engaging the classroom with a particular story of resistance, informed by the philosophy of Alain Badiou, has a number of benefits. One benefit is to supplement the depersonalized

descriptions often found in textbooks. In social studies classes, the Second World War is commonly taught, and yet the focus tends to be on the overall scope of the war and associated horrors (e.g., massive casualties of soldiers and civilians, the Holocaust) and not on how ordinary people took action. The personalization of war could be accomplished by engaging with the stories in this article, but perhaps teachers could consider stories of resilience from their own or their students' families' past.

Combining Badiou's philosophy with a particular wartime story makes his ideas understandable without flattening their complexity. Also, through such a framing, teachers and students can engage with a specific set of philosophical ethics that may encourage them to persevere in goodness. Hallward (2013) argued that Badiou gives us the discipline to make emancipatory, egalitarian changes to our world. Moral codes can feel prescriptive and limiting, but Badiou's ethics provide an affirmative ethical stance that may be empowering and may encourage everyone, despite any perceived difference, to stand up for truths and against evils. On a related note, I feel that it is important to encourage interconnected, community-based theories of change. Although the stories of Anthonius and Johanna are personal stories, they are housed within the context of their communities. Rather than being solitary actors, Anthonius and Johanna drew strength from family and other community members. Furthermore, their honesty about their daily activities and their moral quandaries, particularly Anthonius' description of his participation in the killing of a German man clothed like a civilian, allow us to see complexity in our actions. When students see historical change as occurring by formidable individuals—either perfect heroes or uncomplicated villains—they can feel disempowered in their own lives (e.g., Alridge, 2006; Epstein, 1994; van Kessel & Crowley, 2017; Woodson, 2016). There is a need to thwart the inaccurate assumption that social change occurs through the intentions and deeds of extraordinary individuals; rather, teachers and students need to explore the actions of ordinary people working together.

There are links between Badiou's philosophy and anti-totalitarian education, particularly anti-fascist education, which is as important now as it was in the Interwar Period (Albright, 2018; Fallace, 2017). Totalitarian education is marked by blind obedience to authority, among other characteristics, as seen in the schooling systems of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia (Fallace, 2017; Kandel, 1935; Ziemer, 1941). How might we know when we need to take action against an authority? Badiou's identification of a simulacrum may help us see a troubling situation without the benefit of hindsight, and Anthonius and Johanna's story is an exemplar of how resisting a simulacrum may be difficult emotionally and physically. With Badiou, we have an opportunity to interrogate the harmful situations that plague societies in a way that might strengthen our resolve to uplift networks of support to stand up against evil.

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