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**Ending the Silence: A Documentary Theatre Response to the Impact of
German War Guilt on Intergenerational, Bi-cultural Identity in New
Zealand**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

English

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Abstract

This exegesis forms the written accompaniment to the documentary theatre production *Ending the Silence*. Together, these creative and critical components form the basis for a Performance as Research (PAR) project undertaken as part of a Masters in English at Massey University. This research aims to explore and utilise the potentials of the ‘documentary theatre’ form to better understand how issues of heritage and inheritance have informed intergenerational Kiwi/German bicultural identity. The research also aims to analyse how engaging with a creative process enables a closer investigation into topics which may be regarded as taboo. The PAR project also aimed to give a voice to those who have been silenced due to the pressures of social constructs regarding German War Guilt. This term is defined as a response shared by Germans for Germany’s involvement in the Second World War. This project explores the themes of identity, guilt, history and fiction, and authenticity and the representation of trauma. The thesis begins by describing the ethnographic methodology utilised for devising the documentary theatre script *Ending the Silence*, highlighting how the creative process enabled a closer investigation of the key research themes. The research highlights how history and fiction can work symbiotically to explore taboo topics in greater depth. It concludes that documentary theatre is a useful tool for exploring taboo topics in history, arguing that there is a need to encourage intergenerational, inter-cultural communication around these topics in order to talk responsibly about past injustices.

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