

**RE-PERFORMING TRAUMA
MAKING USE OF OUTSIDER WITNESSING –
A PASTORAL NARRATIVE APPROACH**

by

PHILENE FORTUIN

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Supervisor: Dr M.S. Grobbelaar

Joint Supervisor: Dr E. Baloyi

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DECLARATION

Student number: 35136014

I declare that

RE-PERFORMING TRAUMA MAKING USE OF OUTSIDER WITNESSING

– A PASTORAL NARRATIVE APPROACH

is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

P. Fortuin

Date

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on women's experiences of abuse resulting in trauma. This research performance was conducted within a practical theology framework guided by a de-centred participatory action research process. The study was conducted against a postmodern background and was informed by social construction discourse. Its aim was to explore whether and how narrative pastoral counselling using outsider witnessing could be helpful in finding new preferred ways of living, resulting in healing, resilience and hope for women who had experienced abuse and trauma.

The outsider witness group explored practical ways of listening, observing and responding to the pain and suffering of others, resulting in a new performance of the self as valuable, competent, and enabling those who are witnessed to believe that they are survivors that have lived through and beyond the limited life span of abuse and trauma.

The research report ends with a play, *New Seasons*, which is to be performed in front of live audiences in the course of 2012.

Key terms

Trauma; abuse; outsider witness practices and ideas; narrative pastoral counselling; searching for paths of healing and hope; creating safe and spiritual space; local knowledge; identity, co-researchers, community of concern; standing up against abuse.

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CHAPTER 1:

FITTING INTO THE SHOES OF TRAUMA

1.1 INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

Every telling or re-telling of a story, through its performance, is a new telling that encapsulates, and expands upon the previous telling and persons are re-authoring their lives.

(White & Epston, 1990:13)

To set the stage for this study, I would like to use my own personal experiences as a background, to show what inspired this study. My experiences started as a wife who for three years witnessed the harassment, abuse and violation that her husband went through – an experience that led me to experience distress and trauma as I saw Onno, my husband, suffering. Being a witness of abuse and experiencing the intentionally hurtful actions against my husband made it extremely hard for me to process the events. I could not talk about the situation, and being a witness in isolation made it very difficult for me to carry this problem. At first, I hoped that the abuse would go away or get better, but after months, the situation did not improve and only then did I start to talk to one of my friends about what was happening. Talking about the abuse helped me to feel better, as I could voice my experiences and someone was prepared to listen.

In 1995, my husband Onno and a friend founded a consulting engineering company that employed 40 people by the end of 2007. When they originally started the company, their mission and vision were all based on Christian principles and they were proud to be publically known as Christians and people-centred. Onno's management style has always been relational leadership, like the Good Shepherd leading his flock (John 10:3-5). A shepherd knows his flock intimately. The relationship between the shepherd and the flock is based on trust and he leads from the front. By contrast, my husband's only partner at that stage used a management style that is totally the opposite: finance and systems were important to him. What kept the relationship working for ten years was the fact that the two men complemented one another.

However, after 2005, the company's circumstances changed dramatically. Onno and his partner invited three new partners into their business and they accepted. The company had to change to comply with BEE legislation, and a power struggle

developed between two groups that fought for total control over the company. The two different management styles became a particular source of conflict. During the next three years, Onno tried desperately to keep the company based on its original Christian principles and to maintain a people-centred management style. Looking back, I realise that he questioned what management was doing. I wonder if these questions showed resilience, the ability to stand up and say no to abuse, back-stabbing, and a thirst for power. However, Onno was soon sidelined and marginalised. After three years of humiliation and abuse against him, management decided to sell the company.

I describe those three years as traumatic, as they had a vast impact, not only on Onno, but also on me and our family, our identities and our spirituality. Before the company was sold, we relocated to Kimberley in an attempt to move away from the daily abuse, and the back-stabbing at the office. As a family, we were not going through the best of times, so it was difficult to move to Kimberley, where we had no support system and no friends. It was difficult to find a church to join, and to establish our place in a new community.

In this research performance, I would like to outline, from a position of personal experience, the need of women and men who experience abuse or trauma to speak out. I introduce the idea of resilience and spirituality, and reflect on what positive effects these two constructs might have on this research performance.

1.2 MY INSPIRATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

My journey and involvement in pastoral narrative counselling started eleven years ago at a Pastoral Care Centre in the east of Pretoria, where I was trained as a narrative pastoral counsellor, and did volunteer counselling for a few years. People who grappled with various kinds of problems and were looking for solutions to these problems used the counselling facility. I saw many people struggle with depression, marriage and relationship problems, the loss of a loved one and behavioural problems, but after a few years my focus shifted to clients who experienced different types and forms of trauma. This research was inspired by both my clients' and my own experiences. I often wondered why my clients frequently described their experiences and problems as traumatic. My own journey has also led me to consider and think about the role of trauma in my own life.

In this research, I use the metaphor of *performance*. This idea matured after I attended a workshop called "Responding to Violence" presented by Michael White in Australia in

2005. The focus of the workshop was to guide pastoral counsellors, psychologists and welfare workers in how they can use narrative practices in counselling the victims of violence, abuse and trauma. Outsider witness practices and ideas were illustrated by means of videos, theory and the participants' practising this technique. According to Carey and Russell (2003:4), outsider witnessing involves "an invited audience to a therapy conversation, or a third party who is invited to listen to and acknowledge the preferred stories and identity claims of the person consulting the counsellor". I wanted to invite some trauma survivors to be part of this research and to come to witness, as an audience and as participants, other trauma survivors performing their trauma stories, preferred stories and new identity claims.

After my own months of isolation, telling my friend about our traumatic experiences was beneficial to me in finding answers, hope and healing. Every time Onno and I told God, friends and family about our experiences and talked to one another, it helped us to understand and create new meanings, and helped to anticipate the partners' next move. Those who listened to our stories became our audience and every telling became a new performance. This raised the question of whether other people who experienced trauma would also benefit from performing their stories as we did. Would they benefit from performing these stories in front of other people who have also experienced trauma (as such people become the audience) as an act of searching for healing, resilience and hope?

1.2.1 Resilience

According to the *Collins Concise Dictionary* (2001:1276), the word "resilience" refers to the ability of something to regain its original shape or position after bending or stretching. It can also refer to a person's ability to recover easily and quickly from illness or hardship. Walsh (cited in Appelt, 2002:100) explains the paradox of resilience as follows: "[S]ome of our worst times can also be our best. Traumatic experiences sometimes make family relationships more precious and loving than they might otherwise have been. This kind of resilience does not imply bouncing back as if untouched, but involves a process of integrating the fullness of the experience into the fabric of individual and family identity and a way people go on to live their lives."

I agree with Walsh that our worst times became our best times. Onno and I handled our sufferings and problems by sharing and caring for one another and this made our relationship more valuable, solid and loving. This solid bond made us resilient and able to go on with our lives. It made the suffering and uncertainties manageable and

tolerable. It helped us to change our focus from problems and suffering to a new performance of our trauma as an act of resilience and hope.

Our experiences planted a seed in my mind. How do trauma survivors perform “their trauma performances”? Does trauma have an impact on a trauma survivor’s family life, and/or does the trauma have an effect on family members when they witness the trauma stories? Did my family members experience the situation differently from the way I did? Do others re-perform trauma as resilience and hope as we did? If not, does that mean that people perform trauma and re-perform resilience/hope differently?

1.2.2 Spirituality: a means of hope?

Because I am a spiritual person, my problem became a faith concern as well. Before our traumatic experiences, we were devoted and active members of our congregation. Our life performances then could be described as counting our blessings, as the business was flourishing. Financially, we had enough, and we had four beautiful, healthy children and good friends in our church community.

However, in the months and years after 2005, I started asking many questions, as the peaceful and prosperous life that we knew had started to change considerably. Some of these questions were these: How does a Christian perform this kind of trauma in an acceptable way? What have we done wrong? Was it my wrongdoing that caused this to happen to us? During the trauma performance I often asked the Lord how long it was going to last.

Part of our problem was that the discourse of God has taken his blessing away from the business was speaking to us. Were we victims of the discourse of prosperity faith (God will bless us if we give our tenth)? A discourse can be regarded as “taken for granted truths”, beliefs or ideas that assist problems (Morgan 2000:45). (Discourses are discussed in more detail in Sections 1.7.6.3 ,1.10.5 and 2.3.)

We started to doubt ourselves, wondering whether we were not ‘good enough’ Christians. Griffith (1995:127) suggests that denominational group beliefs are often poor predictors of a person’s experience of God. Griffith and Griffith (2002:232) argue that religious beliefs can have a powerful influence, even preventing the voice of God from having a meaningful influence in shaping individual spirituality. Thus these societal and spiritual discourses interrupted our journey to recovery and prevented us from hearing God’s voice.

In the end, we realised that the trauma that we went through had nothing to do with our faith, our wrongdoings, or with our contributions to the church; we started hearing God's voice in our lives again. Our faith re-performances started taking shape in various ways. We depended on God and trusted Him to do what is best for us. Looking back today, we realise that it was a fight for power and control of the whole company. Onno wanted to rescue the business from going under, when people working there wanted to leave because of the hostile atmosphere at the office and questioned the future of the company. The faith lessons we learned were patience, and to wait upon Him and to trust Him, as He is in control. We searched for the Lord in such a way that we were embraced by His presence and that gave us peace, as we knew we were not in the situation alone.

Embarking on this research journey, I wondered whether the door to spirituality can create a spiritual space through witnessing, in line with Collett's (2003:10) suggestion that spirituality can be a powerful instrument towards health and healing.

I was interested in the co-researchers' voices and the conditions necessary for them to have a safe space to perform their stories. I hoped that in our conversations we could talk about their personal God, as it would bring meaningful elements to this research.

My own trauma experiences and spirituality performances became the starting point for this research performance. I was interested in re-performances of stories of the survival, resistance and practices of resilience of my co-researchers. I wondered whether spirituality is a means of hope that might have positive effects on the co-researchers' re-performance stories.

This research performance focused on working with people who experienced trauma in their lives and attempted to seek a co-constructing role to re-perform trauma in such a way as to seek alternative and hopeful new narratives or performances (Burr, 1995:7). We wanted to explore ways in which spirituality may help to produce a re-performance of resilience and hope and to create healing (Collett, 2003:10).

In the next section, I discuss the purpose of this research performance, which helped me to formulate the research question and assisted me in planning the preliminary performance aims.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH PERFORMANCE

The purpose of this re-performance was to journey with a group of people who had all experienced trauma in their lives. We negotiated and created a safe space for them where they could perform and re-perform their trauma stories and experiences, as suggested by Burr (1995:5). The co-researchers performed these stories in front of the other co-researchers, who acted as an audience, as proposed by Carey and Russell (2003:4) and White (2004). Their voices were heard and taken notice of. We were interested to discover whether the re-performance of trauma gave new meaning to ourselves and to others, as Drewery and Winslade (1997:36) suggest.

In our group sessions, the focus was guided to the trauma performances and experiences of the co-researchers, who were battling with the everyday obstacles or discourses of trauma, and how to cut themselves loose from these obstacles and discourses. The co-researchers were encouraged to question the reproduction and continuation of trauma discourses, as Hare-Mustin (1994:19-20) proposes. In doing so, we challenged, examined and rejected the trauma discourses which were obstructing the journey to healing (Besley, 2001:86). We were interested in whether or not this would be helpful for the co-researchers to make meaningful decisions in their lives so that trauma discourses would no longer rule them (Morgan 2000:45).

In collaboration with all the co-researchers, as Epston (1999:141) and Tootell (2004:56) recommend, I discussed my proposed research curiosities and theirs with the co-researchers. Then we negotiated the aims and set objectives for the re-performance of trauma. The purpose of the negotiations was to ensure authentic participation and to join the “thematic concern[s]” (McTaggart, 1997:29) of all the co-researchers.

1.4 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the research were

- to co-construct what conditions are necessary for each co-researcher to have a safe space to re-perform her trauma stories;
- to explore the influence of socially constructed discourses regarding the beliefs of Western society, social, medical and spiritual ideas about trauma, questioning whether these discourses affected and influenced us in our meaning-making of traumatic experiences and exploring the discourses that have a power/knowledge relation and influenced the healing process;

- to explore multiple meanings in and alternative ways of coping with and recovering from trauma, using outsider witness practices and ideas to assist us in developing new alternative stories, and acting upon this information in such a way as to re-perform trauma to bring about hope and healing which might benefit others; and
- to challenge faith/secular communities to find voices to break the silence and isolation that trauma can sometimes create.

In the next section I discuss the performance curiosity that helped me to formulate the research question.

1.5 THE PERFORMANCE CURIOSITY

I wondered what I could use as a starting point of this research performance. I became curious about the following:

- What would be meaningful common ground amongst all the co-researchers so that all would be interested and could benefit from the process?
- How could we create some safe space together? Will it be equally important to everyone involved?
- How will each co-researcher perform her traumatic performances?
- Would it make a difference if the co-researchers performed their trauma stories in front of an audience? What would the difference be?
- Would challenging dominant discourses of trauma be helpful in finding healing?
- In what other ways is trauma dealt with and made sense of in Christian faith traditions?
- How would each co-researcher discover her own preferred stories and identities? Will the co-researchers be able to re-write or re-perform these identities and story claims?

1.6 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My research curiosity led to the following research question:

In what way can narrative pastoral counselling help to re-perform trauma by using outsider witnessing?

In order for me to gain a better understanding of the field of trauma experiences and therapeutic interventions, I undertook a literature review. There is such a vast amount of literature on trauma that it is difficult to give an overview of all that has been written in this chapter, so, in the next section, I give only a brief indication of a few constructions of trauma, as this topic is discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.7.1 Introduction

Trauma was not a word I would have chosen to use ten years ago. I do not even remember the word being used in our home when I was growing up. I do not remember my mother, for example, using this word, and I certainly do not remember hearing about such things as trauma support or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This does not mean, of course, that there was no trauma in the lives of my parents and grandparents, but they did not use this word to describe what they experienced. As my clients and other people began to talk about trauma, I found myself reading about the concept and reflecting on it. I realised that what was described was similar to my husband's and my own experiences.

According to Kaethe Weingarten (2003), in her book *Common shock. Witnessing violence every day. How we are harmed, how we can heal*, two thirds of all incidents of bullying and harassment, violence and violation occur in the presence of other people, and only in a minority of cases does a person attempt to assist the victim (Weingarten, 2003:20). She explains that “[p]eople often behave as if paralysed. In fact they are” (Weingarten, 2003:20). Witnessing can produce what she calls common shock or trauma (Weingarten, 2003:20). These bystanders are often people who are overwhelmed by what they witness (Weingarten, 2003:20-21).

We are used to thinking about violence, harassment or violation as a drama with two roles: a victim and a perpetrator. In fact, in the majority of cases, there is a drama with three positions: a victim, a perpetrator, and a bystander or witness. The victim can be a person, a group, a community, a building, a city or an ideology (Weingarten, 2003:23). Perpetrators produce victims by a variety of processes. Perpetrators are strangers or inmates; groups or corporations. It can be your boyfriend, someone who claims to love you, but reacts violently to perceived insults and beats you (Weingarten, 2003:23). The witness or bystander is in a position to observe the interaction between the perpetrator

and the victim. The bystander may be present during the episode, or may learn about it later. In either case, the violence between the victim and the perpetrator affects the witness too. A witness may also suffer (Weingarten, 2003:23). Weingarten adds that witnessing violence and violation in isolation compounds people's distress.

It also makes a difference whether the violence witnessed is intentional or accidental. People have a harder time witnessing situations that they perceive as being maliciously perpetrated than situations where others do harm that the witness(es) perceive(s) as unintentional (Weingarten, 2003:27).

I agree with Weingarten on the basis of my own experience: I was a witness to or a bystander who observed the interaction between the perpetrators at my husband's office and Onno. Every evening when Onno came home, I would hear about that day's abuse and the violation that took place, which caused me to suffer and experience distress, because I did not want this to happen to my husband. The perpetrators' actions were intentional – they wanted to hurt Onno, and they were indirectly hurting us as a family too.

1.7.2 The spotlight is on trauma

Walsh (cited in Appelt, 2006) reminds us that each construction occurs in a different context within which people operate. These contexts include familial, political, economic, social, community and radical contexts.

The word "trauma" comes directly from the Greek word for "wound", and has been used in English since the late seventeenth century. It was not until the advent of psychoanalysis in the late nineteenth century that the word came to be applied to psychic injury (Appelt, 2006:19; Take our Word, n.d.)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first included 1980 in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). The *DSM IV* definition of post-traumatic stress disorder indicates trauma as occurring in the following instances:

The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or threat to the physical integrity of self or others and the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. (American Psychiatric Association, 1994:427-428)

1.7.3 The trauma industry today

With the arrival of psychoanalysis in the 19th century and the birth of the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder, a trauma industry arose which continues to grow rapidly. In consequence, there are many definitions, approaches, techniques and perspectives about individual and collective trauma, and there are psychologists and trauma counsellors to deal with the consequences of trauma.

Martin (2003:15), who adopts a narrative pastoral approach, describes two opposing views of trauma, the optimistic view and the pessimistic view:

- The optimistic view represents a hopeful perspective on trauma. De Brule and Range (cited in Martin, 2003:16) explain that “those who experience the personal and spiritual trauma of crisis may find that they rise from their struggles to become stronger, more complete creatures, able to aspire to psychological heights that were previously unreachable”. This approach resonates with the narrative pastoral approach that I use in trauma counselling.
- The pessimistic view is similar to the definition of post-traumatic stress disorder (Martin, 2003:16). Writing from a post-traumatic stress disorder perspective, Weingarten (2003:58) points out in her work on trauma that the body’s and brain’s reactions to trauma are recruited for survival during a danger and threat situation, but may have lasting effects. “Cognitive, emotional, social behaviour and physiological residue of a trauma may impact in an individual for years – even a lifetime” (Weingarten, 2003:58). Martin (2003:16) explains that this pessimistic perspective posits that the victim will stay a victim and that the person is not the same person she or he used to be, with the end result that the person will continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and that the negative effects thereof will disrupt relationships indefinitely.

I would like to add a third view, adopting the approach suggested by Summerfield (1996:87) as an additional way to deal with trauma. He asks us as counsellors to reflect on our own assumptions about the impact of trauma. In Western culture, trauma discourses imply that, after a trauma event, people need psychological treatment or counselling. According to Summerfield (1996:87), every culture has its own constructions of traumatic events and its own recipes for recovery. For example, wars (trauma) cause distress or suffering, but we should not assume that a physical injury means mental injury, or that everyone needs treatment or counselling. A small minority of people develop a psychological problem after trauma which requires professional

help. He points out that expressions of distress do not generally imply psychological damage. Most survivors do not want to be “psychologised” as being “sick” or as having a “sick identity” (Summerfield, 1996:87; Wirtz, 2003). The few people who do develop psychological problems tend to identify themselves, as they show their inability to function properly in their situation (Summerfield, 1996:88).

I tend to agree with the underlying sentiment expressed by Louw (2006) in the title of his article in the *Beeld* of 20 October 2006 – “Berading! Nee dankie, gee my liewers ‘n bier” [“Counselling! No thank you, rather give me a beer”]. In my experience, working with many survivors of hijacks and armed robberies, not everyone needs counselling, and many prefer to deal with the situation in their own unique ways.

1.7.4 Practical theology in the framework of feminist theology

The context for this research is my involvement with pastoral narrative care. I work mostly with people who have a personal relationship with religion and faith traditions. The people I invited to participate in this research came from this context and all have a church background. Therefore this study was conducted within the disciplines of practical theology and pastoral care.

According to Louw (1998:21), the term “pastoral care” stems from the Greek word “soul care”. He argues that the focal point of pastoral ministry has traditionally been the total human being within a specific relationship: a faith relationship with God. Pastoral care as a form of ministry challenges pastors and church members alike to reach out beyond themselves and to respond to those who suffer (Capps & Fowler, 2001:1; Uomoto, 1995:348). Griffith (1995:44) indicates that pastoral care consists of listening to people while they perform their own stories, adding that a pastor’s task is helping people to understand their story in a new perspective and helping them to position it within the much larger story of God’s dealing with humankind.

Trauma survivors often go for pastoral counselling while they are struggling to come to terms with what happened to them. As a result of the trauma, many of them have questions about God and their relationship with God. This challenges a pastoral narrative counsellor such as myself to work within a theological framework and method that forms the basis of practical theology. I was curious about what we need to hear about the trauma performances of the co-researchers that might become relevant in this field of enquiry, based on the understanding that practical theology is concerned with the co-relation between God and humans and how it is acted out. This question

resonates with that of Firet (cited in Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:6), who asks: “What do we need to hear about the encounter between God and humanity?” I was curious about whether or not spirituality might play a role in the co-researchers’ re-performances of their experiences and whether or not it would help to create healing.

I also followed a feminist theology approach. Feminist theology is concerned with a liberating praxis, “giving voice to the voiceless, supporting the oppressed... introducing new values” (Isherwood & McEwan, 1993:87). This approach resonates with resilience and the hopes of survivors of abuse/violence and trauma. Feminist pastoral practices are liberating because they seek “justice, peace, healing and wholeness for all in partnership” (Ackermann, 1991:96).

My preferred approach to practical theology is also connected with a participatory approach to pastoral care, as I worked with a group of people who experienced trauma. A participatory approach (Kotzé & Kotzé, 2001:7) involves a doing approach and is related to a narrative hermeneutic (Gerkin, 1986:52) to pastoral care and counselling. Gerkin (1986:52) points out that those experiences are made meaningful through stories – “to be a person is therefore to live a story”. A participatory ethical approach to pastoral care involves interacting and participating authentically “*with*” people and not “*for*” them. These approaches unite to form a “doing” spirituality (Kotzé & Kotzé, 2001:4) that helped to direct us through this research.

I was interested in the living stories of trauma survivors. Hence, I followed a participatory consciousness so that all the trauma stories that were performed could be heard and honoured. For me as a counsellor, this means, as Kotzé (2000:6) explains, listening to a story in a way that “represents a fine process of weaving threads of understanding – listening, responding, all the while attuned to participate in a way that would heal and not hurt”. Heshusius (1994:15) describes participatory consciousness as “freeing ourselves from categories imposed by notions of objectivity and subjectivity; as a re-ordering of the understanding between self and the other to a deep kinship of self other, between the knower and the known. A participatory consciousness requires a deeper level of kinship...an attitude of profound openness and receptivity”.

This letting go of myself and my own preoccupation also has an impact on my spirituality. A participatory mode of consciousness, then, results from the ability to temporarily “let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention” (Heshusius, 1994:17). This means that I included people from various Christian denominations, respecting each person’s religion, treating all religious perspectives on an equal basis, even when this challenged my assumptions. To

engage fully with another meant having to let go of my own prejudices and preconceived ideas about God – something that was not so easy to do, as I was brought up in a reformed, rather fundamentalist faith position. However, doing so enabled me to listen with a genuine interest in each co-researcher's faith and to learn from all these faiths. I agree with Kotzé (2000:6) that "such knowledges of the other becomes knowing with the other – a participatory process distinct from the Western perspective of knowing the other or about the other". Conversations about the co-researchers' personal God added meaningful elements to this research performance. I respected each co-researcher's God, and I believe that working in such a participatory mode of consciousness assisted me in the co-researching process.

The social context and the communities that we move and live in are in desperate need for a doing spirituality. Rossouw (1993:903) challenges us to shift from "being right to doing right". As a counsellor I see it as my duty to become the hands and feet of Jesus.

According to Pattison (1993:90), "all pastoral care takes place in a specific social and political context and its ideas either question or affirm the values and structure of that order". Conversations about trauma also involve talking about the social and political context that contributes towards our traumatic experiences. Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:7) say that when pastoral counsellors participate with their clients, together they have to negotiate alternative ways of "being and doing", and they can challenge oppressive and dominant discourses and the power that it has over them. This allows negotiating ways of living in an ethical and accountable way.

I have a concern and passion for people in need. Working with trauma and being part of a group of co-researchers, I was touched by what broke the co-researchers' hearts. I do not want to pass through life and through people's lives in a way that leaves me unaffected. This is the reason behind my involvement in pastoral counselling and my inspiration for conducting this research performance. I attempted to use ethical and accountable practices, in the hope of others' benefiting from it.

1.7.5 Postmodernism

This research performance is informed by postmodern epistemological discourses. The term "epistemology" refers to the basic assumptions and discourses that describe a method of knowing (Appelt, 2006:15).

Postmodernism questions the "nature of reality" (Drewery & Winslade, 1997:33). It does not imply that reality does not exist, only that we cannot know it directly. Guba

(cited by Denzin, 1994:5) cautions that “reality can never be fully apprehended; only approximated”. Postmodernism thus accepts that different people describe reality differently. These descriptions of reality are a construction of their social world, history and culture (Burr, 1995:4).

A friend of mine was a ballet dancer and was one of the lead performers in the ballet *Swan Lake*. She reported that she experienced the choreography as set in stone, leaving very little room for interpretation or variation. Postmodernism refuses to accept that there is a single definition or one way of interpreting of a classical ballet. Accepting a single definition fails to acknowledge the variety of interpretations of the whole ballet. Just as there is more than one interpretation of a story, so there are a variety of perspectives or constructions of the world. This phenomenon can be described as “multiple realities” (Drewery & Winslade, 1997:35).

In the next section, a social construction epistemology is discussed.

1.7.6 Social construction as an approach

Freedman and Combs (1995) give a helpful summary of what adopting a postmodern, narrative and social construction-based world view means. The three key ideas on reality in such a world view are that, first, realities are socially constructed; second, realities are constituted through language and are organised and maintained through narrative, and third, there are no essential truths (Freedman & Combs, 1995:22).

1.7.6.1 Realities are socially constructed

Social construction as an approach is concerned with “explaining the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:1; see also Gergen, 1985:266; Hoffman 1990:8).

1.7.6.2 Realities are constituted through language, organised and maintained through narratives

Knowledge, or the truth, cannot be discovered, but is socially constructed between people (Burr, 1995:4). Social construction reflects on the diversity of descriptions as people seek to use language to depict reality through conversations (Freedman & Combs, 1996:22; Hoffman, 1990:3).

As we performed our trauma stories, we used text and language in our conversations and performances to bring forth meaning. These trauma realities are constructed by means of language. Language is not a neutral concept (Freedman & Combs, 1996:29). Freedman and Combs (1996:29) argue that “language is always changing, and meanings are unstable and on the move”.

The focus of the study was on meaning-making of our realities – as Drewery and Winslade (1997:36) put it: “...making meaning is a serious and ethical business in which each of us does count, and we have no option but to take notice of one another.” Thus, the co-researchers did this re-performance of trauma in relationship with one another; it was a social process where we negotiated common ground and understandings and where knowledge was created in a process of social construction. As Burr (1995:5) explains: “These negotiated understandings could take a wide variety of different forms, and we can therefore talk of numerous possible ‘social constructions’ of the world...each different construction brings with it, or invites, a different kind of action from human beings.”

1.7.6.3 There are no essential truths

A social construction approach demonstrates the danger of assuming that reality can be known in any definite or singular manner. Social construction prefers to regard reality as something liquid or fluid – constantly changing and affected by the perceptions and descriptions of the participants (Hoffman, 1990:3). Therefore discourses and “reality” are never neutral (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1994:235). From a perspective of power dynamics, there can be no neutral human interaction. There is no neutral definition of a word or of a concept, nor is there any unbiased version of reality:

Discourses do not simply describe the social world; they also categorise it. In so doing, discourses bring certain phenomena into sight and obscure other phenomena. The ways, most people in a society hold, talk about, and act on a common, shared viewpoint are part of and sustain the prevailing discourses. (Hare-Mustin, 1994:19-20)

A social construction of discourses shows that discourses consist of beliefs, standards, values, establishments and traditions. The challenge of this research was to introduce the notion to the co-researchers that they need not be passive recipients of discourses brought to them through their belief systems and culture, but can choose to re-perform and re-write their own preferred life stories.

Choosing to acknowledge the constitutive nature of language implies taking care in and

about the use of language, especially that which is perceived to have power (Freedman & Combs, 1996:37). Words or language have more than just power. As words are spoken, they become a part of the person's story, either reinforcing dominant stories or helping a person to author new stories (Freedman & Combs, 1996:38).

1.8 THE METHODOLOGY USED

In this section, I discuss the approach used in this research performance. Because narrative practices are situated in a postmodern world view, I followed a qualitative approach to this research, doing participatory action research. As I use the metaphor of performance throughout this research, I first explain the metaphor of performance, and then discuss ideas on qualitative research, moving on to a decentred participatory action research approach.

1.8.1 What is a performance?

Dictionary.com (n.d.) defines performance as

...[t]he act of performing a ceremony, play, piece of music, etc. The execution or accomplishment of work, acts. A particular action, deed, or proceeding. An action or proceeding of an unusual or spectacular kind: His temper tantrum was quite a performance.

White (1995:83) explains that, in counselling, we make use of the "narrative metaphor, it helps us think in terms of people's lives as stories and performances". With regard to trauma counselling, Bruner (1986:11) suggests that it "is in the performance of an expression (trauma stories) that we re-experience, re-live, re-create, re-construct, and re-fashion our culture, the performance does not release a pre-existing meaning that lies dormant in the text. Rather the performance itself is constitutive". White implies that, as we re-tell our stories, it helps us think of people's lives as performances, whereas Bruner suggests that when we re-tell or perform our trauma stories, we could be able to generate numerous new meanings of our stories.

1.8.2 Why performance?

The borrowed idea of performance helped me to think of the telling of a trauma story as a performance. I wonder, as a co-researcher performs this trauma story, might it generate new meanings to her? During the performance, we are all participating and making meaning of the story/performance. As we live life, are we continually involved in

performing it? Social scientists propose that “what persons know of life they know through life experiences...these experiences must be storied and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to the experience” (White & Epston, 1990:9-10).

An additional idea of a performance was also borrowed from the Narrative Theatre, based on earlier work by Boal (Sliep, 2005:50). This kind of theatre and these approaches have been developed in Malawi, Uganda and Burundi, South Africa and the East Congo since 1994, as an outflow of working with communities affected by trauma, conflict and war (Sliep, 2005:48).

In 1994, apartheid was abolished and democracy came into being in South Africa. The transition from apartheid to democracy was, on the surface, a fairly peaceful one, but there were deeply concealed divisions that were to emerge and perplex the development of South Africa’s democracy as time went on (Meskin & Van der Walt, 2011:1). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up in 1996 to address these divisions and the legacy of the past. The TRC hearings were open to the public and the nation witnessed the heightened atmosphere of telling people’s stories through various forms of media coverage (Krog, 1999:360). According to Sanders, the TRC report notes that by “telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi-layered experiences of the South African story” (Meskin & Van der Walt, 2011:1). This recovered history has become the source material for many post-apartheid theatrical works or performances dealing directly with the TRC subject and questions (Moyo, 2011:3). Within the narratives of trauma, there is always scope for a theatrical restoration that can serve as a method on the path of healing, through the re-performing of such narratives in structured forms (Meskin & Van der Walt, 2011:2). This was also part of my inspiration.

Moreover, I was inspired by the work of Dr Jacob Levy Moreno on therapeutic drama. He said in 1917 to the well-known psychiatrist, Sigmund Freud:

“Dr. Freud, I start where you leave off. You meet people in the artificial setting of your office. I meet them on the street and in their homes, in their natural surroundings. You analyze their dreams. I give them the courage to dream again. You analyze them and tear them apart. I let them act out their conflicting roles and help them to put the parts back together again.”
(Moreno, cited by Tavon, cited in Zwiegers, 2010:20)

Dr Moreno used therapeutic drama to bring about positive change in an individual. He believed that words could be lies, but that action (as in acting out) brings out the greater truth between people. When you act out, you become what you act (Zwiegers, 2010:20).

According to Zwiegers (2010:19-28), Boal's plays and performances were always based on the social and contextual problems of the community. He did his research on ground level in the community and presented a play in the "Theatre of the Oppressed", as he called it. Boal eventually moved away from the kind of theatre which sees theatre as a form of one-way communication with the audience. Instead, he adopted the idea of an operational interactive theatre. In this theatre, dialogue takes place between the actor(s) and the audience – the actor(s) will stop the play and ask the audience: "What are the options that the character has in the next move of the play?" Boal wanted to change society through theatre and his therapeutic ideas. He wanted the audience to think differently and to develop new meaning(s) (Zwiegers 2010:19-28).

Taking the above theories into consideration, I wanted to explore whether, and in what way, it would make a difference if performance trauma stories were told in front of an audience who have also experienced trauma in their lives. I was also interested in whether the re-performing of trauma stories would lead to new meaning. Would these new meanings give hope? Would they allow us to put our histories behind us? Would they help us to go forward in life? I was particularly interested in the multiple meanings of ways of performing and living in South Africa that challenge trauma. I wondered what the consequences of such performances would be, and whether the process would end there. Perhaps it would create a path for a play or theatrical work that might flow from this research performance.

1.8.3 Qualitative research

According to Hayward (1984:76), qualitative research attempts to understand individual human experience in great depth. The spirit of qualitative research is that the questions of interest should dictate the design rather than be limited to asking questions that fit accepted research protocols (Becvar & Becvar, cited in Martin, 2003:17). I was conscious of being shown the way by my co-researchers, rather than my showing them the way.

A number of alternative ways of research and understanding have emerged in the social sciences. Using stories, or the narrative metaphor, can be a valuable way of recording research. Ballard (1994:22) indicates that "stories are as important, relevant, valid, reliable, meaningful and generalisable as any other writing that is referred to as research". This study therefore used qualitative conversations to learn about the meaning, experience, perceptions and interpretations of abuse, violence, spiritual abuse, sexual molestation and the misuse of power which caused trauma in the co-

researchers' lives, and had an effect on each person's identity and her preferred stories. The stories performed by each co-researcher might present pictures of her experiences and of the context that reflects actual, lived experiences, rather than predetermined categories of experiences that the researcher may, erroneously, think are important (Grobbelaar, 2001:173; Rubin & Rubin, cited in Mouton, 2001:196).

Post-structuralism informs postmodernism. In adopting a post-structuralist approach, as counsellors, we take a relativist position in which we do not search for the truth, but are open to it. We accept the possible existence of many alternative constructions of how trauma and spirituality interconnect in people's lives and experiences. In this context, I agree with Kvale (1992:51), who says:

...the qualitative research interview is no longer a mere adjunct to the basic scientific methods of observation and experimentation, but provides through conversation between persons, privileged access to the cultural world of intersubjective meaning. In several respects, the knowledge produced in an interview comes close to postmodernistic conceptions of knowledge as conversational, narrative, linguistic, contextual and interrelational.

The highest level of knowing can only be cultural and intersubjective knowledge; therefore local knowledge is achieved through social interaction.

1.8.4 De-centred participatory action research

The participatory action process used in this study entailed writing and re-writing and re-re-writing the script of re-performing trauma by all co-researchers. According to Bruner (1986:11), "we know participants (co-researchers) in a performance (research) do not necessarily share a common experience or meaning: what they share is only common participation". The aim of participatory action research was thus for the co-researchers and me to become equal partners and to create knowledge together which could be applicable and may have value in their particular situations. This notion forms part of the narrative practices that we incorporated in our re-performance of trauma.

A de-centred approach to research as described by Tootell (2004:56) was adopted: the research explored descriptions of the particularities of local knowledges (the co-researchers' knowledges), in this case about trauma, which is more relevant than the knowledges and skills of the researcher (in this case, my knowledges) (Tootell 2004:56). This resonates very well with some narrative practices that we incorporated in this research performance.

Those who participated in this research are referred to as co-researchers. David Epston arrived at the term “co-research” in 1988 and 1989 (Epston, 2004:31). Dixon (1999:45) prefers the term “co-search”. Co-(re)search is the co-production of knowledge by sufferers and counsellors. It is a process in which all co-(re)searchers have a constitutive input and an identifiable stake. I hoped that all my co-researchers would benefit from the research, as such benefits would contribute to ethically acceptable academic knowledge.

Tootell (2004) adopts the concept of de-centred counselling from Michael White. He decided to call his research a de-centred research approach, because it is “based upon [an] ethic of collaboration and equity, and seeks to document local skills and knowledge of the co-researchers” (Tootell 2004:56). I incorporated Dixon’s (1999:232) ideas into my study – he explains de-centred practice as follows: “The de-centredness of the counsellor was also the de-centredness of the researcher” (Dixon, 1999:232).

I hoped that this research performance would allow research and therapy to mesh – as Epston (2004:31) explains: “Unlike conventional research, the process of co-research does not claim to be objective, nor does it aspire to objectivity. The process is inextricably entwined with its purpose, which is to generate knowledge that can influence in preferred ways a person’s relationship with the particular issue for which they sought counselling.” Dixon (1999:232) also found many instances of a crossover between the therapeutic and the methodological stance of research. He argues that “in positioning this research within the methodological discourses I am constantly reminded of the parallels between research and narrative therapy” (Dixon, 1999:232).

The importance of this study lies not in my own observations and understandings, but the meaning generated by the co-researchers who share their experiences in the stories they performed. I am not an interdependent observer, but rather an interdependent co-researcher within a meaning-generating system (Botha, 1998:82). Following the above stances and narrative approach, I would like to position myself as a de-centred researcher and co-researcher. The emphasis of co-research is the centring of all the co-researchers’ local skills, knowledge, validating performances about the self and I incorporation of preferred narratives into their lived experience.

In line with ethical considerations, I wonder if the advanced stage will be the final performance of this research. I suspect that this performance might be performed and re-performed and re-re-performed over and over again.

1.8.5 Key terms

Throughout the research I use the metaphor of a performance. Therefore the following words and phrases were employed:

- the telling of trauma stories became the performance of trauma;
- this research became the research performance;
- standing up against abuse or trauma or showing signs of resistance became responses to trauma; and
- the research process followed with its results became a re-performance of trauma.

In the next section, an outline of the stages of the research performance is given, and the ethical considerations relating to the study, confidentiality, informed consent and the provision of counselling are discussed.

1.9 RESEARCH PERFORMANCE

Schechner (cited in Bruner, 1986:10) explains that “in going from script to performance in the theatre there are at least two intermediary stages: the workshop, a time of breaking down, play, and experimentation; and the rehearsal, a time of building up and polishing preparatory to the actual performance”. Similar stages were followed in creating this research performance.

1.9.1 Stage 1: The selection of the co-researchers and the introduction

Group sessions were planned with people who experienced trauma in their lives and had a desire to talk about it. Gender and cultural differences played no role in the selection of the co-researchers. Six women were asked whether they would be interested in sharing their trauma performances and experiences with others. These invitations came about because I did counselling at a pastoral counselling centre in the mornings and it was mostly women clients who came for counselling. Four of the six who were approached accepted. Their experiences of trauma were all different from one another. I did not select a particular trauma, such as hijacking, murder, political violence, as a focus. Instead, I considered a feature shared by many clients that I saw, and myself, based on my own experiences, namely that we all described our problems or experiences as traumatic. All the co-researchers were invited on the assumption that their experiences and the problems they had experienced could be described as

traumatic. The study was about the experiences of trauma and not so much about the different kinds of trauma experienced.

The co-researchers attended ten group discussions. An introductory session was held with co-researchers and the purpose of the study was explained to them. Each co-researcher introduced herself, telling the other co-researchers what she believed she was good at. This served as an ice-breaker. It also became a useful map (White 2005) used later in the research performance, as it gave some indication about the knowledge, skills, values and competencies of the co-researchers.

Thereafter each person received an information letter (see Annexure A); we discussed the aim of this research performance and I answered all questions asked. The terms of the study, as well as the ethical implications, were negotiated prior to the co-researchers' signing the Informed Consent Form (see Annexure B).

The preliminary aim for the project, as well as some ideas of how the re-performance might develop, was explained. An information sheet on outsider witness practices and ideas (see Annexure C) was handed out that could assist in asking questions in the reflection stage of each session. I indicated to the co-researchers how I see my role as researcher and co-researcher. With all the information from Annexures A, B and C in hand, we started negotiating these practices and ideas, their role as co-researchers and how we saw the way forward with this research performance.

The consent letter (see Annexure B) was given to the women, which they took home to decide on their participation. They were then contacted by phone to enquire about their decisions and to arrange the second session.

1.9.2 Stage 2: Research performance

According to Bruner (1986:10), researchers transform field notes and impressions into drafts and papers in the rehearsal stage.

After I received the signed consent letters, we discussed the research process in detail. The method of collecting and recording the stories was negotiated between us. The co-researchers agreed to my audio-taping the sessions, and that the tapes would be available to my supervisor and the co-researchers. I summarised each session and made the summary in the next session available to all the co-researchers. I will keep the audio-tapes in a secure place for five years, and have undertaken to destroy them at the end of that holding period.

I followed Tootell (2004) de-centred research approach and I saw my role as a de-centred one. My task as co-researcher was as follows:

- to set up the group meetings and to facilitate the performance of the trauma stories and the line of inquiry afterwards;
- to summarise the sessions and reflections using my field notes and audiotapes;
- to represent these reflections at the next session and then to negotiate the findings; and
- to discuss the implications of the findings for research practice.

Following an approach of participatory action research, my intention was to negotiate the goals and aims of this performance with the co-researchers continuously, as they should be the primary beneficiaries of this performance. The intention of this planning was only to serve as a guideline to the research performance. We decided beforehand that if the direction of the enquiries were to change as a result of the insights of the various co-researchers, a new direction would be negotiated.

1.9.3 Stage 3: Create a safe place for the trauma performance

We wanted to create a safe, spiritual and listening space where the co-researchers could perform their trauma experiences. The invited audience was the other co-researchers, who listened with the outsider witness questions as a reference to their responses to the stories that had been performed. White (1997:6) points out the co-researchers' responsibility while listening to others' trauma performances, because the narrating of any story is powerfully shaped by the listeners' responses. I emphasised this responsibility before every performance. Our roles were to understand, listen and respond, and to participate in a way that would heal and not hurt (Kotzé, 2002:4).

1.9.4 Stage 4: Reporting the re-performance

I summarised each co-researcher's story. There was an extra individual session with each of the co-researchers where she could confirm my interpretation or review, could edit and comment on the validity of the summary, leaving the ownership of the research with her.

In the next group session, the summary was discussed, as well as the outcome of the previous group session. Time was made available for more outsider witness responses, which helped us to re-perform the preferred trauma stories. These re-

performed stories formed part of the research report. The final re-performance was made available to the co-researchers for their comment, validation and reflection.

1.9.5 Stage 5: Reflecting on the re-performance journey

In the last part of this re-performance, I attempted to reflect on our journey together, as well as practised self-reflection on the discourses of my personal trauma, which I had brought with me to this re-performance. I questioned these discourses and was aware of my influence and authority and did not try to deny them. It was my honest objective to be informed and be changed by all the stories to be performed and re-performed. I was conscious of creating a safe space for each co-researcher and of opening up possibilities for alternative performances, which, in this case, we called a re-performance of trauma.

In the next section I discuss how narrative counselling and practices were used as the key constructs underpinning this research performance.

1.10 NARRATIVE COUNSELLING AND PRACTICES

1.10.1 What is narrative counselling?

Morgan (2000:4) describes narrative counselling as follows:

Narrative therapy (counselling) seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views the problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to change their relationship with problems in their lives. Curiosity and willingness to ask questions to which we genuinely don't know the answers are important principles of this work. There are many possible directions that any conversation can take. The person consulting the therapist plays a significant part in determining the directions that are taken.

I incorporated some narrative practices into this research performance. Narrative practices are a way of creating new meanings – a complex process of negotiation (Drewery & Winslade, 1997:37).

The narrative practices that were used in the group sessions are discussed below.

1.10.2 Outsider witness, practices and ideas of claiming your preferred identity

In narrative counselling, one can use “definitional ceremonies”, a practice borrowed from the fieldwork of Barbara Myerhoff (cited by White, 2004:50). A “definitional ceremony is a process by which communities of people actively construct their identities” (Carey & Russell, 2003:6). The metaphor of definitional ceremonies contributes to the “structuring” of counselling as a “context for the telling and retelling of stories” of people’s lives (White 1999:59). This creates an opportunity for a client to engage in a telling of some of the significant stories of her or his life. These stories are significant to matters of personal and relational identity. An audience, or outsider witness group is also present in this forum. An outsider witness group is an audience invited to a therapy conversation – a third party who is invited to listen to and acknowledge the preferred stories and identity claims of the person consulting the therapist (Carey & Russell, 2003:4).

Michael White based his writings about outsider witness work on the work of Barbara Myerhoff and Tom Andersen, who both worked with the notion of an invited third party who could witness clients’ storying their experiences (Carey & Russell, 2003:6). In line with Myerhoff’s and Anderson’s observations on their work, White began to focus on outsider witnesses in authenticating people’s identity claims (White, 1999:63). According to White (1999:61), outsider witnessing is a process of witnessing, storying and re-storying trauma stories.

Problems and predicaments can constitute a feeling of isolation in a person’s life and a withdrawal from people who may otherwise hold importance in the person’s life. Outsider witnessing challenges this isolation, invisibility and identity claims that suggest that the person is not valuable and has no purpose anymore (Carey & Russell, 2003:5; White, 1999:61).

Performing and re-performing and re-re-performing our trauma stories could offer an opportunity to provide a context to re-produce the negative effects and cultural discourses associated with trauma. I wondered whether or not deconstruction would have an influence on all the co-researchers. I was interested in whether it could shape our lives to such an extent that we might start to (re-)claim our preferred identities. I was curious about whether it could help to undo the effects of trauma. Would the co-researchers’ alternative knowledges be regarded as valuable? Would these knowledges challenge any expert knowledge? I wondered whether the co-researchers’ preferred views and local knowledges would assist us to constitute the research

process as such.

1.10.3 The client's local knowledge makes her the expert

Freedman and Combs (1996) write about therapy from a not-knowing position. They claim that the client is the expert – they explain: “When we meet people for the first time, we want to understand the meaning of their stories for them. This means turning our backs on ‘expert’ filters: not listening for chief complaints; not ‘gathering’ the pertinent-to-us-as-experts bits of diagnostic information interspersed in their stories” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:44). They add that as therapists we need to “try to put ourselves in the shoes of the people we work with and understand, from their perspective, in their language, what has led them to seek assistance” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:44).

In this research performance, we had multiple conversations about trauma from a not-knowing position (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992:27). We also attempted to adhere to the postmodernist requirement that all co-researchers were equal and open towards one another's co-constructions of the teller's local knowledge about trauma. We did so by attentive listening, which implied that her expertise about trauma was honoured by all co-researchers. The co-researchers were regarded as the experts of their own lives (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:27) and they were respected for their views about their own lives. Their preferred views were precisely the local knowledge that was valuable to this process as such, because, as Andersen (1993:321) explains, the “client has local experiences, while the therapist has general experiences”.

1.10.4 The conversational artist

Anderson and Goolishian's (1992:25-33) counselling approach called “the client is the expert: a not knowing position” was adopted to facilitate the process of counselling, which is a process of change.

The co-researchers and I attempted to ask questions that opened up space in the conversation and would not close it down. These questions were asked from a not knowing position. The co-researchers and I reflected on our understandings of the co-researcher's trauma performance and adjusted our understandings of it. We asked questions that we really did not know the answers to. Asking questions from a not knowing position develops local understandings, language and meanings to emerge. We followed this process so that each co-researcher's local knowledge could be

acknowledged.

Our role as co-researchers was not to be the experts, but to be conversational artists, to use dialogue and to create new meanings evolving towards dissolving the problem rather than trying to fix it:

- We took whatever each co-researcher said seriously and tried to not judge the right and the wrong of the situation.
- We used co-operative language; we called it language of competence. We used the language of the co-researcher.
- We listened respectfully and attempted not to understand too quickly, because the co-researcher is the expert of her own life.
- We tried to define the problem, but facilitated and elaborated on the multiple realities about the trauma and tried to create new meaning.
- Our views and ideas were tentative and were also subject to change throughout the conversations.
- We tried to be transparent and to diminish our power relation towards the co-researcher who performed her trauma. White (1997:202) encourages counsellors to attempt to negotiate a power-sharing relationship by means of decentring practices in the counselling conversation.

1.10.5 Deconstruction of discourses

A discourse is a set of more or less coherent stories or statements about the way the world should be (Drewery & Winslade, 1997:35). Discourses are reality or truth and tend to dominate the lives of those who struggle with a particular discourse. Discourses shape people's lives and relationships.

Culture refers to the ways of thinking and the practices within a community (Botha, 1998:51). Madigan (1996:50) argues that "[c]ommunity discourses can thus be seen as the rules we formulate by which we decide what is normal and what is not". Culture is a by-product of discourses and, because some discourses exert more power than others, and some discourses dominate other discourses, culture too is dominated by certain discourses. The dominant discourses of a given local culture are the taken-for-granted realities and practices of that culture (White, 1991:27).

Discourses can powerfully shape a person's choices about what life events can be

storied and how they should be storied (Freedman & Combs, 1996:43). Hence, discourses are never neutral (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1994:235). Dill (1996:98) reflected on Foucault's view of power, concluding that all discourses are loaded with knowledge and thus with power: "For me it is important to...discover how enmeshed the relationship between power, knowledge and truth is. There is a recursive relation between these phenomena; the kind of power that I exert, relates to my kind of knowledge..." (Dill, 1996:98).

Power refers to a network of practices and institutions, and technologies that sustain dominance and subordination (Foucault, cited in Hare-Mustin, 1994:21). White draws attention both to the ways in which power is invisible to those who experience it and to how individuals are led to embrace their own subjugation knowledge through the influence of certain presumed truths (White & Epston, 1990:25). Trauma survivors might believe that particular discourses are a reality or the truth in their lives, for instance that they are victims of abuse, that they are marginalised and that molestation or violation will be with them for the rest of their lives.

The deconstruction of discourses, according to Morgan (2000:46), refers to "the pulling apart and examining of the 'taken for granted' truths". She explains that a therapist can examine these ideas and practices, define them, pull them apart and trace their history. Deconstruction can lead to challenging discourses and can "open alternative stories that assist people to challenge and break from the problem's view and to be more connected with their own preferred ideas, thoughts and way of living" (Morgan 2000:46).

Since discourses are not stable, but are subjugated by social linguistic deconstruction processes, culture too is always fluid and "on the move" (Gerkin, 1991:35). To deconstruct a text, one should listen for "what was not said". To deconstruct is "to undo, not to destroy" (Sampson, 1989:8).

Narrative counselling practices are conscious of power and power relationships. This awareness makes counselling political. Such practices attempt to include culture in the counselling process as cultural discourses. Such discourses played a role in the lives of the co-researchers in this study and in our research performance. As co-researchers, we looked and listened for hidden meanings, spaces or gaps, and evidence of conflicting trauma performances (Drewery & Winslade, 1997:43), a process which is also called deconstruction.

I would like to share a practical example from my general practice of a discourse that

was shaped through culture and became a taken-for-granted truth. I used a deconstruction question to undo these truth claims. I once saw a client who had survived an armed robbery at his house on a security estate. Because he froze, the Western discourse that dictates that the male has to be the head of the family and should protect his family made him experience guilt. He judged himself, saying: "I am pathetic." Making use of deconstruction, we started to pull this discourse apart by asking many questions. One of the questions we asked looked at the fact that he did not defend himself or fight back: could it not be argued that he contributed a lot, seeing that his family still had a father and husband and he was alive to tell the story? He could easily have resisted and paid with his life. After the session, he reported that the question made a difference and he accepted his reaction.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

In this chapter I started with my own experiences, which I describe as traumatic. Thinking of the difficulties I had in getting over it, I reflected on giving a voice to women who needed to perform their trauma stories. A pastoral narrative context was chosen to search for different ways of healing. This chapter reflects on the aims and approach of the study, and provides information on the literature study and the research process. The remaining chapters present a collection of women's performances and re-performances of trauma, searching for ways to break free from the trauma experienced.

Chapter 2 focuses on social constructions of trauma and the effects that these constructions have on the lives of many people experiencing trauma. I also discuss a pastoral counselling model, theology, social construction and epistemology.

Chapter 3 consists of summaries of the actual conversations with the co-researchers and the co-researchers' reflections on these conversations.

Chapter 4 contains reflections on and interpretations of the trauma performances, called the re-performance of trauma.

Chapter 5 presents a reflection on the research re-performance and a conclusion on what has not been said. I end with more questions and a reflection on what have I learned about myself, about the co-researchers and about research.

CHAPTER 2:

EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITIONING:

POSTMODERNISM, SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION, DISCOURSES

OF TRAUMA AND PASTORAL NARRATIVE PRACTICES

We cannot have direct knowledge of the world; we can only know it through our experiences. As a result, knowledge is evolving and continually broadening.
(Anderson, 1997:36)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The socio-cultural and political context of our country has changed remarkably in the last two decades, resulting in exposure to a wide variety of trauma on a large scale. The almost endless list of relatively recent sources of trauma includes trauma caused by politics, the struggle, violence, abuse, a bush war, crime, HIV/AIDS, car accidents and divorce. In order to deal with the consequences of this kind of trauma, a fresh response is required from practitioners, researchers and narrative pastoral counsellors. Gerkin (1991:11) rightly encourages pastoral counsellors to respond pastorally to the “signs of the times”. I would like to set the scene for such a response.

A group of people are gathered on the stage, not only actors, but also script writers (co-researchers). All have experienced trauma in their lives and would like to make these experiences and knowledges available to their secular and faith communities in the hope that these communities might benefit from these knowledges. It is to be done in the form a research performance (a group of people are in a trauma counselling theatre called the New Way's Theatre, which is known for its spiritual character). Before the script can be written, it is necessary to do some planning and to set the framework for this research performance.

The framework (of this chapter and of the research performance) consists of social construction discourse, which is situated within postmodern philosophy. Hence, the assumptions of postmodernism are discussed before moving on to look at social construction discourse. The theme that brought us as a group together was trauma and spirituality; it is therefore deemed helpful to examine these discourses too. Stories and the performance of these stories is what our lives consist of. A discussion of a narrative approach, discourses and practices and ideas called outsider witnessing is thus also

included. This framework, or epistemology, is the foundation for the research performance.

Epistemology refers to the relationship between the knower and the knowable and concerns the assumptions that inform and shape a person's process of knowing (Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle, 1991:174). Epistemology is related to a paradigm based on inquiry. In this regard, it should be noted that, as Dill and Kotzé (1997:3) point out, we "are currently facing paradigm shifts due to the struggle in the question on how people know what they know". Epistemology indicates the assumptions and discourses that inform a person's way of knowing and, in this case, play a major role in the research performance. In the next section, I examine the postmodern paradigm, showing the movement from modern to postmodern discourses.

2.2 FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

Modernism and empirical or positivist science arose in the Enlightenment period, which dates back to the mid-eighteenth century. Life performances in that time were increasingly based on modernism. In Western schools of thought, the individual gradually became the focus for truth and morality, rather than the Church and God: "It was now up to individuals to make judgements (based on objective, scientific evidence) about what reality was like and therefore what were appropriate moral rules for humans to live by" (Burr, 1995:12).

The modernist movement started its own search for truth, and this truth foundation was based on the notion that there were rules or structures underlying the surface features of the world. There was a belief in a right way of doing things which could be discovered (Burr, 1995:12). A hidden structure was believed to be present, a "deeper reality underlying in the surface of the world, so that the truth about the world could be revealed by analysing these underlying structures" (Burr, 1995:13). People believed in "grand or metanarratives", which offer a means of understanding the entire social world in terms of "one all-embracing principle", and any recommendations for social change were based upon this principle (Burr, 1995:13). These theories were incorporated into the social sciences and humanities, leading to the rise of schools of thought such as structuralism or poststructuralism. Prominent psychologists such as the psychoanalyst Freud in the late nineteenth century and the developmental psychologist Piaget in the twentieth century believed in "the existence of underlying psychic structures to account for psychological phenomena" (Burr, 1995:13).

Postmodern thinking emerged in the mid-twentieth century and developed momentum in the 1970s. Postmodernism refers to a critique of modernism that “departs from modern tradition in its questioning of the modernist monovocal discourse as the overarching foundation for literacy, political and social criticism” (Anderson, 1997:35). Postmodernism challenges modernism in the following ways:

- Postmodernism rejects the claim that there can be an ultimate truth and structure (Burr, 1995:13). Postmodern thought is often linked to poststructuralism, but primarily “represents a broad challenge to and a cultural shift away from fixed metanarratives, privileged discourses, and universal truths; away from objective reality; away from language as representational; and away from scientific criteria of knowledge as objective and fixed” (Anderson, 1997:36).
- Postmodernism argues that we live in a postmodern world with more than one system of knowledge. Postmodernism “offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and deeper understandings of their particular situations” (Lather, 1991:56).
- “Postmodernist thought moves towards knowledge as a discursive practice, a plurality of narratives that are more local, contextual and fluid....knowledge is socially constructed, and the knowledge and the knower as interdependent.....we cannot have direct knowledge of the world; we can only know it through our experiences. As a result, knowledge is evolving and continually broadening” (Anderson 1997:36).
- Postmodernism’s dispensing with the notion of truth does not imply that “nothing exists”, nor does taking a position of plurality imply that “anything goes”. Rather, postmodernism promotes social criticism; from a postmodern perspective, everything is open to challenge, including postmodernism itself (Anderson, 1997:37).
- Postmodern theorists such as Anderson and Goolishian (1988), Gergen (1985), and Hoffman (1992) are deeply concerned about language and its meaning and view all knowledge and ideas as evolving through language and taking shape in the realm of the “common world” and “common dance” (Hoffman 1992:116). Instead of asking what is truth?, one might ask whose truth?. People exist in and through language (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:371). We bring forth reality by speaking in language, as the crucible of change.
- A postmodern stance challenges the modernist relationship between the counsellor and client, where the counsellor is expected to cure or “fix” the problem experienced by the client with “expert” knowledge (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:380). A postmodern counsellor, on the other hand, enters each counselling

conversation with an attitude of “expanding and saying the ‘unsaid’ – the development, through dialogue, of new themes and narratives and actually, the creation of new histories” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:381).

Modernism, in short, is prescriptive, objective and scientific. It believes in universal truths, rules and structures, in the “right” way of how one should perform in the social, political, art and scientific spheres, but its performances have failed to deliver the goods it promised (Brueggeman, 1993:1). While I was reading through the literature of modernism, I wanted to break the chains that were keeping performances and voices in their place. Postmodernism, by contrast, brought a freer spirit to life performances. It provides a softer, more sensitive lens on how to gain knowledge of the world and of the self, without trying to discover an objective reality/truth, or claiming to be an instrument of social power. In a postmodernist approach, knowledge is gained through social interaction, employing language that enables people to change by using a plurality of narratives that are local, contextual and fluid and are regarded as valuable.

Social construction discourse is situated within a postmodern paradigm. This kind of discourse is explored below, as it enhances understanding of multiple versions proposed by postmodern thinking, asserting that not all stories are equally valid.

2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION DISCOURSE

Before starting the discussion of social construction discourse, I would first like to reflect on what a discourse is, as it is a word that is frequently used in this research. According to Hare-Mustin (1994:19), discourses are “a system of statements, practices, and institutional structures that share common values”. Drewery and Winslade (1997:35) state that discourses are the “frameworks we use to make sense of our world”. Discourse is, however, “not a narrow function of the social structure, but is created, maintained, remanufactured, and reshaped by social interaction at all levels of context” (Kogan & Gale, 1997:103). What can be said and who may speak are issues of power in society: “Discourses organise and regulate relationships as power relations... power operates at any level of society” (Drewery & Winslade, 1997:35).

Social construction discourse is concerned with whether our beliefs about the world are social interventions. Meanings emerge unendingly from the interactions between people (Hoffman, 1990:2-3).

Burr (1995:2-5) argues that a social construction approach is based on the following assumptions:

- The approach takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge, or ways of understanding the world (including themselves) – in this regard, Burr cautions us to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be.
- The ways in which people commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts people use, are historically – and culturally – specific. It depends upon where and when in the world one lives. This means that the categories with which we as human beings apprehend the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions.
- We regard knowledge as a product of social interaction. People construct knowledge amongst them through their daily interactions in the course of social life. Knowledge and social action go together.

Anderson expresses a view similar to Burr's suggestion that context plays a very important role in how we understand the world. She points out that

...context is thought of as a multirelational and linguistic domain in which behaviour, feelings, emotions, and understandings are communal. They occur, within a plurality of ever-changing, complex webs of relationships and social processes, and within local and broader linguistic domains/practises/discourses. (Anderson, 1997:44)

Meaning is created through the linguistic interaction that occurs when people speak. Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) argue that understanding exists within language and not prior to language. Anderson (1997:41) comments:

Everything is authored, or more precisely multiauthored, in a community of persons and relationships. The meanings of language, that is, the meanings that we attribute to the things, the events, and the people in our lives, and to ourselves, are arrived at by the language people use – through social dialogue, interchange, and interaction that we socially construct.

According to White and Epston (1990:10), in order to make sense of our lives and to express ourselves, experience must be “storied” and it is this story that determines the meaning ascribed to the experience.

Freedman and Combs (2002) give a short account of the influence of Michel Foucault on White and Epston's ideas, as they were attracted to his thinking on “politics and power”; what is “normal” and “abnormal” and “knowledge and power”. Michel Foucault was a French intellectual and philosopher who is known for his work on various ways in which people in the Western society have been categorised as “other,” “normal” and

“abnormal”. Foucault examined why some people have been labelled “insane or sick, criminal or perverted” and described various ways in which such people have been separated, oppressed, or enrolled in self-policing on the basis of labelling.

Freedman and Combs (2002) point out that Foucault sees language as an instrument of power, and people have power in society in the direct proportion to their ability to participate in the various discourses that shape that society. Discourse, according to Foucault, refers to the ongoing political/historical/institutional conversations within society that constitute people’s notions of what is true and what is possible. The voices that dominate the discussion about what constitutes a discourse are those in power due to the control of knowledge that these people have. Discourses in a society therefore determine what knowledge is held to be true, right, or proper in that society; those who control the discourse, control knowledge (Freedman & Combs, 2002:12-13; White & Epston 1990:23).

Foucault argues that power is knowledge and knowledge is power. In this regard, Edward Bruner (cited in Freedman & Combs, 1996:38) writes:

... dominant narratives are units of power as well as of meaning. The ability to tell one’s story has a political component; indeed one measure of the dominance of a narrative is the place allocated to its discourse. Alternative competing stories are generally not allocated space in establishment channels and must seek expression in underground media and dissident groupings.

To summarise: social constructionism is concerned with truths that are taken for granted. We need not accept them, but may question them. Knowledge is recognised as contextual and historically specific and evolves in a social process that develops and circulates amongst people. Realities are multiple and are “constituted through language and are organised and maintained through narrative” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:22). Meaning is created through language. The language we use “constitute[s] our world beliefs” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:28).

In the next section I discuss some of the many different definitions and constructions of trauma.

2.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF TRAUMA

No one has a programme of the concert of life.

(Retief, 2004:21)

Trauma can happen to all of us, but in different ways. It can strike like a “devastating blow”, or it can come and “torment us slowly” until we disintegrate and we give in to psychiatric illness (Wong, 2009:1). Even ordinary events can have traumatic consequences, for example, the loss of a friendship, getting fired, divorce, or bullying at school. Explicit trauma can occur when a person is exposed to shocking events such as the tragic events of 9/11, or soldiers being exposed to carnage and destruction, or multiple trauma such as child molestation, abuse and domestic violence.

Trauma is a socially constructed concept. White and Epston (1990:27) remind us that our “understandings of our lived experience are mediated through language”. The language, or words, that people use to describe trauma is “something extraordinary, unpredictable, unavoidable, not preventable and shocking” (Martin, 2003:15). According to Müller (2004:78), a social construction discourse of trauma arises when “individuals experience critical or traumatic events that challenge their understandings of their world and their place in the world, they use language to describe those experiences. Trauma refers to the difficulty of integrating his/her preferred worldview with the worldview related to a specific experience”.

The Institute of Traumatology in Johannesburg provides a useful description of trauma:

[P]ersons have experienced trauma if they have been exposed to events related to either their circumstances in life or the phase they are in (e.g. transition from one phase of life to another, or circumstances arising from a new phase which they find unmanageable) and if that results in their ordinary coping-mechanisms being disabled. (Retief, 2004:17)

The transition phase Retief refers to in the above description can be loss of employment, emigration (of yourself, your children or grandchildren), retirement, divorce (your own or your children's), or molestation in childhood (Retief, 2004:18). I agree with Retief, as I witnessed that my mother-in-law experienced severe trauma due to the emigration of two of her children, as well as the divorce of her one daughter. My own parents experienced retirement, old age and the deterioration of their health as traumatic, because it left them with a feeling of hopelessness and shock as they realised that their health would not improve.

As I have pointed out, the word trauma was not as commonly used a decade or two ago. Earlier words used to describe trauma making use of a pastoral lens were words such as “crisis and experience”. Gerkin (1979:32) describes a crisis as follows:

...in the situation of crisis we are confronted with our human vulnerability, our finitude, the utter impossibility of our deepest hopes and wishes. In that situation a most elemental choice is forced upon persons that it is at its core a religious or “faith” choice. Either persons must defend themselves against the contradiction with whatever human defence is possible, be that denial or heroic courage, or they must be open themselves to vulnerability of the unknown future, trusting in the power and care of God coming out of the change and contingency of the unknown. (Gerkin, 1979:32)

Writing from a narrative pastoral counselling perspective, Weingarten (2003:9) comments that “trauma response disrupts our fundamental sense of who we are, who others are, and our sense of safety and security it produces an indelible mark on our world view”. According to White (2004:48), a person tends to label an experience as traumatic when that experience is in conflict with what the person gives value to in life; when it is an assault on what the person holds precious; or it conflicts with the person’s cherished culture and philosophy of life – responses to trauma and what these responses are founded upon are usually diminished or disqualified.

Trauma does not select – it can affect anyone; it does not have age or gender and no one is sheltered against trauma. When it happens, it might change a person’s world view, paralyse, and confuse. It can also lead to a new, unmanageable phase in life, resulting in asking questions such as who am I?. During a traumatic event, a person’s sense of safety may be under attack and the person might question her survival, or whether trust can be put in the power and care of God.

In the next section, I explore different discourses of trauma. Post-traumatic stress disorder is the most popular trauma discourse studied in the medical discourse field. By contrast, the discourse of post-traumatic growth resonates well with narrative counselling, as it focuses on the positive changes that a person can experience after trauma, and it also has a spiritual dimension which is valuable in pastoral counselling.

2.5 EXPLORING DISCOURSES OF TRAUMA

Since post-traumatic stress disorder was first named in 1980, the subject of trauma has been studied in a wide variety of fields, such as modern psychology, psychiatry and the neurosciences, as well as in the social and behavioural sciences. I would like to

speculate that due to the high volume of crime, violence and abuse, a trauma industry has arisen in this country and all over the world.

The word trauma is now a commonly used word. Looking at it from a preventative and training side, there has been an increase in the number of training professionals, counsellors, practitioners and volunteers who help people to deal with trauma. South Africa has many colleges, tertiary institutions, foundations, organisations, government-driven programmes, churches and pastoral centres affiliated with a tertiary institution that all offer training to the trauma industry. The curricula vary from self-help programmes to short courses, presentations, diplomas and tertiary qualifications. There are some government-driven awareness programmes too, for instance, the 16 Days of Activism on Abuse against Women and Children from 25 November to 10 December every year.

The trauma industry is informed by “different discourses” (Wirtz, 2003), particularly

- medical discourses – trauma can be described as a psychiatric or medical condition, with physiological symptoms, as manifested in post-traumatic stress disorder;
- psychodynamic discourses – trauma can be seen as an intra-psychic process that necessitates psychoanalysis; and
- bio-psychosocial discourses – within the field of trauma, the socio-political context gains importance; in this context, post-traumatic growth is seen as a potentially transformative spiritual process, and issues around values, faith and hope related to trauma are acknowledged.

Below, I discuss the post-traumatic stress disorder, which is a term associated with medical and physiological discourses on trauma. I also look at post-traumatic growth as one of the bio-psychosocial discourses informed by the social and behavioural sciences. I then discuss narrative pastoral counselling discourses, which also fall under the social and behavioural sciences, in more detail.

2.5.1 Post-traumatic stress disorder

The definition of post-traumatic stress disorder was already briefly discussed in Section 1.7.2. It was included in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV)*, which defines trauma. Traumatic events, according to Wong (2003:1), “can be so unexpected and stressful that they overwhelm one’s capacity to cope. In many

cases, these severe stressors rip people's lives apart, destroy the foundation of their belief-meaning systems, and fundamentally change their future".

According to medical and psychological discourses, people can lose all control of themselves and life after serious trauma. This phenomenon, like "shell shock" or "battle fatigue", has been recognised amongst war veterans (Retief, 2004:29). "Concentration camp syndrome", "survivor syndrome", "war-neurosis" and "post-traumatic stress disorder" have all become fashionable words which started to dictate the worldwide debate about human responses to catastrophic events. Most medical and psychological literature has used the term post-traumatic stress disorder to measure traumatisation in the subject sample (Summerfield, 1995).

According to the *DSM IV*, post-traumatic stress disorder consists of a cluster of three sets of symptoms, namely:

- re-experiencing the trauma in the form of thoughts or nightmares;
- avoidance – avoiding places, activities, people reminiscent of the event; and
- hyper arousal, hyper vigilance, irritability and exaggerated startled responses (Retief, 2004:15-17; Summerfield, 1995:3; Wong, 2003:2).

If the symptoms last less than three months, the condition is seen as acute; if they last more than three months, it is seen as chronic, and in such a case one can say that post-traumatic stress disorder has manifested itself (Retief, 2004:17). Post-traumatic stress disorder has a tendency to occur with other disorders, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, substance addiction, and dissociative disorders (Wong 2003:1).

2.5.2 Challenging post-traumatic stress disorder

Retief (2004:22) points out that the "effects of trauma remain with one long after the incident that caused it has passed". Retief assumes trauma to be a negative human reaction.

Summerfield (1995:3) explains in his article "Addressing human response to war and atrocity" that the discourse of post-traumatic stress disorder assumes that human experiences of war and atrocity (trauma) can be summarised as "negative psychological effects" as "understood and categorised in the West, and to be elicited in the mental life of each individual victim". He adds that trauma can therefore be viewed as an "individual centred event bound to the soma and psyche" (Summerfield, 1995:3). The discourse of post-traumatic stress disorder promotes an assumption of

“victimhood”, and the notion that “victims are mere passive receptacles” of psychopathological experience that can be adjusted as “present” or “absent” (Summerfield, 1995:3). However, physical injury does not necessarily mean psychological damage. Survivors do not want to be psychologised as sick, fragile or vulnerable (Summerfield, 1999; White, 2004).

Summerfield (1999) advises trauma counsellors and practitioners to reflect on their assumptions about trauma and trauma recovery. Is there a general perception that everyone who has experienced trauma has been psychologically disturbed or damaged? Is this not a Western thought? Do all traumatised people need counselling? Summerfield argues from his own experience of working worldwide with people who have experienced trauma that each culture has its own discourses on trauma and recipes for trauma recovery (Summerfield, 1999:86).

Summerfield's ideas resonate with my experiences, as he is arguing and challenging Western assumptions about trauma. According to Summerfield (1996, 1999), medical discourses of trauma exclude the socialised view of mental health. Massive trauma and its aftermath in war zones is not a private experience. The traumatised social setting needs to reveal it, and the processes that are followed determine how the victims become survivors (as the majority do, over time). Victims react to extreme trauma in accordance with what the experience means to them. The victims tend to generate meaning in line with prevailing social, cultural and political discourses.

I also agree with Summerfield when he cautions Western-oriented counsellors about working with non-Westernised traumatised people. We need to know more about people's traditional coping patterns in a time of crisis and should beware of imposing Western discourses and thinking. Western discourses focus on an individual's integrity and identity, whereas people in the Third World may hold a different notion of the self in its relation to others. The maintenance of harmonious relations with family and the community may be far more significant to people in such a context than Western individual thinking, fantasies and aspirations.

Western ideas about childhood sexual abuse imply that it is a kind of a life sentence, or leads to emotional scarring and the need for treatment. These are Western socially constructed beliefs and are influential in the shaping of what people who have experienced such abuse feel has been done to them, whether they seek help, and their expectations of recovery. Counsellors are given the power to influence the recovery process, and words such as victim are often used to describe people who have had such experiences, their legacy and history.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a construct that contrasts with the construct of post-traumatic stress disorder. The post-traumatic growth approach is discussed in the next section. The language used in this discourse is positive, uplifting, empowering and spiritual. This construct is one of only a few approaches that include spirituality.

2.5.3 Post-traumatic growth

Tull (2009:1) defines post-traumatic growth as follows:

Post traumatic growth...refers to the positive changes individuals may experience following a traumatic event...some people report positive changes in their goals, priorities, relationships with other, and spirituality as a result of re-evaluating or modifying their assumptions about the world and their life.

According to Wong (2003:1), it is interesting that “a percentage of people show positive changes as a result of trauma. Some of the individuals initially may show stress-related symptoms, but eventually recover and demonstrate personal growth”. Wong (2003:2) cites the following pathways for post-traumatic growth, citing the pioneering work done in this regard by Tedeschi and Calhounin (1995):

- Acceptance. No more self-pity, denial or avoidance. Confront trauma and accept that suffering is necessary to gain valuable knowledge and growth.
- Affirmation. Be open to new possibilities. Choose to take a positive stance through affirmation. Believe there is something worth living for.
- Determination. Perseverance and determination will be required to make progress.
- Confidence. With every small victory, your confidence grows.
- Religious faith. Realisation comes that God is with you, crying with you and sharing your pain. Your religion does not shield you from suffering, but God gives grace and endurance so that you can learn. Realisation that you are not alone; your life can now be built on rock-solid faith.
- Relationships. You look at your relationships with different eyes. The lenses that you are wearing now see suffering, and how to help.
- Optimism. You have hope. You have a positive outlook on life.

The discourse of post-traumatic growth resonates well with a narrative pastoral approach to trauma counselling, as it focuses on the positive effects and choices a client makes in the aftermath of trauma experiences. The model incorporates

spirituality as one of the pathways to growth. All the pathways above resonate with what we incorporated in our questions in looking for new, preferred performances as a way of healing.

Retief (2004:28) explains that “[s]ome of the serious consequences of traumatic experiences are that it shakes your entire view of life and your conception of God, and can greatly change your self-concept”. She adds: “It feels as though nothing is the same as you formerly believed. You have been shaken to the very core of your being and you find yourself confronted with deep questions about your own convictions and assumptions” (Retief, 2004:29). As a result of trauma and in its aftermath, people ask many questions. Some of these questions may be about God and the traumatised person’s relationship with God.

Before moving on to narrative pastoral trauma counselling, our preferred way of doing this research performance, the theological framework for doing counselling and practical theology and pastoral care is discussed.

2.5.4 Theological framework

The preferred approach to practical theology, which connects with a participatory approach to pastoral care as a doing approach, was introduced in Chapter 1. A participatory ethical approach to pastoral care involves interacting and participating authentically *with* people and not *for* them. I suspected at the outset of my research journey that the group was likely to consist mainly of women (and this is what transpired), so I included a feminist theology of praxis in my research framework.

2.5.4.1 Practical theology

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:10) indicate that practical theology studies “people’s religious actions”. In addition, it studies “society in terms of religious, spiritual and value commitments”. Contextual theology is a “critical, liberation, transformative, empirically orientated theology and works in action” (Pieterse, 1998:176). Theology must be practical as well as contextual (Martin, 2003:45). A contextual approach is rooted in the living experiences of human beings and considers society’s political, economic, developmental, ecological and medical problems its main focus. Heitink (1999:174) refers to “a political-critical current theology”. This theology defines its position from a political-critical perspective, which engages with “those whom the gospel addresses emphatically: the poor and the persecuted” (Heitink, 1999:175).

Practical theology is a prophetic theology and calls for action. It prompts the church to become involved in society, and to strive for justice and peace; it has a message of hope; it is pastoral and practical (Pieterse, 1998:179). The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 13:11 “to understand the present time we live in”.

My initial intention for this study was not to focus on political issues, but as, somebody once said, you don’t choose the subject, but the subject chooses you. Part of being political is that this research performance was informed by feminist theology, a theology that Ackermann (1991:96) talks about as seeking “justice, peace, healing and wholeness for all in partnership”. A feminist theology of praxis is a “critical, committed, constructive, collaborative, and accountable reflection on the theories and praxis of struggle and hope for the mending of creation based on the stories and experiences of women/marginalised and oppressed people” (Ackermann, 1996:34). I followed Ackermann’s advice in considering the value and place of historically and contextually rooted stories in a feminist theology of praxis an acceptable point of departure for doing theology, which is concerned with human suffering and emancipation. Rossouw (1993:903) calls on us to ensure that the Church is not “going with the flow but should be true to its calling and move from being right to doing right”.

2.5.4.2 Pastoral care

Pattison (1988:195) defines pastoral care as “any form of personal ministry to individuals and to family and community relationships by representative religious persons (ordained or lay) and by their communities of faith, who understand and guide the caring efforts out of a theological perspective rooted in the tradition of faith”. Pastoral care strives for a nurturing of the community of faith. According to De Jong van Arkel (2000:107), pastoral counselling requires “a form of contextual caring and helping which integrates theology/religion/faith with insights from behavioural science”. Pastoral care uses other disciplines’ insights, but is not problem solving-oriented.

Pastoral care calls for a commitment to do ethical care. Ethical care challenges us not to care “for” people, but “with” them (Kotzé & Kotzé, 2001:7) An ethically accountable way of doing pastoral care is a participatory process in which the counsellor collaborates with the client in “challenging oppressive discourse” and “negotiating new ways of living” (Kotzé, 2001:8).

In this research, we endeavoured to create safe space for the co-researchers to feel comfortable enough to open up and bring spirituality into the conversation. This is

necessary because, as Carlson and Ericson (2000:70) point out, “God is often one of the most significant people in a religious/spiritual person’s life, this relationship has a very powerful constitutive effect”. Pastoral care consists of listening to people tell/perform their own stories; it is about helping people to understand their story in a new perspective and helping them to position it within the much larger story of God’s dealing with humankind (Griffith, 1995:44). We can attend to the conversation in such a way as to try to “understand what is going on in a given human situation with the greatest breadth and richness of perception possible and the accompanying ability to relate these perceptions to a coherent and comprehensive theological framework” (Gerkin, 1979:12).

What does it mean to truly care and suffer with others? Nouwen (cited in Uomoto, 1995:344) describes care as suffering with others:

Real care is not ambiguous. Real care excludes indifference and is the opposite of apathy. The basic meaning of care is to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with. I am very much struck by this background of the word “care” because we tend to look at caring as an attitude of the strong toward the weak, of the powerful towards the powerless.... Still, when we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not-healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares.

Pastoral care challenges pastoral counsellors and the Church to respond to those who suffer. In addition to this there should be the overall goal of focusing on spirituality to help a trauma survivor to regain hope. Weingarten (2000:402) regards hope as “something that we do to others.” She continues:

Hope is something 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, there will be a sense of wonder, which has been called the abyss where radical amazement occurs. There is an abyss. Often we can look across or we can look in. We can find ourselves in it or know others who are. When we enter the abyss when we see it, then radical amazement is ours. Together with hope.

2.5.4.3 Narrative pastoral trauma counselling

We are on stage – all co-researchers. The framework of the script now consists of postmodernism, practical theology and pastoral care. Narrative pastoral counselling is

the last discourse still to be included. These epistemologies are all woven into the final re-performance.

Pastoral care informs narrative pastoral counselling. A helpful map is to read the Bible with people. Therefore the focus is on contextual practical theology. Theology discourses are all social constructions and the meaning ascribed to these theology discourses will depend on culturally and socially constructed discourses.

We are dancing with language, while our dancing partners (the co-researchers) help us to make meaning of our own trauma performances and each other's. The outsider witness approach nudges the outcome of this re-performance in a direction that might bring us to paths of letting go which might bring healing.

2.5.5 A narrative approach

The chosen approach guiding this research performance is the narrative metaphor. It is referred to as an “approach” rather than as a “model” and refers to a “growing body of practices and ideas” (Freedman & Combs, 2002:12; see also Bird, 2000:ix). It is not suggested that this approach is the only appropriate approach for dealing with survivors of trauma in South Africa. Care should be taken not to think that a “narrative model” actually exists, as such thinking can overshadow the existence of differences, where practitioners attempt to engage reflexively with ideas and practices (Bird, 2000:ix). The theoretical ideas and practices of narrative counselling are “discovered and rediscovered, supported and challenged, confirmed and changed within this environment” (Bird, 2000:ix). The approach encourages certain ways of thinking about individuals rather than adherence to a series of well-defined concepts. Narrative counselling is based on a postmodern, social construction world view, as introduced previously (Freedman & Combs, 1996:16).

According to Bird (2000), the narrative metaphor was based on the work of Michael White and David Epston, who were inspired by earlier work by Gregory Bateson and his views on the subjective nature of reality and the nature of learning (see also Monk 1997; White, 1988). Bateson (cited in Monk, 1996:7) suggests that “in order to be able to detect and acquire new information, human beings might engage in a process of comparison, in which they distinguish between one set of events in time and another”. This leads to the development of the story analogy/metaphor – the notion that meaning is constituted through the stories concerning our lives that we tell and hear (Freedman & Combs, 1996:15; Monk, 1996:7). Counsellors who started to use the narrative

metaphor experienced quite a “large shift in their world view” – instead of trying to “solve problems, they became interested in collaborating with people to change their lives through enriching the narratives they and others tell concerning their lives” (Freedman & Combs, 2002:12). White and Epston adapted Edward Bruner’s ideas of how people develop their stories as a way of understanding and making sense of their experiences. The story’s language largely determines which experiences are selected for expressions and performances in the world. Some stories have more saying power than others (White & Epston, 1990:10).

In the next section I look at narrative counselling and how it focuses on people’s stories.

2.5.5.1 What is narrative counselling?

.....stories matter. Sodo stories about stories.

(Clifford Geertz, cited in Freedman & Combs, 1996:19)

The term “narrative” refers to the emphasis placed upon the stories of people’s lives (Appelt, 2006:34). As the story metaphor developed in counselling, it has proved to be a potent resource for working with a wide range of clients. Bruner (1991:4) comments that “we organise our experiences and our memory of human happenings mainly in narrative form”.

Individuals who grapple with the effects of trauma may decide to consult a counsellor because they want to find solutions to their problems. A counsellor who uses a narrative metaphor as a counselling guide will invite clients to begin a journey of co-exploration in search of talents and abilities that are hidden or veiled by a life problem.

2.5.5.2 A narrative approach to pastoral counselling

Freedman and Combs (1996:42) explain the importance of narrative as follows: “People are born into stories; their social and historical contexts constantly invite them to tell and remember the stories of certain events and to leave others un-storied.” People’s lives are “multi-storied”, as many stories occur at the same time (Morgan, 2000:5). Different stories can be told about the same event as experienced by a few people. Uncertainty and contradiction are present in every story. Experiences as they occur are interpreted according to the dominant story at the time (Morgan 2000:6). A counsellor who uses a narrative approach tries to listen to the untold stories in a client’s narrative, as they provide “a rich and fertile source for the generation, or re-generation,

of alternative stories” (White & Epston, 1990:15). Dominant stories affect people in the present moment, and influence how they think of themselves in the future. However, dominant stories do not exist on their own, due to the multi-stories in our lives (Morgan, 2000:6). Alternative stories of resistance, success, achievements and hope always exist, but are frequently overshadowed by personal, professional, family, cultural and contextual discourses which are constitutive of people’s lives (Morgan, 2000:8-9).

Narrative counsellors understand that lives are lived through stories. Counselling with survivors of trauma can be described as attempts at “re-authoring” (White, 2004:61) or “re-storying” (White, 2004:53) practices. People give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experiences and, thus, in interacting with others in the performance of these stories, they can become active in shaping their lives and relationships (White & Epston, 1990:13).

White (1995:82) argues that survivors of trauma usually hold negative stories about themselves. They may display self-destructive behaviour as an expression of the abuse that they have been subjected to. Examples of self-destructive behaviour are self-mutilation, addictions and multiple suicide attempts. The therapeutic challenge would be to participate *with* people who have been exposed to extreme traumatic stress. White (1995:84) describes his method as a “process of reinterpretation”:

It is a process where the therapist and the client work collaboratively together to facilitate a different expression of the experience of abuse. This expression takes the form of outrage, of passion for justice, of acts to address injustice, of testimony or searching out contexts in which others might be available to bear witness to these testimonies. (White, 1995:84)

The focus of a pastoral counsellor is to provide a context in counselling in which people can speak about what may not have been spoken about previously (White, 2004:48). Narrative trauma counsellors are challenged to guide and assist survivors of trauma to make meaning of their experiences and search for ways to heal and re-write or re-perform their own preferred life stories with hope.

Before I started the process, I thought it would be interesting to determine what dominant discourses exist in the co-researchers’ lives that restrain them from living and performing a preferred life. As a narrative pastoral counsellor, I wanted to listen to the not yet said performances and knew I would be challenged to seek out alternative performances that they would prefer in their lives. I also wanted to try to incorporate the client as the expert and to take a not knowing position in order to enable the co-researchers to develop their local knowledge.

In the next section I discuss outsider witnessing practices and ideas as a key concept used in this research performance. White (2004:56) claims that in his “experience there is no therapeutic process more powerful”.

2.5.5.3 Outsider witnessing: claiming your preferred identity

This is where the co-researchers and I are on stage. As we act and perform in collaboration, each co-researcher takes a turn in the leading role. She is the expert, as she is the author of her trauma performance, which consists of multiple performances. My role as researcher and co-researcher consists of asking questions from a not knowing position and searching for the co-researcher’s local knowledge about her trauma performance(s) and about how to respond to trauma as a path to healing. These are the primary practices that were used. The other co-researchers become the audience, watching and observing this performance. They do not applaud afterwards, but join their co-researcher centre stage and reflect on the performance they have just witnessed. The outsider witness process is fluid and may take an unpredictable turn – the hope is that it will perhaps lead to different directions and new preferred performances.

Some background must be given on why practices and ideas of outsider witnessing can be used when working with people who have experienced trauma. When people experience recurrent trauma, they experience a “significant shrinking of their *territory of identity* ...it is very difficult for these people to know how to go forward with any personal project or with any plans for living. ...all the things in life that they usually give value to, are diminished or reduced” (White, 2004:47; White’s emphasis). He adds that the primary consideration for a trauma counsellor working with people who have been subjected to multiple and recurrent trauma would be how to restore that valued “*sense of who they are*” (White, 2004:47; White’s emphasis). According to White (2004:47), the effects of multiple trauma on a person’s identity are

- experiencing feelings of emptiness, desolation and despair;
- being overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness, paralysis and the belief that the person can do nothing about it; and
- losing touch with “who they are” or “a sense of myself” or “sense of identity”.

According to White (2004:48), narrative counselling provides a context where trauma survivors can speak about what may not been previously spoken about. They can speak about the nature of the trauma, the identity and strategies of power they have

been subjected to. The outsider witness group as well as the counsellor listen to what the person values in life. They listen for a trace or hint of responses to trauma. No one is a passive recipient of trauma. People always take steps to prevent trauma or to modify it – they usually take steps to preserve what is precious to them. In the context of a trauma story, the steps to prevent trauma or to preserve what they value in life are belittled, demeaned or disqualified. This is considered insignificant and is overlooked. This is the basis from where the co-researcher can be helped to develop a “preferred sense of myself” and to identify how the person responded to the trauma experienced (White, 2004:48).

Using outsider witness practices and ideas may challenge the isolation and invisibility that the person experiences and identity claims that imply that these people are not valuable and have no purpose any more. It is important that a person’s standing up against trauma and signs of these responses become richly known, honoured, and highly acknowledged by counsellors and practitioners working with these people.

White (1999:57) criticises the structuralist approach of contrasting surface or depth – structuralism conveys a sense that the essence of experiences can be discovered by plunging into the depths of people’s lives. It is problematic that the “building blocks of identity” are perceived as the “centre of personhood or self” (White, 1999:57) – self and identity are linked. White argues that a structuralist perspective of counselling is “understood to be expressions that are surface manifestations of deeper truths” (White, 1999:57). In such structuralist approaches, the self is the centre of identity and needs “expert” interpretation through professional techniques and will be “fixed” (White, 1999:58). By contrast, a poststructuralist understanding of identity is something that is negotiated within social institutions and within communities, and is shaped by historical and cultural forces (White, 1999:58). A person’s identity is reflected by her or his self-narratives.

Freedman and Combs (1996:34) comment in this regard: “There is no such thing as an ‘essential’ self. ‘Selves’ are socially constructed through language and maintained in narrative”. People construct a meaningful sequence from their experiences or events in their lives according to certain themes and plots (Morgan, 2000:6). “In storying these experiences they arrive at identity descriptions that are files in identity categories of modern culture motive, need, attributes, traits, properties” (White, 1999:58). “Life is multi-storied, not single storied” (White, 1995:27). Therefore self-narrative is not referred to in the singular, but in the plural.

As mentioned before, structuralist conceptions of life are informed by surface/depth,

whereas poststructuralist thought prefers the metaphor of “thin and thick” (Morgan, 2000:12-13; White, 1999:58). A narrative counsellor listens to the dominant performances of a client’s life (which constitute a thin description). In a narrative approach, we would like to break free from these descriptions and move towards a thick or rich description of people’s lives, relationships and identities (White, 1999:59).

Outsider witness work occurs within what White (1995) refers to as “definitional ceremonies” (see also Andersen, 1987; Carey & Russell, 2003). Outsider witnesses are an invited group of people who are recruited to be members of an audience to observe the conversation between the counsellor and the client (Carey & Russell, 2003:4; Morgan, 2000:121; White, 1999). This significant feature of narrative practice was used in this research performance.

White (1999:64) gives a brief history of Myerhoff’s work and explains why he started to employ this concept in his work. Myerhoff worked in a Jewish community in Venice, Los Angeles. Members of this elderly Jewish community had migrated from Eastern Europe to North America, ending up in Los Angeles. The accommodation these people had was relatively inexpensive, as many of these elderly people had outlived their children. Many of them had also lost their extended families in the Holocaust. For them, isolation and invisibility were primary threats. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that they were becoming invisible to the community, to each other and also to themselves, to the extent that they almost ceased to have any sense of their own existence. In response to this threat, Myerhoff encouraged members of the community to engage in activities that contributed to the production and reproduction of their own identities. These activities were done during their daily activities and were not done on an individual basis, but in a shared way. The people of the community expressed a consciousness of their participation in the production of their own and each other’s identities. They were also conscious of the life-shaping effect of their own contributions to the production of their own lives.

Following Myerhoff’s observations, Michael White brought the term “definitional ceremonies” into his work and, as an outflow of this, began to focus on outsider witnessing in authenticating people’s identity claims (White, 1999:63). According to White (2004:53), definitional ceremonies (called outsider witnessing in the remainder of this study) is a structured level of telling and retelling which reproduces a specific tradition of acknowledgement.

There are three different potential resources that can be used for the outsider witnessing process:

- friends, family or somebody from the community;
- old clients who previously sought consultation for similar difficulties and agreed to help out therapeutically with others whenever asked to; and
- people known as professionals (White, 1999:67; Morgan, 2000:121), known as a “reflecting team”.

In this research performance, the sharing of the trauma performances consisted in a construction of our own and the development of each co-researcher’s sense of identity. This was done in the form of consciousness of participation.

2.5.5.4 The performance and re-performance and re-re-performance of trauma stories

Survivors of trauma sometimes have negative identity claims about themselves that have been forced on them through abuse or trauma. Due to the constitutive force and power of these identity claims and the discourses that go with them, they have become the truth or reality in the survivors’ lives.

An outsider witness group works through a process of witnessing, storying and re-storying stories (Carey & Russell, 2003:6; White, 1999:61) The structure of the first session at which each co-researcher was invited to perform her trauma stories was as follows:

- **The telling (performance):** The co-researcher (Person 1) tells her story. The performance of the story becomes the first performance, while the audience (three other co-researchers) sit back and witness the conversation as an audience. The conversation is between Person 1 and me.
- **The re-telling (re-performance) of the telling:** In the second part of this session, roles are exchanged with the audience. The outsider witness group talk to each other and reflect on what it meant to hear the initial conversation in the first step. This is the re-performance of Person 1’s story.
- **The re-telling (re-re-performance) of the re-telling:** People swap places again and the counsellor asks Person 1 (the co-researcher) about her experiences of listening to the outsider witness group.
- **The re-telling (re-re-re-performance) of the re-telling of the re-telling:**

Everybody comes together to talk about the experience and may take the opportunity to ask the counsellor why certain questions were asked.

To summarise the steps that I refer to from now on:

- Step 1: The performance
- Step 2: The re-performance of the performance
- Step 3: The re-re-performance
- Step 4: The re-re-re performance.

A second session was scheduled a week after the first session, where Person 1 and I have a conversation reflecting on the previous session. I prepare a summary of the previous week's reflections and negotiate the final text before taking it back to the outsider witness group. The two sessions' reflections are summarised, written up and handed out at the third session.

In the third session, all the co-researchers reflect first on their impressions of the first session and we edit the summary together, according to all co-researchers' understandings. In this case, her story is told five times. This process is followed for each of the co-researchers.

White (1995:16) claims that making use of an outsider witness group

- can help participants to break free from the power of particular constraining identity claims or discourses; it can even undo the effects of these experiences;
- challenges expert knowledge;
- privileges alternative knowledge and systems; and
- provides a context to reproduce many of the negative aspects of structures and ideologies of the dominant culture.

The outsider witness group kept the following four primary categories of inquiry/questions in mind while listening to the first performance of the co-researchers' trauma performance/story as they reflected on the process in terms of these questions (White 2004:50).

- Particularities of expression: Identify the expression that caught your attention or captured your imagination, or provided you with a sense of what the person values.
- Images of identity: Describe the image of people's lives or of their identities. What

kind of identity conclusions are supported by these images? What did these expressions evoke? What did these expressions suggest about these people's purposes, values, beliefs, hopes, dreams and commitments?

- Embodying their interest: What is it about your own life/work that accounts for why these expressions caught your attention or struck a chord in you? Do you have a sense of which aspects of your own experiences of life resonated with these expressions and with the images evoked by these expressions? How did this performance touch you personally?
- Acknowledge catharsis: White (2004:55) gives some helpful questions to express the feeling of what "being moved" might be:
 - Have you been moved on account of being present to witness these expressions of life?
 - Has this experience taken you somewhere else – somewhere where you have never been before, if you hadn't been present at this conversation as part of the audience?
 - In what way have you become other than who you were on account of witnessing these expressions, and on account of responding to these stories in the way you have?

All these performances of our trauma stories provided a context to reproduce the negative effects and cultural discourses associated with trauma. My hope was that outsider witnessing would assist the co-researchers to such an extent that it could shape their lives to invite them to claim their preferred identity or "sense of self" in a consciousness of participation. I wonder if the process would be able to undo the effects of trauma. Meaning would hopefully be created with their preferred views. This meaning is precisely the personal knowledge that constitutes the research process as such.

Weingarten (2003) uses the term "compassionate witnessing", which resonates very well with outsider witness practices and ideas.

2.5.5.5 Compassionate witnessing

We are always witnesses, as we speak and hear, whether we choose to or not. Weingarten (2003:192) describes three key elements for compassionate witnessing:

- selecting the focus of witnessing and acknowledging the person's pain;

- listening carefully and responding thoughtfully so that you can make a difference; and
- creating a transition of compassionate witnessing of others and ourselves.

These elements resonate with White's (1999, 2004) outsider witness practices and ideas, as described earlier. In this research performance, we focused more on the outsider witness practices and ideas.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explained the epistemological framework for this research performance. In doing so, I included literature relevant to this study. The framework discussed in this chapter consists of postmodernism, theology and social constructionism. It serves as a philosophy that underpins this research performance. Constructions of trauma and spirituality were considered in this chapter. A narrative approach and one of the key concepts in narrative practices, namely outsider witnessing, were discussed as a platform for the next step of this research performance.

Chapter 3 reflects on the research performance in action and how, through our participation, we as co-researchers were all changed through our trauma performances and re-re-re-performances.

CHAPTER 3:

IN THE WORKSHOP:

PLANNING THE RESEARCH PERFORMANCE

...in going from script to performance in the theatre there are at least two intermediary stages: the workshop, a time of breaking down, play, and experimentation; and the rehearsal, a time of building up and polishing preparatory to the actual performance.

(Schechner, cited in Bruner, 1986:10)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research performance focuses on the personal life experiences and performances of four co-researchers, who were all traumatised. A decentred narrative participatory action research approach was employed as the main qualitative method. This chapter illustrates the stages of the research performance, as well as the interweaving of the co-researchers' stories with some postmodern/social construction philosophy, theology, feminism, feminist theology and selected narrative practices and ideas that informed the research methodology.

3.2 STAGE 1: INVITING THE CO-RESEARCHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PERFORMANCE

I invited six women who had all consulted me previously due to their trauma experiences to join me in a research group. Gender and cultural differences did not play any role in the selection of the participants, but because I worked on a volunteer basis at a pastoral centre in the mornings, most of the clients I saw were women. Five white women and one black woman attended the information session and four white women eventually indicated they would be interested. All the co-researchers (including myself) come from faith-based middle class backgrounds.

The research performance was informed by a feminist theology of praxis and by the principles of decentred participatory action research. Therefore we used constructive, collaborative and accountable reflection on our struggles and hope for mending in the (re)creation of the trauma performances and experiences of women who were marginalised and oppressed, as recommended by Ackermann (1996:34). We valued

each co-researcher's historically – and contextually – rooted trauma performances as an acceptable point of departure. This kind of “doing theology” is concerned with human suffering and emancipation (Ackermann, 1996:34).

These women's trauma experiences were all very different, but one common element I found among many clients that I saw was that they all described their experiences as traumatic. Kemmis (cited in Maguire, 2001:59) explains that feminism and action research come together when “you are invited to join in, redirect and extend the conversation...action research is a process that opens communicative space, which brings people together around shared topical concerns, problems and issues...in a way that will permit people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do”. Action research means to turn to action: “This requires us to examine and change our behaviours, relationships, and often unseen organisational structures and relations which shape the ways we live and work, love and play” (Maguire, 2001:59).

The research focused on the experiences and constructions of trauma, and not so much on the different kinds of abuse that took place, and it focused on how to find alternative ways to move towards healing in a pastoral care context.

Every co-researcher introduced herself in the first session, with a performance of what we can do well. This helped us to create a useful map that indicated some of the knowledges, skills, values and competencies of the co-researchers.

3.2.1 The first session: setting the scene

The following were handed out to the co-researchers at the first session:

- **Annexure A: Information Sheet**

The aims of the research performance and what would be required of the co-researchers were discussed. They noted that the research performance consisted of voluntary participation, and that they would be free to withdraw from the research process at any time. They consented to the research performances' being audio-taped. The confidentiality of each co-researcher's information was discussed and it was agreed that names and places would be altered to ensure anonymity. Everyone noted that the results of the research performance might be published or performed. The terms and rules of the research were negotiated.

- **Annexure B: The consent form**

The consent form is one of the requirements of ethical research. In this regard, the ethical implications of the study were discussed.

- **Annexure C: Outsider witness group questions**

An information sheet of the outsider witness group's questions was handed out (Annexure C) and it was explained to them how this could assist them in asking questions in the reflection stage of each session. These guidelines were developed by Michael White (2004:50). The co-researchers all agreed that this might be helpful and that they would keep the questions in mind while listening to and observing each co-researcher's trauma performance, and then respond along those lines.

In the information session, the effects of potential re-traumatisation were discussed, and everyone committed herself to protect and cause no harm to her co-researchers. This is an important ethical aspect of this research. Re-traumatisation might reinforce the dominant meanings of trauma and restart the cycle (or spiral) of destructive expressions of the experience, which may lead to renewed trauma (White, 1995:85). We were alert to this risk.

3.2.2 Subsequent sessions: discussing the staging

In the individual follow-up session with each co-researcher after the performance of her trauma experiences, I consulted with her about what she perceived to be the effects of the process that we followed. She was asked how she interpreted her trauma performance of the previous week and whether it had an effect on her in the shaping of her life. Extra counselling was offered to each co-researcher if she felt she needed it, but none of the co-researchers indicated that it was necessary.

The ownership and interpretation of the expressions of the trauma performance were also discussed. In the individual follow-up sessions, I submitted a summary of the previous week's session. The summary included the trauma performance (the co-researcher's story/performance) and the outsider witness group's reflections on the performance (re-performance). I attempted to use the co-researchers' own quotes and words. In the individual follow-up session (re-re performance), each co-researcher in turn became a master editor as she edited the summary and reflections of the outsider witness group to match her own understanding.

In the next group session, all the co-researchers received a copy of the edited reflection and then we edited the text so that the ownership could be claimed by the group, and the text did not reflect only my or an individual co-researcher's interpretations. This demonstrates some reflexivity on my part.

I indicated to the other co-researchers that my role as principal researcher shifted to that of merely another co-researcher. I wanted to adopt a decentred research methodology to reveal my reflexivity. A decentred approach is based on the principles of ethical collaboration and equity, and seeks to document the experience, awareness, local skills and knowledges of all the research participants (co-researchers) (Tootell, 2004:54). Tootell (2004:58) suggests that by taking a reflexively dialogical approach, we can share power between researchers in order to construct meaning. In this way, “[s]ubjects become participants (co-researchers) and the number of interpretations or theoretical possibilities generated by the research is expanded rather than frozen”. Research thus becomes “co-research” (Epston, 2004:31), or a “co-search”, the term that Dixon (1999:45) prefers. A decentred researcher attempting to do reflexive co-research is inclusive of the self in the final write-up of the research performance (Tootell, 2004:57).

Feminist scholars often disclose their biases, feelings, choices and multiple identities, clearly locating themselves *within* the research process rather than outside it (Maguire, 2001:65). In trying to be a responsible pastoral co-researcher, I attempted to make myself visible in the writing-up of this research performance, as opposed to other traditional research that aims to render subjectivity, but where the researcher is invisible. The influence of feminist thinking on action research resulted in the “restructuring of power dynamics” in the research process in such a way that the power was “shared or flattened” (Maguire, 2001:65).

Self-reflexivity from me as the co-researcher who has the responsibility for writing up this final re-performance meant challenging my own assumptions, power and knowledge discourses and identities by asking questions such as the following:

Who benefits from this knowledge? Whose knowledge is this? On whose behalf am I talking now? Who benefits by my speaking? How will they benefit? How will I benefit? The effect that knowledge has becomes an ethical issue, not the how and the knowledge, but how I make knowledge, is an ethical issue of epistemology (Kotzé, 2002:12).

3.3 STAGE 2: THE RESEARCH PERFORMANCE

Bruner (1986:10) describes the second stage in a research performance as follows: “In the rehearsal like stage we transform our field notes and impressions into drafts... and papers.”

In the second group session, we discussed the summary I had made of Session 1 and edited it according to everyone’s understanding. The research process was discussed in detail. Some co-researchers offered to supply me with their handwritten notes, as they thought it could assist me in recording a more correct interpretation of their trauma performance and experiences and finding new alternative ways of healing. Each session was audio-taped and was available to my supervisor and to all the co-researchers.

In adopting the decentred research approach, we discussed how we all see my role as co-researcher. It was my job

- to set up the group meetings and to facilitate the performance of the trauma stories and the line of inquiry afterwards;
- to summarise the sessions and reflections, using my field notes and the audio-tapes;
- to represent these reflections at the next session and to negotiate the findings;
- to document the reflections of the sessions and to re-present these as results for discussion;
- to do the final write-up of the research performance and make it available to all for editing; and
- to take the findings and implications of the research performance further to the benefit of others.

In line with a participatory action research process, the intention was to negotiate the goals and aims of this performance continuously with the co-researchers, as they should be the primary beneficiaries of this performance. Participatory action research calls not only for action, but also for change. According to Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:9), the researcher (co-researcher) also has to be changed by the participatory process. Heshusius and Ballard (cited in Kotzé & Kotzé, 2001:9) propose that we constantly work towards viewing research as a relational activity, “a relation that acts in the world, blurring the boundaries between self and other”. The end result is that nothing is cast in

stone, and my initial intent would serve only as a guideline by which this research performance is conducted. I would be guided by the co-researchers as the experts of trauma with their local knowledge of experience.

A faith-based framework forms part of this research. Practical theology and pastoral care are not about individual self-actualisation in a crisis, but have moved towards helping the person in need, to nurture and support her as she negotiates the complexity of moral and theological challenges in a rapidly changing economic and social context (Kotzé & Kotzé, 2001:8). Thus participatory action research as an approach not only fitted us like a glove, but enabled us to challenge oppressive discourses and negotiate new alternative ways of living in an ethical and accountable way, as Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:8) urge us to do.

3.4 STAGE 3: CREATING A SAFE PLACE FOR STAGING THE TRAUMA

Reinharz (cited in Maguire, 2001:62) observes that “to listen to people is to empower them...before you can expect to hear anything worth hearing; you have to examine the power dynamics of the space and social actors”. It was my intention to create a stage where trauma experiences could be performed and to develop self-knowledge, practise more validating performances about self, and to incorporate new alternative performances into the co-researchers’ lived experiences, as described by Adams-Westcott and Isenbart (1995:35). The invited audience would listen, with the outsider witness questions as a reference for their responses while and after the narratives had been performed. White (1997:6) alerts us to our responsibility while listening to trauma performances, as the narrating of any performance is powerfully shaped by the listeners’ responses. I conveyed this responsibility to the co-researchers before every performance.

3.5 STAGE 4: REPORTING THE TRAUMA PERFORMANCES AND RE-, RE-RE PERFORMANCES

A summary was made of co-researchers’ trauma performances. There were individual follow-up sessions (with each co-researcher who performed her trauma) where the co-researcher had an opportunity to confirm or adapt my interpretation of the trauma performance. Each co-researcher edited the texts and made comments on their validity, leaving the ownership of the research with her. Each co-researcher attended

six group discussions over a period of four months.

In the each successive group session, the summary and the outcomes of the previous group session and individual sessions were discussed. More responses from the audience were invited after discussing the summary. These re-performed stories formed part of the research report. The final re-performance was made available to all the co-researchers for their comment, validation and reflection.

3.5.1 Mia's performance

3.5.1.1 The performance: Mia's story

For many years, Mia was in a marriage which was typified by her husband's adultery and emotional abuse. She brought her two children up almost completely on her own, as Andries, her husband, was absent most of the time. Andries was rarely at home in the evenings during the week, claiming he was doing business. Mia was very fond of her husband and believed everything he told her, because, as she explained, love is blind. She mothered her growing children to the best of her ability and had a good support system in her friends. However, since she was on her own most of the time, she was lonely. She enjoyed having a glass of wine, as it helped her to relax and pass the time.

Over weekends Andries played golf. He stayed for the award ceremonies after the game, coming home drunk late at night. If Mia commented about her being lonely and his preferring to be with his friends rather than being at home, he stopped communicating with her for extended periods.

Andries resigned from his work and started a partnership in a new business, for which they used Mia's pension money. The business eventually ended in a split between Andries and his business partner, which was very traumatic for Andries, but Mia was always there to support him financially and emotionally.

Mia's loneliness increased as her drinking increased. A friend confronted her one day with the shocking news that Andries was cheating on her. Mia did not believe her. All the signs were there, but she did not want to accept this news or believe it. It took years for her to believe that Andries was cheating on her, despite reports from all over of seeing him with other women. Finally, her son confronted her with the facts of his father's adultery, and only then did she start to believe them all.

Andries refused to take responsibility for his adultery and the naming and blaming in their relationship got worse. According to Mia, he abused her emotionally because he believed she was the only one with a problem, and she was the problem. He was in multiple relationships and nothing she did, or said, was ever good enough. Mia eventually started to believe that perhaps she was guilty of what he accused her of. We named her problem with alcohol *Jack*. *Jack* helped Mia to forget about all her problems, he became her crutch and lover, as he made life more bearable.

Andries began to run his business from home and Mia was also working there during the day. *Jack* became more prominent as Mia and Andries were spending most of the day together. Andries refused to have her work in the office any longer.

Mia initially came to see me for counselling after she came out of rehabilitation. She moved out of the house and filed for divorce eight months later. She had to undergo rehabilitation several times before she could overcome *Jack*. Today she is divorced and lives happily in a different town. Her daughter is married, but her son died two years ago, due to health problems. She has a good support system in her friends and family.

3.5.1.2 The re-performance: outsider witness reflections on Mia's story

- *Anne's response*

What stood out for Anne was Mia's endurance and Mia's ability to continue with her marriage, as it almost destroyed her in the end. Andries was dishonest. He verbally and emotionally abused Mia and still she endured. What also stood out for Anne was the secrecy which became an ally to the abuse.

Anne wondered whether Mia's staying was a sign of endurance, faithfulness, or loyalty. Anne was also struck by the fact that Anne herself could not break away from her own relationship with her Bible study leader. Loyalty and faithfulness kept her from breaking the relationship and she thought obedience to God made her stay.

Anne was moved by Mia's endurance. It showed that although Mia was in an abusive situation, Mia had learned from doing the outsider witness questions that Mia could draw positive things out of trauma experiences. Anne was moved by the fact that endurance makes you strong, gives you a will to go on; a skill that might help you again later in life.

- *Gaynor's response*

Gaynor said that what stood out for her was the fact that Mia was not shy to admit that she had a drinking problem. Gaynor further acknowledged that Andries abused Mia emotionally; he ousted Mia from his life, took her money and treated her with contempt.

Gaynor said that we all make mistakes in life and that she would have liked it if Andries would apologise to Mia, if he would show remorse. Although Gaynor was abused as a child, nobody wanted to believe her. Gaynor wanted an apology from her father. Since she herself did not receive an apology, Gaynor feels very strongly that Mia deserves an apology. Therefore Gaynor responded in the following way: "Mia, you did the best you could. I apologise on Andries behalf, because he is an asshole." Gaynor was moved because talking about trauma and abuse made her realise that you can say you are sorry and continue with your life. We should all try and say that we are sorry. We should teach our children from the outset to say that they are sorry if they did something wrong. People who never say they are sorry are people who do not take responsibility for their actions.

Anne said when Mia talked about God the image that came to her was that of the Potter. It is visible that God worked with Mia as in the parable about the potter: God worked tenderly with Mia, not roughly. Anne explained that she is also a potter and if you work too vigorously with the clay, the piece flops. A potter has to work softly with the clay to be in control. Maybe we all think God has forsaken us, but he is in control, even when things in life are not going according to how we would have like them to. God has also worked in Anne's own life.

3.5.1.3 The re-re-performance: Mia and I reflect on the outsider witnesses' reflections and the trauma performance

Mia and I reflected on the trauma performance that she shared with the outsider witness group. I asked Mia if she felt different after performing her trauma story.

Mia said she was stressed before the meeting. It all actually started before her daughter's wedding. In retrospect, this stress was exacerbated by the legal proceedings of her divorce. Stress was something new in her life, something which she had rarely experienced before. The prospect of sharing her story therefore caused her a great deal of stress. She was only concerned about performing her story to get it over with, since she had enough of her own story. She wanted to move on and this was the last time she was willing to share her story. With the aim of keeping her story as

concise as possible, she left out some of the more serious parts. The night before the performance she asked God to give her strength. However, it was acceptable to experience stress. After sharing her story, she left early, since she expected a visit from her sister, which was good. She suffered from insomnia, but it has ceased now and after a weekend away with her sister her stress diminished noticeably. She could now face life with renewed confidence, she could drive her car again and she had a more positive outlook on her life.

I noted that what stood out for me in the previous session was Mia's silence about the verbal and emotional abuse and her husband's cheating. Mia did not tell anybody about the abuse and cheating. I wondered if this silence was a sign of loyalty or faithfulness. It reminded me of an old client of mine loyalty to her husband when it was clear that he was unfaithful. Mia's loyalty moved me. Although the couple was in the process of divorce, Mia stayed loyal to Andries because he was important to her. She did not want anybody to think badly of him. I resolved also to be loyal to the people who are important in my life.

Mia responded to that and said that she was loyal towards Andries and did not wish to make a fool of him in the company of his friends and family. I asked if it could be regarded as a sign of loyalty, which Mia agreed with. When I asked her where else in her life she has shown this kind of loyalty, she said she had shown similar loyalty to her children. Her son was gay and she had suspected this since he was young, but she never made an issue about it. She is loyal to those that she loves. Christianity motivated her to stay with her husband, since marriage is for better or for worse. She did not want a divorce, since she did not want to be alone. Today she can say that she is divorced and happy. She has the support of her friends, who accept her as she is. She does not have to be hypocritical. She is happy to wake up in the morning to where she is now and not to where she used to be.

The old Mia at home with Andries was an alcoholic. She attempted to drink as much as she could in the shortest time, but this has changed. She is more in control of *Jack* now than she used to be. In the past, she also showed physical reactions to alcohol, so much so that she started to tremble. This has also changed. She regards her life as being more sorted out and *Jack* plays an insignificant role in her life now.

What struck a chord for me was the emotion Mia displayed while telling her story. She suppressed what seemed to be a raw sob, and she managed to retain her composure. I wondered what the sob represented. Was it a sob for the loss of her marriage, loss of a friend, loss of a life together? I told her that I saw the image of my own sobbing when

she suppressed that sob. My own sob was a sob of sorrow. It reminded me of a good friendship that came to an end. I experienced sorrow. I can remember I learned a few lessons from the friendship and about myself. Mia's sob moved me, I realise that there is a world without old friends, husbands, etc. I would be open to making new friends.

Mia's reaction was that it was sad that she had allowed the sob to escape. The sobs were due to the fact that her husband used to be her hero, but he was not as strong as she had imagined him to be. It was also about her being in denial for so long, while she knew that it could not go on like it did.

Mia mentioned a remark by Thea about Mia's denial, which reminded Thea of her own trauma story. Denial is a reality of abuse. It is a process one has to go through, consisting of analysing and experiencing anger, sorrow and stress, but it is also part of healing.

3.5.2 Anne's performance

3.5.2.1 The performance: Anne's story

Anne joined a Bible study group while she was still an Art student. She stayed with this group for almost 15 years, until recently. Various people joined and left the group, but there were a few core members who stayed loyal. After Anne's marriage, the women's group turned into a family group.

Anne had suffered from depression since she was a teenager, and her father committed suicide due to his own struggles with depression. She believes that depression is in the family genes, as she suffers from a chemical imbalance.

She is married and has five children. The Bible study group moved from one Church to another as the group experienced growth in their spirituality that each time outgrew the current Church they were in. Eventually they formed their own home Church.

Since the inception of the women's Bible study group, one woman has been accepted as the leader of the group. She has had a huge influence on the personal lives of all the members of the group. Since Anne was a long-time acquaintance, the leader knew everything about Anne's life. Sharing was very important to the group, and if anybody experienced a crisis or some difficulties, the leader was the first one to know. The bad news usually ended with a visit from the leader who would pray for the person or situation. The leader claimed that she was guided by the Lord and stated that the suicide of Anne's father had brought a bad omen on Anne and subsequently on the

members of the group. The reasoning was that if anything bad happened to one of the members, it was because Anne was bad. So Anne was reprimanded for being bad. After the second reprimand, the leader instructed Anne to cleanse herself from the bad spirits and get rid of the bad possessions in her house. Anne was told to destroy all the art works that she had made over the years, as the bad spirit was hanging like a cloud over the group. Anne told the co-researchers that the leader made her feel totally inadequate and unworthy. It was like a dog whose face was driven into the dust, getting a hiding for being bad. After such an experience it took her months to recover. As soon as she started to gain confidence again, the same thing would repeat itself. For many years, Anne was the scapegoat of the group.

Anne woke up one night with burglars in the house, in their bedroom. Violent robberies were the norm in the area at the time, and fearing that she and her husband would be killed if she woke up her husband, she pretended to be asleep until the robbers left the house. After the burglary, she started getting anxiety attacks. She was at her wits end and went to a nearby pastoral counselling centre. There she learned about post-traumatic stress disorder and she felt relieved that she could name her painful state of mind. Anne also told the counsellor about the abusive relationship that she was in. The counsellor advised her that she needed to take a break from the relationship for at least two weeks.

Soon after that Anne was shocked by the realisation that a newly appointed domestic worker was molesting her three-year-old twin boys. One of the ministers of my church advised Anne to come and see me for pastoral counselling. Through questioning, she realised that she was not bad, and that true prophets are known for their fruit. Counselling helped her to realise she needed healing on three levels: physically, mentally and spiritually.

By using externalization, we gave the problem a name and it helped her to order her emotions. The song “Waar daar deernis en liefde is, daar is die Heer” [Where there is love and compassion, the Lord is there] helped her to realise through counselling that she could experience love and not rejection, and that the Lord was with us, guiding and healing. Anne also walked the road of forgiveness, which was not easy, but it set her free. Anne wrote “My road to forgiveness” in her journal, which she shared with the co-researchers. The following is a summary of her road to forgiveness.

Where I was	Where am I now
- Broken, destroyed, idling	- Peace
- Under quarantine, had to survive	- Strength to go on with my life
- Outcast and rejected in "God's" name into darkness	- Looking forward to living my life
- Suffering from depression	- Many plans for the future
	- My life has been given back to me

3.5.2.2 The re-performance: outsider witness reflections on Anne's story

- *Thea's response*

Thea was drawn to Anne's faith and her relationship with God. This faith and relationship with God was like a thread which was woven through Anne's trauma performance from the beginning until the end. In Thea's own story, that thread was not there; she longed for it. Thea was moved. The questions that came to her mind were whether this was maybe a golden thread. Did this thread keep Anne alive and together, although it felt as if Anne was only breathing? How does one get hold of that thread?

- *My response*

In the re-performance of the re-performance, the image that stood out for me was the word genuine when Anne spoke about her faith: genuine, real, and authentic. My mental image of Anne is that of a genuine Christian and a genuine person, authentic and real. Anne reminds me of my sister, who became a Christian 15 years ago and until today, after enduring many trials and tribulations, is still a genuine Christian.

I was moved by the steps Anne took to stop this abuse. It took some time, but she said no to spiritual abuse. It caused her a lot of trauma, but she was a survivor who came out of this abuse victoriously.

3.5.2.3 The re-re-performance: Anne and I reflect on the outsider witness reflections and the trauma performance

Anne said the fact that I referred to her as a genuine Christian was good to hear. It confirmed her Christianity once more to herself. For a while, Anne could not pray any more, and this started in her praying again; it did her good.

I wondered if the group members might have been negatively influenced with regard to Christianity. I wondered if it sent out a message that said beware of Christians, they all have a hidden agenda and want to abuse you. Anne was surprised at this idea and she did not see it that way. She considers these Christians who abused her to be like the Pharisees in the time of Jesus. They thought they knew the law and obeyed it completely. However, they did not know the law – they merely interpreted the law as they wished and turned it into human religion, which they imposed onto others. In doing this, they shaped people and forced them into boxes. When Jesus came, He pointed out that you may think you know the Word in your mind, but it all actually depends on your heart and what goes on inside it. Jesus told many parables to teach us what it means to be a child of God. Anne feels that we must be alert about the Pharisees in life, but that we must not treat everyone in this way. Everyone is not a Pharisee and there are still sinful Christians who try their best to live according to Jesus' example.

3.5.2.4 The re-re-re-performance

Thea was inspired by Anne's story. She is determined to raise her head, stand up and take control of her life again, just as Anne did.

3.5.3 Thea's performance

3.5.3.1 The performance: Thea's story

Thea came to our pastoral centre for help after her husband told her life is too short to be a bitch. She came to seek help, as she wanted to change to rescue her marriage.

Thea's story unfolded to more than twenty years ago, while she was still at school and then married at a very young age. Three boys were born out of this first marriage. The marriage was characterised by physical abuse and jealousy. After a few years, Thea's father had to rescue her, because her husband threatened to kill her and the children. She got divorced and started a new life for her and the children with the help of her parents.

She met her second husband a few years after that. She fell in love and they soon got married because she felt he had the attributes of a good husband. He seemed financially well off, with a farm and a substantial inheritance from his father. They lived in luxury, had new cars and a house, and he even adopted her three children.

But things suddenly started to change. Her husband and his mother were always in a

conversation that excluded Thea. She suspected that there could be financial difficulties, but she was excluded from any discussion of financial matters. Over time, she realised that they were going bankrupt due to overspending and a smaller income. She fell pregnant and gave birth to a little girl.

To survive financially they had to sell some assets, including the house, and they moved to the farm, into a cottage next to her mother-in-law's old main house. This is where her nightmare started. Thea was never allowed to ask any questions about the financial relationship between her husband and his mother, as it was set out in her father-in-law's will. Her husband now also had to look after his mother, as all the money had been spent. No details or any explanation were ever given. If she dared to ask anything, her husband physically abused Thea. Their financial status worsened and the physical abuse got worse every day. Thea's mother-in-law treated her as an outcast. Thea and the three boys were not allowed to visit in the main farmhouse, although the little girl was welcome.

Thea had nowhere to go. Many times she considered leaving, but her daughter kept her on the farm. Her husband threatened to take custody of her daughter, and she was not able to care for the boys financially.

Thea arrived at the counselling centre one day after being beaten up severely. Immediately after counselling, she went to see a doctor and pictures were taken to open a case against her husband for assault, but she dropped the case. This situation had been going on for eight years, and still Thea could not get herself to go to get an interdict. Instead, she was convinced that she would bring her husband for counselling. If he was not prepared to come, she said she would get an interdict.

Her husband came for three sessions. Some progress was made towards his accepting responsibility for his actions. However, after another fight, he told her that she and her counsellor can go to a not so nice place. That was the end of the counselling with her husband. Since he heard about her visit to the doctor, he stopped with the physical abuse, but the verbal abuse continued.

3.5.3.2 The re-performance: outsider witness reflections on Thea's story

In the re-performance, the outsider witness group's reflection that stood out was Anne's comment that what stood out for her were the seasons of Thea's life. She explained the metaphor of the seasons. Different seasons refer to the emotional, physical and spiritual experiences experienced during a particular season. Anne spoke about an

article she read in *Keur* about a woman who described her life in terms of imagery relating to the seasons and how the woman had prayed that the spiritual winter she found herself in would turn into a spiritual spring. Anne was moved by Thea's trauma performance. Anne said she will remember Thea for her seasons, and to Anne it was evident that Thea would be surprised at how beautiful spring can be.

3.5.3.3 *The re-re-performance: Thea and I reflect on the outsider witness reflections and the trauma performance*

I asked Thea what had changed since Thea's performance of her trauma story and the reaction of the group.

Thea reported that, before she came to share her story, and even afterwards, she was stressed about talking about the situation. Initially, she was worried about what everyone might think about her and her husband, and afterwards she was concerned that she had undermined her husband's reputation in front of the group and that she might have been underhand. She said that, when she returned home after sharing her story, her husband was nice to her, which made her feel even worse. Thea and I then talked about the different sides of people, including her husband. There is not only the abusive side, but also the good and nice side, which all of us have.

Thea was quite alarmed about Anne's reaction, since Anne had cried. Thea did not know whether she had opened up old wounds in Anne's life. I also wondered what Anne's tears meant. Were they perhaps tears of empathy? Anne and Thea discussed whether Anne's reaction could be compared to a description in Kaethe Weingarten's book, *Common shock. Witnessing violence every day. How we are harmed, how we can heal* (2003) – just being a witness of somebody else's trauma performance can also create common shock.

Thea reported that after her performance she had wondered whether the group thought she and her husband were common (vulgar) and whether the language that they used there was too shocking. Thea and I then spoke about how everybody's frame of reference differs. I then referred to the rules of this project, which had been discussed at the beginning of the research performance. Our world is constantly changing and there is no single right way of dealing with trauma. We must acknowledge that each person experiences trauma healing differently.

Thea said that she also learned that the countermeasure against her problems is the action word 'to do'. It meant to take action against your problems and not to wait and

hope that your circumstances will change. Action, according to Thea, means change will take place.

3.5.4 Gaynor's performance

3.5.4.1 The performance: Gaynor's story

Gaynor is one of twin girls and grew up in a small town. Her twin sister Stacey was born with a lung defect, which hampered Stacey's physical and psychological development. Some part of Gaynor's childhood can be described as happy, but most of it was sheer misery. Her father was a patriarch and his word was law, and nobody would dare to go against his will. When the twins reached the end of Grade 1, the school decided not to promote Stacey to the next grade, due to her lack of academic progress. Gaynor's parents decided to keep both girls back in Grade 1. When the girls went to Standard 6, Stacey was enrolled in a school for children with special needs. In Standard 8, Gaynor's sister left school and her father decided Gaynor must also leave school and get married. Gaynor refused and finished her final year of school.

Just before Gaynor started puberty, her father started to abuse her sexually. According to him, Gaynor was his possession and he could do with her as he liked. This resulted in her rebelling, avoiding her home and her father. This brought more conflict and misery. Gaynor told her mother what was going on, but her mother never believed Gaynor.

Her grandfather was a great admirer of his granddaughter, as he saw lots of potential in her. He was her hero. She and her granddad spent many hours together, and he taught her some life lessons.

She could not wait to finish school and get away from her father's verbal abuse and his possession obsession with her. She found work in one of the bigger cities and started her studies at the University of South Africa. She has nearly finished her postgraduate studies and has still bigger dreams for her future. At first, the communication between her parents and herself were kept at a minimum, but with time she has learned to let go and to forgive. There is a relationship, albeit distant, with her family, as she prefers it to be so.

3.5.4.2 The re-performance: outsider witness reflections on Gaynor's story

- *Anne's response*

Anne said what stood out for her was Gaynor's perseverance. Gaynor was not prepared to quit school. After school she started to study and is still persevering. Gaynor's perseverance reminds Anne of working with the pottery wheel, or doing pottery. Sometimes a piece of art does not taking the shape you want it to have, but sometimes you are surprised at the end result. Anne was moved by Gaynor's story. She wanted to give her a hug, and not judge her. Anne realised Anne is not the only one with pain.

- *Thea's response*

Thea said what struck her was the influence Gaynor's grandfather had on Gaynor's life. The image Thea has in her head is that of her own father's influence in her life. Thea's father was her hero – he was firm, but always wanted what was best for Thea. She wondered if Gaynor's grandfather was also a person like that. Thea was moved by the thought of her father. He is not alive any more, but he was her anchor. She would like to have a celebration for those people who made a difference in her life.

3.5.4.3 The re-re-performance: Gaynor and I reflect on the outsider witness reflections and the trauma performance

Gaynor and I talked about how Gaynor experienced performing her trauma experiences and road to healing.

Gaynor's initial reaction to the idea of performing in front of an audience was that it was scary and she feared that she might be regarded as pathetic. In the end it was not as she had imagined; it was actually good, since someone was willing to listen. She sensed that the outsider witness group tried to understand her troubles. Gaynor was also convinced that they did not judge her. She received acceptance from all, as they were willing to give her a hug, not only to make her feel better, but because they wanted to.

In reaction to the outsider witness group, I asked her what stood out for her. She said it was Anne's reaction about Gaynor's perseverance. The trials in her life only made her a better person. They allowed her to make decisions that she does not regret. Other people might have made the choice to become a perpetrator, to lead the life of a hermit, or to engage in prostitution. She made other choices, and it did in fact, not turn out too badly. She always felt as though she was to blame before. Today she realises that it may just be her fate. These trials along the way only made her a better person. It allowed her to make decisions that she does not regret.

Thea's reaction about her own father and Gaynor's grandfather moved Gaynor. She said that she clung to the promise that she made to her grandfather: that she would make something out of herself. It was her incentive in life. Maybe that was also the reason for her perseverance, not to give up, whatever her circumstances are.

We spoke about the road Gaynor walked, and is still walking, with God, her perception about God and the part she still wishes to play in the community. Gaynor said that her grandfather belonged to the Methodist church, while her mother belonged to a Reformed church and her father to a Dutch Reformed congregation. She also said that she had been a youth leader in church for a few years. The perception she had about God was that He is a loving Father who will also punish deliberate wrongdoing. God has many faces. God is a happy medium for her to go through life. Gaynor said that she is convinced that if she did not have God in her life, things would have turned out much worse and she would not have been able to make it through the situation. Gaynor is a person who likes to make a difference in other people's lives, for example, through teaching black children to read, or working with and caring for AIDS orphans. Her family did not go to church as a family very often, but she did know that God exists. She has forgiven her father, as the distance helped her to forgive him.

On Sundays, their family regularly went out in search of rocks, since it was her father's hobby. Upon reflection she recognised those as being good times. Her father taught her to take a car's engine apart. Her father also taught her to visualise an image or to imagine herself in a picture and she still applies this technique in her studies, job and everyday life.

3.5.4.4 The re-re-re-performance of Gaynor's story

I asked Gaynor at the next meeting what sustained her through all her trauma experiences. She reported that it was her personal strengths: intellect, rebelliousness, standing up against sexual and physical abuse. She explained that she wanted a different life from the rest of her family, and clung to the hope that there will always be something more. Her father always said she would get nowhere in life and she wanted to prove him wrong. Her motto was do not linger on your problems, get up and do something about them! In addition, her grandfather's belief in her perseverance was vital to her – others would have given up, but she would not.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I reported on how the research performance developed. A summary was given of the co-researchers' trauma performances, the outsider witness group's reflections and other reflections.

The primary focus in this chapter was on the outsider witness group and how the questions can help or restore that valued sense of who they are, as trauma and the effects of trauma usually erode this sense of identity. The outsider witnesses challenged their co-researchers' sense of isolation and invisibility and identity claims that suggested that these people were not valuable and had no purpose. It is important that such responses to trauma become richly known, are honoured, and are acknowledged as fully as possible by the counsellors and practitioners who work with people who have experienced trauma.

The process that was followed made use of narrative storytelling and writing. The written group reflections, as well as personal reflections, helped us to thicken the new and alternative performances of the co-researchers. Outsider witnessing was thus an effective way to confirm the successes of the co-researchers in overcoming their problems.

The next chapter relates the final performance. In this chapter, all the final findings, information and local knowledges and new alternative performances are integrated. An indication is given of the action or steps to be taken to take this re-performance of trauma even further.

CHAPTER 4:

REPORTING THE RESEARCH:

THE RE-PERFORMANCE OF TRAUMA: *NEW SEASONS*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research performance was to explore the influence that various discourses had on the co-researchers, rather than on doing therapy with the co-researchers. In this chapter, the discourses of silence, blame, isolation and depression are looked at. Examining these discourses assisted the co-researchers to see their trauma experiences from a different angle, as these beliefs had conveyed certain truth claims to them. We challenged these discourses and experienced a bridging process that helped the co-researchers to move into creating new preferred trauma performances.

Making use of the narrative metaphor, we were curious about each co-researcher's local knowledges (Freedman & Combs, 1996:33), and the meanings of their preferred views were explored. Freedman and Combs (1996:33) explain that

...we want to develop an understanding of the influence on particular people of these dominant stories of their culture while cherishing the knowledge that each person's stories are different from anyone else's...invite them to celebrate their differences and to develop and perform narratives that they prefer around the particularities of their lives.

The meanings created by the co-researchers constituted one of the most important outcomes of the research process. The new preferred trauma performances of the co-researchers were then performed. To do so, the following narrative practices and ideas were applied: "re-membering" conversations (Morgan, 2000:77), "taking it back practices" (White, 1997:132), the creation of a "community of concern" (Madigan & Epston 1995:27) and "outsider witnessing" to thicken a new alternative trauma performance and to honour preferred or new identity claims (White, 2004:54). Therapeutic documents were also used in the same manner (Dixon, 1999:60; Epston, 1993:31; White, 1998).

The spotlight moved from the individual trauma performances to a group activity, creating the final re-performance of trauma. The co-researchers started to harvest the

information and knowledges we had gathered, they compiled a helpful map for doing research – an illustrated move away from the imprisoning voices of trauma that kept the co-researchers isolated from the freedom offered by voices of resilience, hope and spirituality (see Table 1 in Section 4.5.3); a pamphlet was compiled with information consisting of the different kinds of abuse, the cycle of abuse and guidelines to reclaim one's life if one has been abused.

The last part of this chapter leads us to the play called *New Seasons*. The play is based on the life experiences of the co-researchers. *New Seasons* illustrates the co-researchers' dance with trauma and the movement toward change, where hope, resilience and freedom became a reality. This play was written to be performed before live audiences consisting of young teenage girls and boys in high schools and members of different congregations in churches in the Northern Cape and Gauteng Provinces.

In the next section, I discuss the discourses that held the co-researchers captive, preventing healing from trauma. We look at the influence that these discourses had on them. In line with narrative pastoral practices, these knowledges are challenged, as this might assist with the construction of new performances of trauma.

4.2 THE INFLUENCE OF DISCOURSES

Narrative pastoral counselling is about listening to the co-researchers, creating a spiritual space for them to perform their trauma, reaching out and responding to their suffering. Narrative pastoral counselling is based on a poststructuralist understanding of identity. In Section 2.5.5.3, I discussed how identity is shaped and constituted through relationships and the beliefs and ideas that people have of themselves and of what others believe of them. Identity is shaped by historical and cultural forces. The effects of trauma can result in "isolation" and "disconnection" from some relationships (Morgan, 2000:77), especially from nurturing ones, and may direct a person who has experienced trauma to believe that she is vulnerable and fragile (White, 2004:47). These dominant trauma discourses can affect people in the present moment, and influence how they think of themselves in the future. When counsellors work with people who have experienced trauma in their lives, counsellors need to restore that valued "sense of self, or who they are" (White, 2004:47).

Alternative performances of trauma and of identity, resistance, success, achievements and hope always exist, but are frequently overshadowed by the trauma discourses that

are constitutive in the co-(re)searchers' lives. People give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experiences. These stories are active in shaping people's lives and relationships (White & Epston, 1996:13). Narrative pastoral counsellors understand that lives are lived through stories, and that trauma counselling can be described as "re-authoring" (White, 2004:61), or "re-storying" (White, 2004:53) practices. "Trauma stories are always doubled stories and not singled storied" (White, 2004:49). When one is doing counselling with people who experienced trauma,

...there's always the story about trauma – people have the opportunity to speak of their experiences of trauma, and they are actively supported in the telling of their stories about trauma in ways that make it possible for them to speak about what hasn't been spoken before. And, there's also the story about the person's responses to trauma which is often very thinly known – this story is often only present as a very thin trace, one that can be highly difficult to identify. It is very important that we do get onto this trace, and that we assist people to thicken this up. (White, 2004:49)

Morgan (2000:74) suggests that one can thicken the alternative story of resistance to trauma or surviving trauma by involving witnesses who will act as an audience through re-membering conversations, taking it back practices and creating a community of concern, as well as the outsider witness groups. The co-researchers and I used all these practices, and as the new performance developed, I refer to where and how we used these practices and ideas.

White (1995:89) explains the process as follows:

Once the knowledges about abuse and practices are established in their specificity, they can be contextualised – linked to the dominant knowledges and practices of power of our culture, the familiar operations of which can be traced through history in families and other institutions of our culture ...this contextualisation of abuse knowledges and practices is very important...it provides further opportunities for the reinterpretation of one's experiences of abuse and for the deconstruction of the negative stories of identity.

He adds that once abuse knowledges and practices are recognised in their specificity, this can help considerably with

- doing the groundwork to a new testimony;
- distinguishing between those actions that are exploitative, abusive or neglectful in nature and those which are supportive, loving or caring; and
- taking action to resist and challenge these knowledges and practices in people's day-to-day lives.

Deconstructing and challenging the truths of different discourses involved a constructive action to re-perform the trauma and abuse experiences of the co-researchers. In challenging these truths and the status quo, contextual theology was included, because it is a political action. Doing so helped to shape new conclusions about the co-researchers and their identities.

According to White (1995:95), people subjected to abuse often report that they never experienced “being in touch with life”, and “cannot see it clearly – that trying to see life is like looking through a haze of fog”. As people start to challenge these discourses, “the fog begins to lift...and over time this clarity is generalised” (White, 1995:95).

Below, I discuss some of the discourses that influenced the co-researchers and what these discourses tried to convince the co-researchers and me to accept as the truth.

4.2.1 Discourse of silence

The co-researchers held a number of local knowledges about silence and abuse. They all struggled to speak about their trauma performances. They kept their feelings and pain inside and did not want anybody to know. They kept the trauma secret from their families and did not seek professional help for many years. According to all the co-researchers, they were initially shocked, and then paralysed.

Which discourses or beliefs or factors informed, strengthened or supported the discourse of silence?

According to Mia, relational factors kept her from speaking – she said: “I did not want to make a fool of him in front of his family and friends. I did not want people to know, I felt ashamed.” Weingarten (2003:51) offers some notes on the complexity of shame:

Shame is often the hardest feeling to bear for many reasons, one of which is that there is no obvious way to express it. If we are sad, we cry; if we are angry, we can yell. But pause a moment. You can mimic shame by looking down and averting your eyes, but how can you discharge it? In trying to discharge shame we tend to look for actions as straightforward as tears and shouting. Yet shame’s release may take something more complex than this; it may take the making of amends if we have injured others or a forgiving of self, if we are unduly harsh with ourselves.

According to White (1995:88), “to assist people to establish an account of the politics of their experience helps to undermine the self-blame and the shame that is often experienced in relation to the abuse itself”. In line with this argument, we examined and deconstructed abuse and its power. Mia could come to terms with the fact that there

was no reason why she needed be ashamed, or had to blame herself.

By contrast, Anne did not want to speak about her trauma, because she asked: “How can you stand up against church authority? The Bible study leader had direct contact with God, as she would say ‘*the Lord said this...*’. To stand up against her was to stand up against God.” Culture refers to the particular ways of thinking and practices within a particular community. This specific religious culture discourse influenced Anne to such an extent that she could not do anything about the abuse; she was paralysed for a long time. According to Weingarten (2003:55), one of the consequences of trauma is silence, and she explains that we can be “trapped in silence as surely as if we were held in a vice...silence creates isolation”. Anne’s silence isolated her for many years and she could not get out of this spiral of abuse.

Thea said that, for her, shame caused a discourse of silence. She came out of a first marriage known for its physical abuse and here she was in such a marriage again. Thea was brought up on the other side of town, in a community that was infamous for physical abuse. Now she was living on the better side of town and everything that she was concerned about was happening to her again. She did not want to be associated with this kind of abuse and kept silent in the hope that it would go away, but it did not. Weingarten (2003) adds, regarding shame, that “shame can occur between individuals, but there is a more insidious, invisible, and continuous source of shaming: systematic structural inequity, structural violence, which occurs between groups and classes of people” (Weingarten, 2003:53). Thea’s ideas were also linked to the different classes in town, which demonstrates such systematic inequity. These ideas exacerbated her feelings of shame.

Another factor that kept her silent was the fear that her husband created. He told her that he would get custody of their daughter and would not permit her any visiting or parental rights. He used his physical abuse in such a way that she was prevented from speaking and saying anything without his permission.

According to White (1995:92), some women who have experienced abuse before end up in a further abusive relationship. Abuse “encourages women to take responsibility for the abuse that is being perpetrated by men. These interpretations encourage women to preserve in relationships in which they are being subject to violence...maintaining the status quo”. He explains that these women experience difficulties in distinguishing between abuse and nurture, neglect from care and exploitation from love, as it is difficult for them to see the early warning signs and to confront the abuse, to take action or to break the connection before it becomes fully

established and encompasses their identities (White, 1995:93).

Gaynor started to realise that the sexual abuse she was submitted to was wrong when she started growing up, in her teenage years. At first, she thought she was to blame for it and kept quiet. Nothing Gaynor did was ever good enough for her parents, and, according to Weingarten (2003:52), “a person who feels shame has made a global assessment that the whole self is unworthy”; shame tells you that “you are bad”, and leads to pain. According to White (1995:93), most people who experience abuse as children experience this abuse within their families, which are “formally designated as loving and caring contexts”. As indicated above, it is confusing and difficult for these people to make distinctions between “love and abuse, nurture, neglect and care, exploitation and love” (White, 1995:93). Silence was a way of coping for Gaynor, and breaking her silence would involve considerable risk. When she took the risk and told her mother about the sexual abuse, her mother did not believe Gaynor and accused her of lying. Gaynor came to the conclusion that her mother now thought even less of her and that Gaynor was not even worth listening to.

Another question we asked to deconstruct abuse and the power it has over people is: What made you come forward to speak about the abuse after such a long silence?

Anne reported that her decision to speak was precipitated by a sequence of events; the burglary, her getting anxiety attacks and the sexual abuse of her twins were the turning point. She knew that something had to be done. She could not face life any more. She reported that she knew she needed help, urgently, for her survival. Anne said that to her, it was the first step of standing up and saying no to abuse.

Mia was at a point in her life where she wanted to sort herself out. She had recently separated from her husband and had come out of rehabilitation due to the relationship with *Jack*. Mia knew there was no hope left for her marriage – things had gone past the point of no return. Too much water had gone under the bridge. Before, she always thought of what her children, friends and family would they say, but now she does not care any longer. She is now thinking of herself and she has to come up with a plan for her future. She reported that it was the right time to come out with the truth.

Thea wanted to hear through a third party if she was to blame for the abuse that was taking place, as her husband told her life is too short to be a bitch. Thea reported she was not ready to give up her marriage and that if she was at fault she wanted to rectify it. She was suffering from depression and was at a point where she realised she needed help if she wanted to survive.

Gaynor was suffering from depression when she came for counselling. Through asking questions and tracing the history of this depression Gaynor started to speak about the sexual abuse that she went through as a young girl. When I asked why she had chosen to speak about the abuse now, after such a long silence, she reported that when she spoke to her mother many years ago, her mother had not believed her, so why would anybody else believe her? As Gaynor was growing up she realised that she was not to blame for the abuse, but still kept it to herself. Gaynor knew what the truth was and her becoming a rebellious teenager was her way of standing up against abuse.

4.2.2 The blame discourse

All the co-researchers blamed themselves for what had happened. Mia thought that she was to blame for the abuse because of her drinking habits. Anne accepted the blame for the sins of the forefathers, resulting in her being bad. Thea took the blame when her husband told her life is too short to be a bitch. Gaynor accepted the blame, although she knew what the truth was and became a rebellious teenager.

These negative truths of identity were challenged. White (1995:97) explains that “one’s sense of identity is very significantly determined by one’s experience of other people’s experiences of who one is” (White, 1995:97). Perpetrators usually have “the last say about who one is, and about how one relates to one’s self” (White, 1995:97). All the co-researchers were told by the perpetrators of the abuse against them who they were and were recruited through the abuse to believe these truths.

Each co-researcher reported that the perpetrators of the abuse used to mock their behaviour; the co-researcher’s concerns were not taken seriously, the abuse was denied and the responsibility for the abusive behaviour was shifted to the co-researcher by claiming she had caused it. This is in line with the interactional explanations that Jenkins (1990:24-30) offers for abuse, where abuse is shown to be seen from the perpetrator’s side, and perpetrators refuse to take responsibility for their own actions.

4.2.3 The discourses of depression and isolation

Depression and sadness were common consequences of trauma amongst the co-researchers. Depression contributed to their constant questioning of their selves. Weingarten (2003:51) identifies a complex range of feelings of “sadness, helplessness and shame” as a common combination people might experience in the face of trauma.

Depression and isolation were independent forces in the co-researchers' lives. They thought they should handle their problems on their own and should not burden others with their problems. Weingarten (2003:54) explains:

One of the common ironies of trauma is that when we most need people to comfort and take care of us, we may be least able to receive this help. Trauma shuts people down. They turn in towards themselves, wanting others to realise that they are hurting and to know precisely how to take care of them. Since this rarely happens, they may withdraw, get angry, become defiant, sulk, or have a number of responses that make it less likely that others' responses will be a good match.

Thea could not leave her husband, because she was economically dependent on him. Her husband did not want her to take a job, but he also refused to give her money, and if he did, it was a pittance. He even used to take her car keys, leaving her permanently isolated on the farm. Because she had no money, it was difficult to invite friends or relatives over. Most of the time, the atmosphere was not conducive to inviting anyone over. After an assault she was ashamed of her appearance. She suspected that her husband monitored her phone calls and also tracked her movements. Suffering from depression then silenced and isolated her even further.

Anne had a history of depression and the years of recurrent trauma made it even worse. The effect of the trauma was that she was constantly questioning herself. She explained: I was suffering from depression and sadness. She used the following words to explain her sadness and depression: I was broken. Brokenness is worse than shame; shame eases up, but brokenness almost had no chance, it just could not ease upI think I am going mad....dear Lord help me! Get me out of here! Anne was confused and could not accept what was said about her being bad. The sadness was an expression of the loss of her sense of being worthy, God said that to her many times in the Bible. Her five children took most of her time during the day, so there was hardly any chance of talking to anybody other than the members of the Bible study group. She could only talk to God, but answers and healing did not come easily or quickly, although she did get comfort through prayer and reading the Bible.

Gaynor knows how to take a car engine apart and put it back together again, which was unusual for a girl of her age and mindset. She was different and never part of the group of girl friends at school. She describes her relationship with the girls as fraught – they were backstabbers. The abuse made her suspicious of people's intentions; she could not trust anybody easily. She only had one or two male friends, because she felt more at ease with them – she said: men do not ask too many questions. The disconnection from people and abuse eventually led her to seek counselling.

Mia was lonely for many years. *Jack* (the name she gave to the drinking problem she experienced) kept her company, so she started to withdraw from family and friends. She was lonely and suffering from depression.

The co-researchers reported that abuse convinces you that you are not part of the group or part of society. You feel lonely, disconnected, and lack communication skills – most of the co-researchers reported that they had no self-confidence. Fear of more emotional and physical pain was their reason for increasingly withdrawing from the abusive relationship and disconnecting from their community, friends and family.

In the next section I look at the physical consequences of trauma as the co-researchers experienced them.

4.3 THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMA

Trauma can sometimes have an effect on the body's responses (Retief, 2004:16), as in Anne's case, where she experienced bodily responses such hyper vigilance, panic attacks, sadness, and sleep disturbances after the burglary. All the co-researchers reported that they struggled with depression or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Weingarten, 2003:44), sadness (Weingarten, 2003:52), sleep disturbances (Retief, 2004:16) and anger (Weingarten, 2003:52; White, 1995:91), and could not cope with many normal day-to-day activities anymore, as everything was just too much to handle. In Mia's case, *Jack* and depression formed an alliance which caused a severe downward spiral.

Therefore the consequences that trauma had on the co-researchers were the following emotional responses: anger, mistrust, fear, sadness, shame and depression. The consequences translated to behavioural reactions such as being paralysed with shock (Weingarten, 2003:20), limiting activities due to a sense of "I could not cope anymore", isolation (Weingarten, 2003:55), disconnection, hyper arousal and hyper vigilance (Retief, 2004:16).

In the next section, I describe the move away from the trauma-saturated performances towards each co-researcher's new preferred performance. Narrative practices were used to thicken these preferred performances.

4.4 LETTING GO

After the trauma performances, the trauma experiences were not static anymore, but started to move slowly in a different, positive direction with the help of the different audiences (outsider witnessing, taking-it-back practices and re-remembering). Letting go of the old trauma performances helped to move the spotlight to a different setting on the stage. The specific time when the co-researchers started with their new performances cannot be pinpointed, but as the sessions progressed, different, new, preferred performances emerged. The last meeting was at an informal breakfast session. This gathering took place a few months after the last working session. It was a meal to celebrate new performances and the co-researchers' combined research performance. During the meal, the co-researchers touched on the developments of their new performance. The following is a summary of their new trauma performances.

4.4.1 Mia: happily divorced

Since Mia was a little girl, she did not give up easily. That determination was evident in her marriage. When the question came up about what kept her going in the wake of the emotional abuse, she reported that it was her friends and her two children who gave her a purpose to go on. She found comfort in these relationships, as she could reciprocate their love and feelings. These positives helped her gradually to come to believe that she is not a bad mother and friend, which was in contrast to what the abuser used to proclaim about her. Today, Mia is happily divorced and has a new lease on life.

4.4.2 Anne: a reborn artist reaching for the stars

Anne's earlier successes of being a leader at school, winning prizes for her artwork and having a very close relationship with God helped her to realise that she can do these things well.

Her husband, children and God were the reason for hanging in there and not giving up. She lived in the hope that the Lord will bring relief. During her trauma performance she found comfort in words such as *The Lord will not forsake you; in the Lord Jesus everything is possible*. She tried to read the Bible and pray, even if the Lord felt very far away. She shared with us that it took many small steps before she gradually started to believe in herself again and started to heal again. Counselling and being part of this

research group, in which we became a community of concern, helped her to see things from a different perspective.

Madigan and Epston (1995:27) use the term “community of concern” to describe a group of people who are struggling with similar problems and who circulate their ideas and knowledge. Dixon’s (1999:55) idea of a “community of care” and Epston’s idea of a “community of concern” suggest that a co-researcher can benefit from the research conversations and is able to make significant contributions towards the research process. Dixon, 1999:55) suggest that “we invite group members to develop connections and create a community that supports each participant’s [read: co-researcher’s] personal journey of change [read: re-performance of trauma]. This community provides an audience for members to develop their own self knowledge, to practice more validating stories about self, and incorporate preferred narratives into their lived experience”.

In such a context, Anne could report that for the first time in many years she can see things as they were and that helped me turn my back on this relationship which was destroying everything that was precious and dear to me. This includes my relationship with the Lord, my mother and sister, my husband and children, and to find a church where we could belong again. Some of Anne’s dreams came true. She went to France with her mother and she had a successful art exhibition. She now belongs to a new church and is part of that body of Christ. She has put this trauma behind her and has gained peace of mind.

4.4.3 Thea: a new season

Thea’s children, her parents and sisters, as well as one good friend, kept her going through the tough times. Counselling and being part of this research group helped her in three different ways. Firstly, the secrecy of the abuse was broken. This helped to the extent that her husband knew that many people were watching him, which stopped the physical abuse. Secondly, it helped her to see her marriage in a different light. Where she previously always tried to fix her marriage, she now realised that she had to befriend her marriage, and has to make the best of it. The metaphor of her marriage going through seasons helped her tremendously; it helped to put her mind in a different perspective, allowing for a shift, moving forward towards healing. She said she had always lived in the hope that things will get better, and today she knows it was worth holding onto that belief. She said that without hope, she could just as well have given up.

We re-membered the valued contribution that Thea's father made in her life. We speculated on the dreams he had for her, how he managed his troubles and difficulties in life, what advice he would have given her, and what Thea could learn from him.

"Re-membering" (White, 1997:22) is based on the view of membered lives. When we think of the people with whom we are associated in the course of our daily lives, we could consider them members of our "club of life", or life club membership (Morgan, 2000:77). Some members are consciously invited into our lives and others may have little choice about inclusion. Membership of this club can be revised or revoked, by downgrading or upgrading the membership (White, 1997:23). Re-membering can contribute significantly to describing new alternative performances richly. These members may be alive or no longer living (Morgan, 2000:78). The relationships with these members are very important, and re-membering conversations deliberately re-address this. Re-membering involved incorporating and elevating these significant people's contributions in the lives of the co-researchers.

According to Thea, counselling was the initial step in searching for hope and solving her problems. She would like to say to people who are suffering with trauma in their lives that counselling changed her mind and life – do not be afraid of it, in the end you will be proud of it.

4.4.4 Gaynor: the graduate

Since Gaynor was little, she followed her own mind. Growing into a teenager, she did not accept the status quo and questioned her father's authority, his obsession with her being his property and his claim that he could do with her as he liked. The promise to her grandfather to make something of her life kept her going. It created hope of getting out of her circumstances. Re-membering and taking-it-back practices were used in giving a much richer description of the new performance of Gaynor's life.

Taking-it-back practices is another concept of acknowledging significant people who have made contributions in our lives. It can add to a richer description of people's lives and allows people such as the co-researchers "to experience a fuller presence of these figures in their lives, even when they are not available to be there in the material sense" (White, 1997:132).

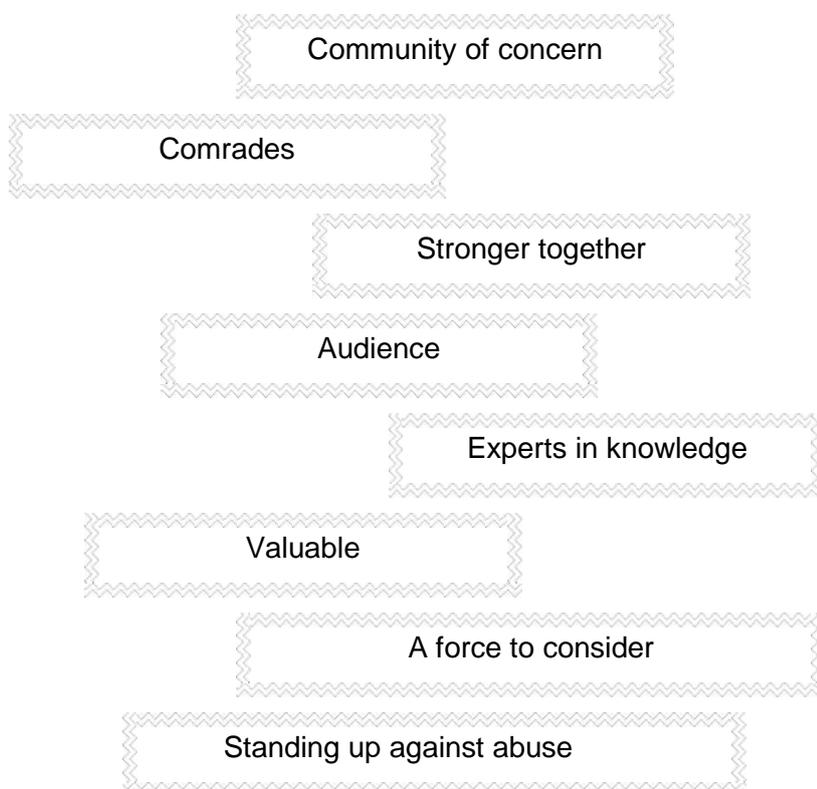
Gaynor's grandfather was a significant person in her life, as he contributed his belief in her capabilities and strengths, and he was given credit for being that person in her life. In doing so we also wondered about the different dreams her grandfather had for her

and how she can reach for them. There was also speculation on what advice he would have given her to conquer her problems in life.

Gaynor's grandfather was not the only element in her life that brought her to where she is today. God threw her a lifeline and she accepted it without delay. God helped Gaynor to overcome the trauma in her life. She said: If there were no God I would not have made it. Pastoral counselling and being part of this research group was a helpful shift to start believing in oneself again. Today, Gaynor is happily married, and she has completed her post-graduate studies.

4.4.5 A joint performance

We are at the last scene of the research performance. The curtain is about to close, but first, we move to an important stage in the performance. The co-researchers now do a joint performance. The co-researchers and I are at centre stage, forming a close circle to illustrate our group as a community of concern. In each co-researcher's hand is a word or words written on a piece of paper to illustrate what the group stands for. The following words are displayed:



The above words and all the information gathered so far were called the harvest. In this harvesting section, a decision was made about the information and how it would be made useful to others.

4.5 NEW COLOUR FOR THE LIGHTING, PLEASE

The harsh white spotlight shone first on the old trauma performances, and then shifted to a new setting on the stage where the new preferred trauma performances of each co-researcher took place. Moving now to the final re-performance, there was a desire to change the setting and the mood on the stage. The spotlight with its harsh white light reminded us of the old dominant trauma performances, and since we did not want these, we decided to use colour in the lighting, as this represents our new seasons. The focus is on the blending of a colourful co-creation of all the co-researchers' ideas, contributions and local knowledges to create the final performance: Re-performing trauma, which we called *New Seasons*.

We asked ourselves what to do with all the information and local knowledges of trauma that had been gathered. How can this information be used to make a difference, or be helpful to the world out there?

Bringing in some softer colours to this research performance helped us to focus on being a community of concern, on how our own personal trauma experiences and local knowledges contributed towards this research. We can now take a stance of standing up against abuse of women and children, if people could be made aware of some of the abuse that takes place on the stage of life, and if they can learn from the group's experiences. The question then is who will benefit from our performance and what its consequences will be.

In co-creating this new performance of re-performance, there was enough space and respect for all the co-researchers' opinions. It came spontaneously, without any hesitation, and with a renewed energy from all parties involved. The spotlight was no longer focused on us, the group or its problems, or on the past. We wanted to make a difference. Nobody held back; it was like having a new purpose, a new direction, and a new lease on life. We were focused on the present and the future.

The co-researchers decided to give an account and some suggestions on what we found a helpful map during the research performance.

4.5.1 Helpful map

We were feeling overwhelmed by all the data, so we decided to focus first on what was positive for us during our combined research performance, and this led to the

compilation of these helpful map. What was the purpose? To summarise our ideas and maybe it may help other counsellors/researchers.

- We created some *safe space* for each co-researcher.
As discussed in Section 3.2, a positive ice breaker was used by introducing everyone by relating what we can do well. This was useful to identify the skills, competencies, morals and values of the group members before we know anything else about them.
- We made our own *rules* to *safeguard confidentiality*.
It is important to respect different perspectives, and the social and cultural discourses people engage in. A *non-judgemental stance* is important. The golden rule was building and keeping *trust* amongst us. Doing so assisted us in realising that nobody was going to be analysed, but that the road is mapped together.
- The *small group of outsider witnesses* was helpful.
If a group is too big, one might feel a bit exposed or at risk. A small group helped those who were afraid of speaking in public.
- Being part of this outsider witness group helped us to *put our feelings into words*, because prior to this research performance none of the co-researchers could verbalise her experience.
- The outsider witness group helped to *confirm values, morals, skills and, old and new identities*, and to honour them.
- It can truly be reported that everyone was touched and moved by listening to the suffering and pain of others. The *mutual* tears of concern were one of the most moving and encouraging elements of the process.
- We were strangers who came *together* with the intention of researching trauma. We completed this process, which turned out to be positive for everyone.
- Each trauma *performance, responses* against trauma, and *resilience* was an inspiration. They helped us to make a *choice* to change experiences into a positive experience, and to become survivors, and not to remain the victims.
- All the research sessions were conducted at a pastoral care centre. It is a spiritual place to the co-researchers and it gave us peace and comfort knowing that *God was also a witness*. It gave us the freedom to talk about our experiences with God during times of suffering and times of healing.
- The *reflection* from the outsider witness group on what stood out for them and what

was valuable helped and carried the co-researchers through the following weeks.

- The conversations enabled us to *recognise the characteristics of abuse and trauma*.
- We created a *community of concern*, which enabled us to have a sense of comradeship and solidarity in standing up against abuse.
- We changed our *attitude*. A positive attitude is necessary to believe in yourself.
- The lessons we learned from sexual, emotional, spiritual and physical abuse are to *break away, say no to the abuse, and remember you are not to blame*.
- The *process* involved building, taking small steps, and starting to believe in ourselves again, with the realisation that we are capable of doing things well.
- We buried guilt and realised that one failure must not send a message of giving up.
- We became firm and lasting friends.
- Our steps towards healing were the following:

Step 1: We agree not to judge each other or ourselves.

Step 2: Since some of the group members are still in an abusive relationship, we have learned to avoid talking about topics that might be considered sensitive to the abuser and might trigger anger or violence, although we recognise that we are not responsible for triggering the abuse.

Step 3: We break away from the abuse; say no.

Step 4: We allowed the Lord to carry us; we were not walking the road on our own.

Step 5: We keep journals, and write letters, as well as letters of forgiveness

4.5.2 Therapeutic documents

In the research performance, we made use of reflective summaries of the conversations, audio-tapes, articles about trauma and healing and personal journals. Therapeutic documents give an accurate account of developments in an attempt to “rescue the said from [the] saying of it” and to document the emerging new alternative trauma performance (White, 1998). Epston (1993:31) argues that, “since the words in a letter don’t fade and disappear the way conversations do, but through time and space, letters have been described as bearing witness to the work of therapy and immortalising it”, letters are particularly useful.

Three of the co-researchers submitted hand-written journals which also formed part of the local knowledge that was gathered. Dixon (1999:60) considers a journal helpful in the sense that writing is “a place where selves can be constructed, re-authored, reflected upon, created within a linguistic space...writing and rereading may allow the writer to discover what her sense of essential identity is”.

In the next section, I present a table the group compiled to represent their path of healing, resulting in a new preferred performance.

4.5.3 From trauma to new preferred performances

Based on their local knowledges of trauma, the co-researchers compiled Table 1 to highlight the path of healing. The voice of trauma devalues a person’s sense of identity and it tried to convince us that we added no value to life. Trauma robbed us of our self-confidence, telling us that we did not make any difference in the world, or that no one would ever listen to what we have to say. The voice of hope and resilience helped us to establish a sense of self again. Our voices, opinions and local knowledges are valuable and might make a difference in the world.

Table 1: The path of healing – from trauma to resilience and hope

Effect of Trauma: Voice of Trauma	Healing: Voice of hope and resilience
No identity.	Value the sense of myself.
No confidence.	Confidence, I can stand up, it needs some action.
Might have a long-lasting effect.	The effects can be eroded.
Nothing changes, everything stays static.	Positive changes, breaking away from abuse, saying no to abuse. New future; being creative; <i>do</i> is the countermeasure against abuse.
Broken; intense sorrow.	Forgiveness is a choice you make. Bringing peace and freedom.
Thoughts of suicide and being the victim. Failure.	Dreams, hopes, plans, being a survivor in the name of Jesus Christ. Lessons we have learned, decision-making, determination.
Hanging on by my teeth on the edge of hell.	Child of God, God is on my side, He will see to justice on His terms and in his own time.

The voices of trauma and modernism want us to believe that trauma will have long-lasting, scarring effects on us, but we have learned by listening to the voices of hope and resilience that the effects of trauma can be eroded by taking active steps to break free from abuse and trauma.

The effects of trauma broke us and we experienced intense sorrow due to suffering from depression. Sometimes our thoughts were influenced by suicidal thoughts, due to feelings of failure and abuse. Listening to the voice of hope and resilience, we took small steps towards finding healing. Creating new preferred performances took some positive action. We said no to abuse and some of us broke away from it completely.

The voice of hope and resilience helped to restore our integrity and we started on the process of forgiveness. We were no longer the victims, but became survivors through the grace of Jesus Christ. We have a future, dreams, hopes and plans. We have learned many lessons from all our trauma experiences, and, being responsible people, we asked ourselves how we could avoid making the same mistakes again.

The co-researchers experienced a period of absence of God. It felt as if God was very far away and unavailable, and they felt deserted. They believe that their Christian culture and context helped them most when they were powerless in prayers for help, and reminded themselves that there is a God who is looking upon them. God sees the abuse and trauma that occurs. God is on their side and will bring relief and healing. Their faith became stronger, as they knew they are children of God and He will not desert them. This helped them to focus on God and not so much on the circumstances they were in.

As the new performances started to take shape and the forgiveness process started, the co-researchers found they were no longer looking forward to justice. In fact, they accepted that He will do as He wishes in His time and on His terms. The above experiences of the co-researchers correlate with what Nouwen (1990:95) describes as the absence and presence of God: "God is 'beyond', beyond our heart and mind, beyond our feelings and thoughts, beyond our expectations and desires, and beyond all events and experiences that make up our life. Still He is in the centre of all of it." When we are suffering, we usually turn to God. Although He might feel far away, we also know he is near. Nouwen adds:

Here we touch the heart of prayer since here it becomes manifest that in prayer the distinction between God's presence and God's absence is no longer really distinguishable. In prayer, God's presence is never separated from his absence and God's absence is never separated from his

presence. His presence is so much beyond the human experience of being together that it quite easily is perceived as absence. His absence on the other hand, is often so deeply felt that it leads to a new sense of his presence.

Although the co-researchers experienced isolation from God, they also experienced his presence through prayer and faith. They clung to God with hope, and in the end experienced healing through their faith and the process of forgiveness.

Nouwen (1990:13) describes how one can be moved from loneliness to solitude. Instead of running away from our loneliness and trying to forget or deny it, we have to protect it and turn it into fruitful solitude: "To live a spiritual life we must first find the courage to enter into the desert of our loneliness, and to change it by gentle and persistent efforts into a garden of solitude. This requires not only courage, but strong faith" (Nouwen, 1990:13).

The group came up with the idea of doing an awareness programme at school level. They could work with teenage girls, warning them about the effects of abuse and trauma. They could produce a pamphlet that could be distributed. The group decided that they would like to make a list of the different kinds of abuse that had they experienced and that they know of. Knowledge and information about this kind of abuse might help young girls to identify the characteristics of abuse, and to turn their backs on abuse as soon as possible and educate themselves about trauma.

Section 4.6 was the initiative, ideas, terminology, language and preferred result and of the group's work and dedication to make a difference in the world.

4.6 TAKING OUR PERFORMANCE OUT THERE: WHAT IS ABUSE?

The following characteristics of abuse can help young girls or women to recognise abuse in a relationship. The list below, compiled by the co-researchers on the basis of their experience, gives helpful information on how to turn your back on abuse if you are in a relationship characterised by abuse and what kind of action is needed to do so. This material was turned into a pamphlet for public distribution (see Annexure E).

4.6.1 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is characterised by the following:

- a) Criticism and verbal abuse

Abusers use name-calling, mocking, accusing, blaming, yelling, swearing and humiliating remarks or gestures.

b) Pressure tactics

Abusers want to rush you into making decisions through guilt-tripping and other forms of intimidation, sulking, not talking for long periods of time, manipulating the children, telling you what to do.

c) Abusing power

Abusers always claim to be right (insisting that their statements are the truth), tell you what to do, make decisions without you.

d) Denying and blaming

Abusers make fun of your behaviour, do not take your concerns seriously, say the abuse did not happen shift the responsibility for their abusive behaviour by saying that you caused it.

e) Disrespect

Abusers interrupt you, change topics, do not listen or respond, twist your words, put you down in front of other people, say bad things about your friends and family.

f) Economic control

Abusers interfere, do not let you work, refuse to give you money, take your car keys or prevent you from using public transport.

g) Self-destructive behaviour

Some abusers also abuse drugs and alcohol.

h) Isolation

Abusers prevent you from seeing or make it difficult for you to see friends and relatives, monitor phone calls, track your movements.

i) Abusing trust and breaking promises

Abusers lie, withhold information, cheat on you and display jealousy; they do not follow through on agreements, do not take a fair share of responsibility, refuse to help with childcare and housework.

j) Harassment

Abusers also make uninvited visits or calls, following you, checking up on you, embarrassing you in public, refusing to leave when asked.

4.6.2 Violence

Violence involves the following:

k) Physical violence

Being violent to you, your children, household pets or others, slapping, punching, grabbing, kicking, choking, pushing, biting, burning, stabbing, shooting, spitting in the face.

l) Intimidation

Making angry or threatening gestures, using physical size to intimidate, standing in the doorway during arguments, driving recklessly.

m) Sexual violence

Using force, threats or coercion to obtain sex or perform sexual acts.

n) Weapons

Using weapons to frighten you, threaten you or attempt to kill you or those you love.

o) Destruction

Destroying your possessions (e.g. furniture), punching walls, throwing and/or breaking things.

4.6.3 The spiral of abuse

The spiral of violence and violation shows how abuse often becomes a pattern made up of three stages:

- **Tension-building:** Criticism, yelling, swearing, using angry gestures, coercion, threats.
- **Violence/Power:** Physical, sexual attacks, making use of disciplines to confirm their beliefs and world view.
- **Honeymoon phase:** Apologies, blaming, promises to change, gifts.

Three dynamics, namely love, hope and fear, keep the spiral in motion and make it hard to end, and for a person to escape from the relationship:

- You feel **love** for your partner/friend/member of a group or company. The relationship has its good points, it is not all bad.
- You **hope** that things will change.

- You **fear** threats to end the relationship when there are too many things at stake that you can lose.

You may also **fear** that the abuser will beat or discipline you if you do not say or do what he/she wants you to do or to say.

4.6.4 How can you escape or reclaim your life if you are being abused?

- **Affirm** your own worth and identity; you are valuable.
- **Believe** that you are not to be blamed for being abused or beaten.
- **Believe** you have the right to feel, think and make choices for yourself.
- **Know** that you are not alone and that you can ask for help.
- **Believe** that you can decide what is best for yourself.

THEN DO SOMETHING, TAKE SOME ACTION!!!!!!

- **Talk** to someone you trust, like a friend or a family member.
- **Break away** from the abusive relationship.
- **Consider** going to the police station and laying a charge.
- **Speak** to a counsellor.
- **Obtain** a Prevention of Family Violence interdict from your local magistrate's court. It warns the abuser that he or she will be arrested if he or she assaults you further.

In the next section, the play *New Seasons* is discussed. At my request and with the consent of the co-researchers, a play was written by Marlene Zwiegers, a well known actor/writer/director in the Northern Cape. Marlene recently completed her Master's degree in Drama. Since her life also had a brush with narrative counselling, she has a good understanding of counselling, discourse and spirituality. Performances of *New Seasons* are planned for 2012 in Kimberley and in Pretoria.

4.7 THE PLAY: THE CREATION OF *NEW SEASONS*

In the last part of our harvesting session, the co-researchers and I discussed the possibility of writing a play based on the co-researchers' trauma experiences and their path to healing with new preferred performances. The aim would be to perform the play

as an awareness and preventative programme of abuse and trauma. All the co-researchers gave their enthusiastic consent.

The co-researchers thought that girls/boys as well as women/men could benefit from seeing this play. It could be helpful to show girls/women how to resist abuse and boys/men the effects of abuse, if boys/men perpetrate it. There are also abusive women and men get abused too.

Marlene Zwieggers (the scriptwriter and director) and I are currently negotiating with some government departments and churches for funding for this project to perform the play. We have contacted the following institutions:

- the Department of Social Development: Northern Cape;
- the South African Police Service – Crime Prevention Unit of the Northern Cape;
- the Department of Education Northern Cape;
- the National Higher Education Northern Cape;
- the Dutch Reformed Church, Elardus Park, Pretoria;
- the CMR Gauteng-East: Pretoria;
- the Bikers' Church, Kimberley; and
- the CRC Church, Kimberley.

We are aiming to follow up on various opportunities. The Crime Prevention Unit of the South African Police Service in the Northern Cape Province, for instance, fund awareness programmes to assist communities of the Northern Cape to prevent crime in the province. These awareness programmes are presented in a form of a play performed to communities. Having the community as an audience will suit our cause.

New Seasons was written based on the groundwork of Dr Jacob Levy Moreno and Augusto Boal, two well-known theatrical script writers and directors. This play could be seen as a therapeutic drama, with the aim of changing communities and congregations' perceptions about abuse and trauma.

New Seasons is also an interactive play. The play is not all factual, but also fictional. The play was written with the intention of reaching young teenage school girls and faith communities to make them aware of the pitfalls of abuse and trauma. In this way, faith and secular communities will be challenged to find voices to break the silence and isolation that trauma sometimes creates. The script and full play details can be found in Annexure D. After the play, the Pamphlet on Abuse that the co-researchers and I compiled will be distributed amongst the audience as another awareness-raising method (see Annexure E).

4.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I looked at the influence that the discourses of silence, self-blame, isolation and depression had on the co-researchers and how it affected them in getting over their trauma performances. These truths were challenged to open the path for new preferred performances for each co-researcher.

The new, preferred performances of each co-researcher were discussed and we then moved on to reflect on what was positive for us during our research performance together. This led to our compiling this helpful map as part of our final re-performance, the play which we called *New Seasons*.

A pamphlet was created containing a list of abuse and the characteristics of abuse and trauma. This might help to identify early warning signs of abuse and to alert young women and girls and secular and faith communities not to fall into the same traps we did.

The play *New Seasons* is a result of all our local knowledges, and information put together into a play to be performed on a real stage with an audience. It is due to be staged in 2012. *New Seasons* illustrates the co-researchers' dance with trauma and the movement to change where hope, resilience and freedom became a reality. This play was written to be performed before live audiences consisting of young teenage girls in high schools and members of different congregations in churches in the Northern Cape and Gauteng.

CHAPTER 5:

REFLECTING ON THE RE-PERFORMANCE OF TRAUMA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter, I reflect back on the research performance that the co-researchers and I embarked on. The first reflection is on the research process and whether the aims of the research performance have been met. The possible contributions of this research performance in practical theology and pastoral care are then discussed. Further practical possibilities for exploration that this research performance has opened up are suggested. I reflect on a few places where we could have lingered and explored more, but had to pass on in the course of our journey of this re-performance. I conclude with my own reflections after exiting the re-performance.

5.2 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In this section I reflect on the research process followed in this research performance. The discussion starts with trauma in the spotlight. I explain what influenced the literature study and my impact on the process. The co-researchers and I followed a de-centred participatory action approach to this research performance and I explain what we did with the data and what process we decided to follow to make these results available.

This research performance was constructed with the local knowledges gleaned from the trauma performances of all the co-researchers. The direction of this research was dictated to a large extent by the trauma performances that the co-researchers brought to this research process, as well as the relevant literature in books and articles that I found, as well as those suggested by my supervisor. Trauma was widely researched. Not everything written on this topic could be studied. I was guided by my co-researchers' trauma performances in such a way that I could respond to their pain and suffering as a result of their trauma experiences. Given the limited scope of a dissertation, this research performance is only a limited study of trauma – due to the limitations of space and time, some trauma experiences had to be excluded, because they would probably have taken this research performance in a very different direction.

As co-researcher and researcher I realise that bringing outsider witness audience practices and ideas (which was accepted by all the co-researchers) into this research had a significant influence on the direction of this research performance. It also influenced the research process regarding the questions that were asked during the trauma performance and during reflection by the outsider witnesses (the re-performance) and further reflection on the outsider witnesses' reflections (the re-re-performance).

All the co-researchers were committed to a de-centred participatory action research approach and all played an active role in the following activities:

- reflecting on the process in terms of outsider witnessing practices and ideas after the trauma performances;
- participating in information-gathering and selecting details to put them into a workable format and introducing a useful map for doing trauma research; and
- setting up the Abuse pamphlet.

Therefore, I believe that we have succeeded in creating a decentred participatory research approach that enabled us to give a “two-way account” of this research, as recommended by Tootell (2004:57).

The co-researchers and I selected data and information that we thought were appropriate to make a difference. In documenting this report, I came across the work of Poplin (1996:145), who warns us to be careful to continue to question our own methods of qualitative research by asking ourselves questions such as the following: How much do we still limit our vision in qualitative inquiry? How much of our “data” is not allowed to see the light? How much do we not see either? How much do we still limit our data by questions we ask, the way we observe and analyse who we are? As co-researchers we selected and highlighted certain parts of the trauma performances, as well as the skills, values, morals and competencies of our fellow co-researchers, while other parts of the performances remained hidden and untouched. Although all the co-researchers responded to the invitation to participate and to share their experiences, some experiences were not shared and remained untold and unsaid. I accept that we were blind to some data, and that some data did not see the light, some questions were not asked and some were not answered, leaving gaps that could be filled. If we had lingered more on the above questions before selecting the data and asked ourselves the above questions, we might have selected different data, with different end results.

The primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:2). Action research is meant to increase the wellbeing of people in society in general and in specific communities in particular. The results of this research performance are perhaps not revolutionary, but we believe that if we can make a difference to one or two people in the secular and faith communities where the play *New Seasons* is performed and with the Abuse pamphlet handed out after the play, we will have been successful.

Documenting the research was a new experience to me. My honest intentions are to let the voices of the co-researchers be heard and I am conscious that their voices could be marginalised by my own voice, or by the academic voices of trauma. This could be regarded as a limitation of this research. However, I would like to believe that, through the helpful map, the play *New Seasons* and the Abuse pamphlet, the co-researchers' voices are kept in the forefront.

In the next section I look at the aims that were set at the beginning of this research performance and reflect on whether we have met them.

5.3 MEETING THE AIMS

As co-researchers it was never our intention “to develop brilliant lines of enquiry...but to provide a thoughtful and careful listening space” (Mann, 2004:5).

5.3.1 The first aim

In this section, I explore some guidelines on how to create a listening space and compare it with what was done in our research performance. I discuss how the co-researchers and I designed our own rules to safeguard our confidentiality, respect one another's differences, not to judge, to develop trust amongst us and to keep it – those were the golden rules and conditions that were set for this research performance (see Section 4.5.1).

<p>The first aim of this research performance was to co-construct what conditions are necessary for each co-researcher to have safe space to re-perform her trauma stories.</p>

I believe we succeeded in meeting our first aim of this research performance.

While writing this last chapter, I encountered some guidelines on how to create listening space in counselling. Mann (2004:5-7), a narrative therapist, suggests a list of helpful ways of listening to create a listening space when working with women who have experienced abuse. These suggestions fit in well with the co-researchers' and my attempts to do research on trauma. I believe that the way we listened aided us to create the *safe, spiritual and listening space* that we aimed for throughout the research performance. In Table 2, Mann's guidelines are compared to what we did in this research performance.

Table 2: Comparison of Mann's guidelines for listening and the co-researchers' and my attempts to listen

Guidelines to create some listening space (Mann, 2004:5-7)	The co-researchers attempts to create listening space
To make the politics and power abuse visible. The context of abuse should be visible, the abuse should be named, and then the politics of the experience can be spoken about. This helps to create space to deconstruct shame, silence and blame.	During the individual trauma performances of the co-researchers, the abuse was named, the traumatic events were performed and the power politics of the abuse were exposed (see Section 3.5). The discourses of silence, shame and blame, isolation and depression were deconstructed by the research group (see Section 4.2). We think that we succeeded in this deconstruction.
To double listen is to listen not only to the distress, but also to performances of values and commitment.	Outsider witness practices and ideas assisted us to listen and to respond to these values and commitments through the outsider witness group reflection (re-telling) (see Section 3.5).
To listen to multiple trauma performances is to listen not only to the trauma performances of descriptions of identities shaped by the critical voice of trauma, but to versions of themselves told by kinder, more acknowledging voices.	Outsider witness practices and ideas assisted us in doing what Mann describes, as our reflections were based on the principle of thickening each co-researcher's identity of self by listening to voices of competence, successes, achievements, spirituality, hope and resilience (see Section 3.5).
To practise in a de-centred way is to create space where a woman's own solutions and knowledges are at the centre of the conversations and to reconnect her with her own knowledge	We would like to believe that outsider witness practices and ideas also assisted us in practising in a decentred way. The process of the performance, the re-performance, the re-re-performance and

Guidelines to create some listening space (Mann, 2004:5-7)	The co-researchers attempts to create listening space
and experiences of influence in her life.	the re-re-re-performance as a process helped the co-researchers to identify their selves and future selves. One could say it was a way of reconnecting them with their own language of competence (see Section 3.5)
To link the co-researchers with the community is to create a space where the community of people is in some way involved in our conversations.	This research performance was a way of bringing people of the community together and connecting them. It created space for the co-researchers to share their trauma performances, to form a community of concern, to develop comradeship and to team up against abuse (see Section 4.5.1.1)
To explore what is most precious to the co-researcher and how the audience's influence can assist in reclaiming her life from the effects of the abuse.	In Section 2.5.5.3, I noted that people tend to take steps to prevent trauma or to modify it. They usually take these steps to preserve what is precious to them. The effect of trauma is that these things that they value in life are belittled, demeaned, disqualified, overlooked and considered insignificant. This was the basis from which the research performance started, as our aim was to develop a preferred sense of myself, and we believe we succeeded (see Section 4.5.1).
To listen in ways that acknowledge that many ways of living is to create a space that opens up possibilities for all the co-researchers in order for each to consider her own preferences for her life, whether or not these fit in with dominant discourses of normality.	During the sessions we allocated some time to topics other than the trauma experiences, such as responses, resilience and hope and spirituality. An important part of the process was that the co-researchers' voices and opinions could be heard, even if it was not on the topic of trauma, and to acknowledge these voices as important.
To acknowledge the co-researchers' contributions to my own life and how these women contribute and shape my life.	In this research performance, the outsider witness practices and ideas aided us to reflect on and acknowledge how these women moved us and how we think differently after hearing and observing their trauma performances, responses to trauma and healing from trauma (see Section 3.5).

Guidelines to create some listening space (Mann, 2004:5-7)	The co-researchers attempts to create listening space
<p>To understand this work is a journey. The metaphor helps me to acknowledge and celebrate the small or huge steps that women have taken towards their preferred directions in life. It also assists us to remember that the journey started long before counselling and is likely to continue after counselling.</p>	<p>The process of performance, re-performance and re-re-performance helped us to thicken the small and huge steps towards a new preferred performance of the co-researchers' lives. Re-membering and taking-it-back practices also assisted us in asking questions on how significant figures in their lives would have responded if they heard about the steps that the co-researchers took. There was a celebration at the end of our research performance, when we all went to a restaurant to celebrate these steps, the new preferred performances and the final product, the re-performance of trauma.</p>
<p>To create a space where there is no room for pathology is to remember that the problem is the problem, and not to confuse the person's identity, not to label or pathologise the person.</p>	<p>Outsider witness practices and ideas helped us to respond in such a way that we moved away from pathologising towards identity claims that are kind, constructive and constitutive towards a preferred self.</p>

The pastoral therapeutic conversation must be an open space where people who experienced trauma can talk freely. We believe that the process that was followed in this research performance taught us to listen and observe in a different way. This enabled us to create a spiritual, safe listening space. It taught us to listen for the gaps, silences and ambiguities in the co-researchers' trauma performances and to search for new preferred performances. It taught us a way to listen and witness attentively, and to respect the co-researchers' performance as the only item on that day's concert programme. An intimacy was co-constructed between the co-researchers that later became stronger than the intimacy of the abuse. This helped to build up confidentiality and trust between the co-researchers. We all became confidantes and comrades.

The co-researchers reflected on the research process and they experienced themselves as having a voice that can be heard, and that their experiences are valuable, as these experiences can benefit others. This sense of being heard was necessary for them, for the continuity of the research performance.

Once a safe listening space had been established, as well as confidentiality and trust, and when each co-researcher's voice was heard, we moved to a different setting on the stage. Here, we became a community of concern, teaming up against abuse and trauma. We identified the discourses that were a hindrance in our path to healing and hope and we started to challenge these truths and beliefs to enable us to move to our second aim.

5.3.2 The second aim

In order to address the second aim, we looked at the constructions of trauma and spirituality and challenged these beliefs and truths.

The second aim was to explore the influence of socially constructed discourses regarding the beliefs of Western society, social, medical and spiritual ideas about trauma, questioning whether these discourses affected and influenced us in our meaning-making of traumatic experiences and exploring the discourses that have a power/knowledge relation and influenced the healing process.

5.3.2.1 Constructions of trauma

Constructions of trauma occur in the context within which people operate. These contexts vary from a medical discourse, where trauma can be described as a psychiatric medical condition with physiological symptoms, as manifested in post-traumatic stress disorder, to a psychodynamic discourse, where trauma can be seen as an intra-psychic process that necessitates psychoanalysis and a bio-psychosocial discourse, where trauma is interpreted in a socio-political context.

The word trauma comes directly from the Greek word for wound. It is only since the arrival of psychoanalysis in the late nineteenth century that the word came to be applied to psychic injury. Trauma is a socially constructed concept. The language or words that people use describe trauma as a painful human experience that is something extraordinary, unpredictable, unavoidable, not preventable, shocking and distressing.

Most survivors do not want to be psychologised as being sick, or to have a sick identity. Only a small minority of people develop psychological problems after trauma that merit professional help. People who develop post-traumatic stress disorder could be those who experienced psychological problems before the traumatic event. Post-traumatic

stress disorder has a tendency to present in combination with other disorders, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, substance addiction, and dissociative disorders. Post-traumatic stress disorder consists of three core symptoms, namely:

- re-experiencing the trauma in the form of thoughts or nightmares;
- avoidance, avoiding places, activities and people reminiscent of the event; and
- hyper arousal, hyper vigilance, irritability and exaggerated startled response.

5.3.2.2 Challenging post-traumatic stress disorder discourses

Medical discourses of post-traumatic stress disorder can be challenged. It is assumed that the effect of trauma is negative and will remain with a person long after the incident that caused it has passed. Summerfield (1995:3) indicates that discourses of post-traumatic stress disorder assume that trauma is negative and have a psychological effect. Post-traumatic stress disorder promotes victimhood, and victims are mere passive vessels of psychopathological experiences that can be adjudged present or absent. The co-researchers reported that the voices of trauma wanted them to believe that trauma will have a long-lasting effect on them and on their lives, but they have learned through this research process, and the voice of hope and resilience, that they can become and indeed have become survivors through the grace of Jesus Christ.

The social context determines the processes that are followed and determine how victims become survivors. Those who experience trauma generate meaning depending on prevailing social, cultural and political discourses. The co-researchers reported that they all came for counselling because of the prevailing discourse that if something traumatic happens to you, counselling can benefit you. Counselling and following this research performance assisted the co-researchers in finding a path to healing and becoming survivors, as they were all able to start with their new preferred performances, since they now have dreams, hopes and plans for the future.

5.3.2.3 The discourse of post-traumatic growth

Post-traumatic growth was another trauma discourse that we discussed. This discourse focuses on the notion that people could experience positive changes as a result of trauma. Some people initially display stress-related symptoms, but eventually heal from trauma and demonstrate personal growth. This approach resonates well with a narrative pastoral counselling approach, as they can both include spirituality.

5.3.2.4 Deconstructing discourses

After the individual trauma performances, the co-researchers and I attempted to identify the discourses that obstructed us from healing from abuse and trauma. We discussed the discourses of silence, blame, isolation and depression (see Section 4.2). Each of these discourses was deconstructed as part of the process to expose the discourse, beliefs associated with the discourse and the truth claims it made, with the end result of breaking the power claim it had on the co-researchers' and my ability to start living in new, preferred ways.

The knowledge of how the discourses operate was helpful to us in order to start with new, preferred performances. The co-researchers realised that the truth claims of these discourses were false. It further helped us to separate actions that were exploitative, abusive or neglectful from those actions directed towards the co-researchers that were supportive, loving or caring. These new knowledges helped to develop and story new conclusions about the co-researchers and their identities.

5.3.2.5 Spiritual trauma discourses

My involvement at the pastoral care centre made it simple to start with this research performance, as the resources (the clients and the spiritual setting) were already in place. Pastoral care asks the church to take action against abuse and trauma and to become involved in society, and to strive for justice and peace, as it offers a message of hope. This research performance is a response to this demand.

Traumatic experiences can shake your entire view of life and your conception of God. They can seriously change your self-concept. Trauma and the aftermath thereof can result in many questions. These questions may be questions about your own beliefs and assumptions or about God and your relationship with Him. The aim of this research was to aid trauma survivors to regain hope, which, as Weingarten (2000:402) points out, is something that we "do with others".

Some spiritual discourses that hindered the co-researchers from breaking free from abuse were exposed during the performance of trauma and the outsider witness group's reflections. The following discourses were identified. Mia believed that God expected obedience in the form of her staying in her marriage. She believed a marriage should be for better or for worse. This resulted in her being loyal and faithful, and protecting her husband's reputation, as she did not want to make a fool of him in the eyes of the world. This discourse was the reason she endured her marriage for

decades. When the outsider witness group reflected on her loyalty, it helped Mia to start talking about this discourse. The conversations helped her to deconstruct this oppressive discourse and challenge it, as she realised that this belief paralysed her, preventing her from taking action to stop the abuse that resulted in trauma and her reaching out to her crutch *Jack*. To challenge a dominant discourse is to break free from the power that the discourse has over someone.

The Bible study leader brought the discourse of the “sins of the forefathers” into the Bible study group (see Exodus 20:5). According to her, this meant that Anne’s father’s sin of committing suicide brought the sin over Anne and her children, meaning that Anne was “bad” and “possessed by demons”. This discourse became a reality and the “truth” in the Bible study group’s lives and started to dominate Anne’s and their lives. Discourses shape people’s lives and relationships. This made Anne the scapegoat for all the bad things that happened to members of the group. She knew that she was not bad, and that she was not demon-possessed, but the power and constitutive effect of this discourse paralysed her ability to break free from the abuse. She became marginalised because the Bible study group made her voiceless, as the group had the final say about her. The deconstruction of this discourse helped Anne to break away from the power of the discourse and from the Bible study group. It opened up a new preferred way of living as she enjoyed the peace she experienced in her heart, renewed strength to go on with her life, new plans like doing art, dancing and being a child of God (see Section 3.5.2).

Exposing discourses by challenging and questioning them helped the co-researchers to realise the powerful effect these discourses had on them and how the discourses paralysed them, preventing them from breaking free. To gain knowledge about these discourses and to deconstruct them was the groundwork that was done to start the new, preferred performances of the co-researchers. We therefore believe that we met the second aim that we set for ourselves at the beginning of this research performance.

The next section looks at narrative pastoral counselling and how it can assist in trauma counselling. I then move to the new performances which aimed to thicken each co-researcher’s identity of competence.

5.3.3 The third aim

The third aim was to explore multiple meanings in and alternative ways of coping with and recovering from trauma, using outsider witness practices and ideas to assist us in
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developing new alternative stories and acting upon this information in such a way as to re-perform trauma to bring about hope and healing which might benefit others.

5.3.3.1 Narrative pastoral counselling as a discourse

Trauma is not selective: it can affect anyone. It is not specific to any age or gender – no one is immune to trauma. When trauma occurs, it may crush a person's world, shatter her or his world view, paralyse, and confuse. In transforming the lives of people affected by trauma, we need to remember that faith and pastoral care matter, particularly because, when people experience trauma or a crisis, they often call upon pastoral counselling for help.

In the book *Counselling survivors of traumatic events*, Charles Figley (cited in Weaver, Flannelly & Preston, 2003:1) suggests that counselling survivors of traumatic events beckons us to help and be helped by those who have experienced something unforgettable. Weaver et al. (2003:11) comment: "Being helped ourselves through our helping others are bearing witness to the wonder of the human spirit." This illustrates the paradox of helping the traumatised.

Figley (cited in Weaver et al., 2003:12) adds that there is no genuine peace until the survivor is able to address the three universal questions:

- Why did this happen?
- Why did it happen to me
- How can I ever put my life back together again and feel okay after knowing what I know?

Survivors of terrible events are often motivated to volunteer as research subjects in the hope that helping others may give meaning and dignity to their suffering (Herman, 1992:240). At the stage when the co-researchers were asked to join the group, all of them were in a process of becoming survivors, as they had started to take pleasure in life again and to engage fully in relationships with others. They became more interested in the present and future than in the past, more apt to approach the world with praise and awe than with fear (Herman, 1992:211-212).

When the research performance started, we looked for ways to explore the multiple meanings of trauma and new ways of coping with and healing from trauma. There are many different avenues that we could have taken, as narrative counselling has a vast array of practices, maps and guidelines that could also have been used. Our preferred way was to make use of outsider witness practices and ideas, which assisted us in

developing new, preferred performances.

In Section 3.5, a summary is given of each co-researcher's trauma performance by using outsider witness practices and ideas and the reflections of the group afterwards. During the process, efforts were focused on each co-researcher's identity as reflected by her self-narratives and trauma performance.

Trauma can affect a person's identity, as people who have experienced trauma may also experience feelings of emptiness, desolation and despair, hopelessness, and paralysis. They lose touch with *who they are* or a significant shrinking of their *territory of identity* (White, 2004:47). In the context of trauma, the steps to prevent trauma or what people value in life are belittled, degraded or disqualified (White, 2004:48). The outsider witness group and I listened, using our outsider witness questions (see Section 2.5.5.4) to discover what the person performing her trauma values in life, to a trace or hint of responses to trauma or standing up against trauma. We listened to what steps each co-researcher took to prevent trauma or to modify it. People usually take steps to preserve what is precious to them. The focus was to listen specifically to the pain and suffering and to acknowledge the co-researcher's knowledge about trauma as valuable and significant and to listen to her responses to trauma. We wanted these trauma knowledges to be richly known, to be honoured, and be highly acknowledged by all the other co-researchers, other counsellors or practitioners who work with people who have experienced trauma, the community or maybe the nation.

Table 3 (overleaf) contains a summary of the co-researchers' new identity claims, which emerged from the listening and observing practices that were used during the outsider witness reflections. This table also shows what the co-researchers regarded as valuable to them and their responses to trauma.

Table 3: What the outsider witness listening and observing practices uncovered

Outsider witness listening and observing practices	Identity claims	What is valuable or precious to her	Responses to trauma
Mia	Loyal, faithful, good mother, child of God	Her children	Moving out of the house, initiating the divorce, counselling, starting to believe in herself again
Anne	Child of God, genuine Christian, gifted artist, caring mother	God, her faith and her family	Seeking counselling after the burglary and molestation of the boys, breaking away from the Bible study group, joining the research group
Thea	Good mother, a responsible person, someone with endurance, determination, prepared to work on herself, a good interior decorator, gardener and friend	Her children, her mother and father and her sisters	Avoiding anything that may trigger abuse (while realising that she is not responsible), requesting counselling, joining the research group
Gaynor	Child of God, headstrong, knows what she wants in life, determination	Grandfather, AIDS children who suffer and friends	Avoiding home and her father, moving out of the house, taking up counselling

According to Herman (1992:214), trauma can destroy the sustaining bonds between the individual and the community, the clergy and the congregation, stewards and the Bishop. Making use of a group, survivors of trauma learn a sense of self, of worth, of humanity and dependence on a feeling of connection with others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. The co-researchers agree with Herman, as we formed a community of concern against abuse and trauma, harnessing the unity of comrades and doing this research and this hope together. We believe in ourselves again and are healed from trauma and abuse. Table 4 shows how the co-researchers moved from being a victim of trauma to being a group of survivors.

Table 4: Moving from being a victim of trauma to being a group of survivors

Trauma	The group
Trauma isolates.	The group re-creates a sense of belonging.
Trauma shames and stigmatises.	The group bears witness and affirms.
Trauma degrades.	The group exalts.
Trauma dehumanises.	The group restores humanity.

Source: Herman (1992:214)

Making use of outsider witness practices and ideas are an effective way of breaking free from abuse and trauma, to confirm the successes of how the co-researchers overcame their problems. We believe that the third aim set at the beginning of this research performance was met.

The next section looks at how and when the new play *New Seasons* will be performed, and by doing so, how we intend to challenge secular and faith communities to break the silence and isolation that trauma can create.

5.3.4 The fourth aim

The fourth aim was to challenge faith/secular communities to find voices to break the silence and isolation that trauma can sometimes create.

The play *New Seasons* will be performed in 2012 at high schools, churches in the communities of the Northern Cape and in Gauteng, as opportunities arise to do so. The script and full play details can be found in Annexure D of this research performance.

The writing of *New Seasons* is in itself a new performance based on the performances, re-performances and new preferred performances of the co-researchers. *New Seasons* is in itself a further confirmation of these new preferred performances and identity claims. It is my hope and dream that all co-researchers will attend the opening of the play, as *New Seasons* is meant to honour and to give meaning and dignity to their suffering and pain and to celebrate their new preferred performances. These performances are to be richly known, honoured, and highly acknowledged by all other counsellors or practitioners who work with people who experienced trauma, the secular and faith communities and the nation.

A pamphlet on Abuse was also compiled (see Annexure E). This pamphlet gives descriptions of different kinds of abuse. This pamphlet can aid young girls or women to recognise abuse in a relationship. It gives helpful information on how to turn your back on abuse if you are in such a relationship and what kind of action is needed to do so.

Government drives an awareness programme called *16 Days of Activism on Abuse against Women and Children*, starting on 25 November ending on 10 December 2012. This will be the perfect time to launch our pamphlet. Negotiations are ongoing at this moment with the Department of Social Development: Northern Cape to create a platform for launching this pamphlet. The pamphlet will also be distributed during this time at the local high schools and colleges in Kimberley.

We believe that sharing our experiences and knowledges with the world will create awareness and might help someone to break free from abuse and the silence that trauma can create; therefore the fourth aim of this research performance has been met.

5.4 WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

I have learnt that being exposed to shocking events, carnage, destruction or multiple traumas such as child molestation and abuse or domestic violence can change a person's view of the world (Müller, 2004:78; Retief, 2003:26). Trauma and abuse are social constructions (Burr, 1995:4); hence, the co-researchers' historical, cultural, societal and spiritual discourses (Morgan, 2000:45) informed them to be loyal, to be silent, to take responsibility and blame for the abuse, and not to give up on those relationships.

People who experience trauma may be invited to feelings of worthlessness, rejection, vulnerability, shame and fragility. They might be invited to feelings of depression, isolation and detachment from society, their community, family or a group (Retief 2003:16-17; Weingarten 2003:20-62; White 1995:88-91). Experiences of trauma and multiple trauma may result in feelings of emptiness, desolation, despair, hopelessness, paralysis and the fear that nothing that the person who experiences the trauma can do will change or affect the shape of her or his life (White, 2004:47): "They have also lost touch with a valued sense of who they are – a sense of myself" (White, 2004:47).

When the co-researchers performed their trauma performances for the first time, they selected a particular language and a performance that corresponded with the dominant discourses of trauma and of abuse. These discourses were constitutive of their

identities and relationships and of their world (Freedman & Combs, 1996:38; White, 2004:47). The co-researchers reported that some performances of trauma could invite feelings of stress, and can escalate the stress to a point where she wants to abandon any hope and no longer has any resilience. A narrative approach to pastoral counselling has to be aware of the harmful effects of such devastating discourses that might “blind us to the possibilities than other narratives might offer us” (Freedman & Combs, 1996:39).

Outsider witnessing practices and ideas focus on listening to and observing the pain and suffering of a co-researcher and acknowledging her own local knowledge about her trauma and abuse as valuable and significant. Adopting a narrative approach to pastoral counselling and the employment of outsider witness practices and ideas in group conversations with individuals who have experienced abuse and trauma helps to convert the conversation and language of some dominant discourses of trauma to a language of competence, creating new and preferred performances.

Counselling may be helpful, as it can provide a context in which people can speak about what they may not previously have spoken of before (White, 2004:48). In line with White’s (2004:48) ideas of double listening to what people give value to in life and to hints of a person’s responses to trauma (standing up against it) are further helpful guidelines in counselling. I have learned that to search for what the co-researcher is able to do well is also helpful in searching for new preferred ways of living. This might be helpful since the co-researcher begins to present the performance of self as valuable, competent, and surviving and living through and beyond the limited life span of the abuse and trauma.

Establishing a safe space (Mann, 2004:5) in counselling (and in the case of pastoral counselling, this includes a spiritually safe space) is achieved by attentive listening to and observation of another individual’s trauma performance and by respecting the person’s performance as the sole agenda of the conversation. It implies that in this study, the other co-researchers were asked not to force a particular co-researcher’s issues to become the agenda of the conversation. The aim of outsider witness practices and ideas are to create an atmosphere by means of the conversations where an individual who has experienced trauma can talk freely about all the issues that worry her, whether it is about trauma or not and then later on develop new preferred ways of living.

Individuals who experience trauma or abuse may want to turn to God for help (Retief, 2003:29). Some religious discourses, however, may disable a person who has experienced abuse or trauma to some extent. In such cases, it may be necessary to deconstruct those harmful discourses. Deconstruction of discourses may offer a mode of conversation (White, 1991:27) that is comfortable for persons who turn to God in their suffering.

I have learnt that a narrative approach in pastoral therapy honours the performance of trauma as the agenda of a research performance such as ours. The process of telling, re-telling and re-re-telling was helpful in the sense that each co-researcher experienced a sense of “being heard” (White, 2004:53). This experience was helpful for the continuity of the outsider witness conversations. During our conversations and reflection sessions, we started to co-construct alternative and preferred ways of living.

Anne’s trauma performance as well as her strong faith and reflections during the outsider witness conversations were like a fresh breeze that swept through the group. Most of her reflections and comments were spirituality related and were positive in tone. She opened the door wider to encourage the other co-researchers to talk more freely about spirituality in the group. I wonder whether, without Anne’s spiritual input, the end results would have remained the same. I suspect that the performances could have taken a different turn. As a counsellor who takes accountability seriously, and who seeks to perform counselling in an ethical and responsible manner, I was aware that not all the co-researchers were as enthusiastic about discussing spirituality as Anne and I were. I therefore took into consideration a de-centred approach, as recommended by Tootell (2004:56) in the research performance, as the results became our results and did not depend on my agenda points and input.

Attending the workshop “Responding to Violence” in Australia in 2005 and conducting co-research with my co-researchers acquainted me with outsider witness practices and ideas. The research performance results showed that individuals who experienced trauma can move forward in life and do not necessarily have permanent scars. In my practice in Kimberley, I have since applied outsider witness practices and ideas on various occasions with children who lost a loved one, in group trauma counselling with medical personnel at the private hospital where I do counselling and with people creating a support basis where there is no support any more. I would not want to proclaim that this is the only way to do pastoral trauma counselling, but what I have learned from the results of this study inspires me to apply this approach more often in my own practice. My dream is to invite a few of my fellow narrative pastoral colleagues

to use outsider witness practices and ideas more frequently – I agree with White's (2004:56) claim of the power of making use of outsider witnesses practices and ideas, when he says: "[I]n my experience there is no therapeutic process more powerful."

The next section looks at places where we as co-researchers could have stayed a while longer and explored more, but where the spotlight moved on.

5.5 REFLECTION ON WHERE WE COULD HAVE LINGERED AND EXPLORED MORE

More time might have been made available in the beginning of the research process to explain the outsider witness questions to the co-researchers. Perhaps if an exercise or two had been done, the co-researchers would have known exactly how to reflect on each other's performances, using the outsider witness questions, which they did not do in the beginning. This might have resulted in richer and thicker descriptions of their identities, as the co-researchers would have responded with the telling of more stories and details of these identity claims and taking ownership of them.

The co-researchers' and my preferred way of doing this research performance was to explore multiple meanings and alternative ways of coping with and recovering from trauma, making use of outsider witnessing practices and ideas assisted us in developing new alternative performances. There are many other ways, maps, guidelines, practices and ideas in narrative pastoral counselling that we could have used and the outcome could probably have been the same or something completely different. For me, as co-researcher and counsellor, however, this research performance affirmed the value of using outsider witness groups. I hope that, like the co-researchers on this research journey, many more people will share their stories of trauma with me in future and will benefit from what I have learned.

In this research performance, all co-researchers were women. I wonder what the outcome of this research would have been if male co-researchers had been part of the group. I suspect that the outcome would have been different. This might open up some possibilities for more research that could be done in this field of enquiry.

Upon reflection, I wonder what the outcome could have been if the outsider witness discussion explored more of the spiritual experiences of the co-researchers. However, I had to stay true to the de-centred approach that was chosen at the beginning of the process. Although I made it clear in the beginning of this research performance that

this research was in the domain of Pastoral Care and Practical Theology, and that the focus would also be on all the co-researchers' spirituality, not all the co-researchers chose to dwell on spiritual issues. However, even though we did not go into deep spiritual discussions all the time, the co-researchers experienced a safe space where they could freely talk about their experiences of abuse, and share their responses to trauma, as spiritual talk. By engaging in a conversation in which, at the appropriate time, as indicated by the client, alternative voices are introduced, the person in counselling may gradually turn to a "healing spiritual talk" (Andrews & Kotzé, 2000:323).

5.6 POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH PERFORMANCE TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND PASTORAL CARE

In her book *Suffering*, Dorothee Soëlle accuses the Church of having an apathetic attitude when it comes to the suffering of fellow human beings. Looking at it from non-Christian perspective, her argument at first glance seems like a condemnation of God (whereas is in fact a call to human action). She has the suspicion that this apathetic attitude should be ascribed to people's fear of suffering (Soëlle, 1989:40). Are we doing what Romans 12:15 asks of us? Are we crying with those who are crying, or are we blind to their suffering? In her book, Soëlle succeeds in closing the gap between theology and practice. This is what we also attempted in this research performance: to bring theology to join hands with practice, to suffer with those who are suffering and to search for paths of healing, hope and resilience.

I believe that one of Jesus' most important teachings was the need to serve one another, in all our relationships here on earth. Matthew 25:31-46 helps me to understand how to be in the service of my neighbour, my family and the community. Being part of a faith community, many of us are struggling to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to be part of the local body of believers who should exist to "care for the needy, to welcome strangers, to do good to all people, to heal the broken hearted, to forgive the repentant, to comfort the sorrowing, to hold up the weak" (Collins, 1988:52).

Matthew 7:12 calls on us to do the following: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." This command has been usually called God's golden rule on account of its great value. All that you expect or desire of others in similar circumstances, do to them. Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you

would expect of her or him. We attempted to do this with our research performance. We have put ourselves in the shoes of the other, we suffered with the other and therefore it gave us a heart to do the same to others. We believe that with the play *New Seasons* we can bring God's word closer to us and others, and present it in a practical way to various secular and faith communities.

We hope that this research performance has made a contribution in the field of Pastoral Care and Practical Theology. In the re-performance of trauma, the co-researchers and I closed the gap between theology and practice by doing what Matthew 25 asks of us. In doing so, we made use of a narrative pastoral approach and we succeeded in caring for one another by applying outsider witnessing practices and ideas, which benefited all the co-researchers. We suffered and celebrated our successes with one another. Outsider witnessing is a non-confrontational approach to opening the door to spirituality. By using this approach, we created a safe and spiritual space so that everybody could talk freely about God. We know what is expected by people who suffer from trauma and it became our cause to help those who suffer it. To conclude, we would like to share a prayer that we sing in our congregation to keep our eyes open to the pain and suffering caused by trauma, and let us be His hands and feet in the service of others.

Let me see

Let me see what breaks Your heart,
Let my heart be broken too,
Let me see Your healing love,
Let me heal by loving too.

Give me the eyes of Jesus.
Let me see what You see.
Let me be Your hands and feet.
Let my heart be stirred by You.

Jesus Lord, You are love.
You are there where people care;
Let me feel Your healing love,
Let me heal by loving too.

5.7 NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPLORATION

During this research journey and my participation in the performances and re-performances of trauma by and with the co-researchers, a few questions presented themselves to me. I found myself wondering whether we as Western counsellors need to know more about traditional coping patterns in a time of a crisis when working with non-Western people. Western discourses focus on individual integrity and identity (as applied in outsider witnessing practices and ideas), whereas in the Third World, many people hold a different notion of self in its relation to others. What do we need to know or learn from non-Westernised people that would help us and that we can incorporate in our counselling approach working with people who have experienced trauma?

5.8 MY OWN REFLECTIONS, AFTER I EXITED THE RE-RE-PERFORMANCE

In this section I focus on my personal development and how I can contribute to the counselling profession in the future.

The research has changed and moved me. I am very grateful to the co-researchers for sharing their trauma performances, for the valuable time they set aside to share in this research performance. Their trauma performances of suffering and pain, and their responses to trauma, standing up against abuse, left all of us changed persons. I would like to believe that the research had a positive impact and benefited all the co-researchers, and that not one of us is the same now, as we were all enriched by the results of this research performance. It is my hope that the co-researchers' sharing in this research performance will give meaning and dignity to their suffering.

I would like to invite some counselling colleagues in Kimberley and Pretoria to participate in an outsider witness reflecting group. This does not mean that they have to sit in as I do counselling. Instead, I would, with the consent of my client, use a video during counselling and play it back to my colleagues, giving them time to reflect, using the outsider witness questions. At the next counselling session with my client, I would then play back the reflections, in the hope that it will have a powerful result on my client's identity claims, setting a path for new, preferred trauma performances and acknowledge that the client's performance is valuable and significant.

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ANNEXURE A

Annexure A:

RE-PERFORMING TRAUMA MAKING USE OF OUTSIDER WITNESSING: A PASTORAL NARRATIVE CARE APPROACH

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CO-RESEARCHERS

Thank you for your interest in this project about re-performing trauma. As a person who experienced trauma, I invite you to participate in this research project. Your co-research part in this project could lead to a better understanding of the complexity of trauma experienced that might lead to alternative ways of healing.

Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, I thank you. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind.

Aim of the project.

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Practical Theology – with specialisation in Pastoral Therapy, at UNISA. The aims of the project are:

- a) To co-construct what conditions are necessary for each co-researcher to have a safe space to re-perform their trauma stories.
- b) To explore the influence of socially constructed discourses regarding the beliefs of Western society, social, medical and spiritual ideas about trauma. We will question whether these discourses affected and influenced us in our meaning-making of the traumatic experiences. We will explore the discourses that have a power/knowledge relation and are influencing the healing process.
- c) To explore multiple meanings and alternative ways in coping with and recovering from trauma. We will make use of outsider witness practices and ideas that might assist us in developing new alternative stories. We will act upon this information in such a way that we will re-perform trauma that brings hope and healing, which might benefit others.
- d) To challenge faith/secular communities in finding voices to break the silence and isolation that trauma sometimes could create.

Participants needed for the study.

The researcher will approach people who have experienced trauma who will be included in the research project, performing their trauma stories of how they experience it in their lives. The people invited will be female, between the ages of 20 and 65 (or older); including any cultural orientation is welcome to join the research project.

What will be required of participants?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to give consent for the audiotape information obtained during the interviews to be used in the research project. Should the need arise for additional therapeutic conversations regarding the difficulty and/or the interview, it could be arranged. It is important to know that the research will be conducted in the qualitative action research method. You are a co-researcher in the project and your opinion and participation will be respected at all times.

Free participation

Participation in the interviews is voluntarily and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences to you.

Confidentiality

The information gained during the interviews will be discussed with my supervisor and will be used in the project. With your prior consent, the interviews will be audiotaped. Should you wish not to have the conversation on audiotape, I shall make notes during the interview. The information collected during the research project will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed after conclusion of the project, but any raw data that the project will depend on will be retained in a locked filing cabinet for six months.

Results of the study.

Results of this project may be published. At your request, details (names and places) will be distorted to ensure anonymity. You will have the choice to use your own name or a pseudonym of your own choice. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

Questions of participants

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me:

Philene Fortuin Tel: (053) 832 7088

Cell: 084 479 1848

or you can contact my supervisor, Dr Ryna Grobbelaar, at 083 271 6875

ANNEXURE B

Annexure B

RE-PERFORMING TRAUMA MAKING USE OF OUTSIDER WITNESSING: A PASTORAL NARRATIVE CARE APPROACH

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning the research project and I understand what the project entails. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage.

I am aware of what will happen to my personal information including audiotape recordings at the conclusion of the project. I understand that the data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project, but that any raw data the project depends on will be retained in secure storage for six months, after which it will be destroyed.

I am aware that the conversation will be audio taped.

I am aware that I may request further therapeutic conversations if necessary.

I will receive no payment or compensation for participating in the study.

All personal information supplied by me will remain confidential throughout the project.

I am aware that the researcher's supervisor will read the material.

I am willing to participate in this research project.

Signature of participant

Date

ANNEXURE C

Annexure C

RE-PERFORMING TRAUMA MAKING USE OF OUTSIDER WITNESSING: A PASTORAL NARRATIVE CARE APPROACH

THE OUTSIDER WITNESS TECHNIQUE AND STEPS WE MIGHT FOLLOW

The following guidelines or categories of inquiry were developed by Michael White and will be applied during the research performance (White 2004:50)

- Identify the expression that caught your attention or captured your imagination.
- Describe the image of people's lives of their identities.
What are the sorts of identity conclusions that are supported by these images?
What did these expressions evoke?
What did these expressions suggest to you about these people's purposes, values, beliefs, hopes, dreams and commitments?
- What is it about your own life/work that accounts for why these expressions caught your attention or struck a chord for you?
Do you have a sense of which aspects of your own experiences of life resonated with these expressions and with the images evoked by these expressions?
- Have you been moved on account of being present to witness these expressions of life?
Where has this experience taken you to, that you would not otherwise have arrived at, if you hadn't been present as an audience to this conversation?
In what way have you become other than who you were on account of witnessing these expressions, and on account of responding to these stories in the way you have?

ANNEXURE D

NEW SEASONS

**(A play for narrative counselling
about 'letting go, to enter the new season',
becoming free to be who you are destined to be –
fulfilled in the life that God intended for you)**

by

Marlene Zwiegers

Dance created by Maggi van Heerden

**In honour of four amazing human beings who had the courage
to start this journey to enter their new season**

November 2011

THE SET

4 black rostra of different heights.

Black boxes on each rostrum with words written on both sides to be used as a wall and to bring about a scene change.

Space for dancing between all the rostra.

LIGHTING

ACT 1: MY STORY

A spotlight is used to focus on each character's story of her past; each is on her own rostrum.

ACT 2: LIES

Red light washes the stage as the lies are told by the others in the story.

ACT 3: OUTSIDER WITNESSES BRING TRUTH

Amber light washes the stage, as the others bring the truth as a gift for one another.

ACT 4: THE NEW SEASON IS HERE

When the play changes to the NEW SEASON, the rostra is used for walls for the words portrayed in the new season. The lighting changes from a white spotlight to blue, orange, green and pink lighting, to suggest spring.

PROLOGUE

On each rostrum, actors are sitting, frozen in position.

Dancers dressed in black come on stage to the music of “Alice” (Avril Lavigne). The dancers are creepy characters... they wriggle and creep along the stage.

The principal dancer, also dressed in black, with a red ribbons tied around her legs, dances on the stage. It is clear that she feels some inner turmoil. She moves with the music as if she is trying to stand. She has difficulty reaching out to others. Another dancer comes on the stage. He takes hold of her violently, takes the red ribbon from her leg and attaches it to her arm. He takes hold of one of the red ribbons and draws her to his side. She tries to resist, but cannot. Another dancer comes on stage and does the same. He also takes hold of a red ribbon. A fight of tugging on these red ribbons starts. She struggles.

You could see her pain in this struggle, until she decides to let go of the red ribbons. The moment she makes this decision, there are no more ribbons to tug on. She starts her victory dance. Elated, she pushes away those that tugged on her...and she flies!!!

ACT 1

FIRST ROSTRUM

Mia is sitting at a table. An oversized bottle of Jack Daniels is set on the table with an oversized glass. Neil Diamond's "Red wine" is playing... she is dancing... swaying... drunk. The music fades.

ANDRIES

The bitch! Look at her!!! Just look at her! Drunken slut! *(He enters the stage with an oversized mirror)*. So I must stay at home? Mia!!! So drunk, she cannot even see me! Look at yourself, woman!!! Look at you! See yourself! *(holds up the mirror in front of her)*

MIA *(she lays her head on her arms)*

But can you see me?

ANDRIES

Listen, woman! I had a hard day at work. Where is my food?

MIA

I am sorry, Andries. I am so sorry...I...I was just so lonely. I thought I would drink something. I waited till seven for you to come.

ANDRIES

So it is twelve now....who do you think keeps you at home, sitting around doing nothing? It's me, Mia. I bring the money in every month. The least you can do is give me a plate of food made from the hard-earned money I bring you. Stupid bitch.

MIA

Where were you?

ANDRIES

Where do you think? I work, Mia, for you and our children...I slave away to keep you living in style...I am your slave...and look at you. Is this my compensation? A drunken woman?

VOICE OF SON

Mom, wake up, smell the coffee. Dad is cheating on you.

MIA

You smell of perfume.

ANDRIES

Mia, I am warning you. *(Taunts her now)* Are we going to start again? “Andries, have you been to your whores?” No, Mia, I have not been! Although heaven knows they would at least give me something to be excited about. You ungrateful wench! Good for nothing wife. When you are not happy with me coming home at a time that suits you...it is always the same story....have I been with another woman...and then...your whining starts. THAT IS WHY I work late!!! You always say I have a problem. No, Mia, you are the one with the problem. Not me!!

MIA *(falls on the ground at his feet and asks forgiveness)*

Forgive me, Andries, please forgive me.

ANDRIES *smirks. He pushes her away, kicks at her and leaves her as a crumpled heap on the ground.*

Freeze.

SECOND ROSTRUM

Four praying women are sitting around a table. Oversized Bible on the table.

RIANA

Thank you, Lord, that you listen to us. That you guide us in everything we need and do. Amen.

Dearest friends, we are here to present our hearts to one another. This is the place where we can feel safe as women. We can unburden our hearts in the safety of God's encompassing love that He sheds so freely in our hearts. But, my dearest friends, there is a passage in the Bible that warns us that we have to be vigilant, watchful. The Devil, the evil one, is there to steal from us. Are we aware how we can be used and abused for his purposes? Have you recognized this factor in your daily walk with God?

ASTRID

I am struggling to get to a place of peace.

RIANA

Lord, we ask you to show us what is stealing the peace that Astrid craves. The Peace, Lord, that you promise us. The peace that surpasses all understanding.

KARIEN

Riana, I am battling with my children. We have constant arguments about everything.

RIANA

Lord, we are asking you to show Karien what she must do to bring a stop to these arguments.

ANNE

I feel so down. I am not even able to get up in the morning. If it were not for this group, I would have stayed in bed all day.

RIANA

In the name of Jesus, I command you, Spirit of depression: 'Leave Anne. Do you hear me!!!??? Leave her!!!' Are you feeling the peace of God flooding your heart, Anne?

ANNE

I don't know...the darkness is so much.

RIANA

Jesus!!! Jesus, save this woman!!! Come on Anne!!! You need to let go of the things that hold you back. Let go!!!

ANNE

I am trying to. I just not seem able to.

RIANA

Let's talk about this. (*Irritated.*) Ladies, if we have reprimanded the evil spirits to leave, and we still battle with the same feelings, we need to look at our own hearts. Anne, if you do not fully believe that God can heal you, how can you be healed? I can scream at the top of my lungs to set you free, but if you don't want it, it will never happen.

ANNE

I do want to be healed.

RIANA

Are you still taking your anti-depression medication?

ANNE

The doctor said I had to.

RIANA

Who do you believe, Anne? Who do you think she believes for her healing, ladies?

KARIEN

Anne, if you truly believed God can heal you, you would have not trusted in medication.

ANNE

It is not a matter of not believing, I have a chemical imbalance. It has been tested.....

ASTRID

God is more than medication. Let go of the drugs, and let God do the healing.

ANNE

Yes, but...

RIANA

Anne, Anne...I am starting to wonder. Do you think, ladies, the turmoil all of us are experiencing...the battles we are having in our homes...it is as if God is saying something to us. We need to recognize His voice. *(Eyes closed and listening to God.)* Yes...yes, Lord...I will be the one to tell her...yes, Lord; I will be the one to succumb to your will.

ASTRID

What does God say?

KARIEN

Oh, Riana, I so wish I can hear God's voice as you do.

ANNE

Share with us, Riana. Your obedience to God is a wonderful

example to me.

RIANA

It is difficult to convey this message. Oh, Lord, sometimes You do expect the impossible from me. Yes...yes, Lord, I choose to be obedient. Anne, the Lord shows me a terrible thing.

ANNE

What?

RIANA

Your dad. Your dad committing suicide. I am so sorry, love.

ANNE

What did the Lord say?

RIANA

He says you need to repent. Your dad's suicide has released an evil spirit. This spirit has cleaved to you. Unfortunately this spirit is trying to wreck all of our homes. You have become this spirit. Ladies...we are battling with strife in our homes. It is not us; it is this spirit in Anne. He is showing me this so clearly. He says that you, Anne, have become a bad omen. This evil spirit has even permeated the paintings that you have done in your home. Rip them off your walls, Anne!!! Destroy them!!! Now I can see it. Everything bad happening in our lives is your fault.

ASTRID

Now I understand. The peace that I crave so much is stolen by Anne. Anne, you must repent.

KARIEN

Do not become a tool of the devil himself, Anne.

RIANA

Cleanse yourself, Anne. Go home and start to ask God how you must do it. Start by throwing out all evil books, your paintings... Look at your furniture. Pray about where you have bought it. Evil spirits attach to the things we buy. Let go of everything in your life that aids this suicidal spirit to rule your life.

ANNE

I am so sorry. I am so sorry.

RIANA

Don't be sorry. Repent. And start to live in a new way. You must do this, Anne. If you are not able to do this, we will be forced to cut you away from our group as the Lord cut down the fig tree next to the road which bore no fruit. To pray, ladies, helps nothing...we have to DO, what the Lord asks and expects from us. Obedience is what he requires. Are you prepared to be obedient?

ANNE

Yes.

RIANA

Praise to the Lord, for the humility in Anne. Bless her, Lord, for listening.

ALL THE LADIES

Amen.

Anne seems drawn and unhappy. The other ladies are smiling and happy.

Freeze.

THIRD ROSTRUM

Music as Interlude: "My Name Is Luka". A little girl sits on Thea's lap. Thea is reading a story to her. Three boys come in to listen too.

THEA

Once upon a time in a land called Tinyariki, there was a beautiful princess. She stayed in a castle all by herself. There was no one to talk to. She had the best food to eat, the most beautiful clothes to wear, the most exquisite perfumes on her dressing table.

When she closed her eyes, she could make a wish, and immediately the wish would materialise. But there was one wish she was not allowed to make. She was not allowed to wish for someone to love her....

THEA (*Thoughts – just the sound of her voice*)

Will my children ever know? How do I forget the hurt, the physical abuse in my first marriage? My dad coming to rescue me and the three boys. Why is it, Lord, that I am in the same circle of violence again? How did this happen?

Music in background: "My name is Luka"

LITTLE GIRL

What happened then, Mom?

BOY 1

This is a stupid story...

BOY 2

Wait, maybe it will get better...is there going to be a dragon, Mom?

BOY 3

Yes, Mom, is there?

THEA

I am sorry, kids, Dad's home. We will read again tomorrow night. Nighty night, off to bed. I need to go to Dad.

(Everybody freezes.)

(Thea's husband enters. Thea walks from the rostrum to Divan, centre stage front.)

DIVAN

Where were you?

THEA

I am sorry, Divan, I read a story.....

DIVAN

Sorry, does not help, Thea. You are forever saying you are sorry. I am so sick and tired of that....I have a meeting with my mom, I need to speak to her about the finances.

THEA

Is everything ok, Divan with the finances? Is there anything I can do?

DIVAN

No. *(His body language shows that he does not want to pursue this subject.)*

THEA

Why can't I be part of your discussions of our finances?

VOICE OF MOTHER IN LAW – HENDRINA

My son, I am so sorry for you. I regret the day you brought this woman to my farm. She is a weak parasite.

Divan

Thea, the finances are not your concern. It is between my mom and me. You are a feeble housewife. And!! Stop doing nothing. Look at the house. It is dirty. Spend less time reading stories and start to clean up around you.

THEA

I was just reading...

Divan

Yes, Thea, you are forever sitting with your stupid stories and books. I don't have time for this. I am going to my mother.

THEA

Divan...

DIVAN

Divan, nothing, Thea! (*Slaps her through the face.*) Thea, you force me to slap you! You bring it upon yourself. Stay this way and I will be forced to divorce you. Then, my dearest wife, where will you be? Who is going to look after you? The court will not give you custody of our daughter. Your boys I do not care about. You have fucked them up already. You can have them for free. I will not let you corrupt our daughter. The thing is, you have nothing. You and your boys will beg for money.

THEA

Divan...

DIVAN

No, Thea, I am tired of your feeble excuses. You are not taking care of the house. My mom will be the one telling the judge of what a poor excuse of a mother and wife you are. You are a lazy whore, lazy to work! It is YOUR spending which caused us

to lose everything we had. You with your scandalous shopping sprees have drained all our money. My mother is helping us, by providing us with this house on the farm and this is your way of saying thank you!

THEA

Divan, I was just reading a story...

DIVAN

Shut the fuck up!!! (*Hits her in the face with his fist, kicks her.*)
This is what I will 'read' to you...go...cry...look at those purple eyes of yours in the mirror and remember to clean the house.

THEA

I am so sorry. I am so sorry, it won't happen again. Please.....
Don't take my daughter away from me.

Freeze

FOURTH ROSTRUM

GAYNOR (*spotlight on her*)

My hero
My dad
My happiness
My sad
Would someone ever understand?
This engraved pain in my soul
I carry
Is there someone
Listening?

(Audience clapping, announcement of Gaynor receiving a gold medal for her poetry.)

VOICE OF ANNOUNCER

The winner of the poetry section for Creative Writing: Original Work is.... Gaynor Alberts.

GRANDFATHER

I am so proud of you. Congratulations, Gaynor.

GAYNOR

Thanks, Grandpa.

GRANDFATHER

I wish your mom and dad had been able to come and see you perform. Your writing and performance of this poem was excellent. If I did not know better, I would have said it was the truth.

GAYNOR

Grandpa...

GRANDFATHER

Where do you get your ideas?

GAYNOR

That is what I want to talk about.

(Gaynor's mom and dad enter the stage)

MOM

I am so sorry we are late. We had to drop something off at the hospital for your sister, and then the phone rang...have you done your piece?

GAYNOR

Yes, Mom.

GRANDDAD

She won! She was the best writer and performer for the section in creative writing of original work. I am so proud of my granddaughter.

MOM

Oh. Which poem did you do?

DAD

I suppose there were not many contestants. She is forever writing silly poems and things. You must start to concentrate on your school work and forget these poems. This will get you nowhere, my child. Focus on hard work, like the stripping of a car's engine. With that, my dear, you will be able to earn a living. Nothing else matters.

MOM

Let's go now. Stacey needs my help.

GAYNOR

Ok, Mom.

GRANDDAD

See you later. I am so proud of you. *(He goes off stage.)*

GAYNOR

Thanks, Grandpa.

DAD

Now don't get big-headed about this gold medal thing. Any money along with it?

GAYNOR

No, Dad.

DAD

See. Medals you can't eat, my child. Get in the car. Let's go home. *(sound of car doors, engine starting, car running)*

MOM

Can you drop me off at the hospital? I need to take this to Stacey.

DAD

Of course. Anything for you, my love. Will I pick you up in two hours time?

MOM

Don't worry; I will go home with one of the nurses who leaves her shift at 10.

(Dad stops the car, Mom gets out – sound of engine idling, car door)

MOM

Bye, you two.

GAYNOR

Mom, can I come, too?

MOM

No, Gaynor, you need to see that your dad gets his food. It is in the fridge.

GAYNOR

But Mom...

DAD

You heard your mom. Who is going to warm up the food if you are too lazy to do it?

GAYNOR

I would love to say 'hi' to Stacey, Mom.

DAD

Gaynor, you always want your way in everything. You cannot visit her now, and that's it.

GAYNOR

Yes, Dad.

DAD

That's my good girl. Bye, love. See you later. *(Mom goes off stage.)*

DAD

It seems you forgot your last spanking for improper behaviour. I think I will have to remind you again...

GAYNOR

Please, Dad...

DAD

Your mom's gone...it is time for some personal time between you and me.

GAYNOR

Dad, I am not...

DAD

Oh yes...You will. Do you think your food in your house comes for free? You owe me girl! You belong to me. You will do as I say.

GAYNOR

NO, Dad!!!! (*very determined*)

DAD

Gaynor!!!... (*Dad freezes.*)

GAYNOR

A little girl
Dreaming dreams of fairies
Taught to become
That which she will stand up against

My mom
Became blind
Deaf to my words of truth
I look through the window
See the cross
In the burglar bars

God are you here?
My soul is screaming for out
I won't let this kill me
I won't let go
Of my dreams
To remember it is not me
It is he
It is NOT ME

ACT 2: LIES

NARRATOR

Each human has a story to tell. The thing with stories is...some parts of them...are truth and some are lies. How, dearest audience, do we get to a place where we, the participants of these stories, can get to a place where we can distinguish between truth and lies?

My dearest Gaynor – what do you believe is the truth?

GAYNOR

I am bad. My dad's bad.

NARRATOR

You say that you are bad. Why?

GAYNOR

I am a teenage whore!

NARRATOR

Is it normal, you think, for a dad to behave such a way to his own daughter?

GAYNOR

Normal? What does it mean to me? In my life it is a given. If it was not, why is my mom not stopping this?

NARRATOR

If it was so normal, why are you not happy about this?

GAYNOR

I don't know. Maybe it is just me. He said he is teaching me to be a good wife one day. It is also a way of rewarding him for all the things that he has to buy for me. He says it is me, who awakens these things in him. I am bad.

NARRATOR

Let's get some help. Audience, is this normal behaviour between dad and daughter?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE

No! Hell no!!!

NARRATOR

What is happening here?

AUDIENCE

He is molesting her, man. He is mad. He should be locked up.

NARRATOR

What do you think of that, Gaynor?

GAYNOR

I will have nowhere to go. Who is going to look after me, my sister and my mom, if he is locked up?

NARRATOR

Are you really looked after?

GAYNOR

What do you mean?

NARRATOR

If you are given the task of taking care of your sister, do you harm her?

GAYNOR

Of course not!

NARRATOR

Would you say that your dad is harming you, hurting you, loving you?

GAYNOR

I don't know.

NARRATOR

What does the audience think?

AUDIENCE

Put him in the slammer! A father that does not protect, a father that hurts his own child is not a father. He is a child abuser. Do not tolerate it.

GAYNOR

I have to tolerate it. My mom does not believe me.

NARRATOR

Does that change the fact that it is wrong to right? Or does it mean she got it wrong?

NARRATOR

Four different stories, four different traumas, which need to be worked through. No easy task. Yes, it is shown from one side. The side from the person who has experienced these things. Yes, there are more sides to one story. The fact is that all of the main actors are living a certain discourse. Let's see if they can discover their discourse or lie, by listening to each other.

All the main actors, Anne, Mia, Thea and Gaynor to the front of the stage. The stage is washed with red light. Each character brings the lies, written on boxes and speaks them.

NARRATOR (ABOUT THEA)

What are the three negative discourses that Thea has fallen into?

Anne, Gaynor and Mia summarize the lie (also named a discourse) that Thea believes.

ANNE (*brings black box with words written on it and builds a wall of those words on her rostrum*)

Silence about abuse is loyalty towards Divan.

GAYNOR

I will lose my children.

MIA

I don't need to know about the finances. I have no right to ask.

NARRATOR (ABOUT ANNE)

Could you name the lies that Anne believes?

THEA

My ideas and opinions are not worth listening to. I am worthless.

GAYNOR

My paintings are evil.

MIA

I am self-obsessed and selfish.

NARRATOR (ABOUT GAYNOR)

What are the three traps that Gaynor fell into?

ANNE

I am voiceless.

MIA

I do not deserve to be listened to.

THEA

I am no one. I do not fit. I do not trust.

NARRATOR (ABOUT MIA)

Can you mirror the discourse of Mia's belief system?

GAYNOR

I do not deserve to believe in myself.

ANNE

I can depend on Jack...Jack Daniels.

THEA

I am the problem.

ACT 3: OUTSIDER WITNESSES

BRING TRUTH

Light changes from red to amber. The stage becomes a lounge, where the 5 women talk to one another. The narrator is on the stage right on a bar stool.

NARRATOR

There is a safe place, where people feel loved and heard where they can speak freely of their feelings, emotions and experiences. This safe place in this story is created where the narrative counsellor brings together four heroes. Women, who decided that they will face their fears, speak about them, work through them, and step out of miry clay into victorious territory. They are the ones who are going to teach us what they learned from one another, what made them heroes, so that we can learn to become heroes too. I will ask some questions that changed their life, by listening to the outsider witnesses. Sometimes the voices within should be silenced to listen to outsiders.

PHILENE FORTUIN *(Narrative counsellor)*

Tell Mia what you have seen, heard and admired in her story? Also tell her why it had an impact on your own life.

ANNE

Mia, I admire your endurance, loyalty and faithfulness. Andries cheated on you, lied to you, abused you verbally and emotionally. Still you stayed. You endured. It struck a chord in me, because those qualities made me stick to my Bible study group as well. I can see now that the endurance was a skill

that you had to learn in your unhappiness, to become happy where you are now. You had the guts to break away from this abusive marriage and that took endurance as well.

GAYNOR

Mia, I admire your honesty. You admitted that you had a drinking problem. You do not shy away from your own truth. Considering that Andries was the one to abuse you emotionally, shun you from his life, treat you with contempt, even though you gave him all your pension money to start his new business. He should have been thankful and loving for the way you loved him. He is the one with the greater problem. He cannot face himself. I can remember the craving in my heart. That those who have hurt me must say they are sorry. So on behalf of Andries, I would like to present you with that gift. I am sorry for what Andries did to you. He was an asshole!!! You, Mia, you did the best you could.

We should teach our children to say they are sorry. If they can learn that, we know we taught them to take responsibility for their own actions.

ANNE

I have an image of God and the way He worked with Mia. As a potter myself, I realize now that He worked tenderly with her. When the potter works too vigorously with the clay, it flops. That's why God would always work gently and tenderly with us, so that we would become victorious and not a flop. To work softly and gently says that He is in control. If I look at your story, Mia, I realize how in control God is. It just depends on what you look at. He is always in control, no matter how

right or wrong things seem to be. We can trust Him.

PHILENE

Mia, can you explain to me the reason for your silence? For I would like to understand your tremendous loyalty to your husband, although he was the one hurting you.

MIA

Strange as it may seem, I did not want anyone to think badly of him. I did not want him to be seen as a fool in front of family or friends.

PHILENE

Where else in your life did you display this amazing loyalty?

MIA

Towards my children. My son is gay and I knew it, from when he was young, but I loved him nonetheless. He is my child. I am loyal to those I love. That is why the divorce between me and Andries was so difficult. As a Christian, I believed it is not permitted. It is also not a sign of loyalty. And of course, I was afraid to be alone. I do have to admit that, today, I am divorced and I am happy.

PHILENE

Mia, you taught me today to be loyal to the people that are important in my life.

THEA

I don't think you are a complete alcoholic, Mia.

MIA

That's a nice way of saying it, Thea, I appreciate it. When I was married to Andries, I had one aim. I had to drink as much

as I can in the least amount of time. Today, I still drink, but I am more in control. (*Mia sobs.*)

PHILENE

Your sob made me think that it is difficult to let go of old friends, or a husband. They are so much part of your life. It also reminds me that by letting go, you are making room for new friends, which is only possible if you can let go of the old. I am looking forward to hear of the new friends you will be making.

MIA

Philene, Andries was my hero. On the one hand, it was difficult to let him go, and on the other hand I am sorry for holding on so long, for being so long in denial.

THEA

Denial is the reality of abuse. I did the same, Mia. You must remember it is part of the healing journey. Denial, anger, sorrow, stress or sadness and then, only then, comes the healing.

PHILENE

Anne, you experienced a lot of abuse, specifically, spiritual abuse. There are no black marks to show, but your spirit grieved a lot. To recap, just tell us your story.

ANNE

My Bible study group abused me. That went on for a period of 15 years. Then there was a burglar in our house. I experienced trauma in such a way that I had to go for trauma counselling. It was with the counselling that I realized that I had endured spiritual abuse for many years.

THEA

I admire your relationship with God. It is so real. It seems like a gold thread, woven through from the beginning to the end. I wish I could say that I have that gold thread in my life. How did you get that gold thread? How did you hold on to that? How can I get hold of it?

ANNE

Thea, I can only speak from my experience. Ask the Lord, like a little child would ask to come into your life. Philippians 4:6-7 explains it well:

(New International Version - UK (NIVUK))

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Just believe, Thea, like a child.

PHILENE

You are a genuine Christian and a genuine person, authentic and real. Anne, you remind me of my sister. She became a Christian 15 years ago and until today, after enduring many trials and tribulations, she is still a genuine “Christian”. You remind me of her.

I am moved today, you took steps to stop this abuse and it took some time, but you said no to spiritual abuse. It caused you a lot of trauma, but you are a victor who came out of this abuse victoriously.

ANNE

Philene and Thea, I so needed to hear that someone believed that I am truly a child of God. That God could be seen in my life. For so long, I could not pray, for I believed that I am not worthy. Today, you gave me the key to my prayer room. Thank you.

PHILENE

I am concerned that you in the group would have a negative picture of Christians in the future, because of this story of Anne.

ANNE

No, not at all. I see the people in the Bible study group who abused me, as the same kind of people there were in Jesus' time, the Pharisees. They thought they knew the law and that they obeyed it completely. On the contrary, they interpreted the law as they wished and turned it into "human religion" which they imposed on others. In doing this, they shaped people and forced them into boxes. When Jesus came, He pointed out that you may think you know the Word in your mind. But it all actually depends on your heart and what goes on inside it. Jesus told many parables to teach us what it means to be a child of God. We must be alert about the Pharisees in life, but we must not treat everyone in this way. Everyone is not a Pharisee. There are a lot of Christians who live the love of Jesus in the way they treat one another.

THEA

I am inspired by your story, Anne. I am determined to raise my head, stand up and take control of my life again, just like you did.

PHILENE

If we look at Thea's story, what inspired you?

ANNE

Thea's story reminds me of different seasons.

PHILENE

Explain this metaphor of seasons to us.

ANNE

By different seasons I mean different emotional, physical and spiritual experiences endured during that season.

I read in *Keur* about a woman who described her life in terms of the imagery of seasons and how she prayed that the spiritual winter she found herself in would turn into a spiritual spring. Thea, I was so moved by your trauma performance that I would never be able to look at the seasons, and not remember your story. I would also like to remind you to look with faith to the future. You will be surprised at how beautiful spring can be. The spring of your new life, awaiting you.

PHILENE

Thea, after hearing Anne's metaphor of the seasons, how do you feel about your life story, now?

THEA

Initially, I was worried about what you may think of me and my husband and I have felt that I defiled Divan in front of you. The strange thing was, when I returned home after sharing my story, Divan was nice to me, which made me feel even worse.

PHILENE

There are different sides to people and Divan is no different.

THEA

Yes, that is true. There is not only the abusive side, but also the good and nice side which all of us have.

PHILENE

Do you feel you have learned anything from the outsider witnesses?

THEA

Yes...one word...TO DO!

PHILENE

I would just like to remind you all that all of you will experience trauma healing differently. We do not have to experience it the same way as the others. Gaynor, would you like to share your story of healing?

GAYNOR

You heard my story in the beginning, but not all of it. I am one of twin girls and grew up in a small town. My twin sister was born with a lung defect which hampered her physical and psychological development. Some part of my childhood can be described as happy, but most of it was a misery. My father was a kind of patriarch and his word was the law of that house and nobody would dare to go against his will. At the end of Grade 1, the school decided not to put my sister through to the next grade due to her lack of academic progress. My parents decided to keep both of us back in Grade 1. When we went to Standard 6, my sister went to a special school helping children like her to overcome her difficulties. When I was in Standard 8 my sister left school and my father decided I must leave school and get married. He was mad! I refused and finished my final

year of school.

Just before I started puberty, my father started with his “tricks”. My dad thought of me as his “possession” and he could do with me as he likes. This was oil in my fire, and I bolted! I stayed away from home as much as I could and never wanted to be near him. Arguments, screaming matches resulted...like you could not believe. I told my mom what was going on but she never believed me.

My grandfather was my hero. He admired me and always reminded me of my potential. He spent a lot of time with me, teaching me about life.

I could not wait to finish school and get away from my father’s verbal abuse and his “possession obsession” with me. I found work in one of the bigger cities and started with my studies at Unisa. I am nearly finished with my postgraduate studies and have still bigger dreams for my future. To safeguard myself, I have not had much communication with my parents, but with time I had to learn to let go and forgive.

ANNE

Gaynor, I am amazed at your perseverance. You did not quit in school, or after school. Again I am reminded of my work at the pottery wheel. Sometimes the peace of art is not taking the shape I want it to be but sometimes I am surprised at the end result. Your story made me sad. May I hug you? I do not judge you, and I realise today, I am not the only one with pain.

(Gaynor and Anne hug one another.)

THEA

Your grandfather had a wonderful impact on your life, Gaynor. My dad was my hero too. He was strict, but he always wanted what was best for me. Was your Granddad like that? I have been moved today just by the thoughts of my father. He is not there any more, but he was my anchor. Gaynor and the rest of you...let's celebrate those people in our lives who made a loving difference to us!!!

PHILENE

Gaynor, how did it affect you to tell your story to others in the group?

GAYNOR

Philene, I was so scared! What would happen if the rest of you regarded me as pathetic? Strangely enough, it was not how I experienced it. It was actually good since someone was willing to listen. The outsider witness group really tried to understand my troubles. Most of all, I did not feel judgement. I received acceptance from all of you. You were willing to give me a hug, not only to make me feel better, but because you wanted to.

PHILENE

What are the most important things that you heard from the others?

GAYNOR

Anne's reaction about my perseverance stood out for me.

PHILENE

Why?

GAYNOR

The trials along the way made me a better person. They

allowed me to make decisions that I do not regret. Other people might have made the choice to become a perpetrator or to lead the life of a hermit or to engage in prostitution. I made other choices and in fact it did not turn out too bad. I always felt as though I was to blame. Today I realise that it may just be my fate. These trials along the way only made me a better person. Thea's words about her father and my grandfather moved me.

PHILENE

Why did they move you, Gaynor?

GAYNOR

They reminded me of my grandfather's belief in me. You know, Philene, there were days when I clung like a swimmer drowning to the promise I made to him. I promised my grandfather that I would make something of myself. It was my incentive in life. Maybe that was also the reason for my perseverance, not to give up, whatever my circumstances are.

PHILENE

Can you explain to us your walk with God? What He meant to you, in times of difficulty?

GAYNOR

My perception of God is one of a loving Father who will also punish deliberate wrongdoing. God has many faces. I am convinced that if I did not have God in my life, it would have turned out much worse and I would not have been able to make it through the situation.

PHILENE

What work are you anon doing in the community?

GAYNOR

I like to make a valuable difference in other people's lives. Like my granddad did in mine. I teach black children to read. I also take care of AIDS orphans.

PHILENE

I would like to understand your picture of God. Did you grow up in a Christian home?

GAYNOR

Well, it depends on what you mean by that. We as a family did not go to church very often, but I did know that God exists.

PHILENE

Did you forgive your dad?

GAYNOR

Yes, I did. Distance helped me to forgive him. I also realised that there are different sides to people, but there are also different sides to the past. There are good and bad times. My father taught me to take a car's engine apart. He also taught me to visualise an image or to imagine myself in a picture and I still apply this technique in my studies, job and everyday life.

PHILENE

What sustained you through all your trauma experiences?

GAYNOR

My personal strengths: intellect, rebelliousness, and standing up against sexual and physical abuse. I craved a different life from the rest of my family. You know, Philene, I always hoped that there will be something more.

PHILENE

Do you recall a legacy of words from your dad that you would prefer to forget?

GAYNOR

I don't want to forget, for that was what spurred me on to do better. My dad always said that I will get nowhere in life and I wanted to prove the opposite.

PHILENE

What would you like to say to schoolgirls that experience the same as you did?

GAYNOR

Don't wallow in your problems! Get up and do something about it!

ACT 4: THE NEW SEASON IS HERE

Blackout, but the boxes in the background are still visible. The sides are turned as the replacement of words is said by the ones who believed the lies. The positive words face the audience.

The lighting is soft: blue, orange, pink, green.

On the background screen, a garden appears, soft music, the sounds of water and birds are heard).

THE NARRATOR

The lies were unmasked. For everyone to see. The truth prevailed through the outsider witnesses. The audience gasp. How could it be that the negative discourses or lies, at one stage, became the truth of what each character believed? Is it because they chose silence, and accepted isolation from places of help and people that really care about them?

What did the characters learn? Did they truly hear the voices of truth from the outsider witnesses? What did THEY hear?

ALL THE CHARACTERS

THE TRUTH, NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

NARRATOR

Go, forth, show the audience how you will change the lies to truth now.

(When each character changes the lies to the truth, they turn the boxes and change their walls to these words, which they say and show the words on the boxes, to emphasise what brought them to a new season.)

ANNE

I forgive those who falsely accused me and abused me. I say

no!!! No more!

It is not God's way. God's way is love and compassion.

I am free.

GAYNOR

I say NO to abuse.

I have dreams. God given dreams.

The plans that God have for me are plans to let me prosper and not to harm me.

I am determined to DO AND LIVE those dreams.

THEA

I am a victor through Christ.

God is on my side.

I deserve to be spoken to.

I am worthy.

MIA

I am the solution.

God is more than enough. More than Jack.

I am strong.

NARRATOR

You are worthy to partake of the meal which symbolizes the grace Jesus brought to us, through his death. Not because of who we are, what we have done, or not done, but because of what He has done.

MIA (*lights two candles*)

Thank you God, that your light became mine. That in you we all are perfect, in spite of our mistakes. Thank you that your Light obliterates our past and gave us a new light for our new season.

ANNE (*breaks the bread and gives to each person and they eat it*)

Thank you, Lord, that your body was given as a sacrifice to us. We eat in remembrance of your complete sacrifice. We can add nothing to the grace your sacrifice brought us. We choose to forgive those that trespassed against us. We set them free. We set ourselves free from the past by accepting your perfect offer. We will seek your voice and not other voices any more.

THEA (*pours the wine*)

We thank you that your blood cleansed us, made us righteous, and gave us all a perfect new season to begin. We are renewed through your Life-giving Blood. We can face life with victory. We are worthy, for you made us worthy. Never again will we believe anything different. To believe anything different is to make an idol of those whose words we believe instead of your loving Word.

GAYNOR (*Pours salt on each one's bread*)

We are salt. We teach others to say no to abuse. We teach them to believe God's Words of Love. Any other word, from people who make you less than valuable and worthy, is not from God. We will say no to those who break us with words and deeds, and turn to God, to hear what He would say.

All four of them sit on a blanket in the 'garden' and celebrate this new season. Freeze.

ANNEXURE E