

**WHITE AND AFRICAN: THE DILEMMA OF IDENTITY**

by

**SHENA BRIDGID HESS**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR J P ROUX**

**JOINT SUPERVISOR: PROF J S DREYER**

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**APPENDIX** | Cycles of Revenge and Reconciliation

I declare that **White and African: The Dilemma of Identity** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Bridgid Hess

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## **SUMMARY**

### **TITLE**

**'White and African: The dilemma of identity.'**

The effects of trauma on group identity. The story of three generations of a white Zimbabwean farming family.

**BY:** S.B.Hess

**DEGREE:** Master of Theology

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**PROMOTER:** Dr J P Roux

**JOINT PROMOTER:** Dr J S Dreyer

## **SUMMARY**

This study looks at the construction of **white identity** within **postcolonial conflict** in **Zimbabwe**. Is it possible to be white and African? And how will the white African look when his identity as 'privileged' is stripped from him/her? This study also challenges the church to respond to the **endemic violence** by finding ways of bringing hope and **healing**.

The role that **trauma** plays in our ongoing narratives is explored along with ways to exit these cycles without re-traumatizing large sectors of the community who are considered 'outsiders'. It ends with questioning the usefulness of '**white**' and '**race**', except as a political construction that benefits those in power to be able to tap into past historic pain and injustice.

**TEN KEY TERMS:** White identity. Postcolonial conflict. Zimbabwe. Endemic violence. Healing. Trauma. Race. Church. Land.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Braai** A word borrowed from the Afrikaans language which means to bar-be-que or to cook on an open fire.

**Chimurenga:** This refers to the liberation struggles. There have been three 'chimurengas'. The first was in 1889 when the Shona and the Ndebele peoples resisted the colonial onslaught of Rhodes. The second chimurenga was the time from 1971-1980 which resulted in independence from Rhodesia, the colonial power. This is what I refer to within this text as the liberation struggle. The third chimurenga is seen as the present struggle to return the 'land' to the black African people, which is currently happening and began in April 2000.

**Freedom fighters:** People who joined the liberation struggle in the 1970's.

**Gukuruhundi:** There are two major tribes in Zimbabwe, the Shona and the Ndebele. In pre-colonial times the Ndebele were more powerful and frequently raided the Shona peoples, burning crops and taking their women and children as slaves.

During the war of liberation, known as the second chimurenga, the Shona and Ndebele each developed their own armies, and were often caught in their own 'power struggles'.

After independence, ZANU (PF), the Shona led government, effectively prevented an opposition from the Ndebele by stamping out any possible dissident activity. They brought in a special branch of the army, known as the 5<sup>th</sup> brigade to officially prevent an uprising. It is estimated that over 20,000 Ndebele were killed from 1983-1985. It was political but also seen as punishment for what the Ndebele did to the Shona in the Nineteenth's Century.

**ZANU (PF):** Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front).

**Homeland 2002: (Author unknown)**

*Within my soul, within my mind,  
There lies a place I cannot find..  
Home of my heart. Land of my birth.  
Smoke-coloured stone,  
And flame-coloured earth.  
Electric skies. Shivering heat.  
Blood-red clay beneath my feet.*

*At night when finally alone,  
I close my eyes – and I am home.  
I kneel and touch the blood-warm sand.  
And feel the pulse beneath my hand.  
Of an ancient life too old to name,  
In an ancient land too wild to tame.*

*How can I show you what I feel?  
How can I make this essence real?  
I search for words in dumb frustration  
To try and form some explanation.  
But how can heart and soul be caught  
In one-dimensional written thought?*

*If love and longing are a 'fire'  
And man "consumed" by his desire.  
Then this love is no simple flame,  
That mortal thought can hold or tame.  
As deep within the earth's own core,  
The love of home burns evermore.*

*But what is home? I hear them say,  
This never was yours anyway.  
You have no birthright to this place,  
Descendent from another race.  
An immigrant? A pioneer?  
You are no longer welcome here.*

*Whoever said that love made sense?  
"I love" is an "imperfect" tense.  
To love in vain has been man's fate.  
From history to present date.  
I have no grounds for dispensation,  
I know I have no home or nation.*

*For just one moment in the night  
I am complete, my soul takes flight.  
For just one moment... then it's gone  
And I am once again undone.  
Never complete. Never whole.  
White skin and an African soul.*

# CHAPTER 1

## INSIDE A WHITE SKIN

This chapter will introduce the way this topic developed. The aims of the study will be formulated along with the research question and an explanation will be given of what I mean by the words '*identity*', '*white*' and '*trauma*'. My own doubts will be discussed, and the chapter will go on to introduce the participants in the study. In addition I will explain what I mean by '*a prophetic voice*'. Finally, a brief overview of the topic will be given along with the relevance of such a topic to practical theology, the church and the wider society.

### 1.1 ONCE UPON A TIME

I have often wondered how stories get written and who decides what roles we play within the drama. This story is evolving and developing, like a baby in the womb, waiting to be birthed. And this birthing is a painful process, because there is uncertainty about how it will develop. As I begin, I don't yet know how it will end. But as with any story, it has its own life, even in its embryonic form.

There is a story I used to read to my children. It was about a rabbit who got lost in the forest and couldn't find his way home. The night came and he stayed awake looking at the shadows that were cast by the moon, trembling with fear and lostness. In his imagination, the rabbit believed that those shadows were going to destroy him. One of my children shut the book on the story and said 'No Mummy, it is too sad – I will not read it any more'.

As I start out on this voyage, I also feel lost in the forest, with nothing much to guide me but the shadows of the night and a part of me wants to close the book and say 'it is too sad and painful'. But something compels me to 'read on', to read on through the shadows of the past, the challenge of the present into the hope of a less painful future.

## **1.2 THE AIM OF THIS STUDY**

The purpose of this study is:-

To understand something about how 'identity' has been formed and maintained in a white Zimbabwean, farming family. I will do this through conversations with three generations of the same family. We will work together at looking at how their own stories and beliefs have influenced their identity, and what role trauma may have played in maintaining or challenging their identity. This will then lead to:-

Ways that honour these stories and the themes that emerge from them. The study will seek to find ways that can help hold on to identity and belonging, where a large group of farmers are at risk of losing something of their group identity through the trauma that they are currently experiencing. The effect of this trauma and the stories around their identity will aim to help a 'voice' emerge, that does not carry the label 'past its sell-by date'.

The study will also challenge the role of the church to address past historic injustice, track trauma, create space for forgiveness, and find ways of bringing reconciliation and hope for a future, where all races are able to participate in society.

## **1.3 THE NARRATIVE SHAPE OF IDENTITY. WHAT I MEAN BY IDENTITY**

Much of my identity has come from my own 'story'. I have selected certain stories that 'make sense' to me over time. These stories are not only to do with 'my' life, but the life of the wider community too. Bruner (1986:143) talks of our identities being drawn from the collective stories that get told and re-enforced through what we call 'narratives' over generations. It is not pulled out of a vacuum. Gergen puts it this way:-

We shape the world in which we live, thereby creating our own 'reality' within a context of a community of others. The boundaries of our narratives are constructed through political, economic, social, and cultural constraints and potentials, with our choice of narratives not limitless, but existing within prescribed contexts.

(Gergen 1991:71)

Who I am becomes an 'identity kit' (Abrahams:1986:55) and is fashioned and developed in relation to family, culture, race, gender and other groups within a social context. I like the idea of an 'identity kit'. It reminds me of a set of tools that are collected and inherited over the years, but also changed according to circumstances. No kit is identical and I recognise my own because it is different from yours, from which I can 'draw a distinction' (Bruner 1986, Bateson 1980). In other words, I know who I am, partly because of who I am not.

My first 'tools' were crafted in England, where I was born in 1953, after World War II. It was the land of my grandparents and great-grandparents and my identity was carried in the stories that were told in the family and community. There were happy ones, funny ones and traumatic ones. Many of the stories my grandfather told me were traumatic ones about the trenches of the First World War. I would wake at night having nightmares about the stories he told and of one particular time when he was the sole survivor of his unit in the trenches. The stories I liked best were of the way he, and other prisoners of war, outwitted the German prison warders, by boiling potatoes in the wood stove, where the guards could smell them but never found them! It was a small way in which they resisted their imprisonment. My mother told me other stories of World War II. She un-picked parachutes made from silk in order to turn them into blouses.

These stories, very much, became a part of my identity. I think that I have found it easy to identify myself with these traumas and the idea of the 'heroic past'. My eldest son, Simon, was also fascinated by World War II and for some years read avidly on the topic, culminating in a visit to France on the 50year celebration of their liberation by the allied forces. Weingarten (2000) suggests that a part of our group identity collects around 'a chosen group trauma', which in the case of our family would be the two World Wars, where the English were scripted as the 'heroes'.

My identity as 'English' however, took a sudden turn when I was 15 years old. We moved as a family to Ireland, where my father took up an Academic Chair in the University of Dublin. My accent was different, I was a part of a minority group of 'British Protestants' and with it came a feeling of being an outsider in a country where I was not sure if I belonged. I also experienced, (but never languaged,) a feeling of 'shame', where I sensed that I was identified with a colonial past rather than a heroic one. A neighbour once got into a quarrel with my

mother about the British and the Irish. The neighbour told my mother 'A leopard never changes its spots'. I wondered what secrets there were that I was unaware of, what prejudice and pain caused such a comment? And how were these 'embodied stories' shaping my experience of my own identity?

Now I live in Zimbabwe. We arrived soon after independence and my identity as a white woman was not something I was ashamed of. My hopes were high in the atmosphere of 'reconciliation' and racial integration that seemed to prevail in the 1980's. But I am now no longer experiencing that confidence and I keep wondering how others see me as a white woman living in Africa.

Having read widely on the theory of social construction, I can hear Gergen (1991:139) say 'in the case of "who I am" it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities'. The possibilities of identity seem to be many, and they 'reveal themselves in every moment of interaction through the stories that I keep alive' (Lax 1992:71). At the moment I don't know if I can see these 'provisional possibilities'. Why am I now lacking confidence in my own identity and in the stories that I have kept alive? These are questions of uncertainty about where I belong and whether I am accepted, and whether the tools in my kit have lost their usefulness. I also have a feeling that 'identity' is more than multiple descriptions of the Self. Some people go so far as to say that our identity is carried in every cell of our bodies. I do not think it a coincidence, that out of the dust from the 2000 parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe, my sense of identity seemed very fragile.

These experiences and thoughts got me thinking about other white people, particularly how white farmers might be experiencing a change in their identity, and what role trauma and uncertainty has to play in it.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE WHITE AND AFRICAN?**

This research will pay attention to four main questions, which are:-

1. How has identity been formed and maintained as "white and African"?
2. What is the effect of group trauma on our identities?

3. How could we construct identities that go beyond race toward embracing our humanity?
4. What role can churches play in transforming our identities and healing our communities?

## 1.5 MEANING OF 'WHITENESS'

*He was serving drinks and dishes of rice and dried fish... on a nondescript road in Sri Lanka....*

*'Who is he?' I asked...*

*'Him?' he repeated. 'I told you, he's a waiter. Local chap.'*

*I was mystified. 'But he's white, Dilsham'...*

*'He's a Sri Lankan like me. Hear how he speaks the language? He's only a Dutch Burgher. Don't bother your head about him... Some of them live in crumbling old grand houses. Nothing to cook with, roof falling in, but that's where they like to live.'* (Orizio 2001:2)

When I was young and living in London I thought that I had no accent! I think I believed that I came from the 'norm'. As I began to think about 'whiteness' and studies that have been done on races and cultures, they rarely seem to focus on 'white people'. Taylor (2002:2) comments on Suzuki's study in 2001 in Western Zimbabwe, saying that there is a noticeable absence of anthropological studies addressing contemporary issues of identity among the white Zimbabwean minority. I wonder if there has been an assumption of white as 'normal'. Dyer (1997:1), an art and film critic, says: 'As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people'. Foucault's work on discourse highlights how dominant, or commonly accepted knowledge, provides normalising truths for people, creating categories in this case, where white is represented as superior to other races (Lyle & Gehart 2000:74, McLeod 2000:37).

The poor, young, white man in Sri Lanka disturbed the white visitor, perhaps because he didn't 'fit' his idea of what he understood as the white norm of 'wealthy' and 'separate' and 'privileged'. Here in Zimbabwe, it has aroused thoughts of white identity and how 'white identity' depends partly on how black people are represented, as 'uncivilised'. In other words, white identity is contingent on what it is not.

Rutherford (2001a:62) talks of a 'hierarchical' division between the 'European farmer' and 'African labour' where the European is constructed as more 'modern' and 'advanced'. This is what Frankenburg (1994) and Fanon (McCleod 2000:38) describe as 'essential racism', where hierarchy, history and biology create an embedded belief of white as superior. Both farmer and farm worker are then trapped in a paternalistic relationship, where the rules of the farm give farm operators the responsibility of helping the workers in exchange for their obedience (Rutherford 2001a:138). Worby (2000:101) quotes Godfrey Huggins (Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia), who in 1941 said: 'It is essential for the preservation of the European civilisation, that the African should be advanced'. Through the eyes then of the coloniser of the time, western ideals were the 'norm' and African ways were 'uncivilised'. In what Worby describes as a distinctly 'Benthamite vision' (2000:110), and in the name of 'development', the 'native' population was placed under surveillance and organised in the name of logic and rationality to work according to a Westernised ideal. This ideal included individual ownership of land, which was a very alien concept to the African culture of the time. Even to this day the white farmer will say 'my land', whereas the African person will talk of 'our land'.

If white farmers are a part of a two-tier system of separate cultures, how much do they feel this tension, and how does this influence their sense of 'belonging'? Taylor (2002:3) argues that white settlers in Zimbabwe experience uncertainty about their belonging and she says: 'Despite their bid to "belong" in Zimbabwe, the white farmers also uneasily acknowledge their rootlessness and construct themselves as a quasi-Western "other"'. Does this mean then that white farmers experience a dilemma in identity because they are not 'sure' about where they belong?

With a history of the white settlers seen as 'separate' and different, is there a possibility in Zimbabwe to transcend race, 'whiteness' and 'blackness', and embrace our humanity? If it is possible, what role does trauma play in maintaining our 'separateness' and our identity? If it does play a major part, the question then becomes how do we dismantle the wall that divides? Frankenburg (1994) argues that racism is deeply embedded within a white person's consciousness. I would argue that this is true of all races, but this does not mean that we cannot embrace our humanity, or allow racism to define us.

## 1.6 TRAUMA

The World Book Dictionary defines trauma as 'emotional shock which has a lasting effect on the mind'. Weingarten (2002a:1) refers to 'common shock', which she says brings it more into the realm of the collective, the everyday, where we have all become 'witnesses' to trauma. It is more this trauma held within community that I am referring to.

### 1.6.1 Group Trauma

There were two particular stories that I recall clearly in 1981, the year we arrived in Zimbabwe. I became a secondary 'witness' to these stories about white group trauma, which were experienced during the Rhodesian war of independence.

One was the incident where Viscount planes were shot down over Lake Kariba by freedom fighters and any survivors shot dead. In a recent conversation with a friend called Ann, she reminded me of this story, which she had deliberately not told her children (who were too young to understand at the time). But in April 2002 on a visit to the Anglican Cathedral in Harare, she noticed that the last vestiges of 'colonialism' had been removed from the church, which caused her to experience a sadness at the loss of something in her background. A lone plaque remained, in memory of those shot down in the Viscounts. It was then, that she told her son, who is now in his early thirties (he was with her at the time), of what happened. She is not sure why she needed to re-tell the story, except that it was a part of her group identity. She spoke of feeling upset and vulnerable at a time when white people are being erased from the walls of church history.

The other traumatic story I remember was of the Elim mission school in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. All the white missionaries and families were massacred by freedom fighters coming over from Mozambique. Whether I liked it or not, I was a secondary 'witness' to these group traumas, or common shock (Weingarten 2002a:1, Good Sider 2001). These stories influenced my perceptions of the white community when entering Zimbabwe in 1981.

I have also heard stories from Gertrude, a freedom fighter (one of the cultural consultants (see 1.11)), who experienced 'group trauma'. She is a nurse and was in Mozambique fighting in

the liberation struggle. She says, *'A child had arrived in the camp in Chimoyo (Mozambique), who had a very low haemoglobin level. I decided to take her to Maputo, as I was so concerned about her. The child's mother had died on the long walk from Rhodesia to Mozambique. While I was gone with the child the Chimoyo massacre took place, where thousands of people were killed by the Rhodesian forces. A little girl and her haemoglobin saved me from death'*. She went on to tell me about a second trauma that she experienced. *'I nursed dying freedom fighters and their last words were "complete the struggle". I am still trying to honour those words of my comrades'*.

These stories that seemed to be 'put to bed' at independence appear to have 'arisen' and re-emerged into our group consciousness at this painful time in Zimbabwe's history. It is as if they happened yesterday and are contributing to the way we define ourselves in relation to others. I wonder then, how these traumas get passed on? Good Sider (2001) says that forgiving and forgetting is precisely what has disallowed many from achieving true forgiveness. This thought brought my mind back to the 1980s, when Mugabe spoke of 'reconciliation'. It has made me wonder what lay buried beneath the surface of those words? Good Sider (2001:) says: 'As peacemakers we must learn to recognise and examine the trauma that often smoulders beneath conflict'. She goes on to say that if the trauma is not attended to, the victim is in danger of becoming the aggressor.

Weingarten (2002a:5), using ideas from Vamik Volkan's work, suggests that large-group identity is rather like a tent with a centre pole representing a leader. When under threat, members consolidate to keep the tent from collapsing. We gather in our 'tents' and pass these stories on to our children, and when these tents are shaken, we stand together to maintain our identity by repeating the stories embedded in the traumas of our pasts, trapped in a triangle of 'victim', 'perpetrator' and 'witness' (Weingarten 2000:397). This would seem to 'fit' with Ann's story of feeling vulnerable and threatened, as well as stories from the liberation struggle. It is as if when our identity is under threat, it also threatens our cultural identity, and rather than allowing culture to change, adapt, mix and develop, we return to earlier understandings of our cultural identity, which could be idealised constructions of how life used to be.

### 1.6.2 Effects of trauma

Studies have been done on the effects of trauma on victims of organised violence in Zimbabwe, both from the Liberation Struggle and involving the current problems (Reeler et al 1998, Patel et al 2001). These studies suggest that about one adult in ten reports a history of torture during the 1970s in Zimbabwe. The lack of freedom to express, mourn, or voice trauma has a knock-on effect (Monitor 2001:1). This issues goes on to say: '[M]any white settlers did **not** defend black Zimbabweans' freedom of expression. Settler colonial governments tried very hard to stifle what black nationalists insisted on telling them. They shut down newspapers and passed the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act to prevent hearing what they were being told'. And yet, the same law has just been passed again in 2002. Moyo (2001:1) says: 'We know the only people who are afraid of the Bill are the MDC terrorists and their British sponsors'. This is particularly confusing, as in the same week, the Herald (2001:15) devoted a complete page to the Declaration of Human Rights. According to Taylor (2002:28) this 'confusion' has led to a great deal of 'uncertainty' behind white 'belonging' in Africa and their identity. I would also argue that this 'confusion' adds to group trauma, because as Donald (a participant) puts it, '*You never know at what time the train is leaving*'. Not knowing the 'rules' has a way of keeping a community disempowered and punished, because the rules can change at any time, as has been witnessed in Zimbabwe with laws being introduced and altered frequently.

### 1.6.3 Rules and punishment

There is a Shona metaphor, which loosely translated says 'discipline a dog with an invisible stick'. In 1975 Foucault published a work called 'Discipline and Punish – the Birth of the Prison'. In it he traces the movement of society from 'public physical torture' to a form of discipline that is more invisible. It is a system that becomes a part of our daily living, imposed as a 'surveillance' on society and as a 'moral reform', creating an individual conscience, where we each become our own policeman. This in turn moulds us into 'docile beings', internalising and accepting as 'given' certain beliefs (Horrocks & Sevtic 1999:117). Compounding this belief are the hidden rules and moral practices that have been embedded in a western world-view of modern society, where European is seen as superior to other ways of knowing. Postcolonial writers like Fanon and Said (McLeod 2000:17) have written extensively on this. This in turn brings greater complexity to the current postcolonial conflict,

trauma and identity of black and white, the coloniser and the colonised. It means that our identity is not easily accessed, disappearing into the veins of society.

Adding to this docility has been the current and historical practice of violence and intimidation in Zimbabwe, where whole communities have become silenced and paralysed by fear. Even those who are not directly exposed to violence have become witnesses to trauma, both first and second hand, which seems to add to this silence (Patel et al 2001). The system, both in the past and the present, has found effective tools with which to discipline and punish the community into submission and obedience, to the point where farmers are currently grateful for even small concessions, like being able to remain on the farm to plant 'one more crop'.

Foucault worked from within a western reading of history. In Africa, I wonder whether there could be a two-tier analysis of punishment at work. This could mean that there is a public spectacle of violence, ruling society through fear and a public show of power, which Foucault would have attributed to the 'pre-modern'. Then there is a western more 'invisible' one, which is being used to punish those who are not acquiescent or 'obedient' to the dominant ideology. I also wonder how much this is a re-traumatising and a remembering of the liberation struggle, just one generation earlier. How then do we intercept these traumas so that they are not passed on to the next generation?

#### **1.6.4 Exiting cycles of trauma**

##### ***1.6.4.1 Grieving***

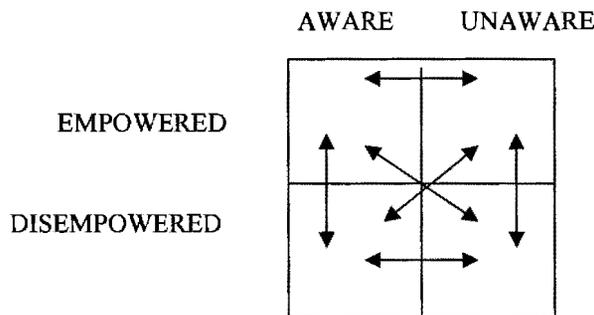
Good Sider (2001) draws on a map adapted from work by Olga Botcharova (see Appendix). She suggests intercepting the repetitive cycle of trauma and revenge by facilitating an expression of mourning and grief, rather than regrouping around injury, pain, shock and denial.

##### ***1.6.4.2 Witness positions***

Weingarten (2000:397) has done some interesting work on intercepting group trauma by changing the witness position from being unaware and disempowered toward being aware

and empowered. When in a privileged position, it is easy to become empowered but unaware. The friend Ann, whom I mentioned earlier, speaks of coming from a privileged, white, farming community, where she felt the community was empowered but unaware of racial inequality. However, at boarding school she became friendly with Judith Todd and Sally Cluttenbrook, who were early activists for black empowerment. She found that on re-entering her traditional farming community, she became aware but disempowered, which she describes as a particularly painful tension.

**Changes in witness position from Weingarten 2000:397**



‘Doing hope’ is one way that Weingarten (2000: 399) talks of moving witness positions. This means having a community of support that can actively hold hope, when those who are experiencing trauma from an aware but disempowered place do not have the ability to do so for themselves. She links this to ‘Ubuntu’ an African word meaning shared community. She goes on to say:-

Hope is something we do with others. Hope is too important - its effects on the body and soul too significant – to be left to individuals alone. Hope must be the responsibility of the community. Where this is so, and when this is so, there will be a sense of wonder, which has been called the abyss where radical amazement occurs.

(Weingarten 2000:402)

**1.6.4.3 The written word**

As a private therapist I have found different ways of ‘doing hope’ and moving from a disempowered aware position to becoming aware and empowered. One way I have found particularly beneficial is to write letters and emails to clients. Both clients and I have found it a helpful way to honour and hold these traumas within language, so that the stories can be mourned rather than put to bed in silence. I have used letters to acknowledge the pain and

trauma and also to capture alternate descriptions, personal attributes and skills that are fuelling a different story, where the trauma doesn't catapult us back into the repetitive cycle of revenge. These would include words and actions that are 'absent but implicit' within conversations, creating 'thick descriptions' of alternate preferred stories and identities (White 2000:40). In relation to this research I am using letters also to bring voice and acknowledgement to that which has become silenced in the current political climate.

#### ***1.6.4.4 Use of rituals***

Eppel (2001) in Bulawayo has done 'hope' in another symbolic way through the use of ritual. She worked on a project to rebury those killed in the 1982-1985 genocide in Matabeleland (Gukurahundi), in a way that honours the dead and brings healing from the group trauma experienced. She did this by drawing on the 'community' as witnesses, using local knowledge and traditional rituals. The project in Matabeleland has been one way in which people have been able to express their grief and pain and then 'care' for communities that suffer and let go of the trauma.

#### ***1.6.4.5 Re-making history***

Minow (1998:6-7) undertook a two-year study called 'Facing History and Ourselves'. She looked at how we can remember trauma so as not to re-traumatise. She says that it is important to learn from as full a story of the truth as possible and then to re-story it so that there can be another story for the future. This got me wondering how we, particularly as 'faith communities', can 'do hope' with one another by creating 'new stories' in a cross-cultural setting. Is there a way to intercept trauma where we are able to witness each other's pain, both present and past, and at the same time become accountable to one another, in an attitude of 'binding each other's wounds' and visiting each other's tents? In this way we may be able to intercept the cycle of trauma and polarisation.

## **1.7 GETTING STARTED**

I selected a farming family where there are three working generations. I did this in order to get a sense of history, time, perspective because I became curious about meanings attached to their identity and belonging and how this is language over time. In what seemed like a casual telephone conversation with Pamela, I asked her if she, her parents and her son might

be prepared to work with me on this project. I visited them twice on the farm in order to share my thoughts, and find out from them how we could work together. I wanted us to participate together and co-evolve the topic as a collective activity (McTaggart 1997:6). Initially they found this a difficult concept as they had agreed to help me on a project that was not initiated by them.

After some months of discussion, informal talks, field notes and reading, themes began to emerge around stories, identity and trauma. I feel these months were particularly useful as many ideas formed and re-formed in my head. This time allowed me space to emerge from my own 'reaction' as a white person within the community. This reaction is perhaps because of my own experience of 'trauma', where I felt aware but 'disempowered' to help in any significant way. I began to wonder how 'hope' could be used to facilitate a move towards greater empowerment. I also found myself asking many people how they viewed their identity and was absorbed with thoughts about the role of the 'white African' and their future identity on the continent. These informal pre-interviews and my own reflection on them helped me as a kind of pilot study to focus on areas that were unclear and to test certain questions (Janesick:1994:213). For example, I began to ask about meanings attached to the 'land' and early on I became aware that the participants were unhappy with what seemed like 'political talk'. Pamela said in one of the early talks, *'Land sounds so political. It is not a possession, it's a part of me, like my family'*.

## **1.8 MY OWN DOUBTS**

There were a number of times that I wanted to 'close the book' on this topic. Although I have lived in Zimbabwe for over 20 years, I re-experienced something of my move to Ireland, where I felt an 'outsider'. I wondered if I had any right to tread on this 'sacred' ground and how they, as a family, would perceive me when I had not experienced the trauma of the Rhodesian War. This re-awakened a similar fear in me when arriving in this country. It was a fear that I would not be accepted, because I had not been a part in the painful birthing of Zimbabwe. After all, I could return to Britain, a land from which I drew much of my identity.

I had doubts about my personal involvement with the family and worried that my friendship with them would hinder my ability to be curious. I have found it difficult to mix my

'friendship' with the research process and fear intruding where I have not necessarily been invited.

Another concern is about researching a group of 'privileged' white people, a group that does not seem to not have a politically correct 'fit' with the framework of contextual theology, which is my preferred approach (see 1.13). As white people in this country, we had our day of access to privilege and opportunity, which was denied to the majority of the population. How could I address this concern in the study, when we are all 'white' and 'privileged'? It is a confusing and paradoxical thought that the privileged could now be a part of the marginalised.

I found this paradox curiously 'silencing' of my own right to have a voice. But then I wondered whether there could be a way that as a group we can take 'responsibility' without it being 'personal'? And is there a way of taking responsibility without blame? (Jenkins 1990). What effect would this in turn have on our identity? As Pamela put it: *'There is a feeling of great loss – of being caught and trapped. I can't move away from being White. How can healing happen if it isn't reciprocal? It is as if I constantly have to ask forgiveness, but there is nothing in return. We have been born into a system and now we are being blamed for it'*.

## **1.9 MY COMMITMENT TO THIS STUDY**

1. To work respectfully with a family that is experiencing primary trauma and to stand alongside them and participate and to 'care' with them.
2. To hold onto a 'radical hope' (Ackerman 1997). This is a belief that somehow we can help bring about a mending of creation. It also involves an ability to participate in shared humanity through relationship and the languaging of our experience. In all the richness of pain, injustice and history we dare to hope that the world can be transformed into a place where all can be included (Ackerman 1991: 108,111).
3. Every telling of a story is performative and requires an audience, which confirms people's common memory (Geertz 1986:373, White 2000:75). Fortmann (1995:1055) referring to rural people in Zimbabwe says: 'The community itself is a very important audience, the act of listening to its own stories being an enactment of cohesion. Telling the story over

and over again can confirm people's common memory that at one time they had access to land and resources or that their right to land and resources was acknowledged. Thus the story of the past serves as a marker for the present'. I am committed to being an 'audience' for a family, as well as other 'outside voices', who also feel a right to farm land in Zimbabwe, and have a different interpretation on their lived experience.

4. Following the ideas of a narrative therapy approach (White & Epston 1990), I am committed to working with the stories that we tell. These stories will be told so that our self-narratives can help bring about change, both in others and in us. This way of working will hopefully free us from some of the tyrannising effects of the labels we live with.
5. To participate with those involved in the research process in a relationship, where my understanding is not privileged over other interpretations. As Burr says:-

There no longer appears to be a good reason to privilege the account or "reading" of the researcher above that of anyone else, and this puts the researcher and the researched in a new relation to each other. Subjects' own account of their experiences can no longer be given an alternative interpretation by researchers who then offer their reading as truth. This is part of what is referred to as "reflexivity".

(Burr 1995:161)

6. Having said this, I am aware that I am the primary editor and instigator of this text and enquiry. I have a responsibility to work respectfully with it in sharing it, working it and re-working it, so that I do not abuse the privilege of my role. I am therefore committed to working 'reflexively' in this text, where the pipes of my personal assumptions, theories and beliefs, which are the artefacts of my history, politics and culture, are exposed for inspection (Jones 1994:5). In this capacity, I also stand to gain from this research, in that as much as I research the 'other' I research myself.

## **1.10 INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.**

### **Bridgid, Donald, Susan, Pamela and David**

#### **Bridgid**

My first memory of arriving in Zimbabwe in May 1981 was of ancient caravans being towed behind equally ageing cars. They were trekking South. We were travelling against the flow of traffic and coming to live in a country that I only knew through the press coverage of

'Lancaster House talks'. We arrived from Lesotho, where we had lived as a family for three years. I was unsure of how it would be to live in a newly independent African country and was anxious about rearing our two young children in a 'war torn land'. What we experienced was something quite unexpected. Much to our surprise, we found that people of all races were congenial and friendly. Not having any previous involvement in the country, we found it hard to believe that there appeared to be such 'racial harmony'. When we asked about it the comments were often, '*We want to get on with our lives and put the past behind us*', or in the Church circles we heard '*It is a miracle*', and sometimes, '*There has been a great deal of prayer*'.

It was not until the 'farm invasions' early in 2000 that I felt that my journey in life turned from a comfortable sense of 'living together' to anxiety, fear and polarisation. It was like a storm appeared from nowhere and my boat was not prepared for what was happening to it. It brought up memories that I had not thought previously significant; memories of arriving in a newly independent Zimbabwe where my husband and I had both commented on the 'silence' around the Rhodesian War. These memories got submerged in daily living and rarely did friends talk about their experiences of the war and how it had affected them. Now in 2002 these memories were being stirred from the archives of 'throw away' comments. It has got me wondering about what happens to our group identity, and whether group trauma has a way of rearing its head again, particularly in times of change or threat to the group identity. I would like now to unpack these comments. I have quite frequently heard it said that if we in Zimbabwe had had a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' after independence, we may not be experiencing such a violent reaction to change. I have a sense that in order to move on we also have to look back. My investment is to unravel this thread, but I am not sure where it will lead.

### **Donald**

Donald was born in Rhodesia in 1921. His father came here after World War I, because he didn't want to return to a '*hum-drum*' life in England. Donald's opening comment, when I first approached him with this project, was, '*Of course, the trauma started in 1932, the year of the locusts*'.

In later discussions about his identity as the son of a pioneer farmer, he described himself in this way: *'I suppose, like my father, I don't like a 'hum-drum' life. My father could have returned to Britain to pursue a career as a doctor, but he chose the adventure and uncertainty and challenge of Africa. 'Brits' are different to us. They talk about "going home". This is home to us. I sometimes feel despair, but then I remember how my father survived World War 1, worked on a "food for work" programme during the depression of the 30's, how we survived through UDI, and then I remember how we are survivors. I could talk negatively, and then we would be out of here, but I hold onto hope that things will get better and calm down.... I think that we have learnt to be resilient against oppression. In spite of circumstances, I think I am good at pursuing an aim in the face of hardship. There was an article written about me in the British Times just before independence in 1980, and it showed a cartoon of me with a caption "Rowing against the tide up the Congo River". That just about sums me up'*.

### **Susan**

*'I just wonder who will be sitting on my veranda in twenty years time'*.

This was Susan's opening question when discussing the possibility of this research. In introducing herself she said, *'I have a belief that we are decent, caring people, anxious to know how to do things correctly'*. She arrived in what was Rhodesia at the age of 15 years, as her father, who was a diplomat, was posted here. She said it was *'exciting and strange'* arriving here in 1938. She trained as a nurse in England, then married Donald and settled on the farm. But the farm they are now on they bought in 1984, four years after independence. Commenting on her immediate experience she said, *'I am finding a terrible polarisation that I haven't felt before, it is as if we are being pushed into thinking of "us" and "them" and an anger at being blamed on one hand and expected to provide for everyone on the other'*.

A concern about 'anonymity' arose during our first conversation. Is it possible to create a 'safe' research where the researched and the researcher are not exposed to undue risk? Names and some facts have been altered to help this feel 'safer'.

### **Pamela**

Pamela, Donald and Susan's daughter, lives in Harare, but has a plant propagation nursery on the farm. She was brought up on a farm with her two sisters, who no longer live in

Zimbabwe. She has raised her five children in Harare and her eldest child is a daughter who has recently returned from Spain, where she has been teaching. David is her second born and after completing university in 2000 returned to help his grandfather on the farm. Her third child has been studying in Germany, and her twin sons are still at school in Harare. Her faith as a Christian forms an important part of her identity. Her initial comments to this study were, *'I get worried for my parents and David's safety. David has become quiet and withdrawn, and can't seem to talk to his friends about the trauma on the farm. My parents are elderly and have experienced such humiliation.... I always feel guilty for just being white and it is as if however much I give it is never enough'*.

### **David**

David, Pamela's son, has recently built his home. It is a gum-pole and thatch home, with a big wooden deck overlooking the farm dam. As I drove up to the house I remembered how for many years in the 1980's, the dam had been reduced to a puddle, because of the prolonged drought. Now it was teeming with bird-life and the farm appeared so 'peaceful'. I drove down through their mini game-park, where zebra were grazing on the new shoots of grass. David describes himself as *'belonging'* and yet *'not belonging'* in Zimbabwe. He said, *'Even though I am fourth generation Zimbabwean, I feel that I don't live among my own people'*. He posed the question, *'How come the Whites are not "Africanised" and yet Africans are "Westernised"? I wonder, as whites, whether we are meant to be here, when few white people even speak the local language, Shona. And yet most farmers speak Shona and interact more with their labour force than their counter-parts in the City'*. Around the idea of *'belonging'*, David is curious about history and since moving to the farm he has immersed himself in reading local history books. *'I just wonder how history has been told and edited? What are Western ideals of democracy and honesty and what does it mean to be a 'good person?'*

### **1.11 A PROPHETIC VOICE: A HERMENEUTIC OF SUSPICION**

This research project is exploring territory that may not be considered 'politically correct' at this time in our history, when white farmers are seen to be the 'exploiters' of the land. This makes it a painful exercise, bearing in mind that I am a white woman and the participants are also white. Our own traditions and beliefs have a way of distorting the bigger picture by selecting information that fits with these beliefs. Therefore, in order for this research to

become more 'trustworthy', I will be challenging my own assumptions, which have been crafted out of a 'western' way of thinking. I will be placing these assumptions under the spotlight of 'critique' and will then pass them through the 'sieve of suspicion - before it is reworked and restated within our context' (Cochrane et al 1991:23).

This is what the social sciences call a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. It is about being suspicious of my own reading of what is said and written. I must be held accountable for what I am writing, because the meanings I place on experience will be different from the meanings that someone from another culture or gender places on the same experience (Waldergrave 1990:18, Hare-Mustin & Marakek 1988:455). In order to do this, I will include two black Zimbabweans, one is a woman and the other a man. Both belong to a Christian faith community. They will be used as 'cultural consultants' on what was 'their land' before colonialism took it away from them (Tapping 1993:3). Gertrude was involved in the Liberation Struggle. Gordon is a churchwarden at the Anglican Church I attend. Because of the limited scope of this enquiry questions to them will centre around two questions:-

1. How they see the identity of white farmers in the past, present and future. How then do they see their own identity in relation to the farmer, the freedom struggle, and social injustice?
2. What is our responsibility as a faith community to bring healing in post-colonial conflict? Is it possible to live in a multi-racial community where one group is not privileged over another?

## **1.12 WHY THIS STUDY?**

This study has been born out of the current political conflict in Zimbabwe. Over 90% of the commercial farms in the country have been designated for resettlement, and since starting this project 75% of white farmers are off their farms. There are implications both economically and politically. More money is being spent on defence than in any other public sector, which has risen from 9% of the official budget to 12% (Economist 2001:45). There are issues of justice and the problem of 'redressing the land imbalance', where whites, who only constitute less than 1% of the population, have owned about 70% of the best farming land. There are unfulfilled promises of 'forgiveness and reconciliation' that are still waiting to 'happen'. There is an escalation of violence, which is reported daily in the Zimbabwe press.

I am experiencing in my professional capacity as a private therapist, the trauma of white farmers being forced to leave their homes. People of all races are facing job losses with the prospect of not finding work and at the same time having to deal with escalating costs and shortages of basic foods. I read in the paper daily of farm workers being stranded with nowhere to go, of rape, houses burnt, and violence. This raises ethical questions about who is benefiting and whose interests are being served by the current land redistribution. Who is taking responsibility for this? Many studies have been done on the land issue, with particular reference to equitable redistribution of land. Studies have been done on farm worker identity (Rutherford 2001a,b), but little has been researched on trauma and the identity of white farmers in Zimbabwe. I believe therefore that this kind of research is important in both asking questions about the future of a white farming community, and in its responsibility to bring reconciliation and healing from what I see as a re-traumatising of a nation, barely one generation after the struggle for independence.

### **1.13 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND ETHICAL WAYS OF PRACTICE**

This study asks questions about ethical ways of practice that challenge violence, injustice, oppressive practices and the subjugation of any people. I feel that this cannot be done in isolation to the injustice and oppressive practices done in the past by colonial powers. However, if we are not careful, one privileged and powerful group replaces another. Those who are currently in power have also enjoyed a privileged position, where they have had access to wealth for over twenty years now. To help me in this task I will be using ideas from contextual theology. Cochrane et al (1991:23) say that contextual Christianity is about appropriating biblical concepts that bring the 'liberating power of God in our historic time...which enable the church to rediscover the meaning of its faithfulness within the struggle for justice, reconciliation and peace'. This is a difficult road to walk, and a very complex one. In order to honour all groups in our society, our stories need to be told in a way that does not create dualisms and dichotomies that split us apart as human beings. To do this, I will be using ideas from feminist theology. I hope that as a faith community we may be challenged by the voices that are heard and respond to suffering in a way that is congruent to our beliefs and practices.

#### **1.14 THE RELEVANCE OF SUCH A STUDY TO MYSELF AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY**

I am writing to all Zimbabweans who may identify with the stories told in this study, bringing forth voices from the silence and confusion that has trapped them. Being a part of the community myself, my own personal journey of pain and confusion may also reflect something of the larger group, and benefit me in making some sense of what is happening, as well as challenging the 'disempowered' position that I find myself in.

I am writing to a 'therapeutic' community, where, in Southern Africa, these issues of identity and trauma are a part of our work and thoughts. I will include comments from farmers I work with in this capacity, where and when I feel what they say brings 'voice' to this topic. I hope this study may generate ideas about how to progress within the church, and the wider political community bringing hope that we can transcend violence, intercept trauma and become communities of healing where our humanity will be more important than race.

#### **1.15 HOW THIS STUDY WILL DEVELOP**

The next three chapters will weave together many voices and musical instruments that will sing and play, sometimes in tune and at times in discordant harmony. Chapter 2 decides on which instruments play in the orchestra, laying the foundation and giving structure, timings and the keys in which the symphony will be written. Chapter 3 will add the lyrics, written by the participants, where the words will work their way into the structure of the music with a poetic feel. Chapter 4 weaves the movements together, using themes, the familiar and also the not so familiar, bringing an element of surprise to the symphony. It uses the symphony to create the stage for a choreographed opera. But it is an unfinished piece of music, in that the last section is written as a postscript of the tunes that are not yet sung or developed.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BONES AND BELIEFS**

This chapter looks at what I mean by qualitative research. It helps lay out the way the study will be conducted and how the data will be used and analysed. An overview of the beliefs and theories that are guiding this enquiry are discussed. Theories include post-modern ideas, theories of social construction, the narrative shape of human experience, history and discourse, postcolonial theory, as well as introducing ideas from contextual theology, pastoral care, ethics and feminist theology. This is the conductor's 'score sheet'!

#### **2.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

##### **2.1.1 From quantitative to qualitative**

This is a qualitative research project. The assumptions are very different to those of more traditional quantitative research where truth was seen as something objective and identifiable. Qualitative research within the social sciences and other 'relational' disciplines sees 'truth' as something that is socially constructed by a group of people in order to bring meaning and a sense of cohesion to their group identity, rather than something that is objectively definable (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:455, Kaye 1990:28).

##### **2.1.2 The self in relationship**

In qualitative research, the researcher and researched have merged into a relationship where both are immersed in the research process, as can already be seen from the way this research has been conceptualised. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:4) put it this way: 'Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry'. This relationship then becomes a journey into the personal world of others, which, in the case of this enquiry, is also becoming a journey into myself (Sears 1992:65).

##### **2.1.3 Re-working the meanings behind the facts**

A quantitative approach to this topic would I feel become 'a fact finding mission'. This could lead us to blame and judge segments of the community, who are seen as 'the root cause of the

problem'. The press in Zimbabwe has been polarised in this way, where 'facts' are found to justify a belief. A qualitative approach helps to avoid the polarisation of 'camps' because it looks beyond the 'facts' to the meanings behind actions and words. By looking at the socially constructed nature of reality, it also gives many other possibilities for identities to emerge that bring a hope that our identities can escape the dichotomous labels that they have been given.

#### **2.1.4 Questions rather than answers**

Qualitative research starts with a question rather than a hypothesis and can end with more questions than answers. As Goolishian (Anderson & Goolishian 1995:54) says: 'If you know what to do it limits you. If you know more of what not to do, then there is an infinity of things that might be done'. It can mean that rather than reducing the data it expands it, creating greater complexity from experience. I have felt overwhelmed with data, which presents a problem in deciding which parts of a text are included and what is left out. Each sentence is loaded with meaning, belief and discourse and in some ways deserves a more thorough textual analysis. But this is not the primary focus of this study. I am seeking to look at a 'landscape' rather than a detailed 'individual' study. Even so, I will select certain parts that seem to fit with my understanding of the participants' narratives. Therefore, in order for this research to be trustworthy, I will return to check that the selected parts fit with the participants' understanding of what they meant. My interpretation will be done through writing letters and the questions within the letters will loop back to the participants, which will in turn generate more questions and thoughts.

## **2.2 BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES**

### **2.2.1 A mixed collage**

Today there is greater fluidity between disciplines and a qualitative researcher draws on many different fields, mixing and matching ideas and thoughts, becoming multi-method in focus (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2). It is what Geertz (1993:21) calls 'blurred genres', giving us 'an intellectual poaching license' where we can merge with literature, philosophy, ethnography, social anthropology and other disciplines. This has come out of a belief that we

cannot directly access lived experience, all we can do is hope to capture something of the aroma through languaging it.

Such a broad intellectual base can be confusing, in that it is hard to pin-point a disciplinary matrix. Already I have drawn ideas from anthropology, poetry and an art critic. As such my mind is open to many possibilities, like making music or writing prose or poetry as a symbolic way of interpreting experience. Turner (1986:37), a social anthropologist, says: 'The hard-won meanings should be said, painted, danced, dramatised, put into circulation'. This fits with the belief that qualitative research is no longer in search of 'grand narratives' but is replaced by more local theories which are read in narrative terms as 'tales of the field' where we become 'bricoleurs' or jacks of all trades (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2). I feel as if I have become an official 'poacher' and will not limit myself to one form of interpretation within this text. This 'multi-medium' approach will also be multi-dimensional. It is as if I am in the process of constructing a picture that has been layered in many media, from newspaper cuttings, poetry, letters and personal stories. The common theme will be the return to the 'personal' and the 'local', using the participants' knowledge, expertise and skills. This will include my own as the artist who is in the process of creating the picture.

### **2.2.2 Multiple perspectives**

The post-modern world has brought with it a 'crisis of representation' and a belief that no one discourse, method or theory can hold a privileged position. This then becomes a 'safety-valve' for any tendency to create exclusive rights to any one truth. This explains why multiple theoretical paradigms claim use of qualitative research methods and strategies. It also helps in this particular research to allow for what I have called the 'prophetic voice' with 'cultural consultants', where other voices are included that may hold a different set of beliefs from my own. I will therefore critique both my assumptions and those of the other participants on what 'white identity' means. I will do this by including people who hold different views and perspectives, and in this way I will be 'suspicious' of any one view, so that multiple perspectives can help bring a depth of understanding and richness to this study.

### **2.2.3 Wet paint. Handle with care**

I plan to balance these rather fluid and mixed paradigms by looking at practical ways that can help bring about social transformation, healing and hope, at a particularly painful time in the history of Zimbabwe, where the identity of 'white farmers' is fragile. This will be done through stories that are told, written about, recorded and worked with, in a way that will allow multiple 'voices' to be heard. This requires a deep level of 'participation', where participants are not exploited. To avoid 'using' the participants, this research will be done 'with' them rather than 'on' them (McTaggart 1997:29).

## **2.3 PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH**

### **2.3.1 How do I 'know'?**

Participatory research is a term that was coined less than 20 years ago, but its roots go back to the age-old traditions where knowledge and wisdom are produced by the people and for the people in 'popular' ways of 'knowing' (Chaudhary 1997:121). But centuries of undermining of this popular mode of knowledge have left us often disempowered in our own ability to 'know' and to trust our experience. To do this means that we need to spend time in the natural setting, where we, as the primary writers of the text, can capture and interpret the meaning within people's lives (Janesick 1994:218). It seeks ways of creative interpretation that remain as close as possible to the intent of the participants involved (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:14) and also allows the 'researched' to become co-creators of knowledge (Dreyer 1998:18). By placing myself within this research process I am participating in this, where my own identity, my assumptions, my values and beliefs are a part of this popular mode of knowledge. My humility will be in 'not knowing' rather than 'not sharing of myself' (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994:151). The way the participants, including myself, experience this process will be unpredictable in that I don't know how it will develop. Being immersed within the relational activity of the research I risk change in both my identity and my ideas.

### **2.3.2 How will I look after being passed through the sieve?**

Thinking about this is a challenging exercise for me because I have had certain ways of writing myself as 'White and British' into history and I am not sure how my identity will emerge from this process. Will I be able to hold onto my identity without apologising for my

'whiteness' or for being 'British?' These are both categories that have become 'excluded' from having a legitimate role to play in Zimbabwe society. Dorman (2001:25) says that the government in Zimbabwe has re-defined who and what are legitimate voices to speak within the political spectrum. She says:-

Groups that were judged to be too independent or too political had always felt the wrath of the state. But now treatment which had hitherto been restricted to political opponents, like Bishop Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole, and groups like the Ndebele, homosexuals and women, began to be extended to all non ZANU (PF) members, nuns and priests, teachers, whites, farm workers (judged to be foreigners) and urban residents.

(Dorman 2001:21)

### **2.3.3 A Shared activity**

McTaggart (1997:28) talks about ownership of participatory research being a group activity where we share in 'the way research is conceptualised, practised and brought to bear of the life-world'. This then helps to avoid the exploitation of others in the pursuit of personal gain. To help avoid this 'exploitation' of the family, this research will involve authentic participation and sharing in the way the research evolves and themes emerge in the production of knowledge. This process began not in a formal sense but in engaging in informal conversations with many people over time. It has also led to piles of locally written books, novels, poetry, biographies beside my bed, as I have tried to immerse myself in the lived experiences of Zimbabweans, both black and white. As Dreyer (1998:17) puts it: 'Only through "entering into" the life-world of the researched as an *insider*, could the researcher hope to gain understanding of meaning'. This form of 'deep participation' is also a key concept of feminist research, where all participants are empowered by the process (Olesen 1994:166).

## **2.4 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

### **2.4.1 Improving our quality of life**

According to McTaggart (1997:2) participatory action research means that that the research is oriented to actions that people might take themselves to improve the conditions of their lives and make choices that will create a greater sense of empowerment. McTaggart (1997:2) argues that to participate is to 'act' in its broadest sense. However, he also says (1997:26): 'If

we decide that something is an example of participatory action research, we are suggesting that it is likely to have improved the lives of those who have participated'. In the context of this research it may be difficult to evaluate this because it is unlikely to happen in 'concrete terms' as those involved could stand to lose their farm. However, by telling our stories and editing our self-narratives so that they tell a story of hope and respect for both our lived experience as well as 'the other's' experience, it could be considered a way of 'improving our lives'. This may resonate and reflect what is happening in a larger group in society and lead to ways of working in a multi-cultural setting that could promote dialogue, healing and social transformation.

#### **2.4.2 Challenging the 'status quo'**

According to Chaudhary (1997:121) action research questions 'status-quoism', which has developed from critical theory. It is a form of research that seeks a transformative function within society. In this sense participatory action research is political. In the context of this research, the status quo is being challenged, as I am taking the position that violence and oppressive practices are fundamentally wrong and do not bring about a society in which all can participate. This is difficult in Zimbabwe because violence and oppressive practices have permeated every strata of society, both historically and in the current context, causing great splits and divides along racial and tribal lines. From my reading of the local state paper, both currently and from extracts written twenty-five years ago, the language and writing appear very similar but from opposite camps. Worby (2001:3) quotes from the Financial Gazette which says: 'Apart from a few minor differences, Mugabe and his government are behaving in the same manner as Smith and his colonial regime did'.

The question then arises as to how we can challenge the 'status-quo' without reverting to similar tactics of the coloniser? Melber (2002:10) writes pertinently about African countries that have been through a war of liberation. He says they carry within their regimes the essential elements of the old system they had fought. The use of force and violence used to gain independence, he says, is hardly favourable for the durable strengthening of humanitarian values and norms. When and how then can this violent cycle be intercepted to help bring about democratic transformation through non-violent means? This research is seeking transformative ways of challenging the 'status quo' of violence, by moving beyond the blaming of one community so that another can benefit. What alternatives are available to

bring about a more just society where we are able to see each other as 'humans' rather than defined by race or political allegiance?

## **2.5 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

I will use a narrative form of analysis to help me pursue this goal. This means that the lived experience of the research participants must be described as fully as possible, using their own words as much as possible. The 'intent' or meanings attached to the words they use will not be assumed but worked with so that their experience is not misinterpreted (Janesick 1994:213). An 'inductive' analysis will be used, which, according to Janesick (1994:215) means that 'categories, themes, and patterns come from the data'.

Reissman (1993:2) says that the purpose of narrative analysis is to see how participants 'impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives'. However, some experiences, she says (1993:3), are very difficult to speak about, like political trauma and violence, and she suggests that the researcher can help by becoming a 'witness'. Weingarten (2000) would concur with this. In this context, I have become the primary witness to the stories that are told and you the reader also become witnesses through the reading of the text.

### **2.5.1 Representing experience**

Methodologically, Riessman (1993:25) raises three questions about how experience is represented in our reports:-

1. How is talk transformed into a narrative text?
2. What aspects of the narrative constitute the basis for the interpretations?
3. Who determines what a 'narrative' means? And are alternative readings possible?

I found these questions helpful in keeping me focused on how I can represent all the participants in a way that does not lose the 'intent' of what they want to say. To do this I decided to conduct one taped interview with each participant where questions would be open-ended but focus on white identity and trauma. These conversations would be transcribed and organised into themes around their identity as 'white' with particular attention to how each generation stories themselves.

## **2.5.2 Writing letters**

Following this I would write a letter to each participant using my own interpretations of their text (Tyndale 1990:25). Letters as a therapeutic tool are used in narrative therapy as a powerful way of capturing lived experience through the written word (White & Epston 1990, Epston 1994). White and Epston's work has inspired me to use this approach in this research so that the stories that are told may be remembered using as much of the original language as possible. Riessman (1993:4) says: 'The challenge is to find ways of working with the text so the original narrator is not effaced, so she does not lose control over her words'. I believe that letters are a respectful way of doing this. Epston (1994:31) says that 'words in a letter don't fade and disappear the way conversation does'. Questions will be used within the letters to check my own assumptions, opening space for the participants to give alternate readings of the letters. These letters are included as the main part of the research in Chapter 3.

## **2.5.3 A Poetic licence**

The same procedure of transcribing a taped interview was used with the cultural consultants, but I have chosen to write their recorded interviews with a loose 'poetic feel' (Willis 2002:9). Willis goes on to say that a poetic feel is more akin to an embryonic form of poetry without the density and crystalline structure. Poetry has an urgent feel about it, which I feel evokes and generates its own intensity, calling for a response or a reaction from the reader. It challenges us to move beyond what we consider to be 'settled reality', towards becoming prophetic in nature (Brueggemann 1989:5). Willis says that it invites an audience to interact in a performative way. The risk is that it could irritate those who are 'poetic scholars', but I hope that it will surprise and invite participation! In one of the 'poems' I will use a 'refrain', an idea that I have taken from Riessman (1993:50), who talks of turning a story into a poem or a 'textual refrain' using repetitive themes that come up in the text. I haven't used repetitive words. I have rathered use words that I have selected; words that have great impact upon me as a listener.

Overall I am using this poetic licence to:-

1. Contrast in style to the main participants.

2. Evoke feelings of passion, inviting us to enter a poetic space where imagination and the text can open new doors and perspectives.
3. Open space where questions surge up in my mind, questions that are not screened out by the habitual (Greene in Willis 2002:13), or lost in the clothing and clutter of prose;
4. Beckon and lure me to participate in a deeper way into the life-worlds of those whose words I am using.

The words for these poems were taken from the transcribed text and were checked by the cultural consultants, so that they are represented in a way that is congruent with what they wanted to say. I am aware that this is an unusual form, in that 'poetry' is intensely personal, using the author's own text rather than the author using someone else's words.

#### **2.5.4 Moments of transformation**

The analysis of the text and the themes that emerge is done through my 'interpretation' of the conversations, using my research question and the aims of the study as a constant guide. I am therefore looking for meanings that each person attaches to 'white', 'identity' and 'trauma'. Riessman (1993:34) talks of paying attention to moments of 'self transformation', which is what White and Epston (1990) would call 'unique outcomes' where alternative descriptions and stories can emerge that do not trap people into unhelpful labels. I will weave these alternate stories into the analysis in Chapter 4.

#### **2.5.5 Many readers, many meanings**

Answering the third of Riessman's questions, I am the primary editor of the texts and the conversations are all filtered through the lens of my interpretation. The stories or narratives will not reflect fully lived experience or even the fullness of the interview, but something of the meanings and 'aroma' of beliefs and thoughts around white identity and trauma will be captured within the text. However, the reader will place their own interpretation on the text and I hope that there will be enough fluidity in the writing to allow for other interpretations. This is another reason why I have included questions within the letters and flirted with the economy of words in a poetic form.

## **2.6 POST-MODERN THINKING**

### **2.6.1 In search of 'meaning' rather than 'truth'**

The Modern Age, which was characterised by the 'grand narratives' of the enlightenment and 'reason', looked for 'rules and a structure' to underpin the world. There was a belief that a correct way of doing things could be discovered regardless of race, culture, ethnic differences or gender (Burr 1995:12). These beliefs came out of a patriarchal western system that privileged a certain way of knowing (Burr 1995:3). Modern man placed great value on the romantic notion of individual growth and man's ability to reason where 'normal persons are predictable, honest and sincere' (Gergen 1991:6). The modern world was also consumed with the idea of being 'productive', as in the industrial revolution in Europe. But there has been a growing sense of 'dis-ease' and disillusionment with this modernistic concept of science in search of truth. Oden (1995:22) says the Age of Modernity started in high hopes with the storming of the Bastille in 1788 and ended in disillusionment with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1988. Others have said the structures of the modernist dream were shattered at the holocaust, which was done in the name of 'reason'. It is being replaced with cyberspace, the 'global village', a market-driven economy and consumerism.

### **2.6.2 Fracturing the truth**

These changes have catapulted us into a new world that is in some ways hard to adjust to. As Gergen (1991:3) says: 'Changes of this magnitude are seldom self-contained. They reverberate throughout the culture, slowly accumulating until one day we are shocked to realise that we've been dislocated – and can't recover what has been lost'. But it has helped us move, in a paradoxical way, into an ability to embrace our humanity and diversity, and allow the personal to emerge in place of the universal. As Brueggemann (1993:6), quoting Toulmin, says: 'We can now see the reversal of the process of modernity, as we move from written to oral, universal to particular, general to local, and timeless to timely'.

As I grapple with the concepts of 'globalisation' and yet 'the personal and local', I as a researcher, have also changed my position. I have become a part of the picture, and as such, I am no longer trying to stand back and watch. There can be no privileged outside position from where I can stand and observe the picture of truth in an unbiased fashion (Hoffman

1992, Anderson & Goolishian 1995, Freedman & Combs 1996). In its place, Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) suggest that we understand our world as we converse and interact together in an ongoing conversation.

### **2.6.3 The dangers of being zapped into hyper-reality**

This post-modern world is hard to grasp or quantify. The objective 'self' as we knew it, as individual and autonomous, has become fragmented, challenging the very concept of personal essences and the individual. It can also be a frightening world, which Graham (1996:1) describes as an age of uncertainty and fragmentation. She talks of Baudrillard's ideas where nothing has intrinsic or eternal value beyond its market or commodity value, driven by capitalism and consumerism. She challenges the Church to address this danger.

This post-modern world is also described as being suspended in a 'permanent present', lacking a grounding in the past and a public sense of history (Appignanesi & Garratt 1999:151). According to Tutu (1999:219) this can be a risky position, as when we forget, we may be in danger of repeating the past. Hobsbawn (1998:336), in an address on 'barbarism', speaks of the danger of a post-modern descent into darkness and believes that we need to revisit some of the values inherited from the eighteenth-century enlightenment. Towards the end of his life Foucault (Appignanesi & Garratt 1999:173) also called for a re-thinking of the enlightenment and the grand narrative, particularly a return to Kant and Hegel. The modernist mission may then still have something useful to teach us about 'truth' and history.

I found it interesting that when introducing himself in Chapter 1, David languaged a concern about his generation's general lack of interest in local history, which has led him to read books on Rhodesian history in a search for 'the truth'. I am challenged by what I see as a stormy relationship between the modern and post-modern, where there is a cacophony of clashing voices claiming the right to the legitimating of reality (Gergen 1991:7). Somehow I have a belief that there has to be a reality that transcends race, culture, gender and the market economy. This is a belief that whatever our background, we all share in one humanity and one world. Within our common humanity I believe that there are 'right' and 'wrongs' and a 'moral' or 'ethical' code by which we should strive to live.

#### **2.6.4 Ethics**

I would like to define ethics as the principles that I perceive to be right or wrong, good or bad (Kretzschmar 1994:3). Kotzé (2002:12) asks the question: 'How do we distinguish between right and wrong? Who has a 'say', and who is silenced?' He challenges 'the effects of these "truths" including oppression, suffering, exploitation and marginalisation of those people positioned at the unfortunate side of these "truths"'. Within this research I will be taking an ethical stand against oppressive practices and the marginalizing of any community, as well as any form of racism or dichotomous splits. I will focus on what 'ought to be' rather than 'what is' (Kretzschmar 1994:3). I agree with Graham and Kretzschmar that as a church and in society, we need to challenge the 'status quo', make a stand for 'righteousness' and challenge those in power to take responsibility for the future wellbeing of their nation. In this way I believe that ethics stand between the modern and the post-modern debate.

#### **2.6.5 Post-modern and narrative**

Narrative has become a term familiar to this post-modern world, where 'community' and 'narrative' replace the individual autonomous 'self' as we knew it. As Lax says:-

[T]he self is conceived, not as a reified entity, but as a narrative; text is not something to be interpreted, but is an evolving process; the individual is considered within a context of social meaning rather than as an intrapsychic entity; and scientific knowledge, or what would be considered undeniable 'facts' about the world yields to narrative knowledge with an emphasis placed more upon communal beliefs about how the world works.

(Lax 1992:69)

The post-modern umbrella will then allow me to hopefully pick a path within the current political tension that will permit a plurality of voices 'where the once dominant centre is no longer able to impose its view and to silence by force all alternative or dissenting opinion' (Brueggemann 1993:9). However, as we look at our identity, it is mindful to remember that although we are living in a post-modern age, we are products of our history, which is embedded in the modern age. This is particularly relevant to this study when looking at the way different generations and cultures have been constructed, which in turn has a bearing on how we language our experiences. For example, in informal discussions with Donald and Susan, the ways in which they explained the world around them was more 'factual' and

'concrete', particularly in their understanding of the factual nature of history. David, on the other hand, is asking questions about '*how history has been told and edited*' and also questions the way local history has been '*left out*' of school curricula in the past. This in itself begs many questions about how in the past local history has not been seen as important. This post-modern world then becomes a confusing place, where we are no longer able to hold fast to the anchors of certainty and truth.

## **2.7 DISCOURSE AND THE CONTINGENT NATURE OF 'HISTORY'**

### **2.7.1 Making sense of our past**

For the purpose of this study I see history as 'the formalised social past, that I come to accept' (Hobsbawm 1998:15). History can be read as a series of stories that bring a sense of identity and cohesion to a community and then create a 'formalised social past'. Fortmann says:-

Stories have the power to frame and create understanding: to create and maintain moral communities: to validate current actions: and to empower, encourage and relieve their tellers. The understanding of past and current events shaped by stories forms a discursive strategy through which struggles are waged.

(Fortmann 1995:1054)

Communities make sense of their history by rooting their deepest identity in a narrative or story of some kind (Gerkin 1986:26). Fortmann (1995:1058) tells stories of commercial farmers in Zimbabwe and the tales of villagers, whose land was resettled by a commercial farmer. They each have their own interpretation of history. The villagers' experience is that the land was stolen from them. The farmers tell a story of being 'ecologically friendly' and productive in an age where the population has grown beyond 'subsistence farming'. They see it as their responsibility to provide for the nations needs and export requirements.

History, as an accumulation of stories, tends to get written by those who have power and by those who promote their own 'cause'. Politics, power and dominant ideology has meant that whole groups and cultures have been written in, or written out, of history, depending on who is 'in power' (Foucault in White & Epston 1990). This I believe is highly relevant in the postcolonial context within which I am writing. Bruner, a social anthropologist did a study of Native North Americans who were at one time written into history as 'disorganised'. He says (1986:139): 'Now however, we have a new narrative: the present is viewed as a resistance

movement, the past as exploitation, and the future as ethnic resurgence'. Their identity was bound with a past, a present and a future and as a group they confronted the dominant culture in North America with issues around the rights of land. Each Age perhaps is given the responsibility to challenge and critique the assumptions that were taken-for-granted in the age before, because culture is not something that is static, but is something that is always moving and seeking to adapt and fill the 'gaps' that were left by previous generations.

### **2.7.2 Finding the "facts" to support our beliefs**

Although our 'narratives' may flow in a sequence across time, history in a post-modern context is not seen as some progressive movement. Rather, in a Foucauldian sense, it is understood as discourses and artefacts and fragments of knowledge that are found and excavated depending upon the ground in which we dig (McHoul & Grace 1993:26-51).

Questions about Zimbabwe that I had previously thought unimportant began to re-emerge in my mind and I wondered what artefacts may be dug up and how information has been selected or not selected? White and Epston (1990:11) say our self-narratives can never encompass the full richness of our lived experience because we select and prune events that don't fit with our dominant plot. Remembering the 'silence' around the Rhodesian War, it got me wondering what stories may have not been told, and perhaps that which is silent may need to be languaged, honoured and brought back. It is the interpretation of what happens, what gets selected and what meaning we bring to bear on this 'reality', that is being discussed in this work.

I would not want this to diminish the reality of what happened under colonialism. However, bearing in mind the ethical position I am taking, the question also needs to be asked as to who is currently benefiting and who is suffering? How is the current 'reality' serving the interests of those in power? How can we use these stories as a springboard to become transformed into what 'ought to be'? And how can the minority white farming population be written into the future history of Zimbabwe in a way that honours their stories?

## 2.8 THE COLONISED MIND

*'Rudyard Kipling (1862-1936) thought he knew which side of the great divide between Imperial Britain and subject India he stood. He was certain that to be ruled by Britain was India's right; to rule India was Britain's duty' (Nandy:1983:64).*

According to Nandy (1983:65), Kipling was caught as a victim of a system. He was brought up, nurtured and identified with his doting Indian servants. He even looked like an Indian child and spoke and dreamt in Hindustani. Kipling's dilemma was, according to Nandy (1983:71), that he had to choose between being Indian or Western. He goes on to say, '[C]olonialism tried to take over the Western consciousness, to make it congruent with the needs of colonialism to take away the wholeness of every white man who chose to be a part of the colonial machine.' Kipling had little choice but to identify himself with the powerful discourse of the time, that of the British Empire. The part that belonged to Indian culture was left out, ignored and split off from his conscious mind. In the same way, Nandy talks of the colonised people turning to a western education in order to achieve status, while at the same time resenting western values. This in turn could mean that the colonised identify with the 'superior, industrial' culture of material wealth and progress, and in so doing reject their own (Tapping:1993:4).

I mention this, because, even in the preliminary introduction to this topic, there seems to be a trap of being British but not British and of being African but westernised. In discussions with Gertrude, she says, *'Britain deceived us, they are hypocritical and yet they are a part of us, that is why there are nearly one million Zimbabweans living in Britain'*. Zimbabwe, in recent years, has had to make major compromises with the powerful forces of modernity, through agreements with the West, because it was tied into a role of dependency upon the Western powers and lured by the culture of consumption and western education.

Tapping (1993:8) refers to Zoy Kazan's belief that as family therapists we need to acknowledge the institutionalised racism that is embedded in our background identity. Perhaps we deceive ourselves to think that we are not all 'tribal' when the nuts and bolts of our 'identity kits' are put under the spotlight. Frankenburg (1994) analyses 34 white women's concepts of race and shows how racism and racial inequality is embedded in discourse and shapes the lives of those who have enjoyed 'privilege', often in a hidden way. One woman told the story of going on a school outing to Mexico to help the 'poor'. Frankenburg

(1994:59) says this is a classic colonialist view of the conquered society, where it is their duty to save the poor native. However, I wonder whether this isn't rather a narrow reading of 'saving', because built into western Judo/Christian culture was a responsibility to 'help' the less privileged. This is perhaps still being 'acted out', in that the countries that provide 'aid' to Zimbabwe are generally Western ones. One could argue that this is born out of privilege and guilt, but there are countries like Denmark that give generously. It was not a 'coloniser'.

### **2.8.1 The shadow**

Looking at 'essential racism' reminds me of a 'witch hunt'. I am not sure if it is a helpful construction or where it can lead us, except to a point of blame or at best an acknowledgement and awareness of our own embedded prejudice. I find the Jungian construction of the 'shadow' more helpful, as shadows can dance and change with our position. Jung would say that we all 'project' a 'shadow' onto the 'other'. Johnson (1991:35) says: 'It is a dark page in human history when people make others bear their shadow for them. Men lay their shadow upon women, whites upon blacks, Catholics upon Protestants'. Johnson (1991:37) goes on to quote Mahatma Gandhi as saying: 'If you follow the old code of justice – an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth – you end up with a blind and toothless world'. He says it is a never-ending cycle of revenge, until we acknowledge this shadow within ourselves and within our communities and take it in hand. I find this idea particularly helpful in Zimbabwe at this present time where we seem to be living in the land of 'shadows'. The perceived 'enemy' can carry the dark side of ourselves. This shadow sends us all scuttling to our opposing 'camps' where we tell stories of 'us' and 'them' with sweeping statements such as 'Africans are generous' or 'Whites are civilised'.

## **2.9 DECONSTRUCTION**

There is a danger of being caught on the rocks of 'normative' thinking, where 'victims' and 'perpetrators' create a subject/object dichotomy apportioning blame, creating those who are 'right' and those who are 'wrong' in an attempt to interpret and give meaning to our lived experience. History then gets re-written from yet another bias and prejudice until we go round in ever diminishing circles. Derrida's concept of 'difference' moves beyond the idea that we know who we are because of who we are not. Deconstruction helps us to exit this

'noose' that hangs one person in order to free another, where our shadows are projected onto the 'other'.

Graham (1996) calls this 'The Self in Relationship', which is born out of care and love and interrelationship rather than 'us' and 'them'. This relational self is permitted multiple descriptions, creating depth and perspective (Burr 1995:161) of what is both present and absent, talked about and not talked about (Gergen 1991).

There are two main daily papers in Zimbabwe, the State controlled newspaper and also an independent one. They tell stories that seem to have no resemblance to each other, and if 'truth' was to be our guide, it seems to me as if we would continue the polarisation of those who are 'right' and those who are 'wrong'. I wonder how I might have 'read' the same paper twenty years ago as a white woman and how the reporting might have been written to benefit the 'few' and 'privileged'? It is as if when one culture or political party is 'right', it makes another 'wrong'. Deconstruction then helps replace the destruction of the 'unacceptable other'. But within this context, is there space for many different realities without one dominating another?

Worby (2001:8) asks the question 'what is civilisation'? 'From whose perspective'? He argues that the Whites cling to a culture and identity grounded in a stage now reserved for the pre-modern past of colonial racism. He suggests that Mugabe wants to rid the country of modernity and return to an agrarian civilisation. But Worby (2001:9) also argues that the answer is complex, multi-storied, plural and diverse. 'It is not one story but many, each shaped by a kaleidoscope of social and historical location'. Baregu (2001:4) says that there is no real agreement on the 'problem' of land rights, with each protagonist 'shouting past each other but seldom being able to engage in a productive dialogue'. Deconstruction in this instance helps to talk 'with' rather than 'past' each other, because the 'master/slave' dance is a deeply complex one, where the one is wrapped up in the other. This gives me a hope in this study that there can be a different way of living together within diversity and difference, if only we could find a way to include rather than exclude and to talk and dialogue rather than shout. In order to do this I believe we have to 'hear' each other rather than 'demonise the other'. In this way we deconstruct the dominant beliefs and suspicions and accusations and work toward a future where all can participate.

## **2.10 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

It is said that we should read the bible with a newspaper in the other hand (Cochrane et al 1991:32). In the case of Zimbabwe it would be two papers!

Practical theology is the interface between theory and the way our faith is worked out in practice (Cochrane et al 1991:2). Traditionally the Church has allowed theory to dictate practice, but in recent years this has been challenged (Bosch 1991, Rossouw 1993, Cochrane et al 1991). A modernist approach to practical theology applies theory to the world, rather than allowing 'praxis' and lived experience to create theory (Van Wyk 1995:86, Bosch 1991 in Kotzé & Kotzé 2001). From a post-modern position of scientist as participant (Van Wyk 1998:15), we are called to move from the role of spectator, applying knowledge to agents and servants participating in the world. He goes on to quote Toulmin as saying: 'Warm hearts rarely go with cool heads'. The pedestals have been removed from under us and we are left participating in a world where there is social injustice, poverty, sickness and silence. This is the World into which Jesus stepped.

### **2.10.1 Contextual theology**

Contextual theology fits with this post-modern epistemology, and as Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:5) say 'it is affirming justice against oppression, shifting from the general to the local, co-constructing a variety of local theologies and opposing a Western theology of claiming universal validity'.

This study therefore uses contextual theology as a theoretical base in the belief that the World cannot be 'explained', rather we seek for it to be 'changed' (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:4). I am taking the position that change happens through action rather than theory, and action happens in relationship, beginning in praxis, not theory. This gives contextual theology a political position on the stage of practical theology, moving it beyond the church to a commitment to becoming agents of change within the community. I am committed to this approach, as well as a belief that this research is not designed as an academic exercise where people are used at my expense, but rather as a participatory process where we can all benefit. Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:9) say: 'Research too often becomes an intellectual activity with researchers obtaining degrees on or receiving acknowledgement based on the suffering of others – with the latter

most likely not to benefit from the research'. Taking this idea further, I also intend for this enquiry to be 'accessible' to those not trained in this field, so that it can be a benefit to the larger community. I therefore try to avoid, as much as possible, 'privileged and academic language', by weaving the theory into the body of the text.

### **2.10.2 Narrative hermeneutic**

This research uses key ideas from a hermeneutic narrative approach to Practical Theology (Gerkin 1986). This is an understanding that we replace core 'truth' with a sense of understanding our faith through the stories that we tell; stories that are selected over time and become meaningful beliefs. Gerkin puts it this way:-

The intention of that process is the transformation of the human story, both individual and corporate, in ways that open the future of that story to creative possibilities. By faith that means nesting the individual and corporate human story finally within the biblically grounded narrative of the God who is both transcendent of the human story (God's otherness) and active within that ongoing story (God's suffering, gracious, redemptive presence).

(Gerkin 1986:54)

### **2.10.3 Feminist theology**

Feminist Theology will also help plot a path in the research. I particularly focus on pastoral care that actively pursues nurturing and the embracing of ethnic, cultural and racial diversity in an inclusive way. Graham (1996:47) talks of 'attention to the diversity of human need, recognition of a variety of models of pastoral care and the importance of integrating theological understandings generated by cross-cultural differences'. Graham has some interesting ideas on the 'self in relation' (1996:51), moving from 'self actualisation' on an individual basis, to people in need of nurture and support, as we negotiate ethical and moral decisions that are too big for an individual. I have a belief that in order for us to make a difference in Zimbabwe in this generation, we need to generate groups of witnessing, where we can both nurture and become accountable for our actions and the shadows that we project.

#### **2.10.4 Pastoral care**

How do we 'care' for communities that are experiencing uncertainty and help bind the wounds of citizens so that they can once more participate in society? Who benefits from the decisions that are made? And how do we participate in caring, where violence, hunger, and suffering are a part of the process? What can we insert that can make a difference to the lived experience of people within the community?

Cochrane, de Gruchy & Petersen (1991:17), helped me in the questions I was asking, when they say:- 'The moment of insertion locates our pastoral responses in the lived experience of individuals and communities. What people are feeling, what they are undergoing, how they perceive this, how they are responding – these are the experiences that constitute the primary data of the context'. This then challenges us to respond by seeking transformation from all oppressive or exploitative discourses and practices in society (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3).

But how do we marry the reality of past injustice of people being displaced, especially when we are a part of that community? Who then are the ones who suffer and are oppressed? And who will be held accountable for the future wellbeing of the country? I feel like a lone voice asking these questions within the church. I also feel a great sadness and overwhelming helplessness that in the name of liberation, a whole nation is being victimised and re-traumatised. No-one then escapes the suffering or the violent means of revenge, the effects of greed and instability, which seem to afford the privileged few access to new wealth. How tragic that it has taken this for us to begin to 'hear' the unresolved anger and pain of the past and to begin to look for ways to challenge these oppressive practices and help bring about God's kingdom upon this earth.

#### **2.10.5 Forgiveness**

In a study such as this, I don't think it would be complete without addressing forgiveness. Ricoeur's work on 'language, memory and forgiveness' shows a way of allowing space, where people can 'embrace the other' (Lyle & Gehart 2000:73) in an ethical way. He talks about re-storying the past with multiple readings of it, but also a 'liberation of promises of the past which have not been kept' (Lyle & Gehart 2000:81). This involves an understanding of

the 'suffering' of both self and other. Lyle and Gehart (2000:82) go on to say: 'This helps end the vicious circle of those who seek to make others suffer as they have been made to suffer, thus perpetuating the terror of history'. It is about the exchange of memories and then the superabundance and supernatural ability to show hospitality to the 'other'. Lyle and Gehart quote Ricoeur as saying:-

'[Forgiveness] belongs to an order – the order of charity – which goes even beyond the order of morality.... Insofar as it exceeds the order of morality, the economy of the gift belongs to what we would be able to term the "poetics" of the moral life.... Its "poetic" power consists in shattering the law of the irreversibility of time by changing the past, not as a record of all that has happened but in terms of its meaning for us today. It does this by lifting the burden of guilt, which paralyses the relations between individuals who are acting out and suffering their own history. It does not abolish the debt insofar as we are and remain inheritors of the past, but it lifts the pain of the debt' (from Ricoeur 1996 :9).

(Lyle & Gehart 2000:82)

I find this concept of forgiveness particularly helpful in building bridges between human beings where we have all become victims, perpetrators and witnesses to wrongs in society. It permits us to forgive, but not to forget. It allows us to keep the past alive without becoming its prisoner, where we are condemned to repeat the past. Tutu (1999:91), in his book 'No Future without Forgiveness' sums up a session during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission by saying:-

'We have been moved to tears. We have laughed. We have been silent and we have stared at the beast of our dark past in the eye. We have survived the ordeal and we are realising that we can indeed transcend the conflicts of the past, we can hold hands as we realise our common humanity.... The generosity of spirit will be full to overflowing when it meets a like generosity. Forgiveness will follow confession and healing will happen, and so contribute to national unity and reconciliation'.

(Tutu 1999:91)

Acknowledgement of past wrongs is a crucial part of forgiveness, and yet Tutu says that in forgiving we are not asked to forget. Minow (1998:120) says that what is needed 'is a process for reinterpreting what cannot be made sensible, for assembling what cannot be put together'. She suggests that this reinterpretation needs to be done with communities and nations, to help convert victims, perpetrators as well as witnesses into actors and agents both for today and tomorrow.

These ideas are important in a study such as this, where healing is a reciprocal process of reinterpreting the past. For healing to happen, acknowledgement has to take place, then afterwards restorative action. I do not believe that this is a one sided affair, for atrocities have been carried out by white on black, black on black and black on white, as well as white on white. For our identity to re-emerge as truly 'Zimbabwean' possibility for transformation and healing needs to be actively promoted, where our identity is 'human' and where wrong is wrong, whoever does it.

These are big questions and I take courage from a book I have recently read about Vasco Pyjama (Leunig:2001). He set out with his 'direction finding duck' on great and perilous adventures. He wrote letters back home to the comfort-loving Mr. Curly, who did not like change. I am setting out with my 'direction finding duck' (theories and beliefs) and am writing to that 'other' in us that prefers the comfort of the familiar, as well as the 'other' upon whom we project our shadow. But this unusual friendship will hopefully challenge us all to share in the adventure.

## CHAPTER 3

### LETTERS AND POEMS

*When there were no external records that you could refer to, even the outline of your own life lost its sharpness. You remembered huge events which had quite probably not happened, you remembered the detail of incidents without being able to recapture their atmosphere, and there were long blank periods to which you could assign nothing (Orwell 1949:36).*

The ‘heart’ of this study is displayed in the following two chapters. I am putting words to the structure of the music that has been written. Chapter 3 is about writing each line of the harmony, and this includes letters and poems taken from the transcripts of the interviews with the main participants as well as the cultural consultants. Chapter 4 will blend and combine the parts so that they can be interpreted with order, using themes that have emerged from the symphony. Sometimes these themes will include melodies that compete with each other, as well as painful clashes of cymbals. The rhythm of African drums will be heard always beating in the background.

There are three letters, one written to each of the main participants. The ‘cultural consultants’ will be inserted in between the letters, so that the voices do not lose the harmonies and multi-faceted richness. Gordon and Gertrude (the cultural consultant outside voices) are given as a poetic gift, written by me, using their words and voice.

#### 3.1. THE USE OF THE WRITTEN WORD

The letters and ‘poetic licence’ help interpret the transcribed interviews with the participants. I say ‘poetic license’ because I am not trying to use poetry as an ‘Art’, where each word is crafted for specific effect. Rather it is ‘poetry-like’, just as another art form might be ‘ballet-like’ (Willis 2002:10). In the first two chapters (see 1.11, 2.5.2, 2.5.3) I spoke of using letters as a tool of empowerment and of bringing a voice and order to our lived experience. The following letters are written as a testimony to the skills and qualities that the participants have employed to help hold onto their identity as white farmers. The written word helps to stand as a witness to our identity and belonging in its record of accumulated wisdom, by deliberately making use of the organisation of linguistic resources. It also opens opportunities for alternate descriptions of our life. This then challenges dominant discourses, which can label us and strip us of our confidence and identity in what Orwell would have called ‘double

speak' or 'reality control'. Our humanity captured in the written word then calls us back from the margins to a place where we can participate in our stories and embrace our humanity. I have filtered the stories through the questions I have asked in the first chapter, selecting words and phrases that resonate with the aims of this study.

### **3.2 GORDON AND GERTRUDE**

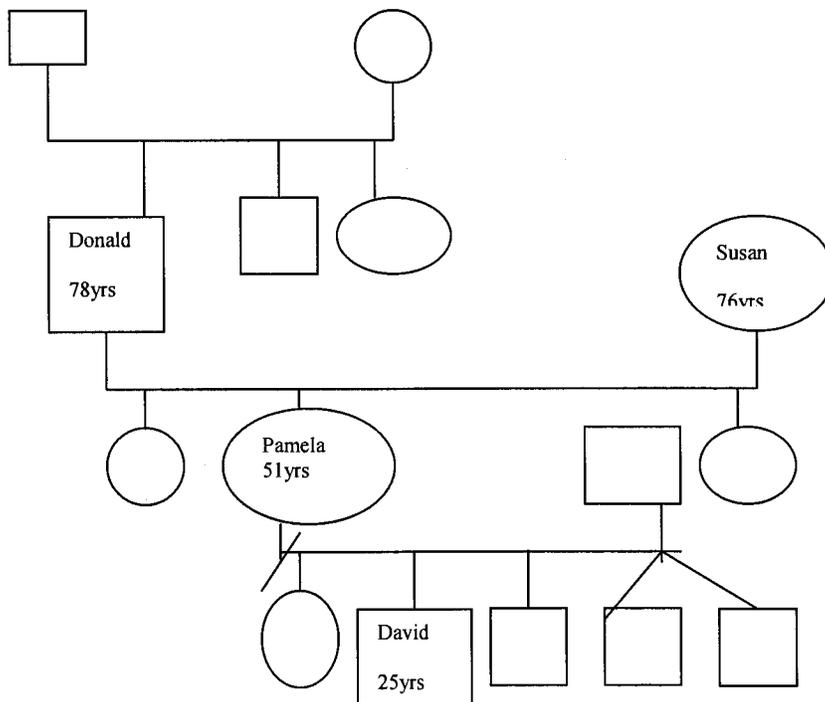
I have only scantily introduced Gordon and Gertrude as the outside voices. I would like you to get to know them a little more. I have known Gordon for many years, as he attends the Anglican Church that I go to. The reason I asked him to participate in this study was because of a group discussion we had at the church on how we can bring about inter-racial and inter-tribal healing. He told us the story of how his grandfather's farm was taken from him in the 1930's and of his temptation to put his name down for 'land'. It made a great impact upon me and I wanted to understand his thoughts about 'healing' and 'hurt' more.

I have known Gertrude for some years, as I have worked with her at CONNECT (Zimbabwe Institute of Systemic Therapy). She is a 'war veteran' and deeply involved within the ruling party Zanu PF. Because of this, and her faith commitment to Christianity, I felt that she would have some helpful thoughts and beliefs around the land issue and healing within Zimbabwe.

### **3.3 DONALD, SUSAN, PAMELA AND DAVID. A FAMILY TREE**

Donald was born in Rhodesia to parents who came out from England, and they had three children, Donald being the eldest. Donald and his brother inherited their father's farm and his brother's farm has recently been taken over by the government for resettlement. Donald's sister married a farmer and has also been forced to leave her farm. Donald bought the farm he is now on in 1985. Of his three daughters, only Pamela remained in Zimbabwe. She married a farmer, but they moved into town during the Rhodesian war of liberation. The government bought their farm in the early 1980's. Pamela and her husband reared their five children in town, but she and her husband separated in 1988. Her son David, after completing school, went to study science in Britain and returned in 1999 to help his grandfather manage the farm. They were invaded by 'war veterans' early in 2000 and have had some serious disruptions on the farm, as well as threats to their personal safety. Perhaps the most traumatic

experience has been the frequent visits of an army colonel, who talks of taking over the farm. Many of the farms around them have been taken over by senior government officials and this has added to the traumatisation and fragmentation of the community. Pamela lives in town, but grows seedlings and propagates plants on the farm, which she sells from a shop in town.



### 3.4 LETTER TO PAMELA, MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> 2002

Dear Pamela

Thank you for sharing your experiences of 'identity' and 'trauma' with me. From the conversation we had, you talked about feeling comfortable with the way the topic is 'mutating' from the 'land' to 'identity', because identity is part of the struggle that you are experiencing at the moment. Like you said *'I am white Zimbabwean but have no rights as a white, so identity is a good thing.... Maybe because I am a product of the 60's and 70's... I had questions, questions, questions about right and wrong, where was God and Truth. That is what characterised the MOST troublesome time in my life. I was tossed around. I didn't support the Rhodesian Front and believed the black people deserved a voice. But I hated the means of violence. I couldn't stand it when missionaries*

*were killed (as in the Elim massacre)... This war has brought up a lot of those questions again. They call it the Third Chimurenga.'*

Thinking about what you said, I am challenged by what seems to me to be very independent thinking. Back in the 70's I imagine there was a great deal of 'State propaganda', and from what I understand, many young people followed the Rhodesian cause. Is this something that runs through your family, an ability to think differently? It seems as if you had many more questions than answers.

You spoke about your memories as a family, and how important they are, of doing things together as a family, on the farm. Like having family braais on the kopje by the dam, when your parents would tell stories about the past. You thought that these stories have helped to form and maintain your identity. You went on to say *'Like having photos on my wall of my grandfather. I refuse to feel ashamed of him (as a pioneer). There is nothing that I have heard of that I am ashamed of'*. I remember your father telling me about those early days, when your grandfather built his first mud house, and had difficulty finding people to help him, because the area was not populated, as it didn't follow a river. Is this partly what you mean when you say you have nothing to be ashamed of? Hearing you talk of these memories of the early days, and your family traditions, made me think how significant they seem to be in forming and maintaining our identity. I have also come to realise that living in Zimbabwe for over twenty years, my memories have formed a large part of who I am. I wonder if these traditions and memories come to our help in times of trauma to give meaning and maintain our family 'togetherness'?

When you mentioned 'shame', it got me thinking about the effects of a system that introduces 'shame'. You talked of being scripted into a position of experiencing shame, when it wasn't your fault that you were born here. You told a story of your ageing neighbour, who was also born here, being told by the 'War Veterans', *'We hate people that were born here'*. We went on to talk about the role that 'blame' has played in what we are currently experiencing. *'We are made responsible for what our ancestors did. Not necessarily ours, but other whites. That is being put on us, and adds to the confusion. I find it very difficult to make individuals responsible for what a state has done. I would never look at a Japanese person and say "you are responsible for what happened in the Second World War". Look at Germany. I picked up a German girl of about 27yrs. It made such an impact on me when she said "I can never go to Israel because of what we did to the Jews". I was shattered and said "But YOU didn't do it". That was a few years ago, and I thought how terrible it was that she carried the guilt*

*for the Nazi regime.... It is a real danger blaming people and the past and not taking responsibility. They are using the weak point of guilt'.*

I wonder how then do we get out of this place, where blame and guilt seem to have a powerfully destructive way of working together? Do you think it would help if others could hear what you are saying about blame and guilt? If so, how can the wider society stand up against their influence? I also wonder what was meant by 'We hate you'?

We talked about 'community', particularly the church community, and how it has helped to hold onto your identity and generate hope, as well as give a position on knowing 'right from wrong', as in the ten commandments. You said that, *'When sermons talk about right and wrong, good and bad, it helps me hope in a good God. It also helps when the church speaks out publicly.... I read the independent papers a lot because I need to know that there are people that feel strongly, like I do, that things are wrong. Maybe it is because I don't know what is right and what is wrong'.* It got me wondering about the effects of this confusion, the guilt and blame, on all of us, and how we can be on the 'right' side in one generation and it can be turned to the 'wrong' in the next. If being in a church community helps protect us from this confusion, what else do you think we need to do and say as a church, to make a stand against wrong, without creating camps of 'goodies and baddies'?

I started to think about what you said about the white community being so destroyed, and how much it helps to find, or create, a 'safe place'. Destruction seems to me like the 'child' of blame and guilt. It seems to have a powerful effect to confuse, polarise, isolate and marginalise us as white people. In fact, you described it as *'abandonment'* - as if you are no longer an accepted member of society. Instead of simply describing yourself as *'Zimbabwean'* you are experiencing a label of *'white'* and *'outside'*, something that would not have occurred to you before.

The day before I met with you, you were planning to plant a 'potiger' and had herbs ready to put in. I thought it so 'spunky' of you to be resisting the 'destruction' by doing something 'creative'. You mentioned that when you are depressed and lonely, you are able to hold onto hope by do something, even if it is small, within a safe environment. You said, *'I try to make my environment more beautiful by being creative in planning things. So this potiger has been part of it. It wasn't really formulated as an antidote to depression. But it helps to forget the horror.... It is something just for myself, something that you are able to do and able to control where there is so much that I can't control'.*

I was thinking that this might be a part of 'doing hope', and yet you went on to say that you get too exhausted, and then can't do it for yourself any more. I found it very challenging, the way you keep 'hope' alive in the nursery, by listening to your staff and customers, and I wonder how doing this influences the lives of other people and perhaps holds hope for them? I had visions of large bunches of flowers passing on their life and fragrance to those around. It was interesting that you said in times of uncertainty people spend money in the nursery on flowers and gardens! I found the story you told of your neighbour having to leave Tanzania, and now having to leave her farm, very powerful. I think it was the story of the 'bougainvillea' that she had brought as a cutting from South Africa, and when she visited her old broken homestead in Dar es Salaam, it was the bougainvillea that remained.

Do you think that by creating safe places, however small, it kind of makes a statement that we are 'resisting' the destructiveness of what is happening around us? It is as if, however much chaos there is, we can still make a choice to create a 'safe community', as a resistance to what is happening in the bigger society. But I also wonder whether there is a point, when we don't belong any more, and can't create safety, however small. And then, is there a way that our identity can be brought forward, taken to another place, bringing with it the memories, expertise, skills and family traditions, in a way that will not traumatise the next generation?

I was profoundly affected by your description of living in Chipinge during the mid 1970's. It had not registered before, how terrifying that experience must have been for you, and I also wondered if my ears had been 'closed' to hearing about it before. Perhaps I couldn't hear because how could I understand as an outsider? When I commented on this you said '*But I have told you about it before.*' You recounted what you described as terror, and said '*I was SO frightened. I think my most vivid memory was hearing the railway blown up so often. I sat by the window all night with a gun. I put the children in the corridor because that was where we were safe. The absolute terror that they were going to come and kill us. They were brutal. I was very frightened that I would be killed and my husband would be killed, and the children would be wounded. I had two small children... My neighbours were taken out and shot. He was a young white guy with a black girl-friend. I think in times of heightened emotion you remember a lot... I suppose now I still view it as a kind of terror... but then I was young and it was different, because I had a husband, and we could go together and make a new life. I had more options.. It was terrifying, but now I feel hopeless because I don't think I can go easily.*'

I found it curious that the evening of our conversation, you sat down with your children, and talked about 'choice' and ways to have an option so that you are not so trapped. Do you think that having some possibility of an 'option' open to you, makes a difference? I wonder if all these things, like making safety, doing 'creativity', as well as making plans, are a part of resisting the fragmentation of our known world. It is like not losing hope of a future that can bring fresh opportunity.

The people you felt that you could most identify with are the Jewish people rebuilding their lives after the Second World War. You told me the story of the children, who on their parent's 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary promised them that they would replace the family members who died in concentration camps. They went on to have seven children each, each child representing a member who died in the holocaust. How then can we rebuild and help our children rebuild the deficit that we have been a part of? How can these stories of hope be kept alive and help us to move beyond the trauma of the present and the past?

Being the same age as you, I thought a lot about what you said about our generation getting caught in the guilt of colonialism. It is interesting that you feel neither your boys nor your parents generation are as consumed with these thoughts of 'guilt about the past'. Do you think that it has something to do with us being women, or the generation in the middle? (You mentioned that Andrea, your daughter, agonises over these issues too).

Talking about a mother and daughter's role, I noticed how deeply you participate in your parents' suffering at this time. I was very impacted by how much you care about them. As you said, *'They are suffering so much and are unable to change. This is a part of the horror of it all, that they are being forced to change. You know it is terrible, because they have always lived what I thought was a "good life".... and that generation might be stuck in a groove, but they are not 100% arrogant and superior.... I am afraid that these stories will be dismissed in one line of history, saying that past wrongs were put right in redressing the past injustices. Our stories will be lost and we will be written into history as the bad colonials.'*

Thanks, Pamela, for sharing the way all these life issues have impacted your life and identity. As I have written this, I can't help but think about qualities such as compassion, creativity, independent thinking, resilience and an ability to find beauty and safety in the midst of such pain and uncertainty. These thoughts are

working in my life too and giving me courage to continue, when all I have left are 'questions, questions, questions'.

With love, Bridgid

### 3.5 I AM GORDON

Gordon was brought up in a 'rural area', with his five brothers and one sister. His parents were both teachers. His father and grandfather were dispossessed from their land in 1934 with the Land Apportionment Act. Their village home is still in sight of their old land, which is now owned by a white commercial farmer, with whom his family has a good relationship. The farmer has recently had to leave the farm due to occupation. Gordon has a strong commitment to Christian beliefs, and was brought up in a family of strong believers. His father is a lay preacher in the Anglican church. Gordon is currently Director of World Vision International in Zimbabwe.

I am Gordon Gandiya, born in '58.

My father, headmaster,

Lay preacher.

Mother. Teacher. Mum.

Farmer, father, business friends.

Plenty to talk, discuss.

Grinding mill, shop and road.

They played when they were small.

The age of innocence.

*Look at me. You see the present,*

*I look at you and see the past.*

*Displaced, pain and hurt, of land where the cattle grazed.*

*Seeing the white man's pain*

*I remember ours.*

*I will not inflict that upon you.*

*'Tit for tat' is for those who do not follow Christ.*

To reach our village.

Walk through the farm,

Where my grandfather and father were born.

Taken in the 1930's.

A fence divides us now.

A farmer. A Christian.  
A good man. He has a shop.  
A grinding mill.  
He built the road.  
He ploughs our fields.  
He speaks our language.  
But it was still our land.  
And we his subjects.

'Occupy the farm'. 'Reclaim the land'.  
Not our village,  
Another village. Not ours.  
We would not do that to him.  
A good man masks our pain.  
Filtered through a government of the past.  
So we let our cattle wander.  
Not by day, but by night.  
For the land was ours.

*Look at me. You see the present.  
I look at you and see the past.  
Displaced, pain and hurt of land where the cattle grazed.  
Seeing the white man's pain I remember ours.  
I will not inflict that upon you.  
Tit for tat is for those who do not follow Christ.*

Understand me, then I am valued.  
Speak my language  
We have learnt yours.  
We are Western. We are Shona.  
My children will learn Shona ways.  
And western too, in the city.  
I also have a culture,  
Grown in Nyazura, Manicaland.  
The land of my grandparents.

*I am a Believer,  
I reflect on my actions.  
I reflect on the word of God.  
My actions reflect on me.*

*They reflect and affect us.  
Our tears at your expense.  
Your tears for what gain?  
It was not this generation that brought our tears 70 years ago.  
We cried then.  
I reflect now. God speaks.  
A symbolic life of following Christ.  
Not this way of 'tit for tat'.*

The papers came, I filled them out.  
Justice was being done.  
My own share of land.  
To be put on the list.  
I reflected, God spoke.  
'Not in this way'.  
Paper, screwed up. In the bin.  
Just walking in and taking land.  
No warning.  
I saw the pain. Destruction. Tears.  
I cannot be a part of that.  
Not in this way of power.  
Political gain.

A better way. A respectful way.  
A way of 'relationship'.  
Standing even above truth.  
Shame one for another to gain?  
Not the way of Shona culture.  
It is not the way of Christ.  
Pain returns. Respect me.  
Your tears for my hurt,  
Wipe away my pain.  
This is to be a Christian.  
To care in pain.  
Not to cash in political gain.

Let us learn not to exclude.  
Some in the church are excluded.  
They are powerful, but excluded.  
They feel the pain.  
Let us work in relationship.

Let us not make enemies.  
It does not make what they do right.  
Let us care and learn about 'relationship'.  
That way we can bind their wounds  
And talk.

*I am a believer.  
I reflect on my actions.  
I reflect on the word of God.  
My actions reflect on me.  
They reflect and affect us.  
Our tears at your expense.  
Your tears for what gain?  
It was not this generation that brought our tears 70 years ago  
We cried then.*

### 3.6 LETTER TO DAVID MAY 18<sup>th</sup> 2002

Hi David,

Here are a few thoughts about the conversations that we have had. I was thinking back to the first time I visited you on the farm and how curious you were, at that time, about how Western thoughts and language seem to have permeated African culture, but not the other way around. Last night, when we finished the conversation you said, *'But we haven't talked about culture'*.

Driving home, it got me thinking about what we hadn't said! I was interested in what you originally said about how much the Western World has influenced Zimbabwe, but how little perhaps, we know about their ways of knowing and their culture. And yet, I wonder if much of our conversation in some way was about culture and how we 'relate' or 'understand' ourselves in relation to other cultures in Zimbabwe. It seems to be multi-layered, in that culture changes, even within our own families over generations.

I wonder, though, in times of great 'stress' and 'uncertainty', whether there is a tendency to go back and hold on to the 'familiar' rather than risk change, because in times of great trauma perhaps we need to group together? You also thought that under the current situation, where there is no law to protect you, you are becoming 'cynical' in your belief in our 'humanity', especially when there are so many 'lies' and 'accusations' about white people. You also thought that the 'abuse' that you are receiving is causing you to experience 'racism' in a way that

you have not done before. You have given me a great deal to think about on that too, as well as what I saw as your pragmatic side, which says, *'I just want to get on with making the 'business' work, because I like living here.'*

In our last conversation we talked quite a lot about the difference in culture between growing up in the city and growing up on a farm, about how you have adjusted. One area was language. Coming from Harare, where you didn't speak Shona, you mentioned how hard it has been for you to learn Shona. And yet you seemed to think that *'farmers speak Shona and mix with their workers far more than those in town'*. It seems nearly paradoxical to me, that a traditionally 'conservative' group of people, who speak the language out of 'necessity' rather than 'choice' would also be the group that works in the fields with the labour force, and is deeply attached to the land. As you said, *'Farming families have a stronger attachment to the country than those living in town. It may be because their family has lived in that place on that land for 60-70 years'*. Thinking about your 'city' friends and how all of your school friends have left the country, it seems as if farmers also have a stronger sense of identity as 'Zimbabwean'. I wonder whether it is easier in town to be 'multi-racial', because our identity is not 'threatened', whereas, as you say, when you are on the farm, it is just you alone with the work force. You describe yourself as feeling more *'Zimbabwean than two years ago'*. You went on to say *'it has made me feel more Zimbabwean than I did before. Going to university (in England), made me realise that this is my home, where I belong. In the last two years I feel justified being here. My grandfather and my parents went through their struggles to be in this country and now I am going through mine. Having to fight for it has made me more determined to stay. If I had come back here and it had all been roses I wouldn't have come to the point now where my identity as a Zimbabwean is very strong. If someone wants to take something away from you, you want to hold onto it'*.

The current situation seems to have sensitised you to finding out more about your 'roots', so that you can get a sense of what 'really' happened. As you said, *'It was important to know, perhaps because of all the propaganda and lies that are thrown at you by the press in this country. I wanted to know the actual truth how the white people had come here, how they had done things before independence.... I found it interesting and exciting. In a way I feel that we have gone back to those early days, when the white people came, and they were here under the sufferance of Lobengula or Mzilikazi. They were there under his rule and had to do what he said. We are here now in some ways under sufferance and we have to go along with what the government says. Back then it was Lobengula and now it is Zanu PF. The two situations match in some ways in my head, and I*

*think that if those guys could do it then, there is no reason why we can't do it. It just gave me some sort of direction'.*

You also described some of those early pioneers as a *'fairly unprincipled lot... in a sly sort of way... like the Rudd concession which Rhodes turned into a Royal Charter.... But they had a sort of capitalist, exploitation outlook on life and they were there to get what they could. But a lot of them stayed and they put in their whole lives into developing their country'*. At that time in history the white people also had a great deal of 'power' on their side. It is different today, when the whites, as you say, are *'powerless'*, and have to depend upon their wits to survive, with no support from either government or the police. In fact, as the Herald put it *'Whites have been declared the enemies of the State'*. This places you in an even more challenging place.

Although your family has had a long history of being in Zimbabwe, before going to university in Britain, you considered yourself as much English as Zimbabwean. But returning here you talk about the long history in Zimbabwe and not feeling British. In a previous conversation we talked about your strong identity being carried in the stories that have been told of your parents and grandparents and great-grandparents' *'ability to survive in difficult circumstances'*. You thought your attachment is *'perhaps because of the stories my parents and grandfather have told me'*. I often wonder about people like your grandfather, and what sort of 'qualities' and 'skills' he had in settling here, when it might have been much easier to return to Britain. Your grandfather seemed to think it was because of his love for 'adventure'.

Talking about 'skills', I was challenged with your ability to negotiate with both the labour force and the head 'war vet', in circumstances where they seem to have total power to dictate their terms, especially when they shout at you and call you names. In fact, you described yourself as the *'chief negotiator'*. I wonder how these stories of calming people down, talking and *'reasoning'* will be told to your grandchildren?

And yet, you also talk about the emotional exhaustion and worry of this responsibility, and how you have to think so far ahead so that they are not angered by your replies. Because of your ability to stay calm and negotiate, you seem to have been able to remain on the farm. Does that mean that you only have to anger them and you might be told to 'go'? I am not surprised that you do not talk much about these traumatic incidents to your friends, because, as you say *'they can't really understand'*, and perhaps, as you said, you want to *'have fun and forget for a while about the farm and work'*. It got me thinking that

perhaps these stories are kept in the 'sacred space of the family', where they will be honoured and kept alive in generations to come.

You described other qualities and principles that you have developed such as *'feeling for the labour'*, in a way that you think your grandfather finds difficult, and is not as skilled in. As you said, *'I like to think that I am someone who has tried to be fair, and tried to work within my own ethical system.'*

We wondered whether this is something to do with your generation, and you said it could be, because you *'don't view black people as second class citizens, and most of our generation are prepared to view them as people who you treat like yourself'*. But you also thought it was more than this, because you try hard to be kind and generous. You feel that your grandfather's generation wasn't equipped in the same way, because of the effects of colonisation, and the construction of a class dominated society. In a way they seemed to be caught as victims of that system. Thinking about it, we had the thought that it is especially hard for the older generation to adapt and change in this confusing world, where they seem so powerless now, with so many of their good qualities, like perseverance and loyalty, being counted for nothing. On top of that, you thought that with your life ahead of you, you can adapt and move if you have to, whereas that would be a terrible thing for your grandparents.

We talked quite a bit about the effects of *'government propaganda'* on your life. There seem to be so many *'lies'* in the press, as well as contradictions, which have had the effect of polarising you as a white person, particularly as a farmer. You thought that with so much *'hate and accusations against white farmers'*, that you are finding it hard not to be racial and counter these attacks. You talked of the State machinery, especially the Herald, being very successful in brainwashing the general public into believing that the white farmer is *'bad'*. This makes it even harder to bear, when the farm workers blame you on one hand, are politicised to support the government, but come to you for help, because government is not helping or supporting them.

It seems hard to escape this 'trap', when you are feeling powerless, and they could take the farm away with no rights to compensation. And yet you also feel for the poverty that is worsening in the country, where even a coffin costs a month's wage. How do we get out of this poverty cycle? Especially, as you say, when you consider that the average person is poorer today than ten years ago. You are trapped into feeling compassion and helping out on one hand, but blamed and forced into a 'paternal position' on the other. As you said, *'My problem is the*

*irresponsibility - they are now like children and we are the parents, and we have to look after them whatever they do. There is no two-way reciprocation going on there. It's all one way and that is something that I have come to have a big problem with over the last few months'.*

These are a few thoughts about our conversation. It has been a confusing and powerful path to walk with you. I am challenged and enriched with your ability to carry on in spite of so much opposition, particularly when the implication is *'that we are bad people... they are allowed to attack us as much as they want and go along with the governments attack on white people. But when it comes to getting help, they need come to us. And now it is expected as a right rather than as a gift because we are nice people'.*

I feel that I have taken a sip from your cup of courage, and these stories will remain with me, and remind me, of one very caring, principled and ethical man, who is trying to make a living in a country that he deeply loves and feels that he belongs. I found this poem, called 'Build Soil', that reminded me of our conversations.

Needless to say to you, my argument  
Is not to lure the city to the country.  
Let those who possess the land, and only those,  
Who love it with a love so strong and stupid  
That they may be abused and taken advantage of  
And made fun of by business, law, and art;  
They still hang on. That so much of the earth's  
Unoccupied need not make us uneasy  
We don't pretend to complete occupancy.  
The world's one globe, human society  
Another softer globe that slightly flattened.  
Rests on the world, and clinging slowly rolls  
We have our own round shape to keep unbroken.

Frost 1936

Yours,

Bridgid

### 3.7 LETTER TO DONALD AND SUSAN MAY 25<sup>th</sup> 2002

Dear Donald and Susan,

Thanks so much to agreeing to talk to me about the terrible experiences you are going through at the moment on the farm. I realise that it is difficult to talk when you have so much on your minds, and I appreciate you making time for me. I hope that by talking, it doesn't make it worse for you. You talked about that '*flickering flame of hope*' keeping you going. I was challenged by your ability to keep going and to '*just work harder and longer to try to get through it*'. By keeping going, you thought that it was one way you could persevere and resist the powerlessness of what is happening. You described how you feel '*desperate*', an experience that you have not felt before. It is an experience that you don't think your parents had either, in spite of locusts, drought, the depression in the 1930's, or World War II.

And yet, Susan, you were still able to hold that flickering candle of hope and say, '*Somehow or other this will come right. But do you think it will? We don't have a great many years to go, but our grandson does. We just hope that somehow we will get through it. It is a very great strain... life has to go on*'. Your ability to hold that candle has had a powerful impact on me, and when you talked about '*courage*', it seems to be a very great and rare gift, to be able to keep going in spite of all you are currently experiencing.

As you related the story of your neighbouring farm and what happened, I have to admit that I have no words for the awfulness of what happened. As you said Donald, '*He stood there and the 'War veteran' just took over the office. The new owner told him, in his own office, to kneel down to him. When he refused he said, "You fucking white fascist pig. It is a long time since I spilt white, fascist blood"*'. I can't even begin to imagine how awful that must be, to have your home confiscated, to have someone point an AK rifle at you, and then, in your own home, to be abused in this way. It is hard to imagine that after confiscating everything, they still want the workers to be paid over \$70 million in compensation.

I am recounting this story, perhaps because I feel that it needs to be told, as a testimony to what is happening in your community, and the effect it is having on you. As you said Donald, it was the bravery of the 'Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace', that exposed the atrocities of what happened in Matabeleland in the 1980's. Perhaps by writing this, it is one way to find a 'voice' and to stand against the awfulness of what is happening around us. This

brutality on your neighbour's farm seems to have had a profound effect on your whole community, and it has certainly shaken me up. It makes me wonder what hope there is for the human race.

You both talked about assumptions you had made in the past being shattered. Assumptions like thinking people are generally good, but now you are not so sure. The situation has caused you to retreat into yourselves for survival, and to think of 'us' and 'them', and in this way keep your identity as 'Anglo Saxon' going in a way that you can be proud of your heritage. You also thought that your 'community' has been a great support for your identity and sense of belonging. But now this is breaking up and there is so much uncertainty about the future. There is just such sadness, that it has happened like this. As you said Susan *'One hoped it wouldn't happen but it has. It was different after independence, there was reciprocity. Both sides were working happily together. Mostly you could trust people when they said something.... But black culture has changed to having lust and greed, and it didn't used to be like that'*. And yet you still thought Susan, that there are good people, both black and white. I wondered what has given you the ability to still believe this in the face of such suffering?

We talked about some of the qualities and good that your generation and your parents have given to this country. They were qualities like *'caring for the needs of the staff and providing good provisions'*, knowing that the families got enough to eat. It seems so hurtful to be blamed for being *'paternalistic'*, when you felt that once they had the money instead of the 'rations', much of it would go into alcohol, and the families would suffer. Why is it that it is easier to find fault with the people that have gone before, than to understand? It is especially hurtful, when now there is no sugar or oil or mealie-meal to buy, and meat seems like a luxury rather than an expected 'ration'. You also thought that your parents gave you the *'ability to relate to the rest of mankind. To be able to understand and sympathise with other people's aspirations'*. These are noble aspirations, and a part of your heritage that you are proud of. You mentioned qualities like *'stability and patience'*, qualities that have been passed down over the generations in your family. It seems as if you have needed an extra dose of 'patience' as you work on keeping that flame flickering.

Inspite of such 'instability', you seem to have a way to try to create stability within your family and keep hope alive. You described it as *'being put on death row and given a reprieve for five months to grow wheat. We have five months and then the logical thing is to ask us to plant maize'*.

And yet you also feel that this glimmer of hope is fading, in spite of all the work you have put in to helping the government over the years, taking them around the country, setting up training for farmers etc. Then to have a 'soldier' or is it a 'colonel?' intimidate you by saying, 'You just helped the MP's so that we wouldn't throw you off the farm'. You thought that David has inherited a great deal of your 'rectitude' and an ability to stick at farming, a quality that you greatly admire in him. Knowing that you are holding on for David, seems to be keeping you going. Just as your father passed on the 'baton' to you, it is as if you are now giving it to David.

That glimmer of hope seems so fragile, and as you put it is 'is fading'. Your graphic description that the 'light was on this region for 100 years and now it is going out', makes this a dark moment for you in history, where all you have known and worked for, is being broken down. You even said, 'We took the wrong fork in the road coming to Africa'. But in spite of all these things, you are writing your memoirs. I wonder if you would have as many stories to tell if you had lived on a farm in Shropshire? And whether the gifts and qualities you have developed, would have been as apparent, or as strong in your children and grandchildren? There may also come a time when you will be remembered by many in Africa, and they will say, 'There was a GOOD COUPLE'. I hope so. And finally, the reason you don't quit is because this is 'home' and this is where you belong. As history gets written and re-written, you will not be forgotten for the impact and contributions you have made to the bettering of the world.

Yours thoughtfully, Bridgid

### 3.8 GERTRUDE'S WEB OF PRAYER FOR HEALING

Gertrude is both a friend and a colleague. She has felt the pain of being a refugee during the liberation struggle and her husband was imprisoned at this time. As an active member of the ruling party, she is now feeling judged by people both in Zimbabwe and in the West. She is a nurse, psychotherapist and lay preacher in the Anglican church.

A web of prayer, Healing, hope  
Wheels have turned.  
Layers and layers...Of mud.  
One hundred years.  
Of wheels with mud.  
An orchard of apples.  
The apples of God's eye.

Pinch you, bruise you.  
A harvest of apples not bruised.  
Dig deep..to where it began.  
England.  
What good is a house  
With no hope of land?  
A passport is taken.  
Land does not disappear  
My identity.  
I scrape it, I sweep it.  
Source of being human, of food.  
A place where I call 'home'.  
In England, in exile.  
'An 'immigrant lives next door'  
Can do it better than in Britain.  
We can all belong.

It is good to talk, to discuss.  
Our experiences with feedback.  
We See things differently.  
Perceptions, perceptions.  
Someone listened, then you heard.  
My heart and kidneys.  
Same shape as yours.  
Difference is only skin deep.

Back to the beginning.  
Where it starts.  
It has not been acknowledged.  
How can forgiveness happen without acknowledgement?  
What can we expect from Britain?  
Seen their 'great betrayal'.  
We expect it from them.  
Acknowledgement, Acknowledge it.  
BBC, CNN - how can we speak against such power?  
Helplessness against the pointing of the finger.  
Isolation.  
Who would broadcast this conversation?  
You and I, of all people.  
Sitting down to tea.  
Who would be interested?

Knowledge is on the ground.  
Here in this room.  
Among those who see.  
This is not a dangerous country.  
But it is portrayed that way.

To talk and pray.  
To see the 'other' and care.  
I used to see a white person.  
'Privileged'  
Now the conflagration.  
Wounded? Injured?  
Advantaged? Injured?  
Oppressor? Injured?  
Suppressed? Injured?  
Abused? Injured?  
Master? Servant? Oppressor? Subjugated? Injured?  
Christian values.  
We can do it better than in Britain.  
No way to reverse it there.  
We can all belong here.

Do not preach forgiveness.  
For what is not acknowledged.  
Do not interfere where you have not been asked.  
We extended a hand of forgiveness.  
On Heroes Day it is told.  
But did you take that hand?  
Perhaps reconciliation was never defined.  
White ministers were included.  
Followed to the letter of the Law.  
Acknowledged? Never.  
The wounds fester.

Return to the beginning.  
Where the pain began.  
Forgiveness can happen.  
Vertical forgiveness from God.  
It can also happen horizontally.  
Africans are not vindictive.  
But who will believe us?

Who will listen?  
Government. Of the people.  
For the people. By the people.  
Do not judge from outside.  
Can someone come from outside the village? Observer?  
Deliver the goods?  
We have our ways and customs. Procedures, processes.  
Those within are heard.  
Within community. Consensus.  
Men sit one way. Women the other.  
A woman is heard. Not directly.  
But she is heard.  
This is community. Democracy.  
Community of purpose.  
Democracy, Consensus.  
Not written.  
Not from the outside.  
Not financed from the West.

Violence.  
Expression, unfulfilled objectives.  
Born from helplessness.  
When will you hear?  
We began to negotiate.  
We graduated to throwing stones.  
We graduated to petrol.  
We gradually graduated to  
A struggle of expression.  
Unfulfilled objectives.

Did you hear?  
We can do it differently.  
Not like in Britain.  
They brought the bible.  
We shut our eyes.  
They took our land.  
We opened our eyes.  
But they still brought the bible.  
Salvation. Forgiveness.  
Good from the colonial leg.

Masters on entry.  
We never had land in Britain.  
Never masters on entry.  
Now we can go to white areas.  
That ludicrous proportion of land.  
But now they are hurt, insecure.  
And I hurt too.  
How can I bruise you?  
The apple of God's eye.

White people.  
Reviewing their position.  
Privilege, power, dispossessed.  
Some, nowhere to go.  
I feel pain for them.  
Perhaps I shouldn't.  
I try to understand the other side.  
But I don't.  
Pain of my child at a white school.  
How can I understand?  
I made a regrettable mistake.  
To send her among those  
Who were not her own.

Stand back and look.  
Where God loves us all.  
One day in heaven.  
There will be no difference.  
No grievance.  
If we could stand back and look.  
As God looks.  
The web of prayer is the answer.

### 3.9 REFLECTING ON THE LETTERS AND THE POETIC RHYTHM

Why have I presented the letters and poems in the order I have? I am not sure, but it is interesting that I began with Pamela, who is my contemporary, and ended with the older generation. Have I given them the least priority? Or is it that I left it with what I believe is like a crescendo of conflicting thoughts and emotions?

I have attempted to enter into the life-worlds of the participants, through the letters and poems. This has been a helpful and respectful process for me, where my understanding has not been privileged over theirs. It has acted like a safety valve on my own judgements and assumptions, and has challenged me to adjust and alter my own story by being transported into theirs. Through the letters I participated within the discourses of each generation. My style of writing, the language we used, and the questions that have been asked are very different, according to each generation. I found myself in a more 'concrete' world with Donald and Susan, where words were more general and impersonal, like '*one does this*', or '*we relate to the rest of mankind*' or '*the logical thing is to grow maize*'. It is as if 'normal persons are predictable, honest and sincere' (Gergen 1991:6 see 2.6.1).

I identify with Pamela, being both the same age and sex. I am also left with so many questions, experiencing 'guilt', 'blame' and 'shame', about good and bad, right and wrong. Guilt, blame and shame did not seem to make any appearance in my conversation with David. I was refreshed by the questions he asked and the way he wants to get on with his life and his business in an ethical and respectful way. It is as if he does not carry the colonial baggage.

It was an emotional experience for me writing in a poetic frame, and this is new territory for me. I found myself participating at a deeper level of kinship with Gordon and Gertrude, and began to engage with two more worldviews. At times Gertrude's stories bruised and confused me. It makes me wonder whether she is also experiencing a confusion about how to position herself. I am left with a residue of 'unfinished business', of curiosity, of anger and pain. These are calling to me like a drum beating over a hill. It beckons me to follow. But for the moment I must stay close to the trail I have set myself.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **MIXING AND MATCHING**

I am now going to have to ‘face the music’, which is difficult, in that I feel called in many directions. However I do it, some of the quality of the original words is in danger of losing its impact. My journey towards participating with, and understanding this music and the lyrics is ongoing. I also feel responsible for my interpretation and stewardship of the stories that have been told. As some themes become centred, others are waiting for their turn on the stage of the story’s ‘genealogy’. However, in the light of the questions I asked at the beginning of this project, I will limit myself to:-

1. How I see that identity has been formed and maintained as ‘White and African’.
2. Group trauma and its effect on our identity.
3. Alternate descriptions of our identity. New descriptions, which go beyond race.
4. Caring for hurting communities and calling the church to practice transformative and ethical ways to bring about healing.

#### **4.1 HOW IDENTITY HAS BEEN FORMED AND MAINTAINED AS “WHITE AND AFRICAN”**

##### **4.1.1 White and African. Where do I belong?**

Is it possible to be both White and African? White identity in postcolonial Africa reminds me of a swirl of cream on top of a dark chocolate mousse. The ‘cream’ is being mixed into the chocolate and is losing its central and privileged position, which was once set off by its dark background. White is being written into history in a different way with a different texture and it can no longer retain its dominant position of being separate and privileged. Theories on social construction, the meaning of ‘whiteness’, and postcolonial theory are all helping me to re-work the recipe, which has as its ingredients culture, race, gender and age. As I taste, mix and blend ingredients, in the company of others, my hope is that it will not collapse in the centre, or forget the cream!

#### 4.1.2 Identity and belonging

*'We are not the same as "Brits", they talk about "going home", this is home to us'* (Donald).  
*'I thought I identified with Britain, but going to university I realise I am Zimbabwean'*  
(David).

The theme of not being 'British' has permeated through the generations in this family, particularly among the two men. 'Belonging' and 'identity' however, may not mean the same thing. For example, David may choose to 'belong' here and at the same time draw some of his identity from Britain. Perhaps this is what Taylor (2002:3) means when she talks of white farmers in Zimbabwe feeling somewhat 'rootless', in a construct of a quasi-Western 'other'.

Gertrude, however, feels passionate about her identity and belonging being rooted in Zimbabwe. In England, she says, she would always be the '*immigrant*', where land can never become 'hers'. Embedded within this text could be a belief that 'whites' or the 'British' are immigrants in Zimbabwe and do not belong here, particularly as landowners and colonials. There may be other reasons why she said that, and it would also not be fair to assume that other black Africans feel this way. Her identity, she says, is bound to the land, a place that you can call '*home... I scrape it, I sweep it, It is my source of being human, of food*'. This statement could, I think, be evocative of what the white farmer also feels, and the poem 'Homeland' represents this powerful identity with the land.

Could it also be a way of holding onto an identity that belongs to the traditions of the past? A lineal identity that seems to lose its multi-faceted, circular richness, just as 'white' and 'black' do? This could be particularly relevant when it appears that many of those who are benefiting from the land redistribution are not farmers, but people who live in towns and have limited, or no experience of farming, except in their 'past'. Is it a way of returning to a familiar 'tent' in order to keep our 'truths' alive and relevant?

'White', 'British', and 'Coloniser', could then be used by those in power, to gain political mileage and benefit from past historical constructions. 'White' becomes a construction that has lost its usefulness, except for those who can use it for political gain. This does not negate historical injustice, but it does challenge us to think about the exploitation of old wounds to justify the current privileged position that those in power enjoy.

### 4.1.3 Identity in a post-modern age

The post-modern world and a market-driven, global economy have 'dislocated' much of our taken-for-granted, traditional identities, calling for multiple descriptions of belonging and identity. Colonisation and commercial farming has also disrupted whole populations, uprooting us all from our past and perhaps adding to the trauma of having to adapt to a rapidly changing world where our identities are not as rooted in traditional belief systems. It also may suggest that when traumatised, we can return to an identity that belongs to a 'pre-modern' age of an idealised, heroic past (Fanon in McCleod 2000:89). This may be especially true of the older generation who fought in the liberation struggle, like Gertrude. In a similar vein, Donald looks back nostalgically to a time when '*the light was on in Africa for one hundred years*'. It is interesting that Donald looks back to a time when life seemed to be 'better'. In a similar way, Gertrude also looks back at the land, which represents something of a 'lost' past.

If race was not the defining factor, I wonder whether this generation may have more in common than meets the eye? They both share what Gertrude describes as '*the colonial leg*'. If this common 'leg' became more centralised, new identity groups may emerge, where these polarisations and the political use of binary generalisation can be challenged. Traditional Shona culture and colonial culture in this instance, share a similar hierarchical heritage where there are those who 'rule' and those who are 'ruled'.

However, in a hierarchical society, where people are told what to think and believe, it may abdicate us from the responsibility of the consequences of our actions. To become 'citizens' rather than 'subjects' means that we have to become accountable for our actions. This was illustrated with a farming client who said that when the police came to arrest him, the policeman said, 'It is not me, I am just under orders. I would not do this to you'.

### 4.1.4 Age, choice and change

While doing this study, a question arose in my mind as to how we adapt to change, a change that Gergen (1991:3) refers to as 'dislocating'. What happens to identity when social change is rapid and yet the unfolding of our personal narrative truth is slower? I particularly asked myself this question in relation to the conversations with Donald and Susan, as well as

Gertrude, because I wondered whether the older we are, the more vulnerable our identity becomes to rapid social change. This could mean that our personal narratives are slower to adapt, contributing to our experience of trauma and loss of identity. It is hard enough to be faced with such rapid social change, but even worse when we are judged for our past or current identity. For example, *'paternalism'* used to be seen as *'caring for the labour'*, a worthy, responsible and honourable quality, but is now constructed as being arrogant and superior. To be a *'war veteran'* held a heroic quality, but how is it seen among the general public now?

Pamela feels strongly about the labels that her parents have been given. *'You know it is terrible, because that generation might be stuck in a groove, but they are not 100% arrogant and superior. A part of the horror of it all is that they are being forced to change'*. To illustrate these absent but implicit judgements Pamela said, *'Like having photos on my wall of my grandfather. I refuse to feel ashamed of him. There is nothing that I have heard of that I am ashamed of'*. Implied within this statement is the 'shame' of being identified as 'white' and an 'early settler'. We are then in danger of criticising the past in order to justify the present. It may work the other way round too, that, as 'white', we criticise the present to justify the past, feeding back into the maintenance of 'white rule' being superior and more civilised.

I feel as if I have let Donald and Susan's voices slip away, as I did in ordering the letters in chapter 3! As I read through the text that I have just selected, I have allowed Pamela to become their spokesperson! I could return and adjust this by re-evaluating the text within this light, but in itself I think it is a useful comment. It is as if they have fallen into silence, which may of course reflect their own experience and vulnerability, where their voices become marginalized and left out of the post-modern frame of thinking. I wonder whether Gertrude also feels a 'silence' and a 'judgement'. I was dumbstruck by a later comment she made to me. *'This is the first time I have begun to peel the onion....I feel judged'*. Options and new descriptions seem fewer and language seems to lose its elasticity, with statements being made rather than questions asked. Are we leaving a generation behind?

Identity can become extremely fragile when language loses its flexibility. Choices are fewer and change and alternate identities seem difficult to negotiate. David's life is ahead of him, his options of finding alternative places to live and a different identity could free him from

the fear of being trapped, still allowing him the knowledge that a part of him 'belongs' in Zimbabwe. This may help him to be more empowered in his role as 'chief negotiator', because he does not stand to lose as much as the older generations. Drawing from descriptions by his mother at a similar age during the Rhodesian war, she also felt that when she was young, more alternatives were available to her. As time has passed, fewer choices present themselves. She describes it as feeling '*trapped*'. Ways of opening alternative stories and choices may be particularly important in the farming community at present, especially where people feel 'trapped'.

#### **4.1.5 Conversations of silence**

'Trappedness' has a way of catching us. It is as if the more trapped we are the more we are tempted to enter into dialogue with our oppressors in an attempt to find a way out. This dialogue, however, may not be born out of equality of voice, but rather desperation. Could it be this very dialogue that also trapped the 'colonised' into a powerless liaison with the coloniser, where the coloniser thought '*both sides were working happily together?*' This then becomes a danger in a study such as this, because it may appear to temporarily ease the pain and look like 'dialogue', but in the end, play into the very hands of the 'oppressors' in the hope of being 'spared'. These 'dialogues' also carry many 'assumptions' about each other, which translate into 'telling' rather than 'talking', in conversations that go past each other. It becomes the conversation of the deaf! This silent dialogue then becomes an extremely powerful weapon of judgement and destruction. In this instance, true dialogue demands an equality of voice and a legal system where the rules are understood, negotiated and accepted. This does not seem to have been done, either historically or now. It is as if silence is both accepted and socially embedded.

#### **4.1.6 The Impact of colonialism on white identity and the dynamics of change**

With colonisation I have argued that there have been certain assumptions about white identity being both 'normal' and 'civilised'. Although history has moved on, and colonisation is something of the past, we are products of a system and live with the effects of it.

Being labelled as the '*outsider*' and '*white*' rather than '*Zimbabwean*', create '*polarizations*' that Susan, Pamela and David did not used to feel. I wonder whether under colonialism black

people, in the past, had a similar experience of separation and lack of privilege in a way that the white man was unaware of? Hooks (1997:167) researching 'Whiteness in the Black Imagination' in an American classroom, says: 'Usually, white students respond with naïve amazement that black people critically assess white people from a standpoint where "whiteness" is the privileged signifier. Their amazement that black people watch white people with a critical "ethnographic" gaze, is itself an expression of racism'. This resonates with my experience of white as 'normal' and places me in a somewhat insecure position until I again challenge the usefulness of 'whiteness'.

Mugabe (2002) said: 'It is not whites we have a problem with, but the evil they represent'. What is the evil that he is talking of? Is it the impregnation of living as the 'inferior other' that colonialism imposed? Of being 'named' and 'called' and 'labelled', until it disappears into the fabric of our being? I experienced 'it' and was disturbed by 'it' while writing 'Gertrude's prayer'. Entering this 'poetic' space, I was not prepared for the terrifying angry ghosts and 'gaze' that overcame me. It is as if some uncontrollable rage was being spewed up, a rage that seems so frightening and voiceless, and speaks of '*when will you hear? And we can do it differently from Britain*'. A rage that is targeted at Britain as the colonising power and those who represent it, the white farmers. Every time 'it' seemed to find words within the poetic frame, it disappeared again into the undercurrent of the text, with words like '*How can I bruise you, the apple of God's eye*'. Is it something 'forbidden to talk of?'

Whatever this 'evil' is, it seems to be powerful enough to split us apart as human beings, having terrifying effects on the community. If this 'it' represents unarticulated, old, traumatised anger, it makes me wonder whether this unconscious anger is being harnessed for political gain as an unethical way of solving the current pain. What then is 'evil'? If 'it' represents a colonial hierarchy, where white is embossed as the patriarch, David felt the force of it drawing him back into this paternalistic role, through no choice of his own. '*They are now like children and we are the parents, and we have to look after them whatever they do. There is no two-way reciprocation going on there. It's all one-way*'. I then wonder whether there is a recursive loop feeding back to the maintenance of 'white' as 'responsible' and 'civilised?' If this is happening, it could help to understand the confusion, where the white farmer who represents the 'colonial' is blamed and punished on one hand, but expected to rescue and provide on the other.

#### 4.1.7 Identity under threat. Finding accurate information

*'I am afraid that these stories will be dismissed in one line of history, saying that past wrongs were put right in redressing the past injustices. Our stories will be lost and we will be written into history as the bad colonials'* (Pamela).

*'I read history because I wanted to know the "truth" that we are good people trying to live an honest life'.... 'It was important to know, perhaps because of all the propaganda and lies that are thrown at you by the press in this country'* (David).

Working with these sentences is analogous to holding precious, but fragmented, pieces of old parchment that have been sentenced to muted and dark underground archives. Their presence is overshadowed as they are cleared off the shelves to make way for other 'truths', written by others into their constructions of 'what happened' and 'who belongs'. In this way memory is far from a pure conductor of historical truth and is far from being value-free. It becomes a function of what is allowed or not allowed, what is talked about and what is silenced.

This must not silence an ethical position, which makes a stand to do what is 'right' and which is committed to 'justice'. Cochrane et al (1991:68-70) describe this form of justice as 'forgiving, energizing and above all human'.

Finding 'accurate' information becomes a part of a just and ethical practice. Accurate information is about asking who is benefiting and who is suffering from the current land redistribution. Accurate information is also about the way land is redistributed and about the effects of the programme on the overall wellbeing of the nation.

Taylor (2002:28) suggests that finding 'accurate' information is one way of resisting what she calls 'the politics of disorder'. Donald speaks of the uncertainty of 'not knowing'. Farmer clients have also talked about this uncertainty, where they are always alert and unsure of when the police will come to arrest them, or when their homes will be burnt. Other groups, who are considered 'outsiders' by the government, also experience uncertainty. Farm workers are in an extremely fragile relationship with uncertainty. Opposition members wives and daughters live with uncertainty as 'gang rape' has been used, among other things, to punish them (Amani 2002:1).

How do we then find 'accurate information' and 'truth' when history is seen as something fluid? And how do we avoid one person's truth excluding another and still stand up for justice? I suggest that one way to do this is to look at the effects on a population and to challenge oppressive practices, violence and cruelty without judging the person. This is what Jenkins (1990) calls 'responsibility without blame', which allows for accountability without demonising the person.

This is easier said than done, because there is a high cost to acting ethically in this way. Human Rights organisations, such as Amani Trust, are raided on a regular basis and employees arrested (Herald 2002:3). It has now (November 2000) been closed down as an illegal organisation. To risk making a moral stand, places me in an exposed position, where, as a human being, rather than as a white woman, I am able to say that the current State sponsored racial 'hatred' and violent practices are wrong.

## **4.2. GROUP TRAUMA AND ITS EFFECT ON IDENTITY**

### **4.2.1 Wailing and Whimpering**

Following Weingarten (2002) and Good Sider's (2001 See 1.6) writings on group trauma, I witnessed a 'present trauma' in the conversations I had with the two 'outside voices' of the cultural consultants. The pain of the armed struggle for independence was with us in our conversations. I was surprised and disturbed by the depth of pain and trauma. It wailed and called for my attention, in what seemed to drown out the other participants 'cries'. I say I am surprised, because I expected more of a knock-on effect from the Rhodesian war and more expressed pain relating to the current trauma that the white farmers are experiencing. That is not to say it isn't there. In fact, I wonder whether guilt and helplessness muffle the cries until they become barely audible whimpers. This may trap my own trauma in silence, as well as the other white participants. This muffled, more passive cry could then apply to all of those categories of people considered 'other', both in the past and in the present.

Turning these cries into 'voice', where we can participate in the re-storying of the pain, needs language as its vehicle or mediator. We can then become co-authors of new stories where the 'other' becomes a part of our new story. It is the ability to re-write history where we can all participate in the knowledge that in as much as we destroy the 'other' we destroy ourselves

because we all have the mark of 'colonisation' within us and bear the 'shadow' (Johnson 1991).

#### **4.2.2 The sound of silence**

*'I told you about this before' (Pamela) 'When will you hear?' (Mutasa)*

The not yet said seems to be patiently waiting for language to accompany it to a rendezvous point where an audience is waiting to listen to the not yet heard. I did not 'hear' Pamela's stories about the Rhodesian war of Liberation. Was it because I did not want to hear? Had Pamela told me in a way that I could not understand? Or did I not 'hear' because I entered Zimbabwe with a different belief system, which did not fit with her experience, so there was no point of common reference? Our story may then be embedded within our conversation, but not packaged in language that another person from outside the community can easily understand or de-code. This then adds to the trauma of not being heard. Gertrude says, '*when will you hear?*' indicating that not being heard or understood is contributing to the sound of silence. Trauma and silence then become close allies.

If this happens, it makes sense that we return to the chosen group trauma, because from that position, at least, there is a common point of reference, a rendezvous and meeting place (see 1.6). We can sit in our tents and tell our stories to an audience of people from whom we draw a common reference. It is as if it paralyzes us on one hand and blame becomes the only antidote.

#### **4.2.3 Paralysis and blame**

Blame has tried to paralyse Pamela into a helpless object of aggression, and it seems to afford no way out of the pernicious circle, returning her to the socially embedded silence. She says that her apology falls on deaf ears and ends up being a one way process. This, in turn, intensifies the 'guilt' and she returns to her tent without resolution, adding to her experience of trauma. What then needs to happen for these cycles to stop repeating themselves? Ricoeur (Lyle & Gehart 2000. See 2.4.2) has found a way of entertaining guilt, without becoming its prisoner. He tempers it with 'forgiveness'. Acknowledging the suffering of the past and the present becomes the channel through which this can be done. This helps to lift the burden of

guilt, which paralyses the relations between individuals who are acting out and suffering their own history. But I agree with Pamela that guilt and forgiveness are reciprocal processes. How do we find the platform to acknowledge past injustice?

There is a link here between peace and forgiveness on the one hand, and justice on the other. I am looking in this debris for justice without revenge and peace that is accompanied by acknowledgement. Cochrane et al (1991:66) quote from the Kairos document: 'Any form of peace and reconciliation that allows the sin of injustice and oppression to continue is a *false* peace and *counterfeit* reconciliation'.

#### **4.2.4 Trauma and revenge**

Trauma and revenge need to be woven into this picture. Trauma can 'freeze' us, as with the motto, '*complete the struggle*'. The struggle for freedom is currently being used to benefit only a few people. For this dream to be realised, more and more people become 'outsiders' and 'enemies of the state', deserving punishment. Reeler (1998), Dorman (2000) and Patel et al (2001) suggest that the re-traumatization and the punishment of the community is bringing with it fresh trauma of new categories that are considered 'outsiders'.

Where can we run to be safe and empowered? A pilot study (Farrel et al 2002) on counselling primary victims of organised violence and torture, indicate that the victims seek power through **revenge** for their torture. When other forms of reparation are not accessible, revenge becomes an attractive option.

Gertrude speaks of violence being an '*expression of unfulfilled objectives born from helplessness.... When will you hear?*' Those in power still see themselves as the victims and in this role they do not have to take responsibility for their actions. This then sanctions revenge and violence. There is a link here between silence and trauma and silence seems to act out in 'revenge'. This links to my experience of entering Zimbabwe where I felt a silence. Somehow 'getting on with our lives' does not seem to be a particularly helpful motto.

One way of finding alternatives to the cycles of violence is through the facility of Weingarten's compassionate witnessing (see 1.6.4.2), where we create safe places to return to the beginning, communities where the 'reality control' is not silencing us to judge or forget.

Re-storying our past may then surprise us and unify us in making new legends out of old stories, stories that are not engulfed in silence. Witnesses may also come from outside the farming community, as I have done, and as you the reader are doing. White (2000:75) suggests that becoming an outside witness acts like a 'Katharsis' and in some ways the letters and the poems have acted in such a way, by witnessing and capturing and naming trauma.

#### 4.2.5 Spit it out

Acknowledgement of the injustices that happened in the past is a theme from the cultural consultants, something that they feel the 'white' community has left 'unsaid', and is an integral step toward forgiveness. I feel that this has been acknowledged academically, just as I am doing now, but I do not think that politicians in the West have understood the profound need for it on a practical level. Neither do I think that those in power want to acknowledge their role in the current destructive practices.

From what Pamela says, it would seem that those who are currently in a position of power are not yet ready to create the space needed for acknowledgement and forgiveness to take place. In a somewhat sinister way, to take 'revenge' may be more in the government's interest than to seek ways of reconciliation, particularly when the question is asked 'who is gaining from it?' Gertrude says, '*Perhaps there was not the opportunity*', although at another point she said, '*We extended the hand of reconciliation, but it was not acknowledged*'. I wonder how 'it' needed to be acknowledged? Was it realistic to leap from war to the hand of reconciliation without 'spitting and spelling it out' in a systematic way, thus leading towards reparation and reconciliation rather than revenge and punishment? Would the 'white' community agree that they did not accept the hand of reconciliation? At what point then can the cycle for revenge and the re-traumatizing of a community be broken? And how will apology look in the future? Now that 'tit for tat' has taken over, how can apology become reciprocal?

### 4.3 ALTERNATE DESCRIPTIONS OF OUR IDENTITY, WHICH GO BEYOND RACE TOWARDS EMBRACING OUR HUMANITY

#### 4.3.1 Returning identity from the margins

Minow (1998), Good Sider (2001) and Ricoeur (Lyle & Gehart 2000) talk of the importance of understanding the truth, so that we can become a part of its re-interpretation. Reconstructing the past is one way to do this, involving us in ongoing conversations about the creation and re-creation of meaning and the interpretation of history. This would, I imagine, need to involve a bringing to consciousness, or languaging, of the rage, where we have become trapped in a 'colonised position'. This trap separates the 'good people from bad people' or 'civilised from primitive'. I noticed a number of times when 'racial traps' snared us into categories where the light shines on one, casting its dark shadow of doubt upon the other. For example '*blacks are not vindictive*' carries within it the belief that black is not revengeful but white might be. Alternatively, it could indicate a fear that white people think that black people are vindictive. Other polarized comments were '*To shame is not the Shona way*', and '*the light was on in Africa for 100 years*'. These categories imply to me that one group of people is better than another and feed into a 'divide and rule' mentality, which is prevailing in the current political climate, and which prevailed in the 'old' regime too.

If race and colonialism, or 'good and bad' were not the defining factors, other options may be open like those who 'cared' and those who 'plundered', those who 'came and went', and those who 'settled', and those who 'led by example', and those who 'demanded submission'. David found differences in his reading of Rhodesian history, when he said '*[S]ome of them were a fairly unprincipled lot....in a sly sort of way....like the Rudd concession which Rhodes turned into a Royal Charter.... They had a sort of capitalist, exploitation outlook on life and they were there to get what they could. But a lot of them stayed and they put in their whole lives into developing their country*'. David is using different categories here to understand 'white'. In this way 'white' loses its totalizing effect on us.

In Chapter 1 I was finding it difficult to find alternate descriptions of identity in what Gergen (1991) calls that 'teeming world of provisional possibilities'. I am more confident now of finding alternatives, in the knowledge that new and multiple descriptions are always waiting to be given. However, it is mindful and humbling to remember that in the multiple

descriptions of myself, there is the potential to be both sly and un-principled as well as open and principled. Derrida's '*difference*', as well as the Jungian concept of shadow, can perhaps help to return these banished scripts to the text, where 'Zimbabwean', 'black', 'white', 'inferior' or 'vindictive' are able to be constantly deferred. Each of these words carries the traces of the other within them and is therefore 'in relationship'. History can then be open to what Ricoeur (Lyle & Gehart 2000), Minow (1998) and Good Sider (2001) call 're-interpretation' in an ongoing narrative, which is more fluid.

#### **4.3.2 The repressive and constitutive effect of resistance**

*My grandfather and my parents went through their struggles to be in this country and now I am going through mine. Having to fight for it has made me more determined to stay. We have an ability to survive in difficult circumstances....If I had come back here and it had all been roses I wouldn't have come to the point now where my identity as a Zimbabwean is very strong. If someone wants to take something away from you, you want to hold onto it'. (David)*

In the context of this research, the Foucauldian understanding of power as a 'relational activity' has opened my mind to asking questions that lie beyond the 'who' and 'why' things happen as they do (McHaul & Grace 1993:31, Flaskas & Humphries 1993:41). It has helped me to ask questions about '**how**' this relationship works, and how a group of white farmers are able to resist the powerful discourses that construct them as the 'unacceptable other', despite uncertainty, trauma, fragmentation of the community and the '*light going out*'?

Drawing from White and Epston's narrative ideas, dominant beliefs are challenged by other 'knowledges' and other interpretations. Communities as well as individuals become the custodians of these knowledges, but may need assistance to find a platform in order to be heard. Writing this research becomes a part of that platform. These alternative readings of history play a constitutive role in a relationship of power. To access these alternate readings, involves looking beyond the horizon of 'what happens', to the relationship between the repressive and constitutive forces of power. Just as Gordon's community resisted white domination by allowing their cattle to stray '*at night*', and my grandfather resisted his imprisonment during World War I, so also this farming family resists the labels that have been given them by the current situation. It is interesting how the participants of this study have resisted the dominant discourse, in order to hold on to their identity as 'White and

African'. These are alternate stories that do not fit with the dominant 'plot' of what can and can't be talked about, or simply 'black' and 'white'.

### 4.3.3 New identities

This opens possibilities of new categories of identity where race does not define us. It reminds me of Tutu (1999:11) when he says: 'I would suggest that instead of skin colour we should substitute a large nose, since I possess one'. In a further conversation with David, their farm has now been designated for resettlement. Most of the farms surrounding theirs have been taken over by prominent leaders within the ruling party and the army. He says, '*I have a very good relationship with the war veterans now and admire the way they are working hard to till the soil. I am happy to help them in any way I can, although if they want to use my tractor they will have to pay for it*'. Could this be creating new social constructions not based on race or hierarchy, but rather on the common identity of farming in difficult circumstances? Opportunity for new categories also opens for farmer and farm worker to re-negotiate a relationship that is not based on a paternalistic idea of responsibility and obedience because they are both being threatened with 'eviction'. On August 19<sup>th</sup> 2002 I received an email concerning elderly white farmers who have been imprisoned. Two black inmates gave up their blankets to help them keep warm. In another cell the black inmates sang choruses and hymns in English to the white farmers so as not to exclude them. These stories do not make headline news, but it indicates that new categories are developing that are not defined by a hierarchical black/white structure.

A rich description that David has of himself is to script himself as the '*chief negotiator with the war vets.... I like to think that I am someone who has tried to be fair, and tried to work within my own ethical system*'. He has found a way around being trapped in a paternalistic cycle by freeing himself from the labels that colonisation imposed. As he says, '*I don't view black people as second class citizens.... I treat them like myself*'. This skill has helped him find a way through the demands on one hand, and what he is able and prepared to provide, on the other. And yet it is a fragile liaison because the power is unevenly distributed, and as Pamela says, the white farmer is left with '*no rights*'. Their farm with all its assets could be confiscated at any time, putting David under enormous pressure to intuit the signs, interpret them and negotiate for his survival as a farmer. But it is a rich description of a skill and a

quality David has developed in creating alternate ways of 'being' that utilise his description of himself as '*fair*' and '*ethical*' and '*free of hierarchical thinking*'.

Pamela holds onto a part of her identity through mixing with other like-minded people, thus challenging the fragmentation of community that Taylor (2002) talks about. She reads the independent press, and finds going to church supportive, particularly when others stand beside her in the knowledge that what is happening is wrong. In this way hope is something we 'do' in a community of others. And yet it is a fine line between standing together against 'wrong', and returning to our familiar tent to keep old stories alive and ticking!

'Doing hope' in the community is another way Pamela responds to the fragmentation. She listens' to others when they come into the shop, thus playing a part in holding onto group cohesion and identity. She creates small safe places where she can make something beautiful and think in her mind of projects for the future. In this way she resists the chaos and uncertainty around her.

#### **4.4 CARING FOR HURTING COMMUNITIES AND CALLING THE CHURCH TO PRACTICE TRANSFORMATIVE WAYS TO BRING ABOUT HEALING**

##### **4.4.1 What is our response?**

Contextual theology challenges us to confront oppressive practices and take a stand against any 'tyrannical regime *that* has no moral legitimacy and has become the enemy of God' (Nolan 1994:215 italics my own). These are strongly prophetic words, and as faith communities we are called to be the 'eyes' and 'ears' and 'voice' of those who are oppressed and marginalized. In other words, a part of our calling as Christians is to position ourselves by becoming open and aware 'witnesses' of what is happening in society, which ties in with what Kretzschmar (1994), and Kotzé and Kotzé (2000) say about ethical ways of behaving. It involves challenging the privileges that one group may enjoy at the expense of another. Weingarten (2001:392) says that our 'voice' is dependent on a community that is prepared to listen. Tutu says of the Apartheid regime:-

For those with eyes to see there were accounts of people dying mysteriously in detention. For those with ears to hear there was much that was disquieting and even

chilling. But like three monkeys, they chose neither to hear, nor see, nor speak of evil. When some did own up, they passed the blame to others.

(Tutu 1998:217)

We are then called to read the papers in one hand and hold the bible in the other. I am finding it hard as a white woman in the current political climate, to take a moral stand, perhaps because I am afraid to risk not feeling 'safe'. What will happen to me if I speak out?

Another responsibility as a faith community is to bring healing in post-colonial conflict through hearing each others stories until it becomes possible to live in a multi-racial community, where one group is not privileged over another. This needs to happen on an individual, informal basis, but also on a community level, where we become accountable to one another.

To be an aware witness does not come without its risks. It is the risk of participating in another's suffering and pain and then being prepared to edit my own text so that it can resonate and beat to a new inclusive rhythm. It is the risk of holding the fragmented story, until another preferred story emerges, and it is the risk of hearing that which I would choose not to hear. It also sometimes means risking the move, as Ann did, into a temporary position of becoming aware but disempowered. I agree with Weingarten (2001) that this is too hard and frightening a thing to do alone. We need community, where we can 'do hope' together. As a private therapist I am participating in this suffering on a daily basis, and sometimes I feel these risks swallowing me up in sorrow and helplessness, where I become aware but disempowered to do anything about it.

#### **4.4.2 Challenging the church**

Churches in Zimbabwe have often been curiously silent or divided about violence and oppressive practices in Zimbabwe, although the Catholic Church has spoken up, particularly in relation to the 'Gukurahundi' in Matabeleland in the early 1980's. Some of the leadership within the Anglican Church has aligned itself with the ruling party, and the independent churches have not been united in their position. This perhaps reflects the conservative nature of the church, both pre-independence and now. However, it does not abdicate us from the responsibility to align ourselves on the side of those who suffer, the marginalised and the

voiceless, to bring about God's kingdom here on earth, where all can participate. A confusing question arises as to who are the marginalised? And who are the victims? We have all become victims of violence, and together we need to take responsibility for a future, where hatred and violence are not promoted.

Returning to Good Sider's model, the perpetrators still see themselves as victims of oppression, and using this construct, we would need to address this within the church before we are able to move forward and grieve that which has been lost. If we do not address these issues we are doomed perhaps to forgive, forget and repeat the past. Only when our stories are told, acknowledged and grieved, is it realistic to say, '*not tit for tat*'. This brings to mind the Christian concept of the 'Wounded Healer', who is able to say '*not your tears for mine*', or as Gertrude says '*not vindictive*'. It is a form of resistance that is able to intercept group trauma, re-interpret history and talk of alternate ways of being.

Dominant thoughts of 'revenge' run deep within society, and Gordon himself says that were he not a Christian, he would seek revenge. But he also says that '*shaming*' is not the way of Christ. How can we, within a faith community, harness these skills that are held within our community to bring healing, without punishing large groups within society? Gertrude describes village democracy, where voices are heard, often indirectly, through communal conversations. From a therapeutic position in family therapy, it is like a 'Greek Chorus' or 'gossiping in the presence of others' or what White and Epston (White 2000:59) call 'Outsider witness groups', which can have a powerfully transformative effect, as does the idea of 'Ubuntu'. Letter writing has a similar impact by having a 'written conversation'. These facilities help to create awareness and an ability to engage in new conversations, where we hear things that would otherwise not be included in our story. 'Ubuntu' would then allow for community responsibility, as well as offering collective compassionate witnessing.

This helps to answer my question at the beginning when I asked whether there is a way we can take collective responsibility, without blaming individual groups in society. I was asking this in relation to past historic injustice, but the question still stands for those currently in power, about taking responsibility for their actions and the consequences of their decisions, without resorting to the cycle of blame and plunder.

The social construction movement asks for multiple descriptions and multiple voices, which become a part of our accountability. This multiplicity beckons the church to 'hear' the harmony of many voices. At the same time, we need to stand and judge the actions of others, by the effects their actions have on the larger community. This is what it means to be prophetic and to challenge the status quo. Positioning ourselves in this way avoids being directly confrontational, saving the dichotomous splits that can reduce our humanity to 'us' and 'them'. We can then challenge the actions of those who have access to status and privilege, becoming the voice for those who are not afforded that privilege, knowing that we may also be challenging ourselves.

Tsele (1994:125), when referring to ethics in black theology says 'Our conviction is that unless black ethics situates itself within the Kairos (critical) tradition, it is likely to degenerate into a *status quo* morality and become assimilated to the very system it currently finds so objectionable in white ethics. Our aim is to create a black ethics that is radically critical – critical also of black morality. Only by so doing, can it be both creative and liberating'.

#### **4.4.3 Forgiveness and healing**

How can we quell our appetite for vengeance by utilising forgiveness, and not be in danger of forgetting? And what form of reparation or acknowledgement is needed for the cycle of vengeance to move towards reconciliation? Ignatieff (in Minow 1998:14) says that vengeance keeps the trauma in the present and concludes that this 'is the dream-time of vengeance. Crimes can never safely be fixed in the historical past; they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for vengeance'. Forgiveness, is the process of walking through and past this 'eternal present' and beyond, where the re-humanising of ourselves is not dependent upon de-humanising the other. Rituals, compassionate witnessing, and reparation rather than revenge can then take the place of violence, until we are able to grieve the haunting memories keeping us in this tormented eternal presence. One of the dangers in Zimbabwe has been the historical and current use of immunity, because in this case forgiveness produces exemption from punishment and justice, which institutionalises forgetfulness (Minow 1998:15) and returns us to silence and the eternal present. Minow (1998:21) suggests that vengeance and forgiveness stand in opposition. To forgive means we let go of vengeance, and to avenge means we cannot forgive.

Building on ideas that have been generated in this project through the reading and the rich conversations with the participants, I would suggest that as faith communities we need to create an environment where reparation, forgiveness and healing can happen. A large part of this is the acknowledgement of what has happened in the past, as well as in the present, so that vengeance doesn't muscle its way back in. As Tutu says (1998:217) 'It is crucial when a relationship has been damaged or when a potential relationship has been made impossible, that the perpetrator (in this case a system) should acknowledge the truth and be ready and willing to apologise'.

Space for reciprocal relationships doesn't just happen, it is 'created', as in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is a 'safe place', where we can tell our stories, and they are not disqualified as either 'fiction', or qualified by 'justification'. This facilitates a process of 'safe grieving' where our identity is not dependent on demonising the 'other' but a letting go of the past. To find a place to *rendezvous* we begin a process of the re-interpretation of history in an ongoing community of witnesses, thus becoming accountable for our actions, beliefs and statements. This involves a decision to move towards an aware and empowered position, although it will be a hard and difficult journey, where we confront the shadows of the eternal present. In this way we confront the wrongs in society without attacking the people. This does not mean that we forget. Tutu (1998:219) says 'it is important to remember, so that we should not let such atrocities happen again'.

Vasco Pyjama (Leunig 2001:4) wrote the following to Mr. Curly

*Dear Mr Curly,*

*I am still a little shaken having recently witnessed, for the first time, something called a 'football match'. It was awful. Two opposing teams of men, with great skill and energy, thwarted and violated each other, quite obsessively and shamelessly in full view of a large crowd. Such greed and desperate snatching I have never seen before; such injury, sadism and sabotage perpetrated in the cause of advantage over one's fellows. I saw not the smallest kindness or act of good faith pass between the teams. More interestingly, the crowd was utterly approving of all this trouncing and hurting and deceiving... Maybe they feel good to see it acted out in this big public ritual.... Anyway, the duck had a terrible day but as usual took the spectacle of human madness and sickness in its stride – or should I say in its "waddle". As we know, ducks don't stride: nor are they strident!*

## POSTSCRIPT

### TALES IN THE TELLING AND THE NOT YET TOLD

*We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time (T.S. Elliot 'Gerontion')*

There are many loose threads that I have found during this project. There are some painful issues that have been raised for me, which have not been resolved. In particular it is the 'silence' that still frightens me, as well as the ambitious expectation that we can hope for healing without another wave of revenge occurring.

#### **Healing humanity, a moral discourse**

I have a responsibility to engage in moral discourse, and to challenge those currently in power to face the shadows of the night, where they have been direct beneficiaries of privileges for the last twenty-two years. This is even more so now, with some of the most productive farms being allocated to senior people in the government, the police and the army. According to JAG (Justice for Agriculture) and the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe, (Mukaro 2002:9), the number of farm workers and their families that have already been displaced with nowhere to go has reached 900,000. This has created what they call 'the worst humanitarian crisis the country has experienced'. The numbers being resettled on the A1 scheme (small plots) are in the region of 130,000 and those on the larger A2 farms are about 90,000, with only about 25% of available land being taken, as this involves self financing. This becomes a moral and ethical discourse. Having positioned myself within a contextual theological context, with a commitment to make a stand for the poor, the marginalised and the voiceless, I would not be acting ethically if I did not challenge this form of redistribution, as the average person does not appear to be benefiting.

Accountability becomes an integral part of this process, which cannot be addressed on the personal level alone, because it involves whole communities, discourses, structures, ideologies and the political machinery that promotes the belief systems that keep them going. The current government policies which peddle 'racism' needs to be challenged. They have power to control the television and radio and they therefore create the knowledge that benefits them. The Family Centre in New Zealand, (Waldergrave 1990:26) challenges us to

be 'involve[d] in demonstrations and other activities to draw attention to the plight of those who are being seriously disadvantaged by government policies and economic decisions'.

I have found it difficult to make this stand for fear of invoking more polarization and because I am 'white'. Silence envelops me in a fog of guilt, because I have benefited from the privileges of the past and not always confronted injustice. Silence has another way of trapping me, in that it feeds back into my historic feelings of being an 'outsider' within a community, where I am not sure if I belong and whether I have a right to make a moral stand. But it is not just about 'me' in an individual sense, it is about the process of human healing and hope, and I represent perhaps a microcosm of what is happening in society. Minow says:

Focus on victims and try to restore their dignity; focus on truth and try to tell it whole. Pursue a vision of restorative justice, itself perhaps a major casualty in the colonial suppression of African traditions. Redefine the victims as the entire society, and redefine justice as accountability. Seek repair not revenge; reconciliation, not recrimination. Honour and attend in public to the process of remembering.

(Minow 1998:82)

This is a tall order and a bold ambition of high expectation. But this is a part of what it means to be prophetic, to participate in suffering, to 'act' rather than 'theorise' and to challenge us all to move beyond 'black' and 'white', into a place where we can care as human beings.

### **Weaving stories**

At the beginning of this study I asked a question about how stories get written, and what role we play within the story. I have been profoundly affected by the stories that have been told, and this has challenged me to re-position myself in relation to my ongoing narrative. I have asked myself how these 'multi-stories' can be built, so that together we can create new stories that are enriched by the 'other', where we can all contribute to the building of hope in Zimbabwe.

A window of opportunity opens when we see that our narratives are not static, but dynamic, open to re-negotiation, editing and re-interpretation, because culture and contexts are fluid and changing all the time, in that we are all engaged in a continuing conversation. This in turn opens opportunity for re-storying our lives, so that all can be included and belong. The stories that have been told in the generations of the main participants of this study have

influenced and helped to keep alive their identity as African. The act of listening, writing and reading the text, has, I hope, helped to give audience to these stories by keeping the common memory alive.

This conversation however, has not been as interactive as I had hoped. The questions I asked in the letters did not generate many ideas and comments from the participants. It was as if they were still 'helping me' rather than it being a group activity. Maybe this was a shortcoming in the participatory approach I took and I was trying to force participation that wasn't there. Likewise with the cultural consultants, I anxiously awaited their comments on the poems, concerned that I might have not given them a representation and emphasis that they were happy with. The only corrections they made to the text were technical ones concerning the accuracy of events or words. Is this because they were 'helping me out'? Or because the study was not carried out within a therapeutic context where ongoing conversations would have been easier?

However, on reflection, in a situation of trauma and when in 'crisis', it might be extremely difficult to 'reflect' because all we can do is 'survive'. It does not necessarily mean that the text is not generating new ideas or thoughts, but the written word may need time to sit around a while, until it is safe to become a 'reflection'.

### **Down the garden path**

There are so many interesting 'trails' in the garden that I am exploring. Glimpsing the unarticulated pain behind the mask of the African face has been deeply disturbing, I think because of the way the pain is being used in such a destructive way. I begin to feel guilty and responsible, and that in turn creates in me a silence and a 'shame', where I lose my ability to have 'compassion on myself' (Weingarten 2002b:49). It could have something to do with thinking in 'black and white' terms and I believe that 'race' has caught me in a category where I feel trapped. Certainly by reading the State controlled paper 'The Herald', this feeling is endorsed, and I feel myself becoming engulfed in silence and helplessness.

Perhaps race and colonialism have been such powerful and controlling discourses, that they have blinded me from looking beneath the surface into the richer and more complex descriptions of culture and language. In fact by taking a stand against any 'dichotomous

splits' and that includes 'racism', I have engaged in one of the very constructions that I sought to avoid! I am beginning to think that 'race' is no longer an intrinsically useful construction, and is being used to gain political mileage in the current trauma of what is happening in Zimbabwe. This could help to explain my feelings of despair and helplessness. I would like to explore this in more depth. This curiously seems to feed back into my experiences of 'silence' as a child, always watching, seeing, but not able to language or interpret. At the end of writing, I still feel somewhat caught in the land of shadows and darkness.

In spite of my initial commitment to voice 'white' identity, I feel as if I am subjecting white voices to more scrutiny, and making more allowances for the 'black' ones. I have found it hard to keep the prophetic voices 'looking in', and have felt drawn into making them more central, to the point where I have worked at witnessing their trauma, and played down my own. Perhaps a white voice evokes more suspicion within me, and this in turn could have something to do with compensating for the inside position I am in within this research. It could also have something to do with 'old trauma' versus 'fresh trauma'. It has got me wondering whether, when trauma is very 'fresh', we turn to 'survival' to keep going, whereas, when it has lingered a while, it awaits our attention more. Could this in itself be a powerful way to keep us all 'surviving', because as long as there is instability and fresh trauma, healing and hope seem so distant and removed.

Writing in the 'poetic form', using the 'first person' for the 'outside voices', has engaged me in a space of 'becoming the other'. Letters are more dialogic in character, less 'lonely' because within them I was able to participate with the other voices. Appelt et al (2002:112) used the idea of interviewing the therapist as the client, and my use of the poetic form has similarities, in that I have entered the life world of the 'outside voices'. It would be interesting to further explore this use of the 'other' in poetic form, both therapeutically and in research.

Both David and Gordon raised questions about the absence of the Shona language in white culture, and these have been largely left unpacked and not answered. Within a post-modern context, language is the lens through which we mediate our experience, and as such it plays a central role in our social constructions. If I were to return to the beginning again, I might visit

it for the first time, wearing the glasses of oral and written language, gender and culture, rather than race!

Early on in this study I entertained the thought about how I would emerge as both 'white' and 'British'. I knew that the exercise would be a painful one of self-examination, filled with coded language reminiscent of my move to Ireland. This is a part of the painful process I am experiencing, trying to understand something that I don't, and feeling guilty for something, but I am not sure what. Gertrude says '*I try to understand, but I don't... they betrayed us*'. I would have liked to ask her more about what she doesn't understand, and talk more about *betrayal*. Is the pain of her daughter going to a 'white' school' symbolic of this betrayal? Is it that she can't understand the way the coloniser became '*master on entry*'? Or the impregnation of British culture within her own, and like an immune system, it rejects the donor's organ? Or is it the betrayal she feels from the British, where, as she says, the government followed '*the letter of the law*'? This is language that is reminiscent of Ian Smith and the 'betrayal' he also felt from Britain. I am also curious about what she means by '*We can do it differently to Britain... We can all belong*'. I am feeling as if I belong less and less and I then wonder why I am feeling more and more the 'outsider'. Thinking about what I have just written it would be very interesting to read a similar study done through the eyes of a black woman on the maintenance of black and white identity and trauma in postcolonial conflict. Gertrude has suggested that this would be an interesting study and is thinking of researching it.

It is perhaps easier to have what Baregu (2001:4) calls conversations that go 'past' each other but never connect, because then we can remain unaware and empowered to blame. Blame is after all a more comforting friend than pain and does not invite the 'other' into the reciprocity of conversation. But to use a person's pain for political gain, is for me, to introduce poison into the wounds of society. The daily paper is turgid with rage and blame toward the British. Moyo (2002:1) when responding to the suggestion that there is 'ethnic cleansing' in Zimbabwe, says 'No African country, Zimbabwean or freedom fighter, is capable of ethnic cleansing. These people are talking about the crimes they committed... It is about justice, it's about ridding ourselves of white supremacy once and for all'. Tutu (1999:110) however says: 'There is an awful depth of depravity to which we can all sink.... There is no room for

gloating or arrogant finger-pointing'. Acknowledgement and forgiveness has to be a two-way process.

Gender and the way our roles as women and men have been written into our narratives deserves greater attention. There was a lot 'not said' about Pamela's introduction of herself. When I asked her about this, she said '*I think I tend to define myself in relation to my parents and children*'. As a woman, I also wonder what choices, or power, Gertrude has to change her witness position, and then what would be the risk? How then have women been scripted into the history of both Rhodesia and Zimbabwe? This large tract of space is awaiting a further study.

The call of other disciplines lures me, and I would like to explore territories that lie beyond theories of social construction, to see how the construction of identity can dialogue with the Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian schools. These schools could I think contribute to the richer description of identity, with particular reference to 'projective identification'. I have only skirted the perimeters of this by touching on the concept of shadow.

### **A last word**

The farm has now been taken by the colonel and Donald, Susan and David have moved into Harare. David has had enough of farming and plans to do further studies in mathematics. His mother and grandfather describe feelings of 'disorientation'. The colonel is wanting to resume discussions with Donald, and might be prepared to allow him back to live in his house, if the farm is divided, and Donald farms the colonel's section for him. He is tempted to enter this liason, because it is his 'home' and his 'identity'. David believes this could never work.

But for now this study rests here, awaiting another story of resilience, courage and the testimonies of those who courageously seek justice, kindness, gentleness and self control in a world that can become a better place for all. In this way we become a 'light' to a hurting world, a challenge that Pamela left me with at our last meeting. We can become safe places where forgiveness is grown and nurtured, in what Ricoeur (Lyle & Gehardt 2001) calls the order of charity (love), which extends the borders of morality, and lifts the burden of guilt.

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