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Changing the scale:

**Unfolding dramaturgies of the Anthropocene and
beyond**

ABSTRACT

This thesis concentrates on discovering the characteristics and dramaturgical strategies that could be described as elements of *post-anthropocentric performance*. I explore how to define possible dramaturgical structures and strategies which move beyond anthropocentric views. Moreover, this research suggests that the paradigm shift from human-centric views to a broader conception of dramaturgy in theatre has already begun which consequently requires changing the scale when addressing dramaturgy. One of my key concepts is the Anthropocene which is a term describing the current geological epoch in which the impacts of the human become clearly visible (Dukes 4). The other crucial concepts used in this thesis are “a minor and major dramaturgy” by Marianne Van Kerkhoven (“The theatre is in the city”).

Chapter 1 introduces a short trajectory of dramaturgy whereas in chapter 2 the debate around the Anthropocene will be presented. Chapter 2 links this debate as well as the concepts of new materialism and posthumanism. In order to elaborate on the possible impacts of the Anthropocene on contemporary performance and dramaturgy, the following research methodology is used: chapter 3 explores how dramaturgical strategies introduced in chapter 1 can be staged by providing an analysis of three case studies which can be perceived as examples of performances which move towards a post-anthropocentric stage. My case studies are the performances *Farm Fatale* by Philippe Quesne, *Posthuman days* by Jenni-Elina von Bach and *Moving in Concert* by Mette Ingvarsten.

Preliminary statement

Firstly, I am grateful to my supervisor Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink for the useful feedback. Even though the scope of my thesis changed during the journey and the interviews I conducted are not a part of my thesis anymore, I am deeply indebted to Bojana Cvejić, Imanuel Schipper and Martin Valdés-Stauber for interesting and inspiring insights. Thanks to Fabian Nyberg for providing video access to *Posthuman days*. Last but definitely not least, I would like to thank Tuomas, my family and friends for their support, sparring and endless understanding

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INTRODUCTION

We are living in troubled times that are often referred to as the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is a term describing the current geological epoch in which the impacts of human become clearly visible (Dukes 4). The concept of the Anthropocene, understood in this thesis, is not only a geological epoch influenced by the impact of human activities but it is also a paradigm which is characterized by human-centric approaches such as the anthropocentric worldview and anthropocentric art. Phenomena such as climate change, the sixth extinction and other severe nature disasters are major issues planet Earth is currently facing. The scale of these issues is enormous and their impacts are profound. Living conditions on the planet are under threat. All these aforementioned matters have been a wake-up call for me, both as a dramaturgy student and a human being. I was born in Finland which is a country that is characterized by its forests and thousands of lakes. Hence, I would say that since I have lived surrounded by nature, it has strengthened my nature relationship. I have been asking myself, what could the current alarming environmental situation mean in terms of theatre, and more precisely, in terms of dramaturgy which has been characterized by its anthropocentric approach? Is it possible to reach out beyond anthropocentric views? What are the dramaturgies of the *Post-Anthropocene*? This thesis is motivated by these difficult matters and questions and they function as my point of departure. However, acknowledging the vastness and complexity of the discussions around climate matters and the Anthropocene, I decided to narrow down my scope and focus on tackling the notion of the Post-Anthropocene in relation to dramaturgy.

My research question concentrates on discovering the characteristics and dramaturgical strategies that could be described as elements of *post-anthropocentric performance* and my sub-question is how to define possible dramaturgical structures and strategies which move beyond anthropocentric views. Moreover, this research suggests that the paradigm shift from

human-centric views to a broader conception of dramaturgy in theatre has already begun, which consequently requires changing the scale when addressing dramaturgy. The concepts of “a minor and major dramaturgy” by Marianne Van Kerkhoven are essential concepts in my thesis (“The theatre is in the city”). Van Kerhoven considers that minor dramaturgy addresses theatre on a smaller scale focusing on an art piece per se whereas major dramaturgy does not only concentrate on the art work but also takes into consideration the more complex network of relations around the art work (“The theatre is in the city”). I am using the notion of scale in an expanded manner in this thesis. Since the current situation in the world is alarming, I suggest that a scaling from a “minor to a major dramaturgy” (Van Kerkhoven “The theatre is in the city”¹), from human-centric perspectives to views which go beyond anthropocentrism, is necessary in order to find new vocabularies to approach the post-anthropocentric stage.

When thinking about dramaturgical discussions in general, an interest towards post-anthropocentric topics is not completely new. Raised awareness about the alarming state of the world has spread and slowly expanded also into the field of theatre. The notion of the Anthropocene has also gained more attention among theatre scholars. Hence, I acknowledge that the discussion I am entering is not totally new. There are already scholars and theatre makers who have proposed that theatre should be thought of differently and who have explored a similar field of inquiry. For example, theatre scholars such as Maaïke Bleeker, Carl Lavery, Elinor Fuchs, just to mention a few, have research related topics. In the article

¹ In this thesis, I will be referring to several articles by Marianne Van Kerkhoven. The articles “The theatre is in the city and the city is in the world and its walls are of skin” and “Looking without a pencil in the hand” do not include page numbers. Thus, for clarity’s sake, I will be using shortened version of the names of the articles in-text citations in order to be explicit and provide coherent information to which article I am referring to. The article “The theatre is in the city and the city is in the world and its walls are of skin” is shortened as “The theatre is in the city” whereas the article “Looking without a pencil in the hand” is shortened as “Looking without a pencil”. The article “On dramaturgy” includes page numbers.

“Thinking That Matters: Towards a Post-Anthropocentric Approach to Performance Design” found in the book *Scenography Expanded: An Introduction to Contemporary Performance Design*, Bleeker explores performance design and its relation to a post-anthropocentric approach (126). Carl Lavery focuses on performance and ecology in the article “Introduction: performance and ecology – what can theatre do?” (230). In the book *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theatre after Modernism*, Fuchs, on the other hand, dismantles the notion of character in contemporary theatre in relation to criticism of postmodernism (63).

According to the professor of theatre and performance studies Carl Lavery, different contemporary forms, such as site-specific pieces, open-ended scores and immersive installations have challenged anthropocentric views (230). As explained by Lavery, “[t]hese diverse modalities of theatre and performance trouble the anthropocentrism that has long been associated with the theatrical medium” (230). In addition, he suggests that it might be the reason why theatre “has played such a minor role in ecocriticism” (Lavery 230). According to him, in comparison to theatre, other disciplines such as literature, philosophy, visual art, history and media studies have been tackling the phenomenon of ecocriticism more actively (Lavery 230). As proposed earlier, one could say that the shift of interest from the human to environment has already begun. Nevertheless, theatre has been occupied with the human as the centre of its focus. Matters related to the debate of the Anthropocene, such as theatre without actors, has gained scholarly interests, for example, the PhD work *Theatre Without Actors: Rehearsing New Modes of Co-Presence* by Pedro Manuel tackles the topic of theatre without actors and explores how staging unrehearsed performers, technology and natural phenomena functions as dramaturgical strategies and the kind of impacts these strategies might have (Manuel 13).

On a broader scale, there are scholars from other disciplines who have been exploring the questions of the Anthropocene, posthumanism and new materialism. Donna Haraway and

Bruno Latour, for example, have been addressing similar questions. Actor-network theory (ANT) by Bruno Latour has been widely discussed in the field (Latour 16). In her renowned book *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chtulucene* Haraway reconfigures the relationship between human beings and the earth and criticizes the notion of the Anthropocene by proposing to call the current epoch as the “Chtulucene” instead (Haraway 55).

When returning to the field of dramaturgy, in the book *New Media Dramaturgy: Performance, Media and New-Materialism* Peter Eckersall, Helena Grehan and Edward Scheer propose the term New Media Dramaturgy (NMD) which includes an expanded understanding of dramaturgy that acknowledges improvements in the field of technology and considers how they are applied to theatre (Eckersall et al. 2). Eckersall et al. also explore new materialism in relation to dramaturgy. NMD addresses new media by taking under consideration its material properties, as well as virtual effects and emergences and technical devices (Eckersall et al. 2). Moreover, NMD contemplates how “the materiality of technical elements *matter*” (Eckersall et al. 3). As the name of the book implies, new materialism is an essential perspective when addressing NMD. The approach of new materialism in relation to dramaturgy can be considered interesting and useful in the light of my research question.

Having said that, the Anthropocene and its relation to dramaturgy particularly, is still a terrain almost unknown. Thus, I suggest that it should be explored in greater detail. I propose that there is a need to widen vocabularies and the understanding of post-anthropocentric dramaturgies. This need manifests itself when analysing and discussing performances and dramaturgies which have central elements that are not human-centric. A large proportion of dramaturgical vocabulary is still designed to describe human performers, their performances and their relation to other elements such as space and spectators. I also acknowledge the limits

of my own vocabulary and tools. Thus, I am in a search of new vocabularies to use for analysis. It is challenging to address performances without referring constantly to something human-centric such as my experiences and observations as a (human) spectator or observer. It is a demanding task to address performances without falling into the trap of anthropocentrism. Durational performances and site-specific performances, for example, have already expanded the understanding of dramaturgy and due to this expansion, new vocabularies have developed.

Nowadays, environmental and climate matters have also gained more media attention.

Forerunners of citizen activism and eco activism such as Greta Thunberg, a 17-years old schoolchild from Sweden, have gained media attention worldwide. Thunberg refused to go to school and sat in front of the Swedish parliament demanding more concrete actions concerning climate issues. By stressing the importance of stopping climate change and showing initiative, such as refusing to fly, her example inspired the rise of the global movement *School Strike for the Climate*. She held speeches in several institutions and events such as at the UN climate talks and met policy makers from all over the world. To conclude, if an individual can raise awareness among citizens and have an impact on the governmental level by setting actions in motions, a crucial question is evoked, namely, is a paradigm shift from the Anthropocene to something else already happening? If so, I am curious to know what this raised awareness could mean in terms of dramaturgy. I would also like to explore how would it be possible to deepen the understanding of post-anthropocentric performances, find new vocabularies and develop dramaturgies that decentralizes the human. This thesis takes part in that ongoing discussion.

This thesis is structured in the following manner. It contains four chapters. In chapter 1, I provide a short trajectory of dramaturgy and then present examples of both anthropocentric and post-anthropocentric dramaturgies. By providing these examples I attempt to illustrate the changes and tendencies that have taken place during the history of dramaturgy. In addition, I open up the idea of a “minor and a major dramaturgy” by Marianne Van Kerkhoven. A minor dramaturgy could be considered something “which lies in and around a production” (Van Kerkhoven “The theatre is in the city”). The major dramaturgy, however, outreaches beyond the theatre space and is about interactions with the world (“The theatre is in the city”). The notions of a minor and major dramaturgy will be used in an expanded manner in this thesis: Van Kerkhoven does not merely focus on the notion of the Anthropocene when addressing the minor and the major dramaturgy. For that reason, the notions of minor and the minor dramaturgy, used in this thesis, are applied to add new views to the debate around the Anthropocene and its relation to dramaturgy. In chapter 2, the debate around the Anthropocene will be presented. In addition, in order to analyse my case studies and their non-human-centric properties, chapter 2 provides a link to this debate as well as the concepts of new materialism and posthumanism. In order to elaborate on the possible impacts of the Anthropocene on contemporary performance and dramaturgy, the following research methodology is used: chapter 3 explores how dramaturgical strategies introduced in chapter 1 can be staged by providing an analysis of three case studies which can be perceived as examples of performances which move towards a post-anthropocentric stage and invite us to change the scale from a minor to a major dramaturgy. This will be done with the help of concepts presented in chapter 2. My case studies are the performances *Farm Fatale* by Philippe Quesne, *Posthuman days* by Jenni-Elina von Bach and *Moving in Concert* by Mette Ingvarsten. All these performances had their premiere during the years 2018-2019. The premiere of the performance *Farm Fatale* took place in Münchner Kammerspiele, in Munich,

Germany in March 2019. The dance performance *Posthuman days* had its premiere in Zodiak, in Helsinki, Finland, in October 2018. The most recent of my case studies is a dance performance by Mette Ingvarsten, *Moving in Concert*. The premier took place in Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium, in October 2019.

When analysing these aforementioned performances, I focus on exploring the dramaturgical structures and strategies used in them. In *Farm Fatale*, I concentrate on the aspect of human performer de-centralization produced by the use of masks and computer generated voices. In the performance *Posthuman days* I take a closer look at the take-over of materials in relation to the dancers' bodies and the agential properties of matter, elements which are characterize the performance. Lastly in the performance *Moving in Concert* spectators are invited to consider the coexistence of technology and the logic of collage.

In short, these chosen performances from the field of contemporary theatre and dance explore the kind of dramaturgical strategies which can be used when approaching the post-anthropocentric stage, the theatre stage that de-centralizes a human from its focus. My case studies were produced in Western and Northern Europe. Hence, my scope is rather Eurocentric. The Eurocentric focus is, however, not the aim of this thesis but rather a by-product of my current residency. When choosing my case studies, the following criteria were taken under consideration. Firstly, I wanted to see the performances in person if possible. I saw two of my case studies, *Farm Fatale* and *Moving in Concert* in theatre whereas I was not able to see *Posthuman days* personally on stage. However, I was kindly given video access to a professional-quality recording of the performance. Secondly, since currently residing in Western Europe and having lived and studied dramaturgy in Finland, Germany and Belgium, I wanted to have examples from countries which theatre fields I was already familiar with. Thirdly, in relation to my research question, these chosen performances focused on addressing theatre through non-anthropocentric lenses which is a central element in this thesis.

CHAPTER 1. ON THEATRE AND DRAMATURGY

In this chapter, I briefly cover the trajectory of theatre, especially in terms of dramaturgy and its relation to the Anthropocene. In order to envision the post-anthropocentric stage, it is also crucial to understand the anthropocentric roots of theatre and dramaturgy. In theatre, dramatic text has played been in a central role. Classical dramatic texts such as *Antigone* by Sophocles and *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, to just to mention few, are quite human-centric and the focus lies in analysing human behaviour and the existence of human beings. *Poetics* by Aristotle can be considered as the cornerstone of early dramaturgical writings in Europe. The dramatic theory by Aristotle has provided crucial vocabulary and insight on how dramatic theatre has been understood and addressed. Although *Poetics* focuses on tragedy (5) its vocabulary has also been applied to other theatrical genres and also movies. In an Aristotelian sense, the starting point for dramaturgical thinking has been a dramatic text. Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt also point out how theatre has been “defined by the play” which centralizes the importance of the dramatic text (6). When addressing tragedy, the imitation of an action and of life is a crucial structural element for Aristotle (5). Thus, the starting point of dramaturgy has been characterized by anthropocentrism.

In the article “The Rock, the Butterfly, the Moon, and the Cloud: Notes on Dramaturgy an Ecological Age”, researcher, writer and artist Augusto Corrieri explains that both Western theatre and theatre buildings were re-invented in the Italian renaissance (242). During those times the anthropocentric worldview started to become stronger. However, the anthropocentric world view and the humanist tradition has also gained some criticism.

Corrieri joins the discussion on minor and major dramaturgy by considering what would be theatre that entails a major dramaturgy as understood by Van Kerkhoven (241). Corrieri speculates what would happen if stars and sky were included as dramaturgical elements and “not just as ‘props’” (240). Corrieri explains how thinking in terms of major dramaturgy nowadays would require “an exceptional shift in scale” (240). As summed up by Corrieri, “[i]n short, we would need to declare as woefully obsolete the humanist tradition that still underpins Western theatre and its all-too-human dramaturgies” (241). Corrieri proposes that the “a radical act of reorientation” is already happening which means that a shift from human-only dramaturgies has already begun (241). Leonardo da Vinci sketched the Vitruvian Man and one could say that human beings became the centre of the universe. Corrieri proposes that the Humanist Renaissance inheritance had a huge impact on live theatre and the development of human-centric dramaturgies (242).

When addressing the trajectory of dramaturgy, one usually encounters Bertolt Brecht who had a great impact on dramaturgy in the twentieth century. His ideas concerning theatre were influenced by Marxist thoughts. Brecht expanded the idea of dramaturgy. In Brecht’s theatre, a spectator becomes aware of one’s position in society. Dismantling the fourth wall and tearing down the illusions of theatre and rendering spectators from passive to active by making them aware of their position as spectators was essential for Brecht’s epic theatre. By proposing to investigate human nature, epic theatre also remained rather anthropocentric. In Brechtian sense, dramaturgy does not necessarily seek coherency. Brecht’s epic theatre suggests that when construction the impact of a theatre play many components should be considered, not only the dramatic text, but also elements such as acting style, music and so on. According to Brecht, in epic form “human nature is object of investigation” whereas in dramatic form “human nature presumed to be common knowledge” (111). A performance is a

dialogue between the performers, the audience and the world. Despite the expanded understanding of dramaturgy, the core of the Brechtian dramaturgy is still, however, constructed around the interest of spectators' consciousness and how human nature works, and thusly, can still be seen as centralizing the human subject.

Later in the trajectory of dramaturgy, the shift from the supremacy of dramatic text to contemporary forms such as works that use intermediality, audience participation, immersion or are process-based or site-specific performances, have challenged how dramaturgy is understood and addressed. The German theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann described these changes as "postdramatic theatre" (Lehmann 17). The focus of Lehmann lies on addressing the new theatre from the end of the 1960s to the 1990s. In the book *Postdramatic Theatre* Lehmann attempts to exemplify and provide new vocabulary to address postdramatic works that move *beyond* drama by discussing and reflecting on theatre history and its tendencies and trends, moving from Aristotle's poetic to Hegel's dialectic.

Phenomena such as the abandonment of dramatic text as the core of theatrical works, process-based projects and site-specific performances that take place in non-theatrical spaces can be perceived as characteristics of postdramatic theatre. Elements of a performance such as space, bodies and sound are not subordinate to dramatic text anymore. Nevertheless, these different forms and aesthetics, in both text-based theatre and other forms are acknowledged and exist alongside. Moreover, an expanded international artistic cooperation between artists and the general globalization of work can also be perceived as characteristics of postdramatic theatre. In addition, dramaturgy might manifest itself when working in a collaborative or process-based manner which can also be considered as emergences of postdramatic theatre. Notions such as plurality, multiplicity, non-linearity and fragmentary are also part of the considerations of postdramatic theatre (Lehmann 88). Furthermore, audience addressed

through sensory-bodily stimulations has created new discourses about spectatorship; embodiment of a spectator and the relation between a performance and spectators have been discussed (Lehmann 89). Moreover, the notion of visibility is highly important in the theorisation of postdramatic theatre (Lehmann 93). The link between visibility and dramaturgy is also “an essential component” of New Media Dramaturgy (Eckersall et al. 89). I suggest that also immersive works and hybrid-forms with aspects of computer gaming and that use for example virtual reality technology are also in line with the postdramatic paradigm.

Even though moving beyond the dramatic text and recognizing the value of other possible parameters of a performance did not mean a completely abandonment of human-centric approaches in theatre. However, one could say that postdramatic theatre was a step towards de-centralizing the human by acknowledging the non-hierarchical value of other elements of a performance, not only the dramatic text.

In the trajectory of dramaturgy, the term *new dramaturgy* by Marianne Van Kerkhoven is interesting and important when attempting to address dramaturgy on a larger scale (“On Dramaturgy 18”). New dramaturgy describes “a process-oriented method of working” (Van Kerkhoven, “On dramaturgy” 18). Acknowledging that the formulation of new dramaturgy was written in the 1990s, the notion is still relevant when addressing a post-anthropocentric stage. In new dramaturgy, not only text but also other forms such as images and sound can be considered non-hierarchical materials (Van Kerkhoven, “On dramaturgy”18). Dramaturgy, as understood by Van Kerkhoven, also challenges the notion of linear dramaturgy and proposes dramaturgy being more enigmatic and “learning to deal with complexity” (Van Kerkhoven, “Looking without a pencil”). Van Kerkhoven proposes considering a new, collaborative dramaturgical mode which does not seek to foresee or predict any particular outcome but

rather to explore a project at hand as a process. This collaborative and process-based thinking is a central idea in the formulation of new dramaturgy. Even though this thesis does not focus on analysing the making processes of performances, Van Kerkhoven's ideas on dramaturgy can be useful when considering the kind of aesthetic impacts it might have on the performance which can be understood as the final product of a process of making. When acknowledging all components as equally valuable building blocks of a performance, as Van Kerkhoven suggests ("On dramaturgy" 18), it is possible to outreach beyond anthropocentric perspectives and create dramaturgical constellations which are not dominated by the component of the human (actor).

Nowadays, the field of contemporary theatre and performance has become more diverse including different forms and aesthetics. Developments in technology and digitalization, for example, have challenged the unity of time and place which has been characterizing dramaturgy and theatre. Theresa J. May has coined the term ecodramaturgy which challenges to consider theatre and performance making in new terms (Arons & May 1). When addressing dramaturgy and its relation to the Anthropocene, the notion of ecodramaturgy becomes particularly interesting. Ecodramaturgy is putting an "ecological reciprocity and community at the centre of its theatrical and thematic intent" (Arons & May 4). According to Arons and May, the conceptual nature-culture binary had been called into question (1). It means that the lines between what we have considered as nature and culture have been blurred. To put it in another way, these two matters are not considered as separated categories anymore. Blurred lines manifest themselves for example in environmental disasters such as flooding and hurricanes. As explained by Arons and May, the ecological disasters have exposed "the interconnectivity between nature and human culture". In other words, nature and human culture cannot be seen as separate elements since human activities also cause such severe

incidents such as the aforementioned flooding. Hence, there is a cause and an effect. Arons and May also propose that the arts have shaped human values but paradoxically also have widened the division between humans and nature, a that division is especially great in Western art (Arons and May). Arons and May also suggest that taking under consideration the current state of affairs concerning environment matters, theorists and scholars should “critically apply an ecological perspective to theatrical representation” (2). The approach by Arons and May stresses the importance of understanding the intersections of performance and ecology in their material sense, not focusing on the metaphorical sense (3). According to them, even though theatre scholars have slowly shown interest toward ecocriticism, only a small group of theatre scholars and historians have engaged themselves to exploring studies on the relationship of theatre to the environment (Arons & May 4). It is worthwhile to mention that the book *Reading in Performance and Ecology* was published in 2012. Ecological discourse has gained more attention among theatre scholars since then. Having said that, there is still a knowledge gap between dramaturgy and ecology. This gap manifest itself as a lack of sufficient vocabulary and a difficulty to leave out a human perception as the point of departure. Therefore, I consider that expanding and deepening the discussion around dramaturgy and ecology is necessary.

It is interesting that Arons and May also mention the notion of a scale. According to them “[e]cological stories take place on a scale beyond human, and so even when a playwright strives to foreground ecological issues on stage, the stories are hard to contain” (4). Carl Lavery is also interested in ecology and performance. However, Lavery takes a critical approach by claiming how the ecological properties of a performance are not necessarily obvious and explains how performances can be ecological if they manage to “trouble the foundations of humanist subjectivity” (“Performance Ecology Heritage”).

Even though this thesis does not concentrate on either ecology on a content level or performances which have the written text as their main component, it is nevertheless, interesting to examine the notion of ecodramaturgy in relation to the Anthropocene. Since earth processes and their stories and effects may unfold over millions of years, ecodramaturgy “stretches any notion of epic theatre to the far reaches of human attention” (Arons & May 4). In other words, since the time scale goes beyond human understanding, or to say experience, ecological stories are “hard to contain” (Arons & May 4). Consequently, one could say that ecodramaturgy moves towards the post-anthropocentric stage and beyond the human scale. Ecodramaturgy suggests to consider “the inescapable interdependencies and shared contingencies between our species and the millions of micro- and macro organisms with which we share both a gene pool and a planetary ecosystem” (Arons & May 6). When exploring post-anthropocentric views in theatre, it is not enough to only scrutinize the micro level but post-anthropocentric approaches require taking under consideration a more complex web of things, it requires a re-scaling.

When addressing the developments in dramaturgy, the rise of technological innovations and their use in performances and the posthumanist theory have expanded the understanding of dramaturgy. This expanded understanding of dramaturgy does not only contain addressing dramaturgy in terms of ecology but also in terms of new media. Eckersall et al. present the notion of new media dramaturgy, *NDM*, which takes under consideration digital and technological aspects and their relationship to dramaturgy (2). In addition, NMD “is more in tune with the emerging non-human life forms” (Eckersall et al. 209) which takes into account the paradigm of posthumanism.

Eckersall et al. also point out that the NMD is linked to new materialism, hence, according to them, NMD “could also read as New Materialist Dramaturgy” (10). Eckersall et al.

acknowledge that a subject or an object entails “performative potential” (10). However, Eckersall et al. suggest to consider dramatic potency as not purely an anthropomorphic perception but as “a productive point of view promoting an expanded repertoire of empathic engagement rather than an unconscious privileging of the human over non-human forces” (11). Thus, one can be engaged in a performance and yet acknowledge the limits of human perception. It does not mean elevating human forces and undervaluing non-human forces (Eckersall et al. 11). In other words, New Media Dramaturgy neither divides nor creates hierarchy among these forces but rather mediates between them.

The use of technology such as mobile phones, head phones, video projections, software applications and tablets has increased in the field of performance during the past decades. According to Eckersall et al. ,“NMD therefore designates an expanded practice of conceptual and creative labour across arts institutions and industries facilitated by recent technical developments, mainly but not exclusively in digital media” (5). Artists and artistic collectives such as Kris Verdonck, Rimini Protokoll, Gob Squad, just to mention a few, have used different technical devices and applications in their performances. Sometimes the use of technology is a crucial element designing the experience of spectators. Immersive performances where spectators are experiencing the performance through different devices, could be considered as examples of such works. The use of virtual reality in performances could also be considered as an element of immersion.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the concepts of a minor and major dramaturgy by dramaturg and essayist Marianne Van Kerkhoven are key terms in this thesis (“The theatre is in the city”). In the following paragraphs these terms will be presented. As an expansion to the minor and major dramaturgy, the notion of a scale is applied to the discussion of minor

and major dramaturgy. Even though Van Kerhoven does not address the notion of scale per se, when talking about the minor and major dramaturgy, these terms seem already to suggest a sort of comparison in terms of size and scale. Despite the fact that the text by Van Kerhoven was written about twenty years ago, the notions of the minor and major dramaturgy are extremely topical when addressing dramaturgy today, especially when envisioning the post-anthropocentric stage.

A minor dramaturgy can be perceived as something smaller, something that can be “grasped on a human scale” (Van Kerhoven, “The theatre is in the city”). Moreover, the minor dramaturgy could be something that zooms in on the level of the topic of or the structural construction of the performance. The name minor dramaturgy implies that it would be something small, *petite*, tiny, human-size. However, claiming that the minor dramaturgy is only human-centric would be too straightforward. Thus, the minor dramaturgy needs a more carefully contemplation. Thinking in terms of the minor dramaturgy could be, for example, addressing a piece-at hand in its particular context, for example a venue where a piece-to-come takes place and acknowledging the people who are involved. The minor dramaturgy could also be taking a detailed look at the elements of the performance at hand. The minor dramaturgy is not necessarily limited to the human as its central element. It can for instance zoom in and take a closer look at the elements on stage. For example, Heiner Goebbel’s *Stifter’s Dinge* is an installation-like performance which in a way zooms in by focusing on the compositional properties of the installation and sound. It is a piece of art where a human character does not play the central role. What the minor dramaturgy could do is that it might explore agential properties of non-human actors and materials and explore a piece at hand in terms of coexistence or as a collage.

The major dramaturgy could be, for example, an expanded consideration of how dramaturgy takes into account different discourses, political and societal matters and climatic issues, not only the production at hand. In other words, what is implied here is that the major dramaturgy expands beyond a theatre space, it penetrates through the walls of the theatre house and reaches out to the world. It does not remain only on a human-sized surface. Thinking in terms of the major dramaturgy could be an attempt to seek connections and interactions between different (non-)human actors and reaching beyond a human-sized-scale. Hence, it might become especially important when addressing the post-anthropocentric stage. Having said that, the major dramaturgy is not a synonym for dramaturgies that only focus on non-human approaches. The importance of the major dramaturgy can be considered very topical today. Nowadays, in the times of the sixth extinction and global warming, it would be short-sighted to only address dramaturgy in terms of the minor dramaturgy because when living in the world that is an intricate web of things there are a vast amount of complex entities interconnected with each other. In other words, one should become aware of the web of things connected to the production and take under consideration such factors as living conditions, political and economic forces because they consequently may have impact on the dramaturgy. Exploring the major dramaturgy is an attempt to reach out and have a dialogue between a production and the world.

The notion of scale and how it is used throughout this thesis allows me to zoom in and zoom out, seek connections and interactions, change perspectives when addressing theatrical pieces and analyse their dramaturgical structures. Van Kerkhoven suggests to widen a perspective beyond a particular theatre piece and trying to observe matters on a larger scale because theatre does not happen in a void and she claims, “there is such a thing as a major and a minor dramaturgy” (Van Kerkhoven, “The theatre is in the city”). This understanding becomes

extremely important nowadays when living in the world that is constructed of complex entities and riddled with conflicting interests.

When considering the notion of scale and the trajectory of dramaturgy, one can notice that the developments and changes in dramaturgy require a rescaling. During the history of dramaturgy, the human has been in the centre of the focus for a very long time. However, developments and considerations such as postdramatic theatre, ecodramaturgy, new dramaturgy and New Media Dramaturgy have challenged this merely anthropocentric approach. Thus, there is a need to not only focus in the human but also zoom out and perceiving everything else that exist too. Re-framing of the big picture is required and acknowledging the non-human entities as part of the constellation.

CHAPTER 2. ON THE ANTHROPOCENE

2.1. The Anthropocene

Having introduced a short trajectory of dramaturgy in the previous chapter, in the following sub-chapters, I will further open up the terminology, concepts and theories used in the analysis in chapter 3. This sub-chapter focuses on presenting the notion of the Anthropocene which is a central concept in my thesis. When scrutinizing the etymological origin of the notion of the Anthropocene, the word derives from the Greek word, *anthropos*, meaning human and *-cene* which is the suffix which usage is linked to describing names of geological epochs (Davidson). When scrutinizing theatre and its developments and trends, they cannot be separated from political and societal events and occurrences in the world.

When considering the Anthropocene as a geological epoch characterized by human impacts such as ecological crisis, the evidences of it can already be seen and experienced because humankind is dealing with severe environmental issues (Davies 42-43). The decrease of species has an impact on biological diversity. The notion of the sixth extinction is used to

describe a sixth mass extinction of species on Earth (Ceballos et al. 1.). It has been researched that “modern extinction rates are exceptionally high” and constantly increasing (Ceballos et al. 3). The rise has been extremely fast and “that our global society has started to destroy species of other organism at an accelerating rate, initiating a mass extinction episode unparalleled for 65 million years” (Ceballos et al. 3). The ecosystem is in danger. Moreover, phenomena such as global warming and the shrinking arctic polar caps are imminent dangers. Shrinking arctic polar ice rises sea levels which might have severe impacts. Flooding may occur and consequently, many problematic issues occur, people are forced to abandon their homes and crops go to waste which might lead to a severe humanitarian crisis.

There has already been an increase of the global temperature, oceans have warmed, the amount of global greenhouse gas emission has grown and other problematic environmental issues have occurred. According to Special Report on the impacts of the global warming by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “[w]arming greater than the global average has already been experienced in many regions and seasons, with higher average warming over land than over the ocean” (Allen et al. 51). The global temperature increase should be limited to 1.5. degree above pre-industrial levels (Allen et al. 79). In other words, global warming is a possible threat to human societies and the globe. The great environmental catastrophe is at hand. We are facing a complex and difficult matter and its scale is hard to grasp. To summarize the importance of climate studies; they shed light on the current, alarming situation on the planet and this information should not be ignored.

The timeline of the Anthropocene is as follows: it is considered to follow the Holocene which is a geological epoch, also known as a post-glacial epoch (Roberts 8). The Holocene is located to be after the end of the Pleistocene, about twelve thousand years ago (Haraway, *Staying with the trouble* 45). The Anthropocene is also entwined with consuming goods. Jedediah Purdy describes how food, the treatment of animals and climate change can be

considered as problems of the Anthropocene era (230). The food industry is consuming of nature and often includes intensive farming of animals which raises several ethical questions. According to Purdy, it might change the relationship between humans and nature (230). Some of these changes have already taken place, namely, the shifts from “wilderness preservation to food production as a model environmental issue” and “from saving nature and solving environmental problems to living with the problems that are new and permanent conditions” (Purdy 230-231). Purdy also suggests that people have, however already shown more interest to know what is the origin of the food they consume and whether it is ethical (231). In order to survive, humans need nutrition. Thus, the food products that are consumed are not only casual matters but also serious choices that entail political, ethical ecological aspects. Choices of an individual have an impact at the global level.

When addressing the notion of the Anthropocene, it entails certain complexity and the notion has been criticized for several reasons. The onset of the Anthropocene, for example, is difficult to describe. Hence, different academic disciplines disagree whether the Anthropocene is a suitable term when discussing the planetary epoch we are living in. In other words, the term Anthropocene also entails controversy and it has also been criticized by scholars. Jeremy Baskin, who is a senior researcher fellow at the School of Government of the University of Melbourne Australia, has been focusing on geoengineering and climate policy. Baskin points out that the concept of the Anthropocene is troubling (10). Baskin considers the concept of Anthropocene not being a completely neutral term describing a new geological epoch but rather a “particular way of understanding the world and a normative guide to action” (10). He claims that the Anthropocene can have an impact but it “does not need to be an object of scientific inquiry by geologist and stratigraphers (Baskin 12). Moreover, he proposes instead to consider the Anthropocene as an ideology (Baskin 10). The Anthropocene, as understood by him, is then not necessarily linked with a geological epoch

but in the “realm of political, cultural or historical time” (13). Thus, one could say that when addressing the Anthropocene, one is encountering a political phenomenon. Global politics is one of the key factors of the Anthropocene and the impacts of globalization can be seen in the Anthropocene. These impacts are, for example, the spread of consumer capitalism and global market (Baskin 12). In addition, Baskin asks critically who is “the human of the Anthropocene?” (15). In other words, for Baskin the notion of the Anthropocene “tends to universalise and normalise a small portion of humanity as ‘the human of the Anthropocene’” (15). By universalizing the human in that manner, one does not take under consideration social-economic aspects, for example. Hence, there is a danger to generalize the agent of the Anthropocene. The understanding of human is more complex and diverse. However, to sum up, Baskin does neither deny the impacts of human activities upon the globe nor completely abandon the notion of the Anthropocene but he proposes the reframing of the notion (11).

Although I partly agree with the critical points given by Baskin, such as the effects of the spread of capitalism and globalized markets, I disagree with the idea considering the Anthropocene merely as “an ideology” as Baskin proposes. One could say that an ideology is creation of a human or group of people and it usually advocates a particular view and its value is difficult to measure. Ideologies can be constituted around many matters, believes, political and/or religious thoughts. Their content can vary, be debatable and abstract. The Anthropocene, however, can be perceived as an epoch characterized by a human impact such as global warming, melting of the polar caps and other occurrences which have been verified being results of human activities. Even though these impacts could be considered as the results of the spread of capitalism and expanded markets, the results can also be measured in terms of geology. At the same time when I am writing this thesis, one can read about deadly bushfires in Australia (Pyne). Before these bushfires in Australia, there were dangerous fires in California, the United States, in 2019. Global warming fuels the fires (Borunda “Climate

Change is Contributing to California's fires"). Steve Pyne, an emeritus professor Arizona State University proposes that the damage has happened in Australia will affect in long into the future and this epoch we are living in, could be described as "Pyrocene" ("The Australian fires are a harbinger of things to come. Don't Ignore their warning"). In other words, the effects of the Anthropocene, such as climate change and its emergences and the sixth extinction can also be seen and verified in nature, they are not only abstract concepts but concrete changes in environment and climate. Hence, what is implied here is that the Anthropocene should not be addressed as a matter of an ideology or believe but rather as a scientific fact. Having said that, that does not leave out its political aspects. On the contrary, the Anthropocene entails many troubling and complex political matters and raises many questions concerning the relationship between economic growth, environmental issues and peoples' responsibility and how unequally the wealth has divided in the world.

Donna Haraway, a professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness Department and Feminist Studies, has been researching topics related to discourses of posthumanism, technology and feminism and steps into the discussion around the Anthropocene. In her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* Haraway is critical towards the notion of the Anthropocene and she refuses to use it unconditionally (47). Haraway considers this particular epoch as "a transformative time on Earth" and this metamorphic period of time "must not be named the Anthropocene" (*Staying with the Trouble* 31). Haraway proposes instead a re-conceptualization called *the Chthulucene* (33). According to her *the Chthulucene* is a current epoch in which humans and non-humans are linked and interacting (*Staying with the Trouble* 33). Haraway asks, "[w]hat happens when organisms plus environments can hardly be remembered for the same reasons that even Western-indebted people can no longer

figure themselves as individuals and societies of individuals in human only histories?"

(*Staying with the trouble* 30-31).

However, Haraway will use the term Anthropocene "sparingly" (*Staying with the trouble* 47). One of the reason for criticism is that Haraway considers that the term of the Anthropocene is usually used among "intellectuals in wealthy classes and regions" (*Staying with the trouble* 49). Even though the effects of climate change, for example, can be seen in every continent, the most negative impacts of the Anthropocene are spread unequally. Not every continent is suffering in the same manner. The most extreme weather conditions, for example, do not occur in every continent. The poorest countries are the most vulnerable when it comes to the impacts of climate change (Mirza 234). Thus, one could say that the notion of the Anthropocene is in that sense a bit elitist term.

As proposed by Haraway, we "must stay with the trouble" (*Staying with the trouble* 2).

Staying with the trouble is being in search of possibilities to find new pathways. Staying with the trouble is thinking differently in a collaboratively manner. Haraway explains that in comparison to the human-centric Anthropocene and Capitalocene, in the Chthulucene human beings are not the only important actors because there are also other creatures and entities which matter (*Staying with the trouble* 55). The notions of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene are entwined with a certain lack of prospects (Haraway, *Staying with the trouble* 57). In that sense, these notions are not very hopeful. She explains, "[t]he unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the exterminism of the Capitalocene, and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener" (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 57). In other words, it seems for Haraway, there is still a certain amount of optimism left, the game is not over what comes to the word because a *mad gardener* can make "a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures."

(Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 57). One could say that staying with the trouble is understanding the complexity of the situation but not remaining passive and hopeless.

2.2. Posthumanism

When addressing the post-anthropocentric stage, it is likely to come across the concept of posthumanism. In the light of my case study analysis in chapter 3, posthumanism helps to understand the coexistence of non-human and human actors in the case studies presented in chapter 3. When addressing the word per se, the term posthumanism entails the term *post* which implies something being “after” or beyond whereas the term *humanism* refers to a human-centred perspective that has been characterizing the Western philosophy and tradition for a long time. The discourse of posthumanism challenges anthropocentric views. When tracing the origin of the notion of posthumanism, the Macy conferences on cybernetics from 1946 to 1953 play a crucial role (Wolfe xiii). Moreover, the emergence of systems theories by Gregory Bateson, Warren MacCulloch, Norbert Wiener and John von Neumann could be considered as the starting point of thinking in terms of posthumanism (Wolfe xiii). One could say that the shift from humanism to posthumanism began around those times. However, according to Jay David Bolter, the Wesley Chair of New Media at the Georgia Institute of Technology, the term *posthumanism* was coined by a postmodern theorist Ihab Hassan in 1977 (Bolter). The inventions of new theories such as system theories mentioned above could exemplify the paradigm shift from humanism to posthumanism. The developments in cybernetics, such as algorithms and voice recognition in digital services and artificial intelligence can be understood being linked with posthumanism (Bolter 5). These developments propose “a breakdown of conceptual boundaries between human and machine” (Bolter 5). In other words, they blur the lines between two entities, a human and a machine, what had been understood as completely separated categories before.

According to Dr Francesca Ferrando who is a philosopher and lecturer, posthumanism can be traced in the first wave of postmodernism and it could be “[t]he posthuman overcoming of human primacy, though, is not to be replaced with other types of primacies” (27).

Posthumanism can be a consideration of *human plus*, *human minus* and *human-hybrid* spaces and creatures. Robots, cyborgs, avatars, virtual reality and smart homes, for example, could be considered as examples of aforementioned notions. Robotic medical assistants in healthcare or industrial robots could be understood as something *human plus*. Until a certain point, robots can replace the human’s abilities and skills, for example, in a surgery or in elderly care, or perform tasks that would be too dangerous for human beings such as handling toxic or hazardous materials. However, they still cannot completely replace the human because they lack some crucial human properties. An avatar, however, could be considered as a *human minus* creature representing a human being, for example, in an online game. A smart home with its intelligent remotely controlled lighting and electronic systems could exemplify a *human-hybrid space* where high technology and human beings exist alongside. One could say that in modern daily life we are confronted with the posthumanism paradigm when *discussing* with Siri or Alexa, voice-controlled intelligent assistants in our smart phones and other digital devices. Siri and Alexa, for example are bodiless creatures *who/which* can understand oral instructions given by humans. Sometimes Siri and Alexa fail to understand too complex questions and sentence constructions. Having said that, they can be perceived as an attempt either to humanize technology or then just simply to make the most of the recent technological developments in order to improve the quality of (human)lives.

However, as explained by Ferrando, posthumanism does not mean that the machines replace humans as a primacy (27), even though the film industry, for example, likes to produce movies which are built around posthuman dystopias. When addressing

posthumanism, it is not abandoning the humanism completely but re-thinking humanism by criticizing the supremacy of anthropocentric view. Ferrando observes that the notions of posthumanism and transhumanism are used interchangeably which sometimes leads to confusions (27). Explained by Ferrando, “[t]he movement of transhumanism problematizes the current understanding of the human not necessarily through its past and present legacies, but through the possibilities inscribed within its possible biological and technological evolutions” (27). This consideration could also be linked with the understanding of *human plus* and *human minus* creatures. According to Bolter, transhumanism can be considered as a sort of “an extension of and intensification of traditional humanism” (2). Both transhumanism and posthumanism share interests towards technology. Having said that, posthumanism neither glorifies technology nor puts the realm of technology in its core interest. One could say that technology is neither a friend nor a foe. Technology, as understood by Ferrando “is a trait of the human outfit” (27).

Art and entertainment industry, especially film industry address topics which are linked with posthuman phenomenon, usually it is playing with posthuman dystopias. Topics such as machines and/or artificial intelligence taking over world, just like in the movies called *The Matrix* by Lana and Lilly Wachowski in 1999 or *Ex Machina* by Alex Garland in 2015, or the emergence of the figure of the posthuman subject like in the movie called *Avatar* by James Cameron in 2009 have been addressed in the film industry. In theatre, a posthuman subject has also been addressed, for example, in the one of my case studies, in the performance *Posthuman days*. In addition, when thinking in terms of the notion of scale, which is a key term in this thesis, the discourse of posthumanism also suggests a new scaling; it encourages to move away from *human only* approaches and make room for *human plus* spaces.

When addressing the notion of agency and the coexistence of non-human and human actors, the notion of posthumanism is interesting. Many feminist writers, such as Donna Haraway and Luce Irigaray have also been influenced by the discourse of posthumanism. The question of gender and how it is constructed has also been resonating in the discourse of posthumanism. As mentioned earlier, posthumanism could be considered as a counter-reaction to humanism. Donna Haraway formulates new feminist posthumanist theory by presenting an essay called *A Cyborg Manifesto*. In *A Cyborg Manifesto* Haraway addresses “a cyborg as a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism which can be considered being both a creature of social reality and fiction” (“Cyborg” 5-6). Haraway acknowledges that the nature-culture binary should be considered differently. Haraway proposes that “[n]ature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other” which is highly accurate and topical when considering debates around the Anthropocene and environmental issues (“Cyborg” 9). This approach challenged the idea of nature and culture being completely distinct categories. The character of cyborg escape from the nature-culture dualism by making knots and avoiding *othering*. Questionable *othering* might occur when discussing topics such as gender and race. Rhetoric of white supremacists is built around the notion of othering. A cyborg is a fluid hybrid *which/who* crosses borders between humans and animals, humans and machines. Bolter’s understanding of Haraway’s cyborg is “a contemporary cultural metaphor in order to capture the ambivalent condition of the contemporary human beings, whose bodies are open to forms of technological modifications and intervention” (2).

When applying the notion of a cyborg in the field of contemporary art, some real life examples of experiments can be found. The French artist Orlan has been experimenting with her body. She has gone through plastic surgery in order to modify her body and extend the notion of a human body and to question standards of beauty. The operations were captured on

video and broadcasted in galleries. One could say, Orlan's experiments with her body could be considered as attempts to reinvent the body and become a cyborg in real life. In her experiments, she crosses borders between "natural" and "abnormal", "real" and "artificial". She discovers the limits of the human body. To summarise, posthumanism moves away from humanism by challenging human-centric views and proposing to re-think the human subject. Posthumanism can manifest itself when thinking in terms of technological developments, hybrid-forms, not-human-only spaces and expansion of the human subject.

2.3. New Materialism

When attempting to move away from anthropocentric views in theatre and dramaturgy, it requires also acknowledging agency of other non-human entities. The notion of agency is linked to the discussion around new materialism which will be presented in this sub-chapter. The term *new materialism* was coined in the 1990s and it challenges the dualistic idea in modern and humanist traditions (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 48). First, I shortly open up the notion of agency because it is a crucial concept when addressing new materialism.

The term agency is used both in the field of sociology and philosophy. Theories such as action theory and actor-network theory have shed light on the notion of agency. Agency can be perceived as an ability of a human or other living being to act in their/its environment. In social science, agency is usually linked to the capacity of choice making of an individual. It has been debatable whether human agency is something habitual and taken for granted (Emirbayer & Mische 963). The discussion on human agency and how it is understood today "can be traced back to the Enlightenment" (Emirbayer & Mische 964). The appearance of secularism in Europe during the Renaissance changed the power of religion in peoples' lives. Emphasizing other values such as material pleasures over religion characterize the Renaissance. Philosophers of the 19th century such as Hegel touched upon the questions of

human agency and considered it as something collective and historical dynamic rather than individual (Speight 4). As mentioned earlier, new materialism proposes to consider agential properties of matter whereas in the past the notion of agency has been strongly linked to the human subject.

Rebecca Schneider, Professor of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies, addresses the notion of agency in the light of new materialism. Schneider claims that matter itself has also agential properties (7). Moreover, matter is not only agential but also “discursive” (Schneider 7). Matter can entail meanings, meaning-making does not necessarily happen through language. She also claims how the borders between the animate and the inanimate have been blurred by questioning the agency of objects (Schneider 7). Animate is considered something living whereas inanimate can be perceived as something that is an object and non-living. The notion of agency is here highly interesting. As I presented above, when speaking about agency it is often linked to agency of a human being. Hence, a consideration of agential properties of matter suggest to re-think the coexistence of matter and humans and whether there is hierarchy among these agential properties. However, the matter itself is not necessarily an immutable entity but rather a process. Diana Coole proposes to consider that a new materialistic ontology “is not about ‘Being’, but becoming: crucially, what is invoked is a process not a state” (453). The notion of becoming implies the process-oriented approach to matter. It suggests that the matter is fluid, not a fixed entity. New materialistic ideas also emerge in other discourses such as in feminism, posthumanism and ecocriticism. A common denominator for them is a critical approach toward anthropocentrism and a re-thinking of subjectivity (Connolly 400).

When addressing the notion of agency, it is possible to come across the notion of consciousness. The division between mind and body has a long tradition in humanities. The traces of Cartesian dualism can still be seen nowadays. However, according to Connolly,

there is an attempt to “stretch modes of subjectivity in a new direction” (400). Even though assuming that humans are only ones considering topics such as morality and death, Connolly explains that “we resist the tacit judgement that this frees us from thinking closely about the complex relations between the human estate and a host of non-human processes with variable degrees of agency” (400). While criticizing the anthropocentric worldview, new materialism emphasizes “the self-organizing powers of several nonhuman processes” (Connolly).

It is intriguing to explore how new materialistic ideas could be applied on performance. A professor in Theater Studies, Maaïke Bleeker discusses new materialism in relation to scenography. Bleeker suggests that some creation processes “can be understood as practices of material thinking in and through which performance come to matter” (126). Material thinking entails unpredictability, one cannot foresee the results beforehand. In order for matter to become matter, a post-anthropocentric approach to performance design is required (Bleeker 126). This aforementioned approach takes into account that matter is considered as “active force in the creating process” (Bleeker 126). Thinking in terms of material provides an alternative to the idea that has been merely focusing on constructing coherent, human-centric dramatic entities on stage. On the contrary, when envisioning the post-anthropocentric stage, material thinking allows us to perceive different web of things, interactions and interplays. It permits unexpected collages, compositions and constellations to emerge. Dramaturgy is not only limited to the comprehension of relationships between human-actors and/or spectators but it expands beyond anthropocentrism. New materialism challenges the humanistic focus that has also been a central element in the trajectory of dramaturgy for a very long time.

In the case study analysis in chapter 3, the notion of collage will be scrutinized. Bleeker provides an interesting insight into matter and the logic of composition. According to Bleeker, “the various elements that together are a performance on stage (people, objects, texts,

movements, sounds etc.) matter as a result of the way in which the performance sets up relationships between them” (128). One can put random objects and matter together and call it a collage. Nevertheless, the significance of collages does not lie in how/what these individual elements and their existence are per se but in the relationships which they create between them. Bleeker analyses the performance *Einstein on the Beach* by Wilson by saying, “[t]he performance presents a combination of a great number of elements and takes its audiences along in the unfolding of relationships between them” (Bleeker 128). This insight is also helpful when analysing the case studies in chapter 3 and deconstructing their compositional structures.

Bleeker proposes that matter can be considered as “an active participant” (128). If addressing matter as an active participant one might be able to interpret objects not only in terms of their significations and meanings but also the kind of relations and webs they form when combined together. When considering dramaturgy in term of new materialism, one is being able to *read* objects, spaces and emerges differently which means that a language, for example, is not the only signifier or the source of information. If de-centralizing the human and acknowledging agential properties of matter, everything on stage becomes equally meaningful. In that case, a stage without human-actors becomes agential, too. When acknowledging matter’s agential properties, it might allow unexpected emergences and relations to be found. It might expand dramaturgy beyond anthropocentrism.

The first chapter laid bare the tendencies in the trajectory of dramaturgy whereas the second chapter concentrated on presenting my key concepts, the Anthropocene, posthumanism and new materialism which are used in the analysis of my case studies, *Farm Fatale*, *Posthuman days* and *Moving in Concert* in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3. DRAMATURGIES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE AND BEYOND

With the help of the concepts presented in the previous chapter, in this chapter I analyse the performances *Farm Fatale* by Philippe Quesne, *Posthuman days* by Jenni-Elina von Bach and *Moving in Concert* by Mette Ingvarsten. In the case study analysis, the focus lies on these analytical categories: the notion of agency, the role of the performer, the role of matter and the logic of collage. By analysing the above categories, my aim is to find dramaturgical strategies which move towards the post-anthropocentric stage.

3.1. *Farm Fatale* by Philippe Quesne

This sub-chapter presents my first case study which is a performance called *Farm Fatale*, directed by Philippe Quesne that took place in Münchner Kammerspiele, in Munich, Germany in June 2019. The performance is a co-production with Nanterre-Amandiers, centre dramatique national. *Farm Fatale* is mainly performed in English and subtitled in German. The group of performers consisted of both the actors from the ensemble of Münchner Kammerspiele and guest performers from France. Firstly, I will provide a description of the performance and then continue scrutinizing the performance concentrating especially on its post-anthropocentric properties.

The performance took place in a black box, in the *Kammer 2* which is the second largest stage of Münchner Kammerspiele. At the beginning of the performance the stage design consists of a couple of stacks of hay, a plastic pig and a couple of other plastic domestic animals, some musical instruments and a pitchfork that functioned as a microphone stand. The floor is white. At some point of the play the performers also bring a tall trailer-like construction on to the stage. The trailer-like construction is used for multiple purposes and it is constantly moved around the stage by the performers. The trailer construction functions both as a vantage point, a shelter and a place where scarecrows are growing magical eggs. At

the beginning of the performance there are four performers on stage. The performers are dressed as scarecrows; their faces cannot be seen because they are wearing thick masks. When speaking, their voices are computer generated. The story line is as follows: these four scarecrows are living on an abandoned farm in a world where living conditions are poor due to intensive farming and other human activities that impacted the planet. Facing aforementioned profound obstacles and problems, many farmers decided to commit suicide. The overall condition of the environment is weak. Thus, the scarecrows who are still on the farm, have formed a sort of an army or a squat and they call themselves activists. The scarecrows have their own radio show and band. Every now and then they perform songs by playing the instruments seen on the stage. The scarecrows are on a mission: they are searching for possible worlds and growing magical eggs on their farm in order to safeguard some form of life on Earth. One day their solitary daily life changes when a fifth scarecrow joins them. The fifth scarecrow seem to be in a search of place to stay. While living as a community and conducting their daily activities, they also share their thoughts about the current state of the world, politics, factory farming and the impact of climate change; there are neither the sounds of nature nor humans left to hear. The scarecrows tell their story; they used to work for farmers but many of the farmers took their lives since factory farming boomed and destroyed their livelihood. There are only a few farms with farmers left. At some point, the scarecrows see some odd and possible life-threatening activity in the farm nearby and they decide to fight back in order to preserve the little amount of life which is left in the world, a place where living conditions are otherwise ruined. In other words, instead of remaining motionless and passive, the five scarecrows decide to take action. One could say that it can be interpreted as a comment on helplessness and powerlessness of mankind when facing the most difficult problems, the environmental crisis on the planet.

3.1.1. Performers: The scarecrows as uncanny creatures

The performance zooms in by addressing the life of these rebellious scarecrows. Compared to my other case studies, *Moving in Concert* and *Posthuman days*, *Farm Fatale* is the only one which consists of a storyline. The storyline is narrated and acted out by five performers who are dressed as scarecrows. The character of the scarecrow is intriguing. It is interesting to explore what kind of interpretations the presence of the five scarecrows may evoke because they are uncanny creatures. One could say that they can be perceived as scary and slightly unpleasant humanoid figures, resemblances of posthumanism. Maybe they could be read as cyborgs even though they are not machine-human hybrids. They are, however, “a condensed image of both imaginations and material reality” (Haraway, “Cyborg” 7). As explained by Haraway, “the cyborg is a creature in a postgender world” (“Cyborg” 8). In the same way, the scarecrows blur the lines between genders and ask to re-think the notion of gender. Knowing that there are human actors inside the costumes works as a reminder of the human trait which might still be there. However, the faces of the performers cannot be seen due to the masks and their voices are computer generated. Carl Lavery analyses Quesne’s previous works *La Démangeaison des ailes* (2003), *Expériences* (2004), *D’après nature* (2006), *L’effet de Serge* (2007) and *Big Bang* (2010) in the article “The ecology of the image: The environmental politics of Philippe Quesne and Vivarium Studio”. Even though Lavery does not address *Farm Fatale* per se, his understanding of the nature of Quesne’s work provides also interesting insight for my analysis. When the scarecrows are talking, their speaking sounds monotonous, slow and auto-tuned, as if one would be listening to the radio from a distance. The scarecrows are expressing their story also in words, albeit the dialogue is quite dry and minimalistic. As explained by Lavery, Quesne is merely focused on producing ecological images “that would challenge the traditional humanist focus of theatre” (“The ecology of the image” 273). Lavery proposes that this focus “helps to explain why language, especially

spoken language, is relegated to such a minor role in his dramaturgy” (“The ecology of the image” 273). Even though the scarecrows are talking, the power of the language is not captivating as such. I am curious to know whether the spoken language (in this case English) could have been replaced by gibberish and the kind of impact it might have had. However, despite the understandable spoken text in the performance, the appearance of the scarecrows drifts away from the notion of the human and starts to reassemble something uncanny.

3.1.2. Agential properties and the artificiality of matter

When it comes to the notion of stage design and its material properties and its relation to the narrative content of the performance, it is interesting to notice that the set is made of plastic and other artificial materials. The hay stacks on the stage which look real do not actually consist of any real hay but it is made of artificial materials, probably of plastic. The performance confronts us on different levels; firstly, the level of the topic which is that of an environment crisis and the impacts of human activities and what is told by the characters of the scarecrows. However, what is even more interesting is that in this performance is another level which moves beyond the seemingly obvious level of the topic of the performance. This other level confronts us with the strong materiality of the stage.

The set in *Farm Fatale* resembles a collage or a composition. The number of objects on the stage is limited, each and every element seems to be there *on purpose* and manifesting its existence. Since there is a seemingly lack of human presence, it is possible to start to read and interpret materials differently. According to Lavery, “the ecological power of an image is not only dependent on what is shown or represented, but on what is hidden” (“The ecology of the image” 270). I suggest that the strategies used in *Farm Fatale* are similar. The composition which is seen on stage shows only little. It is a constructed image, a picture consisting of chosen elements. By exposing few things yet not revealing much, spectators are allowed to

fill in the blanks. In other words, showing *real* nature or realistic images is not needed when pursuing to expose the image's ecological power. As explained by Lavery, Quesne does not produce "images of ecology" but Quesne discovers "the ecological potential immanent to the medium of theatre itself" (271). As mentioned above, everything which can be seen on the stage is artificial. This artificiality of matters functions as a reminder that the image at hand is actually (only) a replica of nature. It is not real but an artificial construction imitating life yet taking place in a theatre space. According to Lavery, Quesne is not eager to educate spectators by providing a lecture (271). Neither is Quesne really interested in "composing sensational images that would somehow shock us out of our complacency" (Lavery 271). These contemplations could also be applied to *Farm Fatale*. The collage which spectators are confronted with does not seek to lecture them but to invite them to perceive their surroundings differently.

If one does not find a human subject to relate to, matters and objects start to matter which strengthen their agential properties and which in turn reminds me of the lines of thought by Rebekka Schneider (7). It seems that in the performance the materials and the scenography presented on the stage are not playing "a merely supporting role" (Bleeker 126). The set is an image consisting of carefully chosen items and material creating an independent entity, it is more than a backdrop for a story. In the performance "it is not drama that gives meaning to matter but design through which matter comes to matter" (Bleeker). The audience can begin to engage themselves with the performance in another way and start "thinking through matter" (Bleeker 126). In *Farm Fatale* there is a plot performed and told by the characters of the scarecrows, albeit the set does not only possess a supporting role but the set per se can be the performance: plastic animals, plastic hey, worn-out musical instruments surrounded by white emptiness of the room as if it would be read as a comment on our Western consumer

society – real nature is consumed and all that remains are plastic ruins. The materiality manifest itself. The elements seen on the stage are produced by human beings and in the process nature's resources were consumed. It evokes a question concerning the materials on the stage, namely, would it actually make any difference whether the materials were from nature (such as real hey etc.) because after all, the theatrical place is a place of illusions, an artificial entity.

3.1.3. The logic of collage

As introduced above, the materials used in the performance are artificial and what is seen on stage can be considered as a sort of collage, an artificial replica of the real world. The space that surrounds the objects presented on the stage is white. At the beginning of the performance there is a *platform* which consists of stacks of hey, a plastic pig and a couple of other plastic animals, musical instruments, a microphone stand, and a wooden construction with the text *Farm Fatale* in the right corner of the stage there. One could say that the aesthetic of this collage plays partly with the notions of minimalism and the homespun or do-it-yourself. On the one hand, the objects seen on the stage could almost be counted because the amount of them is limited and the white cube provides a clear backdrop. The logic of the set is interesting yet not necessarily spectacular. On the other hand, it looks a bit homemade knowing that it was made, however, in an institutional theatre house by experienced professionals. The objects on the stage seem to look quite worn out. Since most of the objects are on the right side of the stage, the point of attention lies there.

When it comes to the notion of a collage, *the currency* of this collage is being slightly unspectacular and strange, not overwhelming in terms of visual stimuli. In addition, despite its artificiality, or maybe due to its artificiality, the set creates a strong image. When combined the elements such as the plastic animals, fake hey, the vaguely humanoid

scarecrows, the glowing magical eggs and the aquarium-like space where these elements reside, create an assemblage that is rather peculiar.

Moreover, the presence of the *fourth wall* is strongly present. In other words, there is a strict division between the performers on the set and the spectators. The space where the action is happening is strictly framed. Lavery explains that environmental theatre is usually “considered to be a type of immersive theatre in which the traditional distance between performers and spectator is collapsed” (“The ecology of the image” 267). In *Farm Fatale* the division between the spectators and the performers exists. According to Lavery, “Quesne’s theatre insists on separation and frontality”. That is indeed the case in *Farm Fatale*, too. The impact of the frontality and separation is that the spectators are not overwhelmed by “an ecstatic experience of space” (Lavery 267). As explained by Lavery, Quesne explores instead of how “small groups of human being exist within and relate to their own ecosystems or habitats” (267). The spectators seated in the auditorium can observe what is happening on stage, as if they were observing an aquarium or a terrarium.

When it comes to the notion of collage, one could say that each and every set is a composition, a collage in a way. Reading *Farm Fatale* in a compositional manner can be useful. Making sense of the compositional logic is not “a matter of decoding representations but the logic proposed by the composition” (Bleeker 130). The logic of this collage is being a bit *offbeat* and *out of tune*, to borrow the terms from the field of music. Having said that, being offbeat or out of tune are neither positive nor negative terms but instead effective terms that can be used to describe how the micro-cosmos of the performance is constructed and how the inner logic of the performance can be perceived.

On the one hand, the minor dramaturgy of the performance could be the topic and the small entity presented on the stage. On the other hand, the minor dramaturgy could also be on the

level of the plot: five scarecrows are in a search of a possible world. However, if zooming out and re-scaling, one is confronted with not only the topic of environmental crisis but one becomes also aware of *where* it is addressed, namely, on stage, in a theatre house in Western Europe. Hence, the performance, this artificial replica of nature made of plastic, could also be read as a comment on how the Western lifestyle affects at the global level.

3.2. *Posthuman days* by Jenni-Elina von Bach

The following paragraphs focus on the dance performance *Posthuman days*, choreographed by Jenni-Elina von Bach. The premiere took place in Zodiak, in Helsinki, Finland on the 18th of October 2018. I could not attend the performance in person. However, the working group allowed me to access a recording of the performance. The performance tackles the binaries of such subjects as nature/culture and human/non-human by blurring the lines between them and addresses the materiality of bacterial cellulose on stage. As the name of the performance implies, questions concerning posthumanism are addressed in the performance. During the performance the coexistence of materials on stage will be explored and the performance plays with the logic of an ambivalent collage. The costumes which the dancers are wearing are partly made of bacterial cellulose. The costume design is by Ingvill Fossheim. In this analysis, I focus on finding the dramaturgical strategies the performance uses.

There are five dancers² on stage when the audience enters. The dancers are wearing black and beige coloured clothing. The audience is seated in an auditorium which is on the side of the stage. The floor of the stage is beige and there are some yellow and black ribbons and ropes, two melting ice blocks and pieces of bacterial cellulose fabrics. A big chest freezer is located

² I use the notions of a dancer and a performer interchangeable when analyzing the performances *Posthuman days* and *Moving in Concert*.

on the right side of the stage. There are a couple of fluorescent tubes on the ceiling. The lightning is otherwise rather harsh. When the audience enters, the dancers are moving around on the stage. The dancers are waving their hands in the air, lifting their legs and performing small jumps, sometimes collapsing to the floor and laying there for a while. Each dancer is moving individually. However, sometimes the dancers are performing similar movements in pairs, movements such as waving both hands up in the air. One of the dancers moves an ice block, whereas another carries a big piece of beige-coloured fabric in the front of the stage, some of the dancers are dragging each other across the stage while others are moving individually. There is no music or soundscape in the background. At some point, the dancers start to speak. They are mentioning words such as *happiness* but it is done in an abstract way: the sentences do not follow a strict story line. They could be described as abstracts poems or notes. The music starts to play. The soundscape changes from piano music to humming sounds and dripping water. When the humming sounds begins, the movements of the dancers get slower and many of the dancers start moving on the floor of the stage. Afterwards, the dancers are speeding up and running around the stage, playing with the ribbons, the fabrics and the ice block, as if they were in a hurry. They are making knots, consisting of the dancers and a black rope and *untying* them afterwards. When they start to speak again, addressing topics such as happiness and feminism, they are expressing being unhappy, they are also referring to *Staying With the Trouble* by Donna Haraway. Then the song “I Nearly Married a Human” by Gary Numan starts to play, the dancers perform a choreography which starts with unified movements, such as marching and waving their hand in rhythm. At some point their movements disperse and at the end, there is no unified choreography instead the dancers are moving in different, individual ways. The dancers are marching, pushing, waving their hands in the air and performing cartwheels. When the music stops, the dancers drop to the floor and the lights dim. The dancers slowly stand up and start to speak again. They mention words

such as *hallucinations, dream-like, giving space*. They are over articulating words in a robot-like manner. It seems that they end up having a small argument. While speaking, one of the dancers starts to drag the ice blocks away, whereas the other dancers start to touch pieces of beige-coloured fabrics which resemble skin. They are touching their limbs and bodies with them. Then one of the dancers start to sing a song: *Mama, You Been On My Mind* by Bob Dylan. The other dancers motionlessly listen and after a while join in the singing. The lights fade out.

3.2.1. The post-human performers and their relationship to movements and words

The position of the human performers in this performance is interesting. According to the choreographer Jenni-Elina von Bach, *Posthuman days* asks what is a post-human subject and what does it mean to let go of anthropocentrism. When watching the performance and thinking of the position of the performers in this performance, I considered the movements as being a “tentacle”, as Donna Haraway proposes in her book *Staying with the trouble* (31). Haraway explains how “[t]he tentacular ones make attachment and detachments (31). According to Haraway, the tentacular ones “weave paths and consequences but not determinism; they are both open and knotted in some ways on not others” (31). One could say that the tentacular ones are unpredictable and do not follow any preceded patterns. In the same way, the performers and their movements in the performance are making attachments and detachments but in an unpredictable manner, in addition the performers are interacting with their surroundings and materials such as the bacterial cellulose. They are making knots with ropes. Moreover, it is difficult to foresee the kind of movements that will follow. To some extent, the notion of unpredictability is present. Nevertheless, the similarities of movements can be recognized and one starts to wonder how the movements are linked with

each other and whether some repeatable patterns will occur at some point. Having said that, to some extent the notion of arbitrariness remains.

The dancers and their presence and coexistence with materials presented on stage are both open and knotted at the same time, they are exploring “material-semiotic worlds” (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 31). As explained by Haraway, [t]he tentacular are not disembodied figures; they are cnidarians, spiders, finery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jellyfish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings” (*Staying with the Trouble* 32). Thus, I propose *Posthuman Days* being in a way tentacular. The limbs of the dancers are touching, sensing, reaching out and exploring, however, not in a human-a-like manner but as if they were bugs, spiders or other creatures which sense and perceive their surroundings differently than human beings. The movements of the dancers propose different perception and sensation of the world around us. The movements escape from the sphere of a human and reaches out to the other spheres which are more tentacular. Most of the time, the movements of the dancers try neither to manifest any virtuosity of a dancer’s (human) body nor to imitate any specific genre of dance or even comment on the trajectory of the dance. How the performers are on the stage and the kind of movements they are performing warrants reading the performers as post-human subjects. Nevertheless, during moments, when the dancers are performing a unified choreography to the music, the performance resonates in a different register. The movement material during the choreographed parts differ from the other movement material presented earlier. Thus, this sudden change of aesthetics tears a rupture in the logic of the piece. Even though the abrupt and tentacular movement material seems to be a bit strange at first, the material works within its own tentacular logic. Hence, the occurrence of pop music and the unified movement material to the music confronts us with a totally different aesthetics and logic than presented earlier in the performance. When the song by Gary Numan is over, the dancers become tentacular once more, the posthuman creatures they were before. The impact

of the transformation is that the abstract and tentacular movements seem to become more *normal* compared to the act of unified choreography which resembles something strange in context. That is to say that the aesthetics of the more abstract and tentacular movements seem to be more coherent and in line with the overall logic of the performance. Moreover, the short act of dancing to the song alienates the spectators from the performance for a while. Bertolt Brecht launched the notion of *Verfremdung* (Brecht 143). *Verfremdung* has been translated as alienation, distancing, estranging and defamiliarization. One could say that the song and the dance alienates the spectators from the performance and make them more aware of their position as spectators.

Whereas the level of tentacular physical movements implies post-human approaches, the act of speech has a slightly different impact. After seeing movements and interactions with materials on stage, and since the set design and lighting are rather minimal, everything unexpected draws attention. The spoken words steer the gaze and interpretations. The power of language comes often from the need to understand the words and their meanings. Words start to create both a context and content. The dancers are addressing topics such as happiness, unhappiness and feminism. However, the dialogue among the dancers is rather vague, and does not follow a certain strict narrative. Nevertheless, the act of speech causes a rupture in the logic of a seemingly material performance. The sudden use of language requires a re-orientation to the performance. During these moments, when dancers start to speak, other dimension of interpretation open and hence, the act of speech steers the gaze of a spectator and interpretations to the direction of understanding the meanings of the dialogue. However, when the performers are speaking, the audience is not addressed directly. The words spoken on the stage could also be considered as mantras or abstracts poems. Referring to Donna Haraway and suggesting *to stay with the trouble*, the atmosphere created on stage indicates

that the performance at hand plays strongly with the concept of posthumanism. Having said that, it seems secondary to understand the exact meaning of the text. The act of speech, and more precisely, *how* the words are spoken, seems to be an add-on to the assemblage that plays with the idea of post-human subjects. As mentioned earlier, the performers' speech on the stage is robotic. One can pick a sentence or a word from here and there and interpret them against the backdrop of the composition of materials on stage. Verbal communication, the words, are also making attachments and detachments, like the movements of the dancers. Hence, one could say that it is in line with the tentacular logic of the performance. Since there is something uncanny how the performers are articulating the text, the performers start to resemble hybrids, something which could be considered as *human plus creatures* or cyborgs as if they were programmed to repeat the text. Due to the uncanny elements mentioned above, I propose that also the relationship between the audience remains to some extent distant. The dancers' physical distance to the audience is quite substantial, the audience is usually not addressed directly and the manner and the encounters with the audience are limited. One could argue that the bodily presence of the dancers could be perceived as vehicles in order to translate and transmit the language of post-human hybrids.

3.2.2. Agential properties of matter: bacterial cellulose and ice

As proposed in the previous sub-chapter, the impact of de-centralization of the dance's bodies is created by the strong materiality of the set. As Rebecca Schneider proposes, "matter engages with matter as well as with (or without) humans, who are also matter" (7). In the same manner, the dancers engage themselves with matter on the stage. The interplay between the dancers and the materials is a crucial component of the performance. The materials such as melting ice, bacterial cellulose and the shape-shifting set itself are central elements in the performance.

Posthuman days stages an open-ended platform to discover the coexistence of materials and the dancers' bodies. In terms of materialization of the performance, one crucial issue is the use of bacterial cellulose which becomes a non-hierarchical non-human actor which coexists among the dancers and possesses agential properties. It seems that the performance suggests experiencing the proximity of materials and considers it equally important or unimportant as the proximity of a human body. The presence of materials such as bacterial cellulose and melting ice reminds how intriguing shape-shifting material entities can be. Melting ice and other material entities which are shifting their shapes and transforming, draw attention and in a way, de-centralize the dancers' human-bodies. Bacterial cellulose as a material on stage is not only shown but also explored. Its properties are tested out. The dancers are playing with it, touching their limbs with the pieces of fabric as if they were forming different assemblages and compositions, or second skins. Bacterial cellulose looks at the same time uncanny and natural. It resembles skin, and so it possesses human-like qualities, however, it is artificial and consists of cellulose. It looks at the same time natural but it is also a slightly disgusting, as if it were real discarded skin. Bacterial cellulose as material seems to cross borders between human and non-human. It seems to be *human plus* material. In addition, bacterial cellulose is intriguing material because it is a small entity, an organic compound. Plants also include cellulose but it differs from the bacterial one. Bacterial cellulose is a material that is produced by humans, grown from microbes and usually manufactured in laboratories. In this performance, it exists alongside ice blocs consisting of water which is a one of the main substance of the Earth. In this performance these two different materials are separated entities existing alongside in a hierarchical manner.

Bleeker proposes that through material thinking performances come to matter (126). This remark applies to *Posthuman days*, too. The matter starts to manifest itself. The ice blocks on

stage are concrete reminders of the process of melting. It is also a visible transformation of matter – ice becomes water. Matter is not playing a supporting role or trying to elevate or underline the presence of a dancer's (human) body. On the contrary, it becomes an end itself. In this case, bacterial cellulose is a strong element in the construction of the performance. Thus, the matter starts to matter.

Moreover, the matter on the stage does not remain the same during the performance. Without paying much attention, one notices that at the end of the performance, the other side of the stage has started to curl up and the stage transforms. The ice blocks are melting on stage, leaving water on the stage which draws attention and evokes interpretations. These interpretations function on two levels. On the one hand, melting ice on the stage reminds of melting ice caps and other troubling climate issues of the Anthropocene, and on the other hand, the ice blocks on the stage embody the abstract notion of time passing by making it visual. When the performance ends, the ice blocks are still melting. One could say that there is still some time left.

One impact of how matter in the performance is addressed, is how the address offers multiple readings and ways to engage with the performance. When observing intriguing transformations of ice and the moving bodies on stage, one can perceive two different modes of *being* and *being in motion* and one can choose which trait to follow, whether it is the process of transformation of matter or the dancers' bodies in motion or the dialogue between different modes of being in time and space etc. Not only are the movements of a human body intriguing but also how other non-human actors exist (and transform) in space. It is not about being but a process of becoming (Coole 453). Moreover, the matter also affects the space and the dancers. When the ice blocks melt, there is also water on the stage. Hence, the performers should be aware of this transformation because it sets new conditions (slippery floor).

Consequently, there is as a danger to slide and fall. The matter has an impact on the performers – they have to adjust.

3.2.3. The logic of collage

As introduced in the previous sub-chapter, matters such as melting ice and bacterial cellulose are essential elements in this performance. I proposed in the sub-chapter above that the matter possesses agential properties in the piece. In this sub-chapter I would like to explore materials a bit further but not only in terms of agential properties but also in terms of a collage. In other words, this sub-chapter concentrates on exploring the dramaturgical strategy of an assemblage and how it manifests itself in *Posthuman days*.

When summing up the key components of the performance, the dancers, the costumes, bacterial cellulose pieces, the ribbons, the stage, the lighting, the soundscape and the melting ice blocks and the time that is shared together, one encounters a logic of a composition. The manner in which the components are used and structured forms a collage. One could claim that each and every performance is a composition; certain elements are put together in a compositional manner. However, what is implied here is that the logic of assemblage is particularly interesting in this performance because by putting these certain elements together the impact of the collage is based on the compositional properties of the whole entity not a singular element in it. In other words, the melting ice blocks, the dancers, the text, bacterial cellulose and other elements are structured in a manner that does not highlight any particular component over something else but the effect of the performance is created by combining certain elements in a certain order and in a certain manner. As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, the performance proposes tentacular logic. The logic does not seek coherency. Neither it is closed. On contrary, the power of this logic lies in its knotted yet porous structure that entails a pinch of unpredictability.

The end of the performance remains open. This open and porous form reminds me of Carl Lavery's idea of *weak performance* and its potential power (4). Lavery proposes that the power of theatre might lie in its weakness by suggesting that "weak theatre holds out the possibility of an alternative kind of eco-practice, rooted in a recognition of limits and capacity" (4). The notion of weak theatre does not imply that weak theatre would be a synonym for bad theatre or theatrical pieces which are not rehearsed enough in order to be shown to audiences. Lavery explains that it is desirable "to produce a theatre that highlights its own capacity to signify, its own failure to act (Lavery 4). Lavery refers to the notion of "mutual vulnerability" introduced by Bad Kershaw (qtd. In Lavery 4). According to Kershaw, mutual vulnerability "means the human recognising and reproducing in 'the other' of the non-human within itself something akin to the qualities of spectacle that provoke then deconstruct contempt and curiosity (238). Hence, mutual vulnerability does not mean physical vulnerability but one could say that it is porous interaction and recognition between the audience, performers, materials on stage and space. *Posthuman days* evokes questions but refrains offering any straight-forward answers or providing morals. When the performance came to its end, I had the feeling that it could still have continued. I noticed that I related myself to the materials and their ongoing transformations. The end seemed not like the real end but rather a small pit stop for spectators to inhale and exhale before continuing melting like the ice blocks on the floor and curling up like the edges of the stage. One could say that *Posthuman days* tries not to humanize what the audience see but allows it to remain enigmatic and abstract. The kind of open ending leaves space for spectators' interpretations.

When considering what could be a minor and major dramaturgy of the performance, I sum up some remarks. The dramaturgy of the performance plays with the limits and capacities of a

theatrical performance. The minor dramaturgy of the performance could be the interplay between the human, bacterial cellulose and ice, an exploration of the coexistence of different materials. I suggest that the post-anthropocentric potential of *Posthuman days* lies in its porous vulnerability. That is to say also the level of the major dramaturgy. Like the edges of the stage starts to curl during the performance, the performance itself appears to be not fixed but an organic entity that does not remain the same but it starts to blister and change its shape, “in this kind of world picture, causality and linearity lose their value” (Van Kerkhoven, “On dramaturgy” 20). Even though when the performance is over ice on the stage continues melting leaving traces of time which was shared and which passed by.

3.3. *Moving in Concert* by Mette Ingvarsten

My third case study is a dance performance *Moving in Concert* choreographed by Mette Ingvarsten. The premier took place in Kaaitheater, in Brussels, Belgium on the 3rd of October 2019. I saw the performance on the 5th of October 2019. Before entering the theatre space, some of the dancers walked around and randomly addressed some of the audience members in the foyer. One of the dancers, Anni Koskinen, came to me and my group of friends and talked to us shortly. Shortly after this brief encounter the spectators were allowed to enter the theatrical space.

When entering the space, there are nine dancers on stage. The audience is seated in the auditorium. The dancers are wearing tight orange coloured one-pieces. When the performance begins, it is quite dark. There are no lamps or other lights on the ceiling. The only sources of light are fluorescent tubes which the dancers are holding. A tube filled with sand is hanging from the ceiling on the left side of the stage. Sand is dripping from it. The dancers start to move. They are forming different patterns and constellation, constantly holding the fluorescent tubes which are sometimes changing their colour from white to red, then red to

magenta and so on. The dancers are forming different constellations together as a group. The constellations they are creating resemble rhizomes and nets. The dancers use the whole floor and sometimes they are only occupying the right side of the stage. They perform their movements simultaneously most of the time. There are variations how the fluorescent tubes are held. Sometimes the dancers are carrying them in their hands, sometimes the fluorescent tubes in between the dancer's bodies and the dancers are carefully leaning on them. At the beginning of the performance the dancers move slowly but having moved for a while in such a manner they start to speed up. The dancers occupy the whole stage and start to spin around simultaneously. Eight of the dancers are holding fluorescent tubes whereas one of the dancers has a wooden pole. They all are spinning around for several minutes. The stage is otherwise dark but the spinning fluorescent tubes and their changing colours leave *traces* and halos which are optical illusions produced by spinning lights. During the performance, the dancers and the bright tubes conquer the whole stage. The stage is full of moving lights which seem to change their forms constantly as if it were a light installation. Sometimes the emergences seen on stage resemble optical illusions. It is difficult to perceive details, one observes only the result of the constellation which consists of an interplay between dancers and the fluorescent tubes. When the spinning and other movements stop, the dancers start to crawl towards the first row. Finally, they stop their movements completely when they surpass the apron.

There are only few changes in the soundscape during the performance. The tube filled with sand which is located on the right side of the stage keeps pouring sand continuously. At some point, the sound of the pouring sand is amplified and becomes really loud. Simultaneously, it is possible to perceive how the sand is piling up on to the stage and how the pile becomes larger and larger.

3.3.1. De-centralizing the performer

When analysing the performance *Moving in Concert*, I start by tackling the position of performers/dancers in the performance. When entering the theatrical space and experiencing the darkness, and the light coming from the fluorescent tubes, the rough amplified sound of constantly pouring sand, seeing it piling up slowly and observing the dancers moving with the tubes in the darkness, I noticed that I saw very little that was humane. The short, humane encounter with the dancer experienced earlier in the foyer seemed to fade away immediately.

The dancers immersed into the background and rendered into mechanical tools which steered the fluorescent tubes that attracted my attention. It is possible to experience space through materiality presented on stage and explore the repositioning of bodily presence. Eckersall et al. propose “reposition would not effectively abolish the actor, for example, but would enable a different conception of acting to emerge from the mediated assemblages in which performance now occurs” (2). The mediated assemblage seen on stage did not abolish the actors but repositioned them in a new manner.

Due to the darkness of the space, the faces of the performers were not very recognizable, only the outlines of the bodies could be seen. In *Farm Fatale* the faces of the performers were covered by masks whereas in *Moving Concert* the faces could not be seen because of the darkness. However, in both cases, one of the most unique features of an individual, the face, was not discernible.

As explained in the description of the performance, *Moving in Concert* started with a small encounter with the performer Anni Koskinen in the foyer. This brief encounter could maybe be considered as a sort of a prologue. During the interaction with Koskinen it turned out that she comes from the same country as I do. As a spectator, the short, informal interaction with Koskinen blurred the lines between the real person and the dancer playing her role. Thus, one

could say that the small prologue could serve the purpose of blurring the lines between the reality and the performance, the current moment and the constructed theatrical event. Finding a common (human) dominator between the dancer and me shaped my perception and expectations for a while. I wore *human-sized glasses* for a moment. In addition, the aforementioned direct audience address also evokes questions such as when does the performance *start* and what is the exact time frame where the performance is located?

3.3.2. The agential properties of matter and the visible passage of time

Having addressed the position of human-performers in *Moving in Concert*, I continue exploring the performance in terms of materiality and the notion of time. When comparing *Posthuman Days* and *Moving in Concert*, some similarities can be found. One of these similarities is a concrete object or matter that embodies the notion of the passage of time. The pouring sand in *Moving in Concert* and its raw materiality and the melting ice blocks in *Posthuman Days* are reminders of the passing of time. In addition, the concrete materials such as sand and ice visualize the otherwise abstract concept of time. In these performances the aforementioned materials can be interpreted as metaphors. When addressing the notion of time through the lenses of the Anthropocene, one could say that the metaphors of time presented in the performances can be interpreted at least in two different ways; the abstract concept of time becomes visible when observing sand that is piling up. However, is not only the time that passes by but also the time that is running out; the sand tube will become empty eventually. In other words, it can be read as a comment or a reminder that the time of the Anthropocene, *the time of humans* is slowly running out. The current state of the environment is not promising.

Another similarity can be found when considering how the matters are placed and explored both in *Posthuman days* and *Moving in Concert*. Staging the human performers and non-

human performers alongside in a non-hierarchical manner creates a fluid interplay which can be perceived as being non-hierarchical. In other words, the manner in which the matter and the human beings are placed does not highlight human agency over the agential properties of the matter.

Even though some similarities can be found in these two aforementioned performances, there are also differences. When it comes to materials which play a crucial role in both performances, the materials per se are different. In *Moving in Concert* there is a tube filled with sand, the fluorescent tubes and one wooden pole on stage. When the fluorescent tubes and the wooden pole are moved by the dancers, creating different constellations and images, one can still see that one of the *rods* is different from the others, namely, the wooden pole. Whereas the other rods are lighting up the room, the wooden pole does not possess such illuminating properties. It's also intriguing to consider what the coexistence of light and wood propose. Also in terms of quantity, the one (not illuminated) wooden pole stands out by looking different from the eight illuminated ones. All these elements, a human body, an example of technology (the fluorescent tube) and a sample of organic material (the wooden pole) creates a collage that is interesting in terms of the materials and what they suggest. If the fluorescent tube could be understood to represent an innovation invented by the human, could the role of the wooden pole could be something different? Could the one wooden pole represent forests which are carbon sinks that can absorb more carbon than they release and play an essential role in reducing the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere? Wood as a material also possesses other properties. It is sustainable. Both wood and bacterial cellulose consists of cellulose fibres. Thus, both in *Moving in Concert* and in *Posthuman days* the materials used on stage consisted of cellulose. However, the growing processes of them differed from each other.

When it comes to sand, it is a grainy material which can be found in nature. Sand also stores time and thus, holds clues of the environment and geology. In addition, there is a booming trade around sand – sand is “the world’s second most consumed natural resource” (Beiser). It is used for multiple uses, for large building sites, producing glass and concrete etc. However, not each type of sand is useful for such purposes. Desert sand, for example could not be used for the aforementioned purposes (Beiser). The sand that is suitable is “the more angular stuff found in the beds, banks and floodplains of rivers, as well as in lakes and of the seashores” (Beiser). That kind of sand is in high demand yet it is not an endless source. Extracting huge amounts of sand has a negative impact on the planet (Beiser). It seems that the sand coming from the sand tube on stage is indeed such sand that could be used for multiple purposes, it does not seem to be desert sand. As a spectator one cannot know what is the origin of that sand seen on stage. One is confronted with different materiality than what the fluorescent tubes and the wooden pole suggest.

3.3.3. The logic of collage and the notion of technology

Moving in Concert stages a fluidly changing collage. The dramaturgy of the performance plays with the logic of composition. When putting elements such as fluorescent tubes, a wooden pole, dancers’ bodies, orange one-pieces, spinning movements, pouring sand and an otherwise dark space together, the result resembles an assemblage. As analysed in the previous sub-chapter, different materials used in the performance, possess different qualities, properties and connotations. Due to the rapid movements of the dancers, the assemblage constantly changes its form. Nevertheless, the individual elements of that composition remain the same. Even though assuming each element, whether they are non-human actors or human-actors, possessing hierarchical agential properties, the dramaturgical strategy of collage is stronger than the impact of an individual element of the collage. By combining the different

elements together, the performances dramaturgical strategy of collage manifests. The strong impact of the collage is constructed by combining these elements, especially the movements, speed and light. It creates an image. However, the outlines of this image are blurred.

Sometimes it seems as if one would be looking at the performance through a kaleidoscope when everything seems to look symmetrical and vertiginous. The collage plays with optical illusions.

One essential element of the assemblage is technology. It is intriguing to re-think the role of technology and the kind of possibilities the coexistence of technology and (human) performers might entail. The use of technology in relation to human performers appears to be non-hierarchical. The amplified sound of the dripping sand and the fluorescent tubes are examples how technology is used. On the one hand, one could say that the use of technology plays a supporting role in the performance. On the other hand, it is still difficult to say who or *what* possesses the leading role. Since the fluorescent tubes are the only source of light, constantly changing alongside the dancers' movements, they become an essential element of the composition. According to Eckersall et al. , “[i]n a postdramatic context, luminosity often exceeds the dramatic situation and light no longer provides illumination (of an action or scene) so much as form part of a material composition with other elements” (55). In the *Moving in Concert*, the light is used neither to illuminate the action nor scene but to be considered as a relevant and essential element of the collage. In addition, how the light is used invites us to focus on observing how the light from the fluorescent tubes enters the space and thus, “we might see something of its materiality emerge, its own moods and tones and its own specific role in the ‘material composition’ of NMD” (Eckersall et al. 55).

Technology and how it is used in this performance, is being part of a fluid assemblage and supporting the logic of composition. The fluidity is constructed by the aforementioned elements, such as the rapidity of movements and lights and other elements of the composition. It is interesting to observe how the combination of the darkness of the auditorium, the moving bodies and the incandescent tubes blurs perception. The outlines of the bodies become porous and seem to blend into the background.

Another crucial component of the collage is the abled-bodied dancers and their presence. The dancers are constantly moving, their bodies are on stage during the whole performance. However, the notion of a human body resonates differently when combined with other components of the collage, such as the pouring sand and the light from the fluorescent tubes. The compositional sequence enlarges and enriches the performance.

In addition, another essential element of the collage is sand and its properties. As addressed in the previous sub-chapter, the use of sand in the world entails many problematic issues. Sand plays also a crucial role in this collage. Sand is a loose granular material found in nature whereas the colour changing fluorescent tubes could be perceived as emergences of technological achievements. The coexistence of sand, technology and the dancers creates polylogue without words. The dramaturgical strategies used in the performance do not seek to elevate a particular element. Neither is the human performer the most important component, nor the presence of technology. However, when it comes to sound, the sound of the dripping sand (with the help of technology) takes over the soundscape of the performance. The human performers are silent during the whole performance – there is no dialogue.

In the light of my research question, it is intriguing to considerer what the logic of this collage proposes. One could say, it is in a way an apparatus, a “totality of elements” (Bleeker 134).

Bleeker analyses the performance *End* by Kris Verdonck in her article “Thinking That

Matters –Towards a Post-Anthropocentric Approach to Performance Design” by saying, “[t]his post-apocalyptic and post-anthropocentric universe takes shape in a composition of materials, yet this composition is also conceptual in the sense that it embodies a concept of what the universe is and how it can be thought” (134). This can also be applied to *Moving in Concert*, albeit the universe seen on stage is not necessarily a post-apocalyptic one. However, the composition on stage embodies an idea of what a post-anthropocentric universe could be. Materials such as sand, wood and fluorescent tubes entail several connotations. How these materials are used in composition evokes interpretations. In addition, in the creation of the soundscape, the human performers play a minor role. The takeover of the sound of sand is in the centre of attention. All in all, the chosen materials of the performance are entwined with the issues of the Anthropocene; an erosion of soil, the urgent need of carbon sinks, deforestation and people mastering nature.

The minor dramaturgy of the performance could be the closeness of movements, lights and speed and the kind of constellations and images this combination produces. The major dramaturgy, however, could be how the performance aligns human performers and non-human entities on the same level. In that manner, the major dramaturgy suggests a repositioning of the human, not only within theatre but also in the world. In other words, reorganizing the power hierarchy so that the humans are no longer the dominant species.

4. CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to identify the characteristics and dramaturgical strategies that could be described as elements of *post-anthropocentric performance* and to define possible dramaturgical structures and strategies which move beyond anthropocentric views. By

analysing my case studies, I came across these key findings: firstly, the reconceptualization of the role of the human performer was a central element in each of my case studies, both in *Farm Fatale*, *Posthuman days* and as well as in *Moving in Concert*. This reconceptualization can be named as the de-centralization of the human performer which could be considered as an element of post-anthropocentric performance. The de-centralization does not necessarily mean erasing the human completely from the picture but re-framing and re-thinking the role of the human performer and making room for other non-human actors, such as material, plants, light, bacterial processes etc.

Secondly, the issue that is linked to the de-centralization of the human performer is the acknowledgment of the agential properties of matter and considering them as non-hierarchical components in relation to human performers. Observing how matter might affect the human performer might help us to recognize the agential properties of matter. For instance, matter might have an impact on how human performers move in a given space. The melting of the ice affects how the dancers re-orientate themselves in relation to the space in *Posthuman days*, or how the dancers have to be cautious not to drop the fluorescent tubes while moving in *Moving in Concert*.

The third finding is how the collage as a dramaturgical strategy can be used in the post-anthropocentric manner which underlines the importance of coexistence of non-human performers and human performers. On the one hand, it can mean that one particular element cannot be considered being more important or agential than another. The powerful capacity of a collage is constructed by the relations which are produced by combining particular elements together. On the other hand, there might not be a such thing as *a post-anthropocentric collage*, albeit there are different logics of a collage that resist remaining on the anthropocentric surface. The tentacular logic in *Posthuman days* or the fluid logic in *Moving in Concert* can be understood as examples of such non-anthropocentric dramaturgical logics.

These logics can be considered as a step moving beyond anthropocentric views and envisioning the post-anthropocentric stage.

Lastly, when it comes to the concepts of a minor and major dramaturgy, they have shown their value when trying to make sense of different dramaturgical structures and logics that the case study performances entail. It can be said that dramaturgy works not only on one level but several. The understanding of the minor and major dramaturgy can be useful when both zooming in on the components of a performance and when zooming out and addressing how the performance communicates and resonates with the surrounding world. Even though the focus of this thesis was not to tackle the process of making post-anthropocentric performance, it turned out that the minor and major dramaturgy can also be beneficial concepts in making processes. In addition, throughout this thesis, the notion of scale was applied. The applied understanding of scale might help us to approach dramaturgical structures that move beyond anthropocentrism and human-only dramaturgies.

The case study analysis answered my research question partly by providing the results mentioned above. However, new questions and insight arose. To better understand the implications of the results of this thesis, future studies could address questions concerning processes of making post-anthropocentric performances. The book *The Practice of Dramaturgy: Working on Actions in Performance*, edited by Konstantina Georgelou, Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou, provides interesting perspectives on dramaturgical practice today. If dramaturgy has been understood as making sense, knowing and pursuing coherency, *The Practice of Dramaturgy: Working on Actions in Performance* proposes to approach it differently, namely, in terms of a politicized and catalytic practice. According to Georgelou, Protopapa and Theodoridou, “dramaturgy basically marks a blending between the

terms ‘action’ and ‘work’, which, as we will demonstrate, points precisely to its catalytic function.” (74). In *Moving in Concert*, the constellation of the group consisted of dancers from multiple countries. In *Fatale Fatale* there were also performers from different countries. A theatrical piece does not happen in a void. Both these performances have been touring abroad. When there are people from different countries and cultures in the process of making, the ideas might start to circulate and collective dramaturgical processes may occur. In addition, if considering the overall dramaturgy of the performance as a major dramaturgy that communicates with the world, the group of performers and how they functioned together with their human properties, could be understood as a minor dramaturgy of the performance.

Moreover, when taking under consideration the current alarming state of the climate and the international manner of the work in the field of performance and emissions that transporting people and goods produce, one could say that the practice of dramaturgy has indeed a catalytic function, both in terms of politics and also the environment. Some practitioners have already decided either to refuse or to reduce flying due to ecological reasons. One of them is choreographer Jérôme Bel who trains with dancers by Skype because in 2019 he decided not to work in ways that involves flying (Sulcas). Belgian based artist Benjamin Verdonck, on the other hand, refuses to fly to a theatre festival in Belarus and asks in an open letter whether this trip could be done in a more sustainable manner (Verdonck). Considerations of how to work internationally in a sustainable manner are topical when exploring the notion of post-anthropocentric performance. Hence, I suggest that this field of inquiry should be researched further.

To conclude, this thesis illustrated that post-anthropocentric performance does not necessarily mean erasing the presence of human performers on stage completely but questions the position of the human performer as the central element of the performance. In addition, post-

anthropocentric performance re-thinks the concept of agency and makes room for non-human actors.

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