A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OF RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH AFRICA FOLLOWING ON FROM THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

By

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I declare that '**A pastoral Response to Some of the Challenges of Reconciliation in South Africa following on from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Shena Bridgid Hess

Abstract

This work is concerned with **healing practices** that are created within a participatory framework in pastoral theology. It works in **post-colonial** and **post-apartheid** times in South Africa following on from the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission.**

The thesis looks to forms of **participation** with both **victims** and **perpetrators** of apartheid. It seeks to challenge singular identities of victims and perpetrators, whites and blacks, which are bound up in juridical practices that are embedded within **binary forms of identity**. It exposes some of the problems associated with the splitting of a **subject** from an **object** of enquiry.

The research concerns a journey with a group of Mothers who lost their sons and husbands to the violence of the apartheid state. It is also a journey with some of the perpetrators who were responsible for the elimination of these men. It seeks to deconstruct identity in order to find alternate descriptions of people, both the victims and perpetrators that are not constructed within a binary oppositional form. This is worked with ideas from the **social construction movement** particularly ideas relating to **relational responsibility**. The research attempts to create a safe enough context for **accountability, vulnerability** and healing to take place within a participatory frame of pastoral care. It works with **post-modern theology** and some of the philosophy of **Derrida**, **Foucault** and **Levinas**.

Key words

Pastoral care, theology, post-apartheid South Africa, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, participatory action research, binary forms of identity, relational responsibility, vulnerability, post-structural philosophy, social construction, Derrida, Foucault, Levinas.

Acknowledgements

Any piece of work, whether oral or written holds within it many voices of other people who have influenced one's own voice and beliefs. There are a number of people and life experiences that have particularly influenced my own way of thinking and being in this world, and I would like to pay tribute to a few of them.

Firstly there is my husband Richard, who has patiently watched his wife go into a metamorphosis of change, not knowing what would emerge from the chrysalis. I have often run away in my head and in my thoughts and he has I think anxiously waited for the return of someone he once knew. It has not been possible to return in the same shape and size, but I have returned, hopefully wiser and less irritable and touchy about my way of living in this world.

Secondly I would like to thank Professor Dirk Kotzé for the many conversations we have had about participatory ethics and a theology of engagement with the issues that I grapple with in this thesis.

I am very thankful to my supervisor Dr. Johan Myburg for his wise and often understated comments. He has beckoned and invited me to persevere on this research journey without me losing control over my own voice or writing. As a student supervisor myself I admire this as it is easy to read students work with the urge to privilege your own voice in it.

I have appreciated Dr. Johann Roux's input in this work, particularly his leading of the reflection with the Mothers and his encouragement in the work. It was through him that I also wove in ideas of Wittgenstein and the thought that it is nearly impossible to describe lived experience, just as it is impossible to describe the aroma of coffee. I have also appreciated my co-supervisor Dr Hesterness's comments on this text; his thorough reading and constructive comments.

I am thankful to the Mothers for allowing me into their lives and homes and for all they have taught me in this participatory process of mutual benefit. I am also very grateful to Adriaan Vlok, Jack Cronje, Jan Wagener and Johan Van der Merwe for engaging in this work. They have given their time freely and risked opening themselves to my own critique. I am also grateful to Dr. Jobson for introducing me to the Mothers. I am also deeply appreciative of the work Gaelle Van Dyk put into the graphics in the poetry section.

Lastly I am unusually grateful for all the hard lessons I have learnt from my life experience in Zimbabwe. The pain, history and patient suffering of people in that country has taught me both that history does not go to sleep, and that it is easy to repeat oppressive regimes and ideologies without being aware of the terrible effects it has on those who are denied a voice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Introductions are written after a work is done, when writing hopefully appears orderly and seamless to the reader, defying the chaos and pain out of which a document is birthed. Introductions in another way present a 'face' to the reader that might appear 'made up', 'dressed up', and ready to meet a world 'out there', neatly fitted into language. This work attempts to present an orderly presentable face that meets with the subject I am in conversation with, although I do not think that it is possible to adequately find language for the stories that are to follow. Because of this difficulty I find myself writing often in anecdotes or the metaphorical, the imaginative and sometimes the poetic.

This pre-amble also serves as an introduction to the scheme of what lies behind the 'face' of this thesis. It lays out some of the main arguments and themes of this text in order to make the writing more accessible to the reader. This introduction in other words serves as a guide to both the epistemology and the methodologies that I am using in this thesis. I make this clear at the outset because I have chosen to write in a particularly fluid narrative style that does not make it easy to access some of the theory lurking behind the text.

This narrative style is not particularly 'heading' friendly and does not necessarily guide the reader directly to the theory that supports the text. Although I use some numbering in order to help order the text, I have broken with a tradition of forming sub-numbers in favour of a constant weaving of ideas into the texture of the thesis in a poetic, fluid and recursively circular way. Chapter four, which traces some of the theology in South Africa is more easily measured and chronological in its order than the other chapters.

The less static format allows a free-play of both the complexity of this topic, as well as my own reflection into the research, which, along with experience and memory is not a linear process. The ideas mature I hope like a mellowed wine which is evocative of flavour and aroma rather than something more quantifiable or sterile. It is not that I have anything against the former more traditional way of writing, but my own style seems to best be accommodated within a more poetic form of writing, which creates a less interrupted rhythm. This is taken from a post-modern approach to research in

which the grand narratives of modern science that seek to arrive and settle for a truth are replaced by multiple realities, meanings and flavours that hint at many truths performed in constant movement on the many stages and sets in life.

This work invites you into its own journey as I attempt to weave the stories of research participants, including my own, through the whole narrative. The written document becomes a by-product of this journey of participation.

On the face of it the terrain I explore is South Africa. Behind the face lurks Europe, colonial identities, wars, empires, victors and vanquished, enemies and fear of death. It is through scratching the surface of any one ideology that its own dishonest pursuit of certainty is revealed, as a futile attempt to give privilege to any one belief.

This research takes me into a black township in Pretoria called Mamelodi. Mamelodi is one of the older townships in Pretoria and lies roughly fifteen kilometres to the east of the city. I was invited in March 2003 to work as a pastoral narrative counsellor to a group of women who were still seeking healing from atrocities committed under the apartheid regime during the 1980's. They have become known as the Mamelodi Mothers, or the relatives of the disappeared in Mamelodi. This research is a reflection on our journey, which has to date been three and a half years. The research has worked with a participatory ethic and my interest is in the role that this way of working might play in assisting the transformation process, within the discipline of pastoral care, in South Africa today.

The work is reflected upon with the Mothers in chapter seven. There are other participants in this text and they include some of the senior men who were ultimately responsible for the deaths of these family members. I do this for two reasons. Firstly I do it because the Mothers themselves asked for me to contact them as a way of finding healing. Secondly I do it because I hold a belief that authentic participation needs to find ways of retrieving lost humanity in a world that is turning more and more to a mentality of *us* against *them*. This is not at first obvious in literature and politics that espouse inclusiveness of all people, but I argue in this thesis that separatisms and dualisms are deeply embedded in juridical systems of governance, as well as contextual and liberation theologies out of which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

emerged as a way of doing justice. Along with ideas of justice goes the need for man to control his environment and it was through reading Foucault's work on *The Order of Discourse* that I became aware of just how much modern man attempts to control both the world and ideas about God.

I use people's real names in this work because I am working with people whose voices I feel I want to honour. This is in contrast to numbers or fictitious characters. There is one exception to this and concerns a person who I have had problems with and who remains for me a reminder of the limits of my own paradigm of participation, as well as the limits of language, which whether I like it or not, pushes me into oppositional categories.

The question that aroused my interest and curiosity concerned the role that a participatory theology might play in an ongoing process of healing in South Africa. I was interested in challenging and dismantling certain practices that subtly maintain separation, privilege, dualism, self-righteousness and exclusion.

Using a post-modern approach to theology, I have taken a participatory practice to mean that I attempt not to argue my position against another, but rather in a Derridian way, to know that the very thing I do not say is implied in what I say. This position calls me to become both self reflexive and accountable to those who see me in ways that I cannot see myself. To argue one idea, or theory against another appears particularly futile to me and maintains the very separation and contradiction that I attempt to avoid in this work.

Using Derrida's ideas on deconstruction as a point of departure, I argue in chapter four that a participatory theology needs to participate alongside the many other current theological voices in South Africa, without drowning or eclipsing other methodologies, both from the past as well as the present. It is easy to entomb ideas that were once costumes worn with pride, and tag them as relics of the past, unaware that they too are sewn into the patchwork fabric that is constructed anew. I attempt to avoid this through a constant deferral of any one assumption within the text, on the understanding that traces of these ideas are present and alive within the text and cannot be otherwise.

Having said this, I focus particularly on South African contextual and participatory theology, tracing its genealogy from some other models that are currently used in South Africa. My critique is focused on forms of embedded dualisms that have become fabricated and sewn into the seams of the costumes that theology and other literature have inherited. I do not choose to argue against dualistic thinking, but rather investigate some of the blind spots and gaps that might have been overlooked in other models of practical theology. I attempt to weave other theological voices back into the text, along with certain fundamentalisms and timely, as well as timeless, truths. It appears somewhat contradictory to say this, but I believe that an ongoing challenge within theology is to find ways of participating with history without scribbling it out, as if one idea stands in opposition to another. You will find this theology in chapter four of this thesis.

I look for moments of insertion, *kairos* moments, that arrive when I least expect them within a context of mutual care. Of course it depends so much on how such a moment is evaluated or noticed, and I can only speak for these golden moments from my own experience of them. I explore this in relation to Levinas's ideas on *the face and trace of the other* in which he challenges human beings to see the naked vulnerability of another human being, and not take advantage of it. These moments are not easily quantifiable and are some of what I consider the slippery fragments that get lost in more traditionally controlled theological reflection. A text that I have found particularly helpful in reading Levinas is one that I found by Veling (a theologian) on the internet.

Moments of transformation within this participatory research appear to have happened when I have least expected them, often at times of exposure to human frailty and vulnerability. On reflection I can particularly remember three moments in this research where I was surprised by the surplus of care in moments of vulnerability. One was a time in which my own vulnerability was exposed to the point I was close to giving up this research journey. The Mothers came along side me at this time, and encouraged me to continue journeying with them. Another moment was when Adriaan Vlok (the minister for Law and Order in the 1980's) exposed his vulnerability concerning his wife's death. A third unexpected moment was when Jack Cronje (the police brigadier directly in charge of the deaths of the activists) visited some of the Mothers at my home. We had reached an impasse concerning apology and forgiveness, and the

Mothers told him that there was nothing more to say to him as he was not sorry for what he did. He rose to leave, and then something most unusual happened. I asked him what he needed from the Mothers. He said: '*I do not want to be seen as a murderer and would like to be forgiven.*' The Mothers at this moment seemed to see his vulnerability, took compassion on him and each in turn offered him forgiveness. There is another moment of enormous surprise in this work. It happened while I was writing the postscript in August 2006 and also concerned Adriaan Vlok. Rather than spoil the ending of this research journey, you can read of this event on the final page of this thesis. It stands as a comma to ongoing processes of healing in a land that has been fraught with pain and division.

Each page of this dissertation is designed to dance with memory; story and complex forms of participation and transformation in moments where dominant discourses seem escape the nets of control.

In order to do this I work epistemologically with post-structuralism. I particularly work with some of the ideas proposed by Foucault and Derrida. I have employed some the ways Foucault subverts taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world is seen and the artefacts that are worthy of examination, as in his work *The Order of Things* and *The Order of Discourse*. In these works he challenges people to pick up on the bits and pieces that in more dominant methodologies have been overlooked or disregarded. I pick up on participation as the focus of one of the less dominant artefacts for consideration. I also work on different forms of power. Included in this is a particular interest in some of the ways in which power works to both include as well as exclude people from participating in ways of doing pastoral care.

Foucault brilliantly clarifies sovereign and modern power. Both of these forms of power are relevant to the state of South Africa. Foucault's work on modern forms of disciplinary power is very much linked to western forms of governance and ideas around the individual subject and discourses on what is seen to constitute civilisation through certain taken-for-granted assumptions about people. It is a power that is everywhere to be experienced but difficult to pin down. This form of power is used extensively in post-colonial theory, which I explore in chapter five of this thesis. It is the effects of such power that are of interest in this research rather than the power in

itself. Colonial power and the civilised state, out of which apartheid was formed, was also fuelled by sovereign power, which Foucault describes as a more traditional form of power. Sovereign power is formed by the belief that in order to survive a nation, or a group, must ward off a common enemy. This is an idea proposed by Hobbes and developed by Foucault in his work *Society Must be Defended.*

Sovereign and disciplinary power both work through knowing the human subject in binary opposites. There are categories of people who belong and those who are excluded from belonging. Foucault, in *Society Must be Defended* goes so far as to suggest that politics itself is war by other means. There are those who are civilised and those who are savage and those who are terrorists and those who are heroes; those who have a *just cause* and those who have an *unjust cause*. It is true that as human beings we know who we are through who we are not, but that which we are not is in fact also a part of who we are, an idea promoted by philosophers such as Derrida and Levinas. There is also a great body of psychoanalytic literature on splitting the parts of ourselves that we do not like away from us and projecting this onto another person or group of people. I look at some of this literature in chapter five. It is also true that as human beings we attempt to ward off the anxiety that is provoked by people we do not understand. The Christian church is no exception to this, and church history, particularly following the formalisation of Christianity in the late Roman Empire, exposes the intolerance of deviance from the norm, coining such words as *heretic*. But it was through modern forms of power that man advanced the idea that he could take control of the world, partly because as the empires grew so did the world and the influence of the powerful. This was particularly seen in Africa through colonisation. Modern power, working hand in hand with rationality sought to control uncertainty and difference through unified systems of knowledge and this included colonisation and apartheid. Through unifying such systems of belief under the rubric of civilisation, the tension of holding multiple world views and beliefs was of course reduced and alternate ideas more easily controlled or dismissed as primitive.

Following a thread of participation I develop the idea that these forms of power present pastoral care with a great challenge to finding ways out of such dualistic thinking. In order to search for ways out of the reproduction of such dualisms I turn to Derrida as

well as Levinas' philosophy. I also work with Gergen and McNamee's ideas on relational responsibility.

I work with mostly secondary texts in Derrida's work. One of the main texts however is the film by Dick and Zeiring Koffman (2002) in which they follow Derrida around for a month listening to him talk. There is a significant part of this film where he is in South Africa talking about South Africa. I have watched this film over and over again, watching Derrida perform this text in action. In this way it is a primary text but you will notice that there are no page numberings in reference to this text.

Throughout this writing I use a social construction paradigm to create the text. This paradigm holds that the world is not something that can be objectively explained or dissected. Rather, as a social constructionist believes, human beings interpret the world through certain discourses which are held in place through social processes, which in themselves obscure alternative ways of knowing and being. Meanings are generated between people through relationship and talked into existence in language. I particularly focus on the theories that influence a social constructionist world view in chapter six of this work. This has been a helpful paradigm for me to work within because if discourses and truths are brought about in social processes, alternate discourses are also birthed in this way and can challenge some of the taken-for-granted assumptions in both how we do research as well as what becomes significant research material. Emerging from this thought is the idea that change happens at both the local level of **p**olitics as well as the larger system of the **P**olitical.

Methodologically I am working inductively within a qualitative paradigm, allowing data and discourses on relationship to emerge from the text, which in this instance is a three year journey. The text is not confined to the journey with the Mothers. It also involves, as I have mentioned, senior people from the security forces, and their voices are woven into the dissertation in chapter three, although they are present in most of the other chapters as well.

The data as well as literature for such a journey is of course vast and I can only do justice to a small arena of writing. I focus on post-colonial literature and ways in which history has formed the objects of which it talks. I also focus on theologies that have

historically formed people in South Africa and some of the recent theological literature that focuses on the future challenges in South Africa. This literature seeks to bring about transformation through relational practices that court uncertainty, multiplicity, welcoming and celebrating the anxiety and surprise held in the less predictable moments of relationship.

Qualitative research works at the meanings that are both historically attached to a text as well as generated by it. I select and give privilege to particular moments, which I hope are representative of certain dominant discourses as well as sub-texts. I do this in a particularly unstructured way, which I lay out in the first chapter. Traditionally chapter two would lay out both my methodology and my epistemology. The methodology can be found in both chapters one and two. Methodology is also found embodied and woven right through this work. Methodologically I work at deconstructing the text in order to examine multiple meanings associated with any one incident. I do it in the way I engage in self reflexive conversations with the text and with my own memories stirred from my background and the conversations I have had with the other participants.

To have written about this research as if it were *out there* would not have allowed me as much space to permit it to work within the text, challenging and deconstructing positions of power and privilege that are so much a part of modern forms of methodology. Much of the structure of this methodology can be witnessed in the voices of the Mothers that can be experienced in chapter seven of this work. Rather than saying that this chapter is the heart of the work, I would rather use the metaphor of harvesting to describe the reflection that I present in this chapter. The position I take up is present in the translations of their reflections on our work together. The participatory position is also inserted throughout the text through the ways in which I participate with my own whiteness and background. In another way it can be witnessed in the ways the participants from the old regime join in the conversation and comment on the text.

The golden thread that I have found in this text has been the genuine surprise of the surplus of care that comes from being faced by some of the unpredictable relational moments with other human beings. It has been the ability to always stand on the threshold of different identities that are not based on dualisms and fixed identities.

Through creating a context for our lived humanity to perform in the reciprocity of relationship I have worked with intense risk of vulnerability and personhood, aware that absence or *otherness* is present in everything I say. This golden thread is a fragile thread that is easily broken by dominant dualistic discourses. Dominant discourses cannot be erased from memory or identity, but can be slowly challenged as different friendly discourses are generated to maintain alternate stories of reciprocal care, that in a different way attempt to control the uncertainty and unpredictability of dehumanising and cruel human action. Chapter seven, through centring the voices of the Mothers themselves develops a conversation around what has gone before through a self-reflexive process which draws from some of the literature that has been used.

There is a central section in this thesis which acts as an interlude between the first three chapters (methodology and the research story), and the next three chapters, (theology, post-colonial theory and social construction theory). This central section is not numbered and is done in a poetic format. It uses photography and rhythmic stories set out in poetic conversations, which capture some of the relational moments I have experienced with the Mothers. These form significant landmarks and insertions on our journey towards participation with the multiple voices that form some of the realities of which I speak. I have included this interlude for a number of reasons. Firstly it offers the Mothers something tangible. Each Mother will be given this section as a small book of our journey together. Secondly it helps to introduce the Mothers, and other research participants, to the reader in another reading of the text. I have repeated a few texts in the thesis. This is so that the reader might both be reminded of them and find an alternate reading within them in that each reading becomes a new reading.

The post-script of this thesis attempts to tie up some of the loose ends and ask questions that emerge from the data and the ongoing text. The methodology I am working with opens spaces in this for a surplus of relationship and lived with experience that can only point towards some of the artful moments of participation as well as some of the problems associated with it.

Maria Ntuli can never forgive her son's killers. She has never understood why Jeremiah, only 17 at the time, could be killed the way he was. 'If ghosts exist I want my son to haunt his killers forever, I want him to lead them to suicide', cries the elderly mother, her face a grim monument to pain. For nearly 20 years, Jeremia's body lay in an unmarked grave more than 45km from where he was last seen in Mamelodi on 26 June 1986. His family searched endlessly for him weeping in frustration when policemen turned their backs on them as fear and chaos exploded across the country…. The truth of what happened finally came out during the TRC in 1995. On the night of 26 June 1986, together with nine other youths, Jeremia was injected with a sedative substance, driven to a dry riverbed in a minibus where explosives and an AK-47 rifle were planted in the vehicle. The boys were then doused with 25 litres of petrol and set alight. They were still alive. The heat detonated the explosives and the vehicle exploded. The next day the burnt out minibus and the 10 charred bodies inside were discovered by the Bophuthatswana police. The bodies were buried in a pauper's grave in Winterveldt Cemetery, about 45km north of Mamelodi. The youths, Sipho Sibanyoni (15), Matthews Lerutla (15), Samuel Masilela (16), Abraham Makolane (17), Steven Makena (18), Morris Nkabinde (19), Elliot Sathege (20), Thomas Phiri (22), Rooibaard Geldenhuys (age unknown) and Jeremia, were lured to their gory deaths by apartheid death squad agent Joe Mamesela.

(Drum Magazine 28 April 2005).

CHAPTER 1

Faced by the past: Looking for a future

Ours is essentially a tragic age; so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened; we are among the ruins. We start to build up new little habitats to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work, but there is no smooth road into the future. We've got to live no matter how many skies have fallen (D. H. Lawrence, 1918. Lady Chatterly's Lover).

1.1 Introducing the context of this research

It is the particularity of some of the stories that appear not yet to be resolved from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that originally called me to pastorally care with the Mothers of the Disappeared in Mamelodi. They became known as the Mamelodi Mothers, and this is how I will refer to them from now on. It is in this context that I became interested in the possibilities and the spaces that the reciprocity of relationship offers to ways of caring pastorally in community.

The Mamelodi Mothers belong to a support group that meets under the umbrella organisation of a national victim support group called *Khulumani*, which literally translated means *speak out*. I was introduced to the Mothers by the chairperson of this organisation, Dr. Jobson. The Mamelodi group had asked for some group counselling and it was in this capacity that I was invited to join the group, on the understanding that the Mothers would also give me permission to write about our journey together for research purposes.

1.2   The group of Mothers with whom I have been working

Khulumani was instituted at the time of the TRC to work with victims of human rights abuses. The common factor that brought the Mothers together was the loss of a close relative to political violence during the apartheid era. These relatives went missing during the 1980's and a few in the 1990's. There was Lizzie Sefolo's husband Harold who disappeared from his shop in Witbank. There was Adelaide Dlanimi's son Kenneth, who was killed in Angola while fighting for the ANC. There was Caroline Mokoena's son Moeketsi who was killed by the ANC in Angola. There was Lilli's son, a policeman, who was killed in mysterious circumstances in the early 1990's in Standerton. The majority of the Mamelodi Mothers however are the Mothers of what became known as the Mamelodi Nine (KwaNdebele Nine) and the Mamelodi Ten (Nietverdient Ten). Their sons were still at school at the time when they disappeared from Mamelodi. They went to join up for the armed wing of the ANC, but were abducted on their way to Botswana for training and killed by the security police in two different incidents a few weeks apart in June 1986. This research is about a journey with the Mamelodi Mothers.

1.3   Constructing the meetings together as a group

The work with these Mothers was not set up as a research group. It was set up as a support group with my involvement coming at the Mothers invitation, to help in the healing process. The research is a by-product of our participation and a reflection of our journey together. In another way it was a re-search group as the Mothers and I searched together for some answers to the questions that the Mothers asked. As a group we have met in the Mamelodi West Community Hall on a Wednesday morning for two hours. I say *we* in that I am a part of this group. I have positioned myself within the group attempting not to control the process. This is of course not fully possible given my own privilege and position within the group, as well as the original request from the Mothers that I play a therapeutic role in their healing process.

Being placed within the group is more a participatory position, where I work *alongside* and *with* the group as a co-traveller and participant, rather than as a researcher who

gathers information, or as pastoral therapist using a particular model of practice. As a participant I am present in an open-ended capacity to journey alongside this group of Mothers. I often sit for a whole meeting while the Mothers talk in Sotho, or Zulu. I will sometimes ask for clarification, or a Mother will sum up what they are talking about for me. It is not the purpose of this research to argue for this form of participatory practice as a model of care. I am rather interested in it as a helpful practice that can accompany other more structured practices of care and research processes.

This journey has been particularly unstructured with no contracted beginning or end and continues as an ongoing process of engagement in community. I joined the group in order to journey with the Mothers and there was no way of predetermining the completion of this journey. This form of research carries a great deal of risk, in that the journey rather than the research has been the focus of attention, with the research becoming a reflection, or a by-product on our participation together.

Our journey has taken the Mothers and me into many territories. We have searched out some of the perpetrators in the hope of finding healing through means of finding the truth, apology and forgiveness. We have wept over children dying from HIV/AIDS. We have painted, sewn, done bead work together and I have watched the Mothers performing in the play *Mamelodi the Forgotten* which they wrote as a part of their healing process. Chapter three goes into more detail about some of the work we have done together and chapter seven reflects upon this participatory process. The journey has been one I believe of mutual healing and care that has attempted to soften the dualistic ways of thinking that are so endemic in Western discourses and research methods.

I cannot claim that this writing is anything other than my own inner reflections written within a finite number of pages. Frank (2005:971) puts it this way: 'Who speaks at what length in those pages is decided in the author's inner dialogue with now-absent participants. However present their voices remain, the author has final responsibility, anticipating the response of readers, and behind the process, publishers.'

1.4   Pastoral care within a particular context

Every age is perhaps tragic in its own way and calls us as people of faith to pastorally attend to the context and suffering of our times. This presupposes of course many assumptions and competing ideas about what is important and what constitutes suffering in our times. Multiple contexts and sufferings happen within any one context, and South Africa has its own particular and dominantly told histories of suffering under colonialism, apartheid and now post-apartheid. These histories are steeped in poverty and separation, promoted through certain ideologies that have formed it and challenged theologians to appropriate means of care in a suffering church.

The current context of what it means to suffer and to care has kept theologians busy over the recent past to both bring change and *make things better* for people, particularly within a liberation frame where there is a focus on a God who is on the side of the poor and oppressed. But which people does it make it better for? And who decides what *bette*r might look like? Who suffers from these making things *better*? For example after the great depression of the 1930's, following on from the devastating effects of the Anglo-Boer War, suffering, hunger and poverty were very familiar to the Afrikaans people in South Africa. A Nationalist government came into power and very successfully *made things better* for the poor Afrikaners. They made things better so that they would not be as poor as the *Blacks* (Mbembe 2006). The effects of the policies they instituted were catastrophic for many people in South Africa. In other words through focusing on one group of *poor* people, others become marginalised. Another problematical and commonly thought ides is the idea that we can for example 'make poverty history' or 'war on HIV' as if we can destroy or eliminate these realities. This thesis offers perhaps a different focus, and challenges the presumption that we have the right, power or burden to eliminate suffering in this world. My own position within this work is to participate with our painful past and with poverty in a different way.

This research looks at some of the difficult challenges that face South Africa, when we seek as people of faith to *make things better*. As a narrative pastoral therapist I am used to people coming to me with different forms of suffering in the hope that we can make things better. This particular research journey leads me towards community practices

that help to make things better in a country where suffering seems to have locked people into certain fixed ways of acting and being.

Dominant historical discourses that have formed identity in South Africa are powerful and have been frequently disabling for the majority of the population and continue to be so. These disabling identities help point pastoral care to some of the signs of our times in finding practices that are both *abling* and life-giving to people living in the country. Practices that help to both deconstruct and dismantle disabling historical constructions are important to the future of South Africa if privilege and race are not going to become reproduced, particularly as a Western construction. In this work I look backwards into some of the ways identity has become constructed, both in the larger political structure as well as within the individual, over generations of beliefs and assumption in order to look forward towards alternate ways of relating that participate in less hierarchical and oppressive ways.

1.5   The use of 'I' in this research

I am using the more personal form of 'I' here to indicate that I am both a researcher as well as a participant on this journey of re-ordering identity. The 'I' is also indicative of what Frank (2005:968) describes as offering 'an account of how researcher and participant came together in some shared time and space and had diverse effects *on each other'.* The 'I' in this regard implies an immersion within the process, not as some separate researcher, but as a fellow traveller along with other participants, and how our travelling has had diverse effects on our relationships with one another. The 'I' also indicates what Frank (op cit: 971) refers to as dialogue within relationship in which the researcher not only '*studies* people, she or he spends time *with* those people'. In this way I am taking up a social constructionist position where the 'I' refers to my own immersion within a process. I am also taking up an ethical position in doing this. Parsons (2005:73) for example, in taking up a personal response to research, suggests that researchers need to reconsider the authenticity of relationship between the researched and researcher. He is speaking particularly in a context of suffering and vulnerability in Zimbabwe. He argues that research can be 'both cruel and intrusive for participants'. He goes on to suggest that the stringent codes of ethics potentially lock

researchers into sterile relationships for positions of safe *certainty*. Parsons (op cit: 74) refers to a growing concern about the ethics of research that enters a community with forms to sign and information to gather, without spending time building relationship within community. The 'I' in this research indicates something of this position of lived with experience and the relational self that engages in this research. This is juxtaposed against more objective fact finding research methodologies that seek to find out certain facts about victims or perpetrators.

1.6   Words and their constitutive effects

Words are not innocent in the role they play in discourses of entitlement in the light of historical injustice and the effects of such entitlement on people. Many of the ways in which people in South Africa have been constituted and defined have been through colour, gender, privilege and race and this is solidified in language. The selection of words such as race, coloniser, victim, reconciliation and perpetrator have come to hold particular meanings within the context of South Africa, and accompanying such words are certain entitlements. Words in this sense are not innocent, and embody assumed socially sanctioned meanings that seen from a post-structuralist world view come to form our thinking and constitute our world (Anderson & Goolishian 1988, Foucault 1970, Burr 2003).

This research explores and challenges some of these commonly held assumptions. Within any assumption of entitlement are the seeds of its own reproduction. Human rights movements that fight for a cause against any injustice in this sense are in danger of reproducing themselves. Villa-Vicencio (2004:69) referring to Kole Omotoso pertinently asks: 'at what point do we become that which we are fighting against?' One of the issues that this research looks into is how, as a society in South Africa, and as pastoral care workers, can we work towards practices that can benefit the future of South Africa without recursively looping back into a paradigm that reproduces entitlement at the expense of another person or group of people. I suggest that one way in which this is possible is through practices that find alternate forms of healing within community; ways of healing that are not formed within rights based systems of thinking that place blame upon a person thereby exonerating another from accountability. A

rights based system at once entitles people to certain privileges and at the same time creates categories of exclusion which can become problematic.

I am not suggesting that this work competes with other discourses concerned with human rights and justice, but that it engages in different territory in the belief that a primary focus on justice, forgiveness and human rights are limited in their capacity to bring about transformation. I will suggest at this work continues that forgiveness is rarely related to traditional justice systems. It is found in less 'trodden' territory.
Having said this I agree with Tracy (1994:124) when he says: 'Dialogue and the quest for unity cannot effectively happen in a situation of domination and inequality.' I suggest however that a part of the effectiveness of challenging inequality lies in the role that authentic participation might play in healing.

1.7   Invisible assumptions that reproduce exclusion

The paradigm shifts that have taken place in ethnographic, family therapy and particularly narrative research have positioned a participatory mode of consciousness as something that is significant to research (Kotzé 2002; Chamberlain 1990; Heshusius 1994). Kotzé (2002:9) suggests that these paradigm shifts in knowledge and ways of doing and knowing come about when we are challenged into finding new ways of solving problems in society in ethical-political acts of resistance against the exploitative and oppressive effects of dominant paradigms of our time. I am tracking the implicit and dominant belief systems that have been a part of ideologies in society; belief systems that are centred on both the individual as well as dualistic rights based thinking. These beliefs are always imminent but rarely visible until we look behind the curtains on the stage of life, where they are tucked away as scriptwriters 'out of sight' (Gergen 1994:216).

Although some forms of entitlement within a dominant paradigm are visible, others are particularly discreet and invisible, disappearing into the many assumptions that we make about one another concerning what people are *owed* in society. These assumptions are present but often not talked about, or if they are, it is through forms of

historical redress in a *rights* based paradigm which maintains a separation between those who deserve and those who do not.

It is not easy to see many of the invisible barriers and identities that appear to maintain separation, in spite of apartheid having ended over ten years ago. This is partly due to the many boulders that obscure and occlude our vision of the past. No-one can look into some pure map of the past without particular versions of history getting in the way. Identities in this particular post-colonial and post-apartheid era are still indelibly soaked in categories and boulders built on racial distinctions and the multiple privileges and exclusions that accompany this. Race continues to have power over the ways in which people become defined and the ways in which privilege is embedded through practices that entitle some people to have a legitimate voice in society but in doing this exclude others.

There appear to be many embedded assumptions, upheld in social practices in society that assume a position of separation and hierarchical order. One of these assumptions has been the way in which those who are in positions of authority care *for* the poor and the marginalised, the victims and the powerless. These roles are not necessarily obvious, or talked about because they have become the taken-for-granted ways of doing and practicing care. Another hierarchical assumption has been in existence within the Christian church since the church was unified under the Roman Empire (Isherwood 1999:3). According to Isherwood the unification of the church jettisoned much of its original tolerance for different forms of faith thus creating binary opposites of saints and heretics.

1.8   Caring with people as a way of challenging hierarchical orderings

There is a distinction in my mind between *caring for* people and caring *with people* (Kotzé 2001, 2002). Through drawing this distinction between these two thoughts I am also forming categories as well as placing a certain spotlight on the constitutive meaning of these words that I have chosen to use. Words then begin to mould and form my own ways of caring. In a Foucauldian sense it turns these distinctions into social

practices or a modern disciplinary discourse within a power relationship (Horrocks & Jevtic 1999:121). I am crafting language deliberately in using the words *for* and *with*; in the belief that meaningful language is generated within processes of relationship and human interchange (Shotter 1993, McNamee & Gergen 1999, Burr 1995). It is generative in the way I am writing and in the ways in which I discursively position words within this text. Language in this way becomes constitutive of my thinking and it begins to take on a new life with different meanings and these meanings begin to constitute new social practices.

One way in which pastoral care may be in danger of upholding practices which inadvertently exploit people is through a subtle relational positioning in which people fight on behalf *of* communities, or in another way care *for* community in an attempt to make things better *for* the disadvantaged, or speak *for* others, the marginalised and the voiceless. This often leaves communities dependent on *our* help and our voices rather than empowered through their own agency, knowledge and wisdom. This process of dependency is of course a relational and historic practice. People become locked into certain positions within relationship which are difficult to escape from, because they are upheld through historically sanctioned relational practices or discourses. In the context of this research they are colonial discourses, with assumptions about knowledge, privilege, wealth and power (Isherwood 1999:15).

For example one Mother I work with told me: 'Bridgid when the Mothers see your white face they see *Solly Kerzner* coming.' By saying this she explained that to see my white face is to see *money bags*. Put in another way my personhood is superseded by my whiteness as an object of financial betterment and this becomes a practice that we *play* together in relationship with one another. This particular role has often found me digging deep into my pockets to help out and deal with my own guilt. This position in many ways has constituted me and has in its own way caused me to feel trapped and dehumanised. This is not to say of course that other discourses around for example consumerism do not play their role in forming relationship and this might have little to do with race. My focus however in this study is to examine racial categories as an object of discourse.

Working *with*, rather than making things better *for*, or on *behalf of*, is an important question within theology. As a white woman coming from a privileged, educated, empire building background, I have been programmed in many ways to privilege doing *for* people, rather than participating *with* them. Academically I seek in this work to re-position myself where I participate in ways that allow all participants in this process to co-construct meanings together in generative ways, so that we may live in a more life-giving way with our pasts.

This includes taking a participatory position within theology, placing participation in the limelight of this research enquiry. This is not to say that pastoral care in other forms does not participate meaningfully with people. It is difficult to write about one approach without excluding others and it is not my intention to do this, although I do not pretend to be neutral in this pursuit. Through a focus on participative practices I privilege certain practices that at the same time limit my engagement with other ways of knowing and doing. My main point here is that I do not want to argue one position against another.

To care *with* in the context of post-apartheid South Africa is a deliberate and perhaps exaggerated positioning in this research that I have chosen as a way of engaging in community. I use the word as a bridge, moving the locus of control away from caring *for* people towards what appears to me a less privileged and less easily controlled position of care *with* people. A participatory position is risky and unstable in that the reigns of control and expertise are held within a group process and in local knowledge and wisdom. It is also theologically risky in that the Christ that I thought I knew is no longer seen within clearly demarcated lines. As Isherwood (1999:148) says: '[A] more free-flowing Christ is risky business because this notion implies that Christ is only a possibility and not a guarantee.' Put in another way the Kingdom of God is constantly in the making. Charting maps of participation are not predictable in this sense because I have no outside position with which to map the territory and the gods that we make in our own images generate mirages that are difficult to pin down. This is not altogether true because certain philosophical positions and theological assumptions pin me down to certain compass points and direct me towards certain goals. One of these assumptions focuses on racial categorisation. The use of local knowledge and wisdom however, creates alternate categories of expertise, where my expertness as a researcher

and pastoral care worker is seen in the way in which I engage with both this process and the writing of it. It is only afterwards as we reflect on our work together that perhaps the maps emerge as working documents of a journey, knitted together with the research methodology and epistemology.

1.9   Focus on race and civilisation

Race has become an indicator of ways in which people in South Africa have been categorised, included or excluded from care. There is of course an idea of *the Rainbow Nation* but there is a long way to go before racial categories are able to blend in less competitive or threatening ways. It is a land that has in many ways been torn apart through the categories and labels that have been attached to race and privilege. Through colonialism and then apartheid, whole population groups have for over two hundred years been separated from many of the benefits of reciprocal care and personhood. This has happened in many forms, centred on superiority in work, community and education, some more obvious than others. Through these dominant discourses, upheld in relational practices I have also become trapped by my own colour, education and privilege into caring *for* people.

The machinery of colonialism, working with certain assumptions about what constitutes a civilised society has created embedded categories of superior and inferior identities that are not at first obvious although they are everywhere to be seen. These assumptions affect the ways in which we care with people and the ways in which we use our expertness upon people, often speaking on behalf of them. These less obvious forms of power and privilege can become some of the taken-for-granted ways of doing and caring for people in society which inadvertently trap people into positions that are difficult to escape from. It is what Foucault (1970, 1970b, 1972) would describe as an invisible power relationship that disappears into the fabric of society and is associated with modern or disciplinary forms of power. These taken for granted truths turn into dominant discourses that have power over people's roles and identities in society. They are everywhere to be experienced but nowhere to be talked about. It seems to me that through the subtle positioning of caring for people, much of a peoples' own knowledge, personhood, wisdom and agency becomes forfeited and not talked about.

31

Alternatively, through a focus on practices that care with people, alternate knowledge and relational agency can become talked and richly written into being through the privileging of local knowledge and wisdom. Through fore-grounding alternate ways of care they may be both more accessible and more readily practiced within communities. These practices may play an important role in both healing as well as contributing to ways of pastorally being with people in the future.

1.10 Naming and labelling categories in identity formation

Identities based on labels, categories and positions in society cannot be avoided. The TRC created categories of people who suffered gross human rights violations and there were clear delineations for these categories. The commission also created categories for victims and those for perpetrators. Forms of categorisation are both necessary but at the same time can become problematic. Any category, or what Foucault would call a regime of truth or a *normalising practice* (McHaul & Grace 1993:17), at once includes and excludes people from belonging and this cannot be avoided. Dominant categories also tend to drown out alternate categories that do not fit the definitions created by the discourse. I am not suggesting here that categories and labels are either good or bad. They are both necessary and important, because through knowing who we are, we know this through difference as well as sameness. Categories however come attached to certain historically constructed agendas which can be problematic. I am interested in the ways that some discourses that are centred on racial difference can reproduce themselves in ways that are not always helpful or obvious. They are reproduced from outside through large public discourses as well as within the individual subject through the assumptions, demands and expectations placed upon people living in a given society. As I will argue they are maintained and reproduced through relational practices in every day life, often hidden behind socially correct agendas. If they are reproduced through every day practices, what becomes exciting to me is that alternate ways of being can also become established in this relational way.

As a pastoral care worker I am left attending to some of the gaps that these dominant discourses might have overlooked. These gaps are frequently not visible and can be particularly difficult to talk about or find language for. Sometimes they appear not even

to exist. Firstly, how do you talk about something that does not appear to exist? Secondly, dominant beliefs and assumptions are in the habit of disregarding other beliefs that are there but not talked about. This research centres and more fully describes alternate relational identities that focus on participation as a way of practicing pastoral care.

These relational identities move me from being seen as *Solly Kerzner* to being seen as *Bridgid Hess* in multiple identities that represent a rainbow nation. In another way I am interested in the shifts that happen when identities are not focused on victim-hood, but rather on identities such as survivors and carers within community. I am equally interested in finding language for alternate identities of perpetrators. Although the label of perpetrator has dominated a public identity, there are many other identities that can become fore-grounded that may enhance practices of accountability

Pastoral care in this way invites a reciprocal imaginative relationship where in community we can begin to find language for both what is not said, but assumed, and that which is waiting to be said. The conversations generated in this research become a product of the participants' action together towards richly describing a participative pastoral care practice.

1.11 Conversational partners

There are a number of participants or conversational partners in this research. Firstly I am in conversation with myself and my own history as a British woman, who has lived most of my adult life in Africa (Kenya, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and South Africa), although I was raised in England and Ireland. Secondly I am in conversation with a group of Mothers, who were victims of the apartheid regime. I have travelled with these Mothers for over three years as we have worked at healing practices that have sought to deconstruct some of the dominant themes of history in South Africa. Thirdly I am in conversation with some of the men who were responsible for the elimination of the disappeared activists. Fourthly I participate in this research with voices of academia, in particular theology as it has developed in South Africa. Theories of social construction and post-colonial theory also accompany this journey as well as my field

notes which are threaded throughout this thesis. Lastly I have been influenced by my colleagues at work and with supervisors.

1.12   Some limitations of this research

The way I am in conversation with these participants influences the outcome of this research. Research methodologies are limited in the way in which they go about engaging with a topic. Qualitative research methodologies, under which this research falls, also fall prey to their own particular complications and limitations carried in their own assumptions. In fact any methodology is at once aware but also limited in its capacity to represent the subject of which it speaks. In the more personal use of the 'I' for example I attempt to be open and transparent, but at the very same time I exclude knowledge about myself that I might not want the reader to know. I also exclude experiences within the research which have been intensely painful or private or plainly unspeakable, through either putting others, or myself at risk of judgement. Academically I am positioned within a certain discourse that at once imposes as well as reproduces certain ways of knowing and caring. My own perhaps over zealous passion about what it means to participate, alongside my immersion within a community for three years, is in danger of losing a position of genuine curiosity within this research, of which any worthwhile research should aspire to. It would be far easier to be curious if I were not so personally involved in this work. This cannot be avoided, but I hope that as you read on you might journey with something of my lived humanity, even if you have to read it in the blurry gaps where language and meaning speak within their silence.

1.13   Discontinuous knowledge held in a poetic form

This research journey looks to some of the messier, more chaotic fragments of local knowledge and care that might have escaped the dominant nets of categorisation or the rules of control. Foucault used the metaphor of archaeology (Foucault 1972, Horrocks & Jevtic 1999). Searching for dominant artefacts in the earth, at once excludes other artefacts that are inadvertently discarded. Discarded relational artefacts always await discovery. One effective way of finding *order* for alternate subjugated artefacts has traditionally been through the arts as a form of resistance (Graham & Poling 2000,

Lykes 2001, Parsons 2005a). Brueggemann (1993:20 - brackets my own) for example, when talking about poetic imagination in what he refers to as a prose flattened world puts it this way: 'The work of funding (poetic ways of working) consists not in the offer of a large, ordered coherence, but in making available lots of disordered pieces that admit of more than one large ordering.'

Art as a form of creative theology has traditionally opened space for groups of people to find expression as a form of resistance to evil (Graham & Poling 2000). Graham and Poling (op cit: 265) go on to suggest that art has always been used when those who have no platform for language use other forms of resistance to become heard through restoring collective memory and restoring non-persons to the fullness of life. Added to this is the post-structuralist turn in history which has given greater access and credibility to literature and poetry. In this work art can be seen in the ways in which the Mothers and I engage in our journey together. It can be seen in this writing through the way the writing opens up possibilities for multiple interpretations on the text, and it can be seen in the middle section where photography and poetry are used as a form of celebration of these disordered pieces that 'admit of more than one large ordering'. Parsons (2005b) working with ideas developed by Deleuze suggests that painful memories are often told in a poetic format using the metaphorical and a rhythmic meter that evokes something of lived experience that cannot be told in an orderly fashion. I attempt to capture this in chapter seven, as well as the postscript of this thesis, where the journey is evocative of memorably lived experiences.

Finding ways of talking about discontinuous knowledge offers a way of pastorally engaging with this topic that might not have previously been explored. Looking at knowledge in this way, it is inconclusive and contingent, never arriving. Connections will for ever await our attention and people's identities likewise should ethically be open to exceed any set description. In this research I examine a few of these fragments that might have escaped dominant discourses that I briefly described above. These are fragments that allow an excess of formalised identity to surface. As Foucault (1980:78) says of knowledge: 'Repetitive and disconnected, it advances nowhere. Since indeed it never ceases to say the same thing, it perhaps says nothing. It is tangled up into an indecipherable, disorganised muddle, in a nutshell, it is inconclusive.' These trails are

therefore inherently unstable. Stability is produced through creating categories which we have more control over.

1.14   A paradigm of social construction

A social constructionist paradigm has helped me in this pursuit to understand language and identity as something that is sculpted over time and within social processes and is therefore open to re-negotiation. If meaning is generated in this way, it also holds a capacity to change and alter within social process. Caring then as a word is inherently unstable depending on the multiple and historical discourses and social assumptions with which it works.

Pastoral care while crafting new meanings calls for imagining different ways of seeing and doing care. Imaginative ways of relating *with* one another appear to be somewhat unconventional and perhaps, as Brueggemann (1989) says *poetic* in their ability to hold onto fragments and multiple meanings within any one text. It is through unconventional connections of bits and pieces of knowledge that this work offers pastoral care something that it might not have seen before. It may give theologians an alternate tool or way of looking at people. Practical theology has over the years been in a constant search for new ways of engaging in community, in this way the movement has been dynamic because the context and therefore challenge is for ever shifting and changing.

1.15   Shifting faces in theology in South Africa

One of the challenges that practical theologians have taken on over the last thirty years has been the debate between theory and practice. Along with some of the paradigm shifts in the social sciences, theologians have become more aware of the need to work inductively between theory and praxis on the understanding that they are in a complex relationship with one another. This relationship has been understood through social theory at a macro level and the individual at the personal level. At both these levels the metaphor of communication has been used extensively to access an understanding of relationship. Communication exposes its own limitations in this work in that one communicates *something* **to** *someone*. Within a post-structuralist and social

construction paradigm there is greater interest today in the ways in which we create and generate ways of communicating with one another. Thi*s* is explored in chapter four of this work.

Theologians in South Africa, particularly within contextual theology, have also spent a great deal of time and energy challenging practices, categories and discourses that exclude people from fully participating in society, working from a *bottom up* approach to theology. Their focus has been on finding practices that do not simply explain a status quo but seek to change and transform society (Bosch 1991:430) on the understanding that power and opportunity have not been equally distributed. My interest in this research lies in centring participation as a practice of transformation on the understanding that ways in which we participate in community and position ourselves within community can be transformative, working in a power relationship in which we might live differently with history, poverty and inequality.

There has been a great deal of contextual literature in theology within South Africa that has concerned itself with understanding and sustaining life-giving pastoral practices of care in the face of the history in South Africa. Theologians are attending to the changing context within the multiple relationships in South Africa today. Poverty, injustice, inequality and gender discrimination are a few of the challenges that are being addressed by South African theologians at both the macro as well as the micro levels (Ackermann 2002, Cochrane et al 1991, Bosch 1991, de Gruchy 2001, Tutu 2000, Müller 2005). These are ongoing concerns about the role the church plays in bringing about justice and care in South Africa today.

Contextual and liberation theologies have also played a significant role in challenging oppressive practices that silence those who suffer under dominant and oppressive discourses. Theologies concerned with the rights and voices of those who are excluded from the privileges of power are well-trodden paths in South Africa. As much as these theologies are important in a study such as this, they will not maintain a centralising position.

Having just said this, the Mothers and myself have journeyed a long way with ideas and actions about justice and truth as a form of healing. I talk about this in the next two

chapters as it has been an important part of our journeying together. In reflection on this however, I think it was the by-product of a participative care that made a difference in our relationship rather than the initial focus on justice, truth and forgiveness. In other words it was the journey of participation and trust, rather than the object of justice that seemed to work in a transformative participatory way. This could of course become the very surprise of the connection of bits and pieces of participation that are difficult to find language for. Through not focusing on healing, justice and truth, they may appear from the shadows and constitute ways that bring healing in the world.

Such healing properties of relationship have always existed in communities but are difficult to explain or write about, they are perhaps mysterious. Wittgenstein (Monk 2005:27) in the last page of the *Tractatus* comments on how very difficult it is to find words for the inexplicable. This is the place where language finds its limits. He suggested that such moments can best be captured through metaphor and poetry, and can only be measured inadequately as a by-product of our relational actions.

Taking my focus away from discourses around justice, truth and reconciliation, I look for pieces and fragments of knowledge that might, in the greater struggle for democracy, have been left unattended. I suggest at the outset of this research that these too might be found in the poetic. These fragments concerning stories and relationship might not fit in the more traditional contextual theologies, where God's voice is heard immanently speaking up for the poor and marginalized. In other words, as with any form of justice or care it produces its own limitations (Foucault 1970, Du Toit 1993).

A different set of questions emerge within a post-structuralist and social construction paradigm which accompany the paradigm shift towards post-modern thinking. Empirical and scientifically based theologies, as well as theologies based on communication and liberation models seem to be limited in their capacity to address some of the questions that arise today concerning truths, dualisms and separations within our humanity (Van Wyk 1995:86). This current research focuses not only on some of the less talked about pieces of history that have been excluded, but also on the challenge of living together in ways that nurture trust and mutual inter-dependence through the deconstruction of dominant discourses around race. This is something of what I see as the signs of our times and of the kingdom that is waiting to come.

Some of the newer writing within contextual theology is drawing theologians more into what it means to participate in relationship in South Africa where the church and the country is in a process participating inclusively in transformation and reconciliation (de Gruchy 2001, Cochrane 2001, Balcomb 2001, Kotzé 2001, 2001, Maluleke 2000, Vosloo 2001, Cochrane et al 2001, Ericson 2003, Barrett 2004, Carmichael 1996). Questions are being raised about what happens after liberation and after caring for those with no voice. It becomes a process of not knowing what will happen and not being able to plot our maps on territory that is progressively in some ways less certain than the maps of certainty that accompany a more modernistic approach to theology. Empirical as well as liberation approaches to theology have tended to position themselves within dualisms in search for a truth. For example to argue a position and make a stand *for* one thing, means to stand in contrast to something else.

Cochrane, using Derrida's deconstructive ideas, challenges us to think beyond dualities of one way or another and live more with the uneasiness of uncertainty. The uneasiness of knowing that what is not said and what is left out is as important as what is said.

> Not to possess the truth is to be forced to search for it, before, now, and again and again, unceasingly. Not to possess the truth is to be forced to think, and to be forced to think is simultaneously to be forced to act, and to be forced to act is to take responsibility for our actions, and to take responsibility for our actions is to take responsibility for the other. And if Ricoeur is right, then acting is always accompanied by suffering (Cochrane 2001:38).

Within a post-modern paradigm the comfort of certainty and universality of assumption is no longer there to guide (Rossouw 1993, Du Toit 1991, Kotzé 2002, Pieterse 1996) and it is therefore not possible to reduce and distil truth in one place or to place the blame on one individual. In an article reflecting on post modern theology Pieterse (1996:60) suggests:

> It compels one to appreciate the contradictory, ambiguous, conflictual, risky, insecure, peripheral and creative dimensions of everyday life and radical political practice. In short, it allows space for my humanity and simultaneously injects restlessness into any moment of contentment…. In this perpetual alertness for who and what is being marginalized, a certain capacity evolves to develop a politics and agenda which seeks to tie different types of margins together, without yielding to the incentive to simply become another or different centre of power.

Truth in this context is suspended, particularly in the light of the ideologies around apartheid that served the church in the past, and the disillusionment with the grand narratives of progress that seemed to have crumbled and disintegrated (Dockery 1995:23).

1.16   Harvesting the husks

The important paradigm shifts from structuralism towards post-structuralist interpretation, has made a move from what has been understood as a modern world where our diet has been a highly refined one of distilled western scientific 'absolute truths' (Oden 1995:19), toward a post-modern world which invites the husks and fibre of the ordinary, the personal, and the relational into our understanding of who we are in a more embodied way. In the past these have been seen as the cluttered, unnecessary debris of that which interferes with fact and research. The hard sciences associated with meta-narratives and absolute truths had discarded these husks as not relevant. But it is these husks associated with relationship and meaning that are challenging me to grapple with and accommodate many contradictory and complex thoughts as ways of honouring many realities in participatory practices.

I am working from the belief that new possibilities of hope and healing lie forgotten within the husks of our communities. Practices that build different ways of knowing and seeing that do not focus directly on truth, trauma and race thread unusual stories that perhaps open space for alternate readings on what it means to be human in the face of race and historical separation. Transformation may in this way of practicing become a by-product of different relational identities through stories that wait to be told.

I pay particular attention in this writing to some of the less obvious ways that theology might have inadvertently maintained hierarchical positions of power, thus playing into racial division of caring *for* rather than *with* through dualistic forms of thinking. I say this cautiously because I attempt in this work not to argue against one idea in favour of another. I am rather picking up some of the less attended to fragments of care that might contribute to the ongoing practices of care within the current context in South Africa.

40

Participation in this journey challenges the boundaries between the carer and the cared for, as well as the boundaries between the victim and the perpetrator. Through attempting to dissolve these categories I look at the role that this particular form of participation might play in bringing about transformation and healing in South Africa. In doing this I attempt to construct language as a by-product of our action together. According to Pattison (1988:5, 16), pastoral care cannot be understood outside of the ways in which we interact together and construct language as a by-product of this action. In this way language becomes what Wittgenstein calls a by-product of action (Wittgenstein in McNamee & Gergen 1999:4). In another way Wittgenstein suggests that when philosophy moves towards the ethical, it can only be practiced, seen and shown, it cannot be said (Monk 2005:20). But it can perhaps be captured in moments of relationship and through richly and thickly described stories that evoke an ethical poetic aroma that is always open to revision, poised on the threshold of another world (Frank 2005:973).

By de-centering the metaphor of communication as well as the metaphor of justice and liberation I am looking in this research towards a re-positioning and centring of relationship in its lived complexity. This does not mean that it stands in opposition to models based on communicative actions or the *confessing* or the *suffering* church. Rather it changes the focus, allowing language and explanation to become a by-product of our action and being together. It challenges, in a post-structuralist sense, the idea that there are subjects and objects of enquiry, but rather invites practices into an inter-subjective relational space. It appears important to research different ways of caring that attempt to avoid the separation of myself from others through what Derrida (Powell 1997:25) refers to as a Western preoccupation with binary opposites and objectivity, where researchers are encouraged not to get emotionally involved. One way of doing this is through the deferral or repositioning myself to a place within this research, as a participant rather than as a gatherer or interpreter of stories, I am creating space for what Brueggemann (1993:19-20) calls the imaginative funding of post-modern theology in a way that can generate a new world.

1.17   Research question

These thoughts have led me to asking my question which is:

What role might participatory pastoral care practices contribute towards ongoing conversations in South Africa between races, given our history of colonisation, separation and oppression?

This is more than a curiosity. It has drawn and compelled me particularly in the ways in which I see myself constructed as a white woman living in Southern Africa. I have difficulty avoiding race and my own embedded racism and historical privilege and guilt. As much as I try to wash my hands clean of it, its trace is ingrained like a tattoo into my skin. My overall aim is to deconstruct racism and to explore alternate ways of pastorally engaging with care that attempt to dismantle white embedded supremacy with which society appears to be saturated.

1.18   Aims in this research

There are three aims that I have had in this research that fall under this deconstructive umbrella:

Firstly I aimed to find ways of participating in a community that challenge hierarchical and racial privileges embedded within some of the dualisms connected to colonial and modernistic discourses.

Secondly I have aimed to explore healing practices based on participating together across racial and cultural boundaries.

Thirdly through centring participation as a relational practice I have aimed to understand something more about the sustainable role of caring with people and learning together what mutual and reciprocal care might mean. Through attempting to dissolve historically privileged categories I want to know something of the role that it might play in bringing about transformation and healing in South Africa. I hope to

contribute to an ongoing theological conversation a bout how to bring a voice to doing theology in a participatory way and to be a part of humanising society through finding stories that challenge the belief that Africa is a 'scar on the face of this earth'. I would like to contribute towards making these voices more visible in society.

There are also a number of aims that have been defined by the women I am working with. This research emerges from this relationship in which the Mothers have asked me to help them bring closure to their grief through group counselling. They also requested that I assist them in finding the bones of their loved ones. Lastly they asked that I facilitate a process of talking with the perpetrators so that truth, apology and forgiveness might happen.

1.19   Agreement made for this research process

This research has been an ongoing negotiated agreement from the Mothers concerning our work together. It was agreed when I began working with the Mothers that they in turn would allow me to reflect as a research journey on our work together. It was however only in 2005 that the Mothers officially wrote me a letter giving me permission to write about this journey. The letter was hand-written in front of the Mothers as an ethical way of co-constructing mutual consent. Many researches have consent forms that in a cross-cultural context may be signed but not fully understood, and this was one way in which it could be written in a co-constructed way, where the Mothers felt more in control of the process. This written agreement can be seen in appendix (i).

Agreements with the perpetrators became an ongoing process of multiple conversations, both face to face and telephonically. It was not until they had the opportunity to read this writing and comment on it that I asked for written consent. This is a risky and perhaps uncommon way of doing research, but working methodologically within a participatory frame, I believed this would offer a good relational basis built on trust for the writing. It also meant that people's stories were not taken and frozen in the headlamps of history, seen only through a politically privileged discourse, or through one interpretation. These consent forms can also be seen in appendix (i).

Writing this first chapter in hindsight, I have become perhaps more aware of some of the difficulties in dismantling some of the less visible meanings attached to discourses that have categorised and formed me in terms of race, privilege and the expectations that accompany these privileges. This research journey will take you into something of the complexity of caring in community when accompanied by such 'tags'; and where I, as a pastoral therapist and as a mother, chose to walk many miles with other Mothers, whose lives were scripted differently from mine. And yet as the journey exposes itself I hope to language the inseparable nature of our journeys and the mutuality of care.

Chapter 2

Freedom as a relational practice

2.1   Introduction

This chapter goes into more detail on the way in which this research is conducted and the methodology used. It begins with a major assumption running through this thesis, that modernism has brought in its wake certain challenges around dualistic thinking. Modernism has also placed a great deal of emphasis on the 'here and now', the materiality of life and the imminence of Christ in the world. Through a focus on the 'here and now', dialectics of entitlement grounded in economic empowerment have focused on the poor. Discourses of truth, justice and blame have been privileged over some of the less measurable relational practices that grow communities of relational care. Using a social construction methodology I shift the attention away from freedom as a right towards freedom as a relational and ethical practice.

2.2   Dualistic thinking

Dualistic thinking is endemic in Western ways of knowing (Dingermans 1996, Van der Ven 1988, 1993, Van der Ven et al 2003, Heitink 1999, Ackermann 1994). As I suggested in the introduction, it can be traced far back into the beginnings of institutionalised Christianity, where diversity was replaced by consensus (Isherwood 1999:3). Under this long historical dialectic, modernism and scientifically deduced facts have flourished. It is like a mother tongue to me. I have come from a long tradition of scientific rationalism and debate where one idea stands against another idea.

My interest in this work has been to move towards knowing myself in relation to someone else rather than in contrast to. This has not been an easy journey given the inequalities of the past. It has also not been easy because as much as I have attempted to employ this practice with the Mamelodi Mothers, I have also taken a position of inclusiveness with the men who perpetrated political violence. These are men who in other circumstances may have been described as heroes rather than murderers. This has

been a particularly difficult process and the next chapter takes you into some of the difficulties we encountered through walking this path. Research has a tendency to characterise people in definitive ways as for example heroes or villains. Frank, in looking at qualitative research methodology contends that this too is not immune from such quantifiable claims, leaving out the complexity of lived humanity, which becomes an unethical practice. Frank quotes Bakhtin in this regard in his analysis of Devushkin's story *The Overcoat*:

> Devushkin had glimpsed himself in the image of the hero of "The Overcoat," which is to say, as something totally quantified, measured, and defined to the last detail: all of you is here; there is nothing more in you, and nothing more to be said about you. He felt himself to be hopelessly predetermined and finished off, as if he were already quite dead, yet at the same time he sensed the falseness of such an approach.' (Frank 2005:964)

Norris (1991:87) in discussing the immense history that dualistic thinking and writing has played in Western thought suggests that deconstruction offers a way of creating a 'non-categorical surplus of meaning which mocks and destroys the putative laws of thought.' He goes on to quote Foucault as saying that dialectics depend on categories that 'organise the play of affirmations and negations, establish the legitimacy of representations, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts'. [1]

With the powerful influence of such dialectics, it is not easy to work with inclusive practices that invite this form of participation. A part of the difficulty in research is that participation is not easy to measure because conversations and possibilities are open ended and never come to a definitive conclusion. It escapes the categorisation and organisation of affirmations and negations and therefore becomes difficult to qualify within academic language. Frank (2005:965) suggests that academic institutions hold researchers responsible for rendering those they have studied as measured and defined. At the same time however research also has to work within forms of categorisation and therefore cannot stand against them, but they can refrain from doing what Bakhtin would call finalising the other (Frank 2005:966).

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[1] Foucault, M. 1977:186. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice.*Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry simon. Oxford: Blackwell.

A call for research to accommodate categorisation, while looking for alternate ways of describing humanity is something that a participative research is about. Participation is connected to the knowledges and wisdoms not yet talked about. This is what Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002) might call *l'avenir*, a future that is not predictable, in comparison with a future that we plan and predict within familiar interpretive paradigms that bring a certain amount of finality and control upon a subject. The unpredictable ongoing conversations bring about surprises, which in themselves are also never definitive, because they become ongoing conversations. Within theology we might call these *kairos* moments that are not connected to chronological time, but rather 'timely' and can often only be seen as we look back to these moments held in relationship and in imaginative wisdoms (Bulman 1997:464-476). To work with surprise is also to work with anxiety, in as much as anything inconclusive brings with it a certain amount of anxiousness simply because it is less controllable.

In this regard I have refrained mostly in this research from using tape recordings in that recordings can become static and somewhat quantifiable. I have rather attempted to capture conversational and relational ongoing moments with the perpetrators and with the Mothers, bearing in mind that these too are only my words concerning another. In doing this I attempt to ethically refrain from finalising or quantifying people as either victims or perpetrators, so that they may be given the space to outgrow any dominant categorisation or theme. I have however video-taped a reflection with the Mothers on our work together and in this way I have worked within a more static text and this can be viewed in appendix ii.

2.3   Imaginative wisdom

The less planned moments of participation happened at the TRC. They have been written about by people like Krog (1998) and Tutu (1999) and captivate me with what appear to be eternal moments of care and participation within multiple forms of identity. But they are not often talked about or highlighted and it was not the mandate of the TRC to explore perpetrators identities apart from within the paradigm of 'aggressor'.

Fragments of imaginative wisdom tend to be overlooked in the emergency of *justice* and *truth* associated with liberation and contextual theologies, particularly in the context of liberation struggles which are situated within a materialist paradigm of concrete betterment. I have talked more about this (see 1.13, 4.14). Bosch (1991:431), using Stackhouse as a guide, says: 'People do not only need truth (theory) and justice (praxis); they also need beauty, the rich resources of symbol, piety, worship, love, awe, and mystery. Only too often, in the tug-of-war between the priority of truth and the priority of justice, this dimension gets lost'. *Poesis* draws me away from winning or losing towards inhabiting a relational space where we experience the healing presence of God in the not so common stories waiting to be performed in communities.

Levinas (Veling 2005) has spoken of our western preoccupation with the *immanence* of Christ in the here and now. Immanence concerns itself with chronological earthly time, centred on individual and group entitlement and human rights, in other words quantifiable life based in economic reality. The fragments that are left out might not be as orderly and are harder to understand in a time frame. They are better understood as those eternal moments that come to surprise us. These moments of surprise are sought out in this research through relational practices where I create space enough for them to visit in ongoing multiple relational conversations. They are found in moments when I least expect them to arrive. Looking back on this journey, they have often been inserted in moments of vulnerability and humanity and often in a poetic form.

In this research I maintain a position which Levinas (1963, 1984, 1986) describes as an eternal responsibility and possibility in the face of the *other,* the one I can never fully understand or quantify in immanence. I attempt to develop a framework to find language for these less orderly fragments of relationship without explaining them away. Spivak (Morton 2003:42-43) refers to Derrida's engagement with ethical positions where to engage with the *other* is a slow and painstaking process with no guarantee of success, because each context is different and unique and inherently unstable.

2.4   Relational practices

Relational space is more than what Bosch (1991:425) calls a mutual dependency, or inter-subjectivity between theory and praxis, it involves a paradigm shift towards a place where theory and praxis collapse in upon themselves in eternal moments of vulnerability as human beings. This is a word used by Levinas when he talks about the intense and eternal vulnerability seen in the face of another human being that calls us not to kill or injure or hurt (Bernstein 2002, Paperzak et al 1996, Levinas 1986, Veling 2005).

Kotzé (2002) working from a post-modern participatory consciousness and building on ideas developed in theories on social construction and ethical practices, suggests that challenges facing us in today's world are ones that move us into relational practices in which the *other* is my concern. Eagleton (2003), writing on literary theory challenges us to confront our human frailty in the face of new waves of fundamentalism facing the world today, where we create contexts to meet with the *other*. Fundamentalism based on such power is not only seen within politics and religion, it can be witnessed in the corporate world in which the individual becomes the façade for conformity. This indicates that the democratic rights of individuals are superseded by ideologies and controlled by the few over the many. In other words you comply or you suffer. This poses an ongoing challenge to theology today. What appears on the surface to look like acceptance, tolerance and plurality becomes a complex web of power, control and dependency, privileging certain truths over others. As Derrida (in Boyne, 1990:155) says regarding the discourse of apartheid in South Africa: 'The task should be to expose the contradiction between the development of the official discourse and the deepening brutality which lies beneath it'.

Practices that work towards participating through seeing ourselves in the face of *the other* provide an ethical position of accountability to another person as well as an ethical position in which the *other* is not reduced to a quantifiable object. This ethical relational responsibility indicates that my own survival is dependent on a less controllable reciprocity of relationship with someone who I may not fully understand or trust. This in itself challenges the privileged role that certainty plays in an increasingly

uncertain world (Graham 1998). It calls me into a deep participation with another, where I attempt to break away from categories, particularly categories that care *for* people, or fight *for* people. It moves towards participating in practices that I have less control over, practices that involve mutual dependency; practices that belong to a different order of relationship.

Participation is best seen when people are prepared to stand in the gap between opposing forces and find a way to be faced by the *other* without the fear of being destroyed or humiliated in the process (although this too can happen and becomes a part of the risk). It is experienced in a context of care where people are invited to be more than any dominant discourse would say a person is.

In another way it could have a great deal to do with ways in which people build trust and mistrust with one another. Trust is not something that is built overnight and mistrust is deeply embedded in ways in which we see and experience people who are different, or a threat to us. Trust in this research is built through finding ways of working with vulnerability that do not take advantage of another human being when in a position to do so.

2.5   Freedom as an ethical practice

I am shifting the emphasis, without excluding it, away from freedom as a matter of rights, or a *will to truth,* towards asking questions around freedom as an ethical and relational practice. The archives I open hold well-worn pages, embossed with themes and discourses around racial categories, victims and perpetrators, jaundiced by our colonial history. In Foucauldian terms I am using an episteme, which is synchronic rather than diachronic way of hopping between disciplines in a lateral way. Synchronic ways of researching also engage non-formal more imponderable knowledges, permeated with irregularities that cross boundaries of different disciplines (Foucault 1970:xxii). Alternate forms of liberation may well be forged through relational practices that hop between these disciplines in somewhat fluid informal ways.

50

Breaking out of some of the well-worn politically correct categories in search of chance conversational events in this research runs great risk of not fitting within accepted theoretical discourses of our time. It also risks falling prey in a certain way to the old structure that it seeks to criticise (Morton 2003:42). Foucault, in his lecture *The Order of Discourse* (1970:52), further talks of the difficulty of escaping the web of meaning attached to discourse. He says that 'in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality'. To begin to tell a story using different orders and procedures needs a position within which to launch itself into different ways of thinking and seeing. Holding onto previous structures that have formed my thinking and being I also do not want to fall prey to old structures. It is as a launch pad into different territory that I explore. This is a territory where I seek to engage in narrating our stories in ways that do not lay claim to any one truth.

2.6   Conversations can only be relational

Methodologically this research becomes a part of re-relating narratives in ways that give life in inclusive rather than exclusive ways. Inviting a human face back to names and labels is one way of doing this. This way of telling comes from a premise within the social construction movement where we understand our identities relationally as narratives, which are performed with an audience (Bruner 1986:143). It is what Bakhtin (in Frank 2005:968) refers to when he says: 'A man never coincides with himself'. In other words there is no individual autonomous *'I'* that can possibly stand outside of a performing relationship with other people. The metaphor of performance opens opportunities for many readings and many audiences. Bruner (op cit: 143) goes on to say: 'Narrative structures organize and give meaning to experience, but there are always feelings and lived experience not fully encompassed by the dominant story. Only after the new narrative becomes dominant is there a re-examination of the past, a rediscovery of old texts, and a recreation of the new heroes of liberation and resistance'. Participatory practices in this sense should not demand my *rightness* if it means your *wrongness*.

Narrative practices that use performance, audience and re-authoring (White & Epston 1990) as ways of moving from dominant problem saturated stories can sound somewhat romantic and conclusive. Lived experience is so much more than using thin or thick descriptions of a problem or a preferred way of being (White & Epston 1990, Geertz 1986). Relational practices move in as well as out of many dominant, painful and tragic stories of South Africa attempting to find different ways of living with these stories. Sometimes it appears as if these stories can be laid to rest and alternate descriptions found. Then I have found that given the chance these dominant narratives of suffering keep raising their heads. I listen to these dominant narratives that seem to be activated in communal memories as tinder to a match. I suspect that this will always be so in history for group pain is a very constitutive force in forming collective identity and justification of a cause. There comes a time when we have to find ways of caging the tiger rather than taming it. I am looking towards decentralising these histories, placing them in suspension, in favour of alternate identities that are not based on categories of victim or perpetrator, or my people or your people.

2.7 Multiple relational journeys that attempt to plot the territory

This document shares something of the many ways in which I have experienced my relationship with the Mothers and the perpetrators. I can only look at vignettes and pieces of these relationships and depending on the ways in which I select texts it could be told in many different ways. I have particularly selected certain experiences that I have seen through some of the dominant discourses of race and privilege.

I document something of the chronology of our journey as we have engaged in healing practices together. This includes our work with finding the bones of their missing relatives. It includes conversations when we meet together on a Wednesday morning. It also includes some of the ways that truth and justice have accompanied the Mothers, perpetrators and me on this journey. I am ill at ease with the word perpetrator. I know that the men I have talked with would not choose this word, but for the moment it stands in apology to these men.

Following our three year journey I invited six of the Mothers to a reflective conversation on our work with particular emphasis on the role that I have played in participating with them as a group. A seventh person was included who agreed to translate for us. This two hour conversation was video-taped and transcribed and can be viewed (appendix ii). I held this reflection at the Institute for Therapeutic Development (ITD), where six of my fellow doctoral students interviewed the Mothers and me about our relationship and the role it might have played in bringing healing and transformation. This reflection is perhaps the core of this study and I write about it in Chapter seven.

2.8   Additional conversational partners

In chapter one I documented some of the people who have been conversational partners within this research process. Documents have also been in conversation with me in this process. Field notes have assisted me in my remembering of events and emotions associated with this journey. They have allowed me time to a critical *self reflection* on this process. However, field notes and self reflexive conversations held in my head are limited in their capacity to challenge the romantic relationship I have with this idea of participation. A danger is that the more I buy into a participatory frame of consciousness, the more I become seduced my own methodology. As Derrida says: 'It is like the philosopher who walks along the road and falls in a well while looking at the stars' (Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002).

2.9   Something of the ecology of interrelatedness

Ecologically texts do not live in isolation. Derrida (Powell: 1997:5) for example suggests that within any text, whether written, oral, or in the texts of bodily gesture, are traces of other texts, other people and other voices. These texts cannot be dissected or purified, just as history, race, apartheid, suffering, colour or gender cannot be separated out. As research participants we are therefore indelibly connected to one another through our relationship to our pasts and histories.

This interrelatedness challenges the idea that I can bite into some central core value that cannot be challenged or critiqued or taken for granted. It also requires that assumed knowledge, or that which we take for granted, needs to be suspended, because it cannot be understood outside of that which is excluded. By this I mean that there are many traces of texts that have been excluded and these texts wait to be read, because they are already a part of the text in both what is said and what is not said. The texts that I am researching around our identities in a post-colonial context hold multiple and complex meanings. This text invites readers to generate new and imaginative meanings from it. In a similar way peoples voices are also not pure. Traces of many voices are found within any voice and every voice will take this trace or supplement and make it their own. The reader will find their own interpretation generated through the metaphors triggered in prior memory. The text works another way as well. Ricoeur might say that the text 'reads you' (Capps 1984:21). In this I deliberately evoke the text to conjure ways of knowing and seeing.

Being connected in history challenges the idea that my survival is dependent on someone else's death, or that I can win at someone else's expense. The idea of political survival through sovereign means is well developed by Hobbes (see Chapter five), in which a group survives through fear of a common enemy. Levinas (see chapter five) holds a very different idea. He suggests that my survival is dependent on your survival and so your survival is my ethical concern. Levinas' ideas are dependent on ideas of a collective consciousness as opposed to individualist notions of success.

This theological challenge begins by starting this text, looking towards a future of what role faith might play in creating space to embrace the other in what Ricoeur might call the supernatural and poetic ability to show hospitality to another and allow forgiveness to alter meanings that we might attach to the past (Lyle & Gehart 2000:82).

2.10   Sameness, difference and alterity

There is a dominant narrative in South Africa that focuses on race, inequality, domination and difference, bound up with discourses about *us* and *them*. There is of

course nothing new in this. Difference is one way in which I come to know who I am through knowing who I am not, as I discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

In this journey with the Mothers I am rather referring to the position I am taking up within this research. It becomes a shift in assumption. It is what Shotter (1993:95) calls 'a shift from the standpoint of the detached, theory-testing onlooker, to the interested, interpretative, and procedure-testing participant-observer; from one-way action to two-way interaction; from an interest in theories of underlying processes to an interest in accounting for the actual practices in everyday life.'

If this shift is to be taken seriously it challenges not simply an academic positioning, but it challenges me to become willing to relinquish some of my privileged ways of knowing about someone else. Difference is in many ways bound up with the *other,* the one that I cannot fully understand and to whom, in Levinas's terminology, I am accountable to, the one who I am faced by. Through re-positioning myself from an onlooker to a position immersed in two-way interaction I refer to something that cannot be fully understood or grasped by models that work with communication or thought processes that I understand in the world of the rational. It cannot be fully grasped through models that promote success or failure either, because it becomes a relational activity, one that does not look to quantifying success or failure, but rather the vulnerability of our humanity.

I have positioned myself in a particularly vulnerable place where I risk what Heshusius (1994, 1995) and Kotzé (2001, 2001) describe as a self/other relationship. I am not attempting to dissolve my own identity as a white woman brought up in a privileged middle class background, who has had opportunities to roam the world and live in Europe as well as Africa. It is not that I am attempting to homogenise my relationship with the Mothers, or become African, because I am not that, although Africa has moulded me and challenged me beyond anything I expected in life. It is more what Levinas (1984, 1986, Paperzak et al 1996) refers to as *alterity,* which suggests a difference about someone whom I will never fully understand, but to whom I am bound in relationship with. This position, which is both participant and observer within a two-way process exposes my own vulnerability and with this my own human failure

(Pattison 1988:145-168). This position also generates anxiety within me (Heshusius 1994:15) in that I give away much of the control and security that one identity offers.

Using Ricoeur's ideas on difference Cochrane (1999:95) suggests: 'If sameness dominates the encounter, the other is defined as nothing more than an extension of the self, posing no challenge, no question, no confrontation, no threat. We do not change. When difference is recognized, however, we encounter not just the other but our own selfhood in the making'. Tracy (1994) adds to this conversation, as does Veling (2005), Pattison (1988:147) and Levinas (1984, 1986), when they suggest it is the complete *otherness* of the other, that part I cannot understand, that exposes a vulnerability that demands of us that we do not hurt or kill or judge. Theologically I suggest that this is challenging territory, because the *other* has historically been seen as a threat or as an object to be cared for, dependent, controlled or tamed.

Once separated from another person it seems a small step to turn another person or group of people into an enemy. This enemy becomes a threat to our survival and we do not see their survival as something that is connected to our own. As I argue in chapter five, this is a flawed argument; as can be seen in Foucault's work on the sovereign state. Through the reproduction of dominant narratives that perpetuate suspicion between races, we are in danger of creating enemies that we must protect ourselves from, as can be witnessed in current wars on terrorism. Alternatively we empower ourselves by perpetuating a subaltern that we must rescue. Maintaining hierarchical positions becomes a part of this reproduction of identity. I will explore this in much greater detail in chapter five.

Texts that are centred on race and separation, justice and truth through too much talk or too little talk have a capacity to lead to the reproduction of these dominant narratives around racial and ethnic separation. Within this my curiosity finds an ethical political position through reading myself within the face of the other. It is also about reading me through avoiding an axis of ratings based on success or failure.

Pattison (1988:145) suggests that '[i]n modern achievement and success orientated secular society failure has replaced sin as the greatest evil to be avoided. Failure brings in its wake that most terrible of feelings, shame, a sense of complete exposure and

vulnerability'. This is in line with the idea that a challenge facing theology today is to find practices that are life-giving in the face of our history, and do not reproduce the texts of exclusion, success or failure as a measurement of life-giving transformative practices. It concerns dismantling dualities that separate and divide us as human beings and finding ways to re-interpret history. Different sets of questions await my attention concerning my own humanity and how I work as a co-participant within a research process. These are questions that attempt to avoid interpreting data around the dualities of theory and praxis, the researcher and the researched.

2.11   Discursive positioning within multiple webs of meaning

South Africa today has an expansive genealogy and history, and methodologically this writing can only fish in a small lagoon of a far greater ocean of humanity and relationship and literature on the topic. The discursive waters I fish in will determine how I represent history, which means that the ingredients I am selecting can only become a partial and provisional representation of a much greater picture, which in itself is also provisional and not definitive.

Telling and interpreting stories within this context is not linear or neat; it is rather a process of conversing with history in its complex and multiple webs of meaning that mix in different ways. These ways are constantly under construction in my mind through events selected over time that connect and overlap with my own experience of life. The following conversation is an example of some of the complex thoughts that have played in my mind over the last two years.

I was attending the funeral of Everite, Maria Ntuli's fourth child. He had died very suddenly from what Maria suspects was an HIV/AIDS related illness. Maria had lost a daughter to this in 2003 and now it was Everite, and the family were reeling under the shock of this untimely death.

At the funeral, Onica, Maria's eldest child, showed me a picture of Jeremiah (one of the Mamelodi 10). The picture was taken in March 1982 when Jeremiah was twelve years old and can be seen in the central section of poetry in the poem *Yesterday's men*. He

was standing outside their family home in Mamelodi, squinting into the sun with two of his cousins beside him and Onica holding her eldest child. As I looked at this photograph I remembered myself at that age at school in London. I thought about Jeremiah and the stories Maria had told me about him 'making trouble' in Mamelodi at the time of the riots. I thought about Maria's hopes of him becoming a lawyer. Then I asked Onica:

> **Bridgid**: 'Tell me about Jeremia'
> **Onica**: 'Jeremiah was the youngest and I was the oldest. When I started work he was eleven years old and would wait on the corner of the street for me to return from work to give him a sweet. I did not dare to return home without a sweet for him'.

I thought about a family so removed from my own and yet so similar. I thought about myself at that age walking home from school in order to save my bus fare to buy sweets. I kicked my black lace-up shoes called *Start-rite runabouts* because I hated them. Other girls in my class laughed at me because of them. I knocked them about in the hope that they would wear out and prove my mother wrong about their sensibleness and durability. I remembered how lonely I was and how lovely it would have been to have an older sister thinking about me. I also thought about two strange dreams I have had of Jeremiah. In one of them I woke up screaming and in another Jeremiah appeared to me as a bearded man of about forty years. These loose thoughts are only fragments of course, but they seem to knit themselves together in a relational understanding of our identity interwoven with my own history and memory of lived experience. Dominant discourses that focus on truth, justice, victim and perpetrator, or hero, can so easily dazzle us with their heroic splendour, leaving unattended the less dominant narratives of lived moments that appear to stand outside of time and could play a significant role in how we pastorally attend to our context.

2.12 Heroic narratives that are in danger of excluding the complexity of relationship

Dominant narratives around what constitutes a hero have a capacity to exclude that which is not said in a family, or considered not worthy of talking about in a society. I refer here to stories of other deaths, particularly in Jeremiah's family where two of his

siblings have died from the HI virus, as well as possible stories of sons perhaps planting bombs. This lies outside the focus of this study, although the significance of sharing these journeys with death and alternate themes also play their tune in our relational practices, building communities of trust through the many webs of meaning created within them.

Relational identities which focus on humanity, vulnerability and care connect us as human beings but can be difficult to place within a bigger picture. For example news of my new grandson Benjamin, who was born on May 10th 2006 seemed to travel fast in Mamelodi. I got to hear through one of the Mothers (Joyce Hlope). She told me how delighted Sophie (another of the group) was to hear that his name is Benjamin, after her son who was one of the missing Mamelodi Nine. She said 'So now I also am a grandmother'. Relational pastoral care is built up over time slowly, personally and carefully.

Through focusing on relationship and humanity history may be written about differently. Experience tells me that history has a way of living with us and holding us captive to its powerful discourses of victor and vanquished, winner and loser. In this way history still lives us, condemning us to the silence of polarisation and suspicion of one another. This does not allow for faith to find alternate ways of understanding. This phrase 'faith finding understanding' was a way Anselm found out of the polarities that the early Christian Church presented him with. He shifted the locus of interest away from language that created categories of good or bad, right or wrong, towards faith as a practice (De Gruchy 1994:10). A part of finding understanding is to employ certain interpretive methods to texts that are under negotiation (Brueggemann 1993), and in this I turn to poststructuralist thought.

2.13 Working within a post-structuralist and social construction paradigm

Post-structuralism challenges assumed and taken for granted ways of knowing. It has grown out of the discipline of linguistics and semiotics and language, as I have described toward the beginning of this writing. Within the context of this research it is

understood as something that is constitutive of our reality and world-view. Language is not seen as a reflection of reality, but as something we generate and create together as we co-create meaning through the ways in which we interact together. Language is an activity in which people create and talk about reality together and this in turn produces discourse. Burr (2003:64) quotes Foucault as saying 'discourses are practices which form the objects of which they speak'. Language and how it becomes represented, constituted and held in our collective memories is important to this study, because through language we generate discourse and through our relational activities we bring about certain realities. That which is considered important to talk about has a habit of turning into reality, but this text holds a powerful subtext because by talking about some things we do not talk about others. The text is seen as a living document which is saturated in discourse and meaning. A small example here has to do with my first encounter with one of the men responsible for the deaths of these activists. His name is Brigadier Jack Cronje and he worked for the security police in the Northern Transvaal. He was directly responsible for the deaths of the Mamelodi Ten. The incident happened when I contacted him by phone in April 2005.

> Bridgid: 'Would it be possible to meet with you?'
> Cronje: 'No….(pause). Even talking with you on the phone is upsetting me (pause) 'I just want to put the past behind me and get on with my life. Talking about it re-traumatizes me. I am already under a doctor for post-traumatic stress disorder'.
> Bridgid: 'But how can I write on a topic such as this without hearing what you have to say?
> Cronje: 'So when shall we meet?'

I include this conversation for two reasons. He changed his mind about seeing me very abruptly. Could this have something to do with relational practices? Secondly it appears that some memories, particularly around war and conflict are particularly difficult to find language for. They are consigned to the dungeons of unacceptable shame. Assumed within this conversation is a belief that Cronje has nothing to say that would be of value to this research. Another silent assumption could be that I am yet another researcher who gazes upon him as a villainous perpetrator, whose trauma and pain live outside of an acceptable discourse. From my own position however as participative researcher it would be unethical not to hear and respect his voice. I develop this conversation in the next chapter along with other texts.

2.14   Structuring analysis in this text

Representing and analysing a text is problematic, when I seek to become accountable to those who participate in a research project, while at the same time keeping my eye on the larger texts and discourses from which our texts emerge. Ricoeur (Capps 1984:28) suggests that we cannot avoid a structural analysis through looking at both metaphorical meaning and the deep structure of thought. This however assumes there is some objective common river of thought into which our texts run. Texts have generally been seen through methodologies steeped in Western rational thinking that maintain a subject/object split, as if researchers need to find some underlying academic structure that is frequently only accessible to certain privileged academics. Sometimes what we know seems to become so obvious that we can overlook it and discard it as unimportant simply because it doesn't fit the assumed structure of analysis.

Methodologically analysing representations of God, of memory and relationship is not easy or even possible, particularly in the light of questions such as who decides on what any text means? Or how we decide what is meaningful for those we work with. This makes the status of meaning very precarious. Conventional forms of textual analysis, for example grounded theory, narrative analysis (Riessman 1993), or discourse analysis (Phillips & Hardy 2002, Burr 2003), are useful particularly in uncovering and analysing, in a Foucauldian sense, the production of knowledge and meaning through text, context and discourse, as well as exploring the genealogies of patterns that emerge from such readings. However, within this research I move towards what Heshusius (1994, 1995) and Kotzé (2001, 2002) call a participatory consciousness, where the text is an ongoing co-construction between participants awaiting the unpredictable *kairos* moments of *l'avenir*. In many ways this is not possible, and as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I am the one selecting and writing this text and therefore the idea of co-construction holds within it its own limitations and plays tricks on the limitations of my own imagination. However, it is perhaps the paradigm I can best explore the unexpected and the *kairos* moments, in attempting to make meaning from some of the fragments of conversation that could be significant.

This is also made difficult in this work because as participants in this process we are working across cultures and language barriers. Without any official translation we depend on each other to engage in meaningful and reciprocal relationships of mutual trust. In this context it becomes impossible not to privilege myself, the researcher, as I am the one engaging with the power of academia and written about theology, as well as the use of English as the written text. My own academic privilege, affords me great power, as well as my colour and education and therefore to talk of authentic participatory action research becomes something of a misnomer, because I have control over the text as it is written, as in the excerpts I selected earlier.

Privilege places me in a discursive position of authority within the group I work with, as I have already mentioned in chapter one. Assumed expectations abound in the role I play within the group which are not necessarily talked about. Financial and racial privilege finds me in challenging positions where it is assumed that it is my role to 'pay' or provide services and to be a spokesperson for the group. The assumptions however attendant to my privilege as both *white* and educated keep me vigilant of the power offered to me within this historical discursive position, as well as the conundrum of experiencing being trapped within this role, which diminishes my ability to authentically participate. A participatory action research methodology calls for authentic participation where both the researcher and those who participate in the process benefit from the journey.

2.15   Representing and finding order within this text

There are many ways that these stories could be represented within a hermeneutic circle (Cochrane et al 1991), depending on the point of departure. There is so much lived experience and therefore the point of insertion is in multiple places, although this particular point of departure is relational participation. Lived experience holds ambiguity as there is so much of it depending on what becomes selected. I cannot exclude my own prejudice for ordering these stories in a sequence that makes sense to me. However, as I said earlier, every reading of this text becomes a new reading through the way it works at reactivating prior experience (Bruner 1986:17). This in turn permits conversations between the texts, without one colonising the other. It is in

this telling and re-telling of story as a performance that Bruner says that we refashion our culture and so bring about paradigm shifts, of which I am interested.

A participatory theology of relational and reciprocal accountability perhaps best describes what I am attempting to write about. This is a complex and imaginative road to walk, searching for fragments of relational meaning away from old and well-worn roads that beckon me to care for and rescue the other, the ones who are helpless, subaltern, and the Mothers. This colonial discourse is not so easy to break away from. I recognise it every day as I play out my role as a white woman of privilege. I experience it in the NGO the Mothers are a part of in the ways in which we as a group get positioned in the movement, often without being consulted about decisions that are made, leaving the group in the 'dark' as to what is happening in a hierarchical order of privileged knowledge. I notice it in the 'rights' based paradigm around which Khulumani is constituted at both the collective as well as the individual level.

I am aware in another way of how white people have experienced the poverty of being split from their own humanity and numbed through discourses that flourished around individualism and the ability to cut work and school from home life (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003). Dominant discourses have placed white men within a certain frame from which their lives are viewed, and yet people are so much more than this poverty would suggest. I will turn here to a conversation I had with General Van der Merwe (General of the Police Force during the 1980's), his lawyer Jan Wagener, and Adriaan Vlok. I met with them on the request of the Mothers, who had asked me to find out whether the perpetrators would meet with them to apologise. During the course of the conversation Wagener looked at me and said 'You have to know Bridgid that the only emotions that Afrikaans boys were brought up with was aggression and competition'. My immediate thought was that he was 'split off from his own humanity'.

After reading this text Wagener phoned me and said 'You haven't really captured what I was saying. I meant that other emotions did exist but they were discouraged when I was a child. It was the days of corporal punishment and if you were beaten you had to leave the head masters' office without showing that it hurt.' He went on to tell me that so many researchers have come to him looking for stories of him as a perpetrator as well as his clients, scripted as murderers and aggressors. He went on to tell me over the

phone: 'No researcher seems to be interested that my wife and I have taken in abandoned babies for many years. These babies could be any colour. I have probably changed many more nappies than you have in your life Bridgid. Imagine me a "typical Afrikaans male" going to a typical white Dutch Reformed church. There I am sitting in the pew and in the carry-cot lies a black baby. I pick up the baby and burp him/her. Researchers are not interested in this. They come with a pre-determined idea of what reconciliation looks like and go away with all the evidence they want'.

Research methodologies in other words can look so good on paper, so conclusive and accurate in writing, so politically correct and ethical they have no problem passing an ethics committee, but they exclude so much of the rich ongoing conversation of ethically engaging with those who you are writing about in non finalising ways.

Multiple voices, offer me in this writing an opportunity to call to these frozen voices to return from the shadows of anger, shame, misunderstanding and silence. Multiple readings also help generate new meaning from our humanity, to talk so that we do not need to negate one another. The ways in which I position myself within memories of oppression and injustice will to a large degree influence the outcome of the research. A participatory action research methodology fits with my approach although it does not fully encompass it.

2.16   Participatory action research

Reason and Bradbury (2001:2) talk about participatory research being both practical and reflective. The research is practical from a number of points of view. It practically engages with particular needs and concerns of a community, which itself become action orientated. It is reflective in that the text appears to never quite be complete. As Frank (2005:968) says: 'The dialogical alternative emphasizes research participants' engagement in their own struggles of becoming; its focus is stories of struggle, not static themes or lists of characteristics that fix participants in identities that fit typologies:' Reflection reminds me of space created between the lines for both critique and for imaginative thoughts. I hope through the way I craft this text for this to be evoked in its reading. Writing and re-writing a text becomes its own reflexive process

in which it interrogates me each time it gets re-written. This becomes its own transformational process (McTaggart 1997:1, Chaudhary 1997:121).

A more radical and imaginative reading of the texts, in a participatory research can be partially understood when I allow us as people to constitute the text through ongoing conversations. It is also more possible within a research such as this in that the research is an ongoing relational process in which lived complexity of relationship is more accessible. It has happened over three years of engagement and has not been constituted through a more limited process of data gathering. McTaggart (1997:13) comments on this by saying: '(t)hose seeking more technical accounts of method may be frustrated here. They may be even more frustrated by my further observation that authentic participation itself might almost be seen as *constituting* the method.'

McTaggart (Reason & Bradbury 2001:1) argues the aim of participatory action research is 'to change practices, social structures, and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice, and unsatisfying forms of existence'. McTaggart's in this case joins the post-colonial writer Mbembe (1999) in evoking the word irrational and unreason from its slumber. As we emerge from an age that has worshipped rationality, McTaggart inserts that same word until it begs the question 'whose rationality'?

Participatory action research also allows data to emerge through relational activities that, in the case of this work, sit with time and people, allowing language to emerge as a product of our action. It is more process oriented than fact or truth centred. I read this in that researchers engaging in such methodology seriously engage with the ordinary person at the local level, and take their voices seriously without fitting words into a predetermined structure. Lykes: (2001:235) suggests that it is captured in the poetic.

This process is a constantly happening and changing practice and can best be written about when researchers become immersed in the lives of those with whom they are researching. This in turn both influences and transforms the research process. In this relational process of change the researcher sees something of their own image within the other, as well as a fuzzy space that is difficult to categorise. As soon as this experience is written about it loses something of its magical and mysterious lived experience.

2.17   A relational process of change

Change happens within relationship, it happens as much to the researcher as the other (Heshusius 1994, Kotzé 2001, Reinhartz 1992). In the case of this research I am bound with the other through my relationality. The other does not represent some different life form or separatist movement as in black consciousness, or identity politics (Gergen 1995). This form of participatory research also demands from me an engagement in community that far exceeds a research process, because it involves authentic participatory ongoing relationship with real people. Theories of post-modern theology, particularly as developed by Brueggemann are tools in helping to deconstruct the text in order to see the relational dance between us. This theology pierces the stubborn walls of objective reality that keep us separate from our humanity and vulnerability.

Transformation cradles an alternate power relationship in its hands, and through the redefining of that word rationality; it might contain a capacity to redistribute power. Power can be harvested from the husks, the ordinary and familiar as was shown with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina (Mellibowski 1997). Ordinary mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared stood in the Plaza wearing white head scarves after the dirty war in Argentina from 1976 – 1983. This research is about finding the extraordinary within the ordinary.

Action research also challenges the domination of power over an individual or group, in other words the abuse of power (Poling 1991:25), but it acknowledges in a Foucauldian sense power as an inter-relational necessity for life itself. According to Poling (1991:24) 'power in its ideal form is virtually synonymous with life itself'.

Winter (2001:14) speaks of action research involving change. Changes have happened in many ways, both practically and in my own thinking on this work. I have changed the way I think about the project on many occasions as the process has shifted from direct action relating to justice, truth and forgiveness towards the less measurable processes of participation. In its meander the value and measurement of change happens in its attention to the detail of relational ways of being together, bearing in mind the constitutive power of historical discourses. Reason and Bradbury (2001:2)

suggest: 'Good action research emerges over time in an evolutionary and developmental process, as individuals develop skills of inquiry and as communities of inquiry develop within communities of practice.' Having said this, I also believe that I have a responsibility within the group to contain the risks involved and not expose us as a group to situations that we will find too hard to negotiate.

Change has also happened with the other participants in this process. An advantage in this research process is that the research itself has involved three years of participation and this offers a greater opportunity for change to be witnessed within the relational process.

Although participatory action research is relatively new on the shelves of academic institutions, it has been around for a long time in an informal way, utilizing the age-old traditions where knowledge and wisdom are produced by the people and for the people in 'popular' ways of 'knowing' (Chaudhary 1997:121). In some ways it is of course a disadvantage to be an outsider to the community through language, background and culture. In another way it has allowed me ways of paying closer attention to the context within which I find myself. The lack of familiarity has meant that I have had to ask many questions around practices that I genuinely have no idea about. Being attentive in this way has led me to write extensive field notes and hold conversations with myself on paper. My mind has been challenged into creating new ways of working as a group that are not defined by the structures and rules that have organized my thinking in conventional group structures. In this way culture and people's 'ordinary ways of doing things' (McTaggart 1997:4) challenge ways that I have thought in the past.

In participatory action research the aims need to be moveable, changing targets, constructed together in a non-hierarchical way, so that those at the receiving end do not become 'docile bodies' whose voices do not count as they fall victim to the research. Such research works through not separating a subject from the object of study.

2.18   Some of the effects of separating a subject from an object

Effects of rationalism and truth built of a Western drive for truth, entitlement and individual rights is something that Foucault talks about in much of his work on power relationships (Foucault 1970, 1972, 1977, 1980). I am particularly interested in the ways that some of these power relations have inadvertently led to the separation of subject and object in its sovereign as well as disciplinary forms, as I mentioned in chapter one. Eagleton (2003:146-147), writing within literary criticism, uses strong and evocative language when he suggests that evil has to do with separating another person as a non-person either through creating it (as in destroying the idea of human as in the holocaust) or as a nameless threat to selfhood, as for example in a *war on terrorism*.

In this understanding of history in Southern Africa, history is not behind us with a rainbow nation in front. History is in front of us, and we walk forward into it as we search for new meanings out of old worn texts. Our colonial history of separation might have the power to relive us through the reproduction of violence and separation in South Africa, unless these texts can somehow find a way of becoming transformed. Given certain patriotic conditions racial differences become accentuated. Ideology, formed along any lines, limits other contexts, other identities, other opportunities from emerging, leaching out the colour from multiple ways of interpreting relationship and accountability within relationship. The constitutive effect of such colonial discourse is faced and explored in this research using the assumption that it needs to be languaged in an accountable way so that the research can move into an alternate consciousness.

Walking into history through the lens of ideology is subtly embodied in my own engagement in Mamelodi, where the messiness and weight of our pasts hold me in tension with a liberation struggle. Shifting of hierarchical boundaries and historical separation is not easy considering the weight of history that has constructed us. It is a particularly slow process to ethically deconstruct dominant texts (Morton 2003:43).

Authentic ways of engaging in dialogue can become particularly difficult in a country such as South Africa where racial mistrust is endemic and visible through economic privilege and education. This is difficult to talk about in South Africa. Weingarten

(2004:391) talks about the difficulty of participating and connecting authentically when she says:

> How to thread one's way through the central paradox of voice? If I don't tell you what I really think and feel, I will feel disconnected from you. I will end up withdrawing from you in silence. But, if I do tell you what I really think and feel, you will withdraw from me. What I have to say is so heinous, horrible, toxic, unacceptable, that you will not be able to stand me.

Where there is polarisation it becomes increasingly hard to find a voice because only certain authentic realities become permitted within a dominant discourse to speak. Sometimes it becomes particularly difficult to explore this volatile territory because we have few maps to guide us, and we become trapped in *otherness* and silence, as will I hope become clearer as I continue in this chapter.

The context of post-apartheid South Africa has drawn me into a maze of categories, assumptions, silences and labels, interpreted through dualities and the splitting myself away from others. This context is entrenched in duplicity and separateness played out on the stage of apartheid. Challenging dialectics embedded in polarisation and separatism does not preclude the enormity of crisis within South African theology to work with justice, poverty and human rights as Tracy's earlier text points out. But within the texts of challenging domination and inequality are other less explored texts. It is difficult to focus on participation without categories entrenched in individual rights, trauma, victim hood and perpetration stealing back the centre of the stage.

2.19 Researching a participatory theology within a post-apartheid state

Participating both meaningfully and authentically with a group of Mothers in a township in Pretoria, where experience and language appear incongruent is difficult as I have already mentioned. Constructing meaning together can be confusing and discursively problematic through the assumed identities we hold of poor and rich, powerful and poor, victims and perpetrators etc. However, having said this, the movement away from dominant discourse towards a journey of our shared humanity and vulnerability has I think created some significant *kairos* moments of mutual care.

Humanising practices that expose these vulnerabilities hold a capacity for transporting people beyond racial identities, which have scripted us into existence in South Africa. Allowing these possibilities to emerge appears to me as a particularly fragile process.

This writing is a meander into this world, which is not a world of order, but invites you the reader into the journey without dismissing the confusing twists and turns that become a part of such a research process. It would be easier to talk about those sparkling moments of break-through, but this would leave out the importance of the process and those seemingly silly invisible thorns that pierced our feet as we walked.

Kotzé (2001, 2002) has referred to this shared journey as a participatory ethic in theology. The possibilities of weaving different worlds together are complex in a country that has historically experienced separation. Embracing a participatory approach to theology allows for participants in this process to create meaning together in a world where meaning and language are constantly moving and unstable, and yet at the same time constitutive of our worlds and beliefs. Dominant descriptions of the mothers as suffering victims can give way to other descriptions that the mothers may choose such as brave mothers. For example in November 2005 Maria told me 'I am tired now of being a victim. I would rather describe myself as a survivor'.

2.20   Current research in pastoral participation within South Africa

Research in South Africa with the discipline of Practical Theology and pastoral care is not easy to find in this area of work in communities engaged in participatory practices towards social transformation. There is a great deal written about change and transformation within the church, but not much research on working with communities who are still experiencing trauma and unresolved issues relating to direct political violence in South Africa. Cochrane (1999) researched local knowledges and voices waiting to be heard in an informal settlement in KwaZulu Natal, using a secondary source. His concern at this time was about whose voice gets to write theology, particularly at the grass roots level. This more contextual engagement in practices that bring back voices from the margins is only a part of my engagement in this process. Can there be a way of engaging in conversations with people in the past regime in ways

that are not drowned out? This more inclusive voice appears to be absent in local literature.

Maluleke (2002:174) referring to local wisdoms within communities speaks on behalf of the unheard African. What if this unheard voice included the yet to be listened to voices of all races? Might this become the art of theology and a theology of art?

> '[R]esearch in African society, has been experienced largely as a tyrannical enterprise demanding information, respect and obedience but refusing to be accountable. In other words, while needing the awe and obedience of ordinary people, research has nevertheless proceeded from a position of refusal to put the 'silly questions of untutored village girls' at the centre. Ironically, research and education have been most captivating when they have engaged the 'silly questions of untutored village girls'…..Research is therefore nothing but a profound engagement with the ordinary questions of ordinary people. When research disparages and disowns these, it risks losing the right to be called research.'

2.21 Sustainable relational webs

Concerning this research I have gone about doing this through participatory activities, which invite collective relational responsibility (McNamee & Gergen 1998). I have worked at grounding knowledge and embodying life from what Bosch (1991:423) calls 'the underside of history', but this cannot be done in isolation to what might constitute the 'top' side of history. This is what it means for me to participate and to care with rather than to care for those I work with. Kotzé (2002:25) refers to embodying knowledge as a participatory 'ethicising' way of working:

> Searching for new knowledges in acts of participatory ethicising foregrounds ethicising knowledge. The foremost thought guiding the search for new knowledges relates to living in ways that will be to the good of all, and will not only benefit some at the expense of others. We seek new knowledges to bring about alternative ways of living in which all, including our ecology, can participate in life in a mutually respectful, caring and collaborative manner.

Forms of separation, enmity and mistrust have lived in South Africa through colonialism and apartheid for longer than living memory can recall. These have formed dominant discourses concerned with entitlement and belonging. This is not to say that forms of separation, enmity and mistrust did not exist before, but over the last few

hundred years separation has taken on a particular form, grown through colonialism and apartheid. It has taken many hundreds of years to set in place and calls for many different approaches to challenge its many ongoing effects. A participatory ethic (Reinhartz 1992, Heshusius 1994, 1994, Kotzé 2001, 2002) may help in this regard in the way it challenges the separation between the self and the other, the knower and the known, the researcher and researched, the oppressor and the oppressed, the trusted and the not trusted.

CHAPTER 3

INTERWOVEN STORIES CONCERNING
A HUMAN WORLD

If you saw me at a distance, you would think I was an ordinary person. Even if you got closer, you still couldn't tell. Maybe if you observed me very carefully you might notice, that I seem somewhat alone, even in the middle of a crowd.
You would be right, but you would also be wrong, for I am never truly alone. Thousands of people are always with me. My head is so full of ghosts that I sometimes think it will burst. My ears ring with cries from the voices of the dead. My dreams flame with horror. My memories are grey with ash.

The Survivor. Jack Eisner. Quoted by the TRC final report. Volume 6. Chapter 2. Section 7

3.1   Introduction

This chapter continues from the previous chapter in exploring the role of trust and mistrust within a post-colonial context which influences this research. The chapter then takes you on a journey that led to this research through returning to some of the TRC process. Although not directly concerned with this research I have included in the appendix (see appendix iii) a recording of the Mothers at the TRC process. This was filmed in 1998 and parts of it are referred to in the research (Maria in the poem *Yeserday's men*, as well as *Return Home*. It is a long film and the two sections that are of particular interest to me are found at the end of each DVD. The first is the TRC proceedings in the amnesty applications and the second is the TRC visit to Nietverdient where the Mamelodi Ten were killed. I have included the complete film as it documents the TRC hearings in Mamelodi.   This chapter includes the exhumations of the Mamelodi Ten group in the Winterveld, in an unkempt graveyard about forty five minutes North West of Pretoria. I filmed this exhumation, in which Argentinian forensic specialists exposed these graves. This can be viewed in appendix ii.

This chapter moves from focusing on trauma, individual rights, justice, race, forgiveness and truth towards an interest in the role of participation as perhaps a more indirect form of healing. Embracing vulnerability, personal, as well as collective history, it explores a difficult kind of freedom formed within relationship.

3.2   Trusting myself to the care of another person

Trusting myself to another person is an idea proposed by Levinas (1984, 1986, Mbembe 2005, Tracy 1994, Paperzak et al 1996, Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002) which is threaded through this work. The idea is partly based on the premise that within the face and vulnerability of the *other* I find my own freedom (Levinas in Mbembe 2005, Cochrane 1999). This process is far less controllable, in that my ethical position becomes more than facing myself, in fact it is more a position of being open to being read by the *other*. Frank (2005:967) using ideas generated from Bakhtin says: 'Dialogue depends on perpetual openness to the other's capacity to *become someone other* than whoever she or he already is. Moreover, in a dialogical relation, any person

takes responsibility for the other's becoming, as well as recognizing that the other's voice has entered one's own. For Bakhtin, speaking *about the other* is both an empirical illusion of objectivity and an ethical failing of responsibility'. Such a research process then involves ability for the other to face and gaze upon me and in this being faced I also have the right not to be taken advantage of. Veling (2005:6), using Levinas's ideas, describes it as *being faced* by the other. He says 'Here I lose a certain hold over myself, and find that I am no longer the one who interrogates and questions; rather, I am the one who is faced by the other's interrogation and questioning'. Being faced in this way challenges hierarchical orders embedded in discourses around racial superiority and power. This form of working and researching could play an important role in participatory practices of pastoral care that help to deconstruct the effects of colonialism on the people I work with. Writing *with* people in this way is very different to writing *for* them, or transcribing words in a more empirical fashion, as if words are static and can be analysed.

In the light of an uneven power relationship however, and my own experience, it is not always possible or right to expose oneself to the one who has power over you. To be faced by the other is only possible when the person who is being faced by another is able to see the other, not as an enemy but as someone who is reciprocally connected in a non-threatening way. My initial conversation with Cronje reflects something of the intense vulnerability and mistrust of people who enter with certain assumptions about another person. Within a dominant historical discourse of separation and racism such as has happened in South Africa, this takes time and care to develop reciprocal relationships that can dare to trust another person (in this context a researcher) who has the power to write *about* you in ways that you have no control over.

3.3   The social construction of truth, trust and history

Truth and trust do not live independently of an historical context and the beliefs that are selected in order to uphold certain truths about other people. In other words, as I have argued in chapter one and two, truth is context dependent and contingent on how a collective group of people interpret their experience through privileging certain knowledge to the exclusion of other knowledge. In the pursuit of finding understanding

and making knowledge, the world in this way is not out there waiting to be discovered, but becomes pieced together through the social processes of interpretation (McNamee & Gergen 1999:20-21).

Truth and meaning within any society are also influenced by people we trust or people we have reason to be suspicious of. My son for example recently travelled back to Zimbabwe in which country he has permanent residence. He was anxious about his re-entry into the country, partly because a year earlier his brother had been refused re-entry. He was filling in his returning resident form, and the lady at the desk, who he described as friendly and helpful, asked him for his permanent address in South Africa. He did not have a permanent address in South Africa and did not want to jeopardise his re-entry into Zimbabwe either, so he left this question blank. She became angry with him and after explaining his reason she said 'Do you not trust me? I am a government employee.' He wondered why he should trust her given the recent history of Zimbabwe. Did she really think he should trust her? He did not wait to find out. He politely obliged her demands and was grateful for the re-entry stamp. It made me think about how often the Mamelodi Mothers seem to oblige and comply with what others ask of them. When I have asked Maria Ntuli (co-ordinator of the group) about this she says: 'Bridgid, just do what they ask quietly, even if you don't agree. God knows the truth.' I have become more aware of such passive compliance in the face of power and authority and as a form of resistance to a dominant discourse.

Trust in this context is a volatile and unstable word that has a tendency of trading in previous experience of the world and the people in it. Trust is not something that is built overnight and can easily be broken on an individual as well as a collective level. It helps to explain something of the passive ways I have sometimes been a part of, either in my own dominance, or through witnessing others coming into the group.

Building trust often happens in small, seemingly insignificant ways. It takes time and happens within a relational space where we are not seen to be taking advantage of another person. I suggest in this chapter that trust has been built through ordinary every day occurrences that don't necessarily fit or measure up against dominant texts of truth and justice. Consistency of relationship with the Mothers is one way in which I have built a trusting relationship with them. This has happened in contrast to other more

traditional researchers who have come to the Mothers to gather stories, but have not returned to them with their results, leaving the Mothers often angry. Forms of less measurable care have happened of course all through history, but in the face of freedom struggles and traditional research methodologies, such forms of care can appear somewhat arbitrary or not sought out. They become the messy fragments of alternately lived experience that traditional research methodologies have left aside. Alternate truths and identities await discovery, put together through different stories and meanings that are concerned with caring outside the more familiar boundaries of dominant group loyalties. Wagener illustrates this very point in chapter two of this thesis.

To engage with trust in this particular work has involved enormous risk on my part. I risk exposing myself to this writing as well as exposing other people's vulnerability to the written word. I particularly risk exposing people from the previous regime, knowing that if this is not written with enormous care, I could jeopardise people's reputations. Ethical practices that attempt not to abuse or take advantage of another person might be easier within a quantitative study, or a less sensitive research in which names are removed and replaced with statistics.

Trust and mistrust are also difficult to comprehend in my relationship with the Mothers because it is often not visible. I experience myself as both trusted and not trusted. Trust as well as mistrust are present in every interaction with the Mothers. Trust and mistrust are also in every eye that looks upon me in the township. The tension of such a gaze is equally present in my own body when I return from Mamelodi feeling the tiredness of the constantly pressing needs upon me to be trustworthy. It is there in the historically assumed role of responsibility I feel for the Mothers, as if I am the mother and they the children. It is there in my obvious whiteness against their black skins and the historical meanings attached to whiteness. It is there when I bring a sack of second-hand clothes and the way in which they are shared out among the Mothers. It is there in some of the demands that are made on me, just because it seems that I am a white woman and with that assumption goes money. The invisible looks of mistrust drive me to perform, to not *steal* the Mothers' stories, to be accountable to the Mothers, to not let them down and to not desert them. The Mothers tell me often of other white people who have come and stolen their stories; and others who have come and not returned to them with feedback or explanation as to why they no longer come. There are others who have come to give

them empowerment programmes, forgetful of the Mothers own wisdoms and knowledges of survival. I have been present to these occasions and I watch myself vigilantly to not do the same thing. These dominant stories place me in a difficult position regarding trust.

These stories are rooted in history and the way it has been interpreted through the lens of race over generations of inequality, voiceless ness, mistrust and poverty. The Mothers call on me to *help* them, as if I have the position and power to change things. For example asking me to help *find the bones* and *speak with the perpetrators* perhaps illustrates the power they see invested in me. It might of course be that they would like me to join with them to employ my *whiteness* in ways that might give them access to people and places. I am aware of the powerful discursive position I hold, and rather than see myself powerless to change it. I use it hopefully to our mutual benefit, but this does not necessarily comfort my anxiety, because how do I know what is mutual benefit? The paradox is that within my position of whiteness and privilege is such silence and powerlessness.

Practices that participate across racial boundaries compete with the weight of hundreds of years of racial privilege and subtle *civilising* control and mistrust of one people by another. This becomes one way of reading the signs of our times through participating beyond discourses grown in the ground of apartheid, modernism and rationalism. Foucault (1970), using Freud's idea of a death drive, suggests we need to find alternate discourses that do not reproduce forms of control. In his lecture *The Order of Discourse* (1970) Foucault for example exposes some of the dominant beliefs that drive Western civilisations on a trajectory of control that separate people as subjects from the objects of study or control through economic or other means.

Hearing the voice of participation in this capacity is one way of finding different ways of working, where separation of one human being from another is challenged. Co-creating realities that work outside a paradigm of Western forms of civilisation bound up with the individual, separation and juridical forms of sovereign power (see chapter five) towards our personhood and identity as a people who are not subjugated, subaltern or split away from our collective responsibility to one another, living as one tribe in what has become known as a global village.

3.4   Reparation from the TRC

Reparation in the form of R30 000 payouts was finally awarded late in 2004 to victims who testified at the TRC. These were people who were considered victims of gross human rights violations. The Mamelodi Mothers mostly fall into this category, although some did not receive reparation. Justice as a form of social empowerment was done during the TRC to promote unity through the National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No 34 of 1995. It mandated the TRC to 'promote national unity and reconciliation through amnesty and reparation (Villa-Vicencio 2004:70). The R30 000 which the Mothers received was less than half the amount suggested by the TRC committee. The very process that promoted unity and reconciliation brought with it compromise as well as exclusion. Some of the Mothers for example were excluded from receiving reparation at the TRC, either because they did not testify, or because it did not fall under the categories decided upon at the hearings. This has led Maria to say 'We need another TRC for those who did not testify. It is not fair that some got reparation and others did not.'

Any form of justice will of course not be fully fair, but there is a belief among the Mothers that certain justices still need to happen for healing to take place. For example the Mothers have said that perpetrators escaped without proper punishment and that they never apologised. Apology was in fact beyond the mandate of the TRC, and the Mothers are waiting for it to happen as an ongoing process of healing. The scales of justice are not easy in this sense to balance. Perpetrators received amnesty immediately at the TRC and the victims waited nearly ten years to receive theirs. Justice and truth are familiar companions on this path and have kept the mothers busy searching for healing through apology and forgiveness.

3.5   **Justice as** a **way of avoiding revenge**

At my initial meeting with the Mothers, they particularly asked me to help them find the bones of their sons, and to talk with the perpetrators so that they could know the truth and apology could happen.

Research in Southern Africa indicates that victims can get trapped in the past (Reeler 1998, Hamber 1998, Ranger 2004, Rosenblum 2002:1) where justice turns into vengeful acts of violence, particularly where truth and justice are not seen to be done. In work done by Mopane (2002:13) in Zimbabwe with victims of state sponsored violence, they say:

> Recurrent in these very painful stories is the theme of revenge and the dominant idea that only revenge will give peace to these victims. We are motivated to find alternative, non-violent modes of release and restitution that might bring peace to both victims and perpetrators and the deeply wounded communities from which they both come.

Justice and truth routes would ask that perpetrators become accountable for their actions and acknowledge that what they have done is wrong. Amnesty International (1993:100) uses strong language when it says 'perpetrators need to pay for the wrongs they have inflicted'. The United Nations (1997) on the sub-commission of the economic and social council (ECOSOC), when talking about justice say it is for victims to determine when justice has been done and the debt paid. The committee also makes interesting reference to group accountability, moving away from individual responsibility to relational responsibility in community. A part of this is that perpetrators should be permanently removed from positions of power. Reeler (2003b) makes reference to community accountability when talking of taxes that are still paid in Germany in reparation of the damage caused by World War II. It would appear that for collective as well as individual accountability to happen a context of trust needs to be created where people can apologise without experiencing *shame* or a serious loss of face. A participatory ethic in this situation attempts to create such a context. There is also doubt in my mind as to how much this paradigm of justice can work, particularly in the context of ongoing entitlements by victims from the apartheid regime. There is an urgent need in South Africa to find alternative ways to support this paradigm.

3.6   In conversation with an old regime

I spent two years setting up conversations involving truth and reconciliation and apology, attempting to balance the books of justice. I held conversations with Adriaan

Vlok, who was the then Minister for Law and Order in South Africa at the time of the disappearances. He was very willing to talk with us as a group. Through him I met General Van der Merwe, the Commissioner of Police at the time of the disappearances and their lawyer Jan Wagener.

Travelling to the Western Cape I met with Cronje, who was divisional commander of the Northern Transvaal Security Branch. He was working at the time of the disappearances in the Special Branch of the Police and was directly responsible for organising the elimination of the Mamelodi Ten and Mamelodi Nine.

I contacted him on the request of the Mothers in order to find out the truth about what happened and as a means to find their bones, as well as seeking apology so that healing could happen. The Mothers were not satisfied that the stories told by the perpetrators at the TRC were conclusive, and the healing process did not lead them to their sons' bones. In many meetings the Mothers would tell me 'We cannot move on until we know the truth about what happened. We need to meet with the perpetrators and find our sons bones'. This fits with the findings of Reeler (1998b, 2003b) and Mopane (2002). Those who were responsible for the disappearances say it differently. 'When will they be satisfied? We told the truth but they don't believe us. Those who have power have the moral high ground. We used to hold that position but now they do and they get to decide what is the truth' (Wagener 2005).

3.7   An unusual meeting with Adriaan Vlok

Vlok was very willing to meet with the Mothers and after a number of phone calls I visited him with Joyce Mabena (one of the Mothers). He was working part-time at a craft shop which was run by his children. I wanted to talk about the logistics of him meeting with the Mothers as well as what would be spoken about. He must have had his concerns about how I would use our conversations and he was prepared to risk this.

I was anxious to know that he would apologise, because it was clear from the Mothers that they were not interested in any *excuses*. The airs of grandeur that once must have accompanied him were long gone and he seemed such a mild and gentle man. He

invited Joyce and me to share a cup of coffee with him in the café beside the shop. I thought how strange that we should be doing this, remembering a 'whites only' policy that he had been a part of. At this meeting we talked to him about coming to meet with the Mothers and Vlok suggested he come to meet with us at the Mamelodi West community hall. I remember Joyce asking him the question 'But are you really sorry for what you did?' It seemed such a bold question to ask of someone who must have commanded so much fear in the past. He told her that he is really sorry and he went on to tell her how much he had changed. When she asked what changed in him, he said 'It was my wife's death. I changed and turned to God'.

Joyce Mabena talked to me on a number of occasions after this meeting about his wife dying. On one occasion she said 'It is only because his wife died that he has sympathy with us.' On another occasion she said 'God took his wife so he could know suffering.' But on another occasion she said 'I now know he is a person because he too has suffered.' It was as if his suffering had affected her in some way but she was not sure how to understand it. Perhaps it was that it took time and relationship to come to an understanding where he was not seen as an enemy, but as a person.

Vlok was keen to meet with the Mothers at the Mamelodi West Community hall. The Mothers' response to this was. 'Does he not know how dangerous it is for him to come to Mamelodi? If people recognise him they will kill him. People are angry with him', they said. They seemed genuinely surprised to think that he would be unaware of the feelings of the community about him.

And so it came about that the Mothers and I decided that he would meet them for tea at my home. It seemed so incongruous with him arriving in an old City Golf. I imagined him in his days as a government minister flanked with body guards in a shiny black Mercedes with smoky windows. And here he was someone quite different to the man I had imagined.

Eight Mothers sat around my dining room table drinking tea and talking with Vlok. There were photos taken of this occasion that can be seen in the poetry section of this thesis. The Mothers had selected among themselves representatives of the different groups of the disappeared to come to my home and they had dressed in their best to

meet this man who once had wielded so much power over their fates. There was an air of anticipation as well as respect from the Mothers. I am not sure how Vlok was feeling, although he had voiced to me over the phone an anxiety about possible anger and rage. He cited recent news coverage of Gideon Niewoudt, who was being re-tried in the Eastern Cape for the 'Motherwell killings'. He described how people had thrown things at him in rage. In spite of this he risked coming to meet with us and said that these are the kind of meetings that need to happen.

Each Mother in turn spoke with him and told him her story. Vlok listened attentively to each story, recording each Mother and child's name in a book. I noticed how he gave full attention to each story without interrupting their often long and convoluted descriptions of their missing relatives. After each Mother spoke, he looked into their eyes and said: '*I am sorry for what happened to your son/husband, I will do my best to find his bones*'. I sat there thinking how bizarre it was for him to be apologising and speaking in this way with the Mothers all sitting around the table. I also thought how improbable it was that he would be able to track down these burial grounds. It was as if the Mothers thought he would somehow *know* each of their loved ones. I sat on the edge of my chair thinking *how would he know them, they were just a statistic*. It seemed as if Vlok read my mind because he said that he was in an office and didn't know their sons or husbands but he was sure that General Van der Merve would help him in his pursuit of this matter and that he would liaise with me over this as General Van der Merve might be able to talk with the security policemen involved with the killings. This meeting was tense.

The Mothers seemed both suspicious of him as well as in awe of him, allowing him to hug them and be photographed with them. They simultaneously looked on with caution; with both trust as well as mistrust. They told me afterwards that they were not sure if his sorry was a real sorry and Lizzie in particular said '*We are not in the mood for excuses*'. I noticed how he avoided taking personal responsibility through the careful use of words such as '*I am sorry for what happened to your son/husband*'. He used phrases like '*those were bad times*'. He also talked with the Mothers about the death of his own wife and the effect this had on him. He said *I think I know more now how you feel.* He described to the Mothers how his wife's death led him to re-evaluate his own beliefs. In his pain he talked of turning to God and dedicating himself to the *Gideons,* a

movement that provides Bibles and Christian literature in the community. In some ways it was as if the Mothers could begin to understand him as a human being, as a man who was sorry for what happened. Awareness in itself, along with sorry and *excuse* becomes a complexly interwoven web that carries multiple meanings. So often, when seeking *truth* or *apology,* the multiplicity of both awareness as well as apology gets lost in oppositional categories.

Gobodo-Madikezela (2003:129) talks of genuine personal engagement when she says: 'Many victims discover within themselves an inexorable movement toward forgiveness at the moment when the person who represents their pain drops his façade of indifference and opens up to express contrition.' There may be something about this human encounter and the exposure of vulnerability that draws us to an ethical position of not hurting another human being. Although the Mothers viewed him with careful eyes, cautiously treading to test his trustworthiness and authenticity, I noticed how they did not want to take advantage of his vulnerability and the Mothers were genuinely concerned for his safety.

Awareness and identity appear to be fragile concepts. In one way Vlok did not seem to be aware of the danger he was in, or of the intense rage that people felt toward him in Mamelodi. He described himself as a prisoner of the system, who could go nowhere without body guards. This made me think of other leaders, who enveloped in their own rhetorical isolation are unaware of the thoughts of the populace. He also described the way he visits his retired maid's daughter each month in Mamelodi East, to bring her money. He described his role as protecting a country against the enemy of communism. He also described himself as a changed man, who had turned away from politics and towards God. He was after all a human being worthy of multiple descriptions, prepared to meet with us and help in our search for the bones. In all of these descriptions he was Vlok.

3.8   Meeting a lawyer and a General

In my mind I had built General Van der Merve to be a big thick set commanding person, but when I met him I shook hands with a small, neat, quietly spoken man who

allowed his lawyer mostly to do the talking; a strategist perhaps. This was the impression I got from reading an extended interview with him (Foster et al 2005:105-125). He seemed from this narrative to be a man who was committed to keeping law and order and at the same time aware of the crumbling regime that became more and more out of control.

On behalf of the Mothers I attempted to negotiate ways of apologising for the role the security forces played in causing so much suffering. Van der Merwe sat quietly and said that he could not come to the Mothers to apologise. He did suggest however that he could come to talk with the Mothers about their different experiences of violence. The Mothers had already made it very clear that they would not accept this. In the words of Lizzie, she said '*we are not in the mood for excuses.'* I felt somewhat helpless in this pursuit of truth, justice and apology as if it was not appropriate in the aftermath of the TRC and amnesty. And yet in spite of this Van der Merwe, along with his lawyer were prepared to give me their time and to expose themselves to an ongoing conversation about healing.

We talked about the TRC and the humiliation of the world's judgement looking on. Wagener told me of a time he was invited to the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town and how silently judged he felt among human right's activists. These memories also triggered other more recent memories for Wagener, who was at the time representing Niewouldt in the case in progress against Niewouldt in the Motherwell killings. Wagener said:

> From what I could understand Gideon apologized very sincerely in the court, but the mothers said 'he is a liar' and those waiting outside had placards saying 'kill the white pigs'. He was ridiculed by lawyers, the press, told he was lying and that they don't believe what he said. You need to understand how hostile these courts are. At the TRC the lawyers for these grandmothers did not want my clients to receive amnesty.

My mind was simultaneously brought back to the task the Mothers had set me to do, which was very specific: '*Go and see if they are in the mood to apologise and tell the truth'*. The Mothers had been very clear with me that they wanted to meet with the perpetrators so that the perpetrators could say sorry for what they did to their sons and husbands, not so that they could hear their stories and excuses. This was said in a

number of meetings with the Mothers when they repeated the words '*If you have done something wrong you are supposed to say sorry*'. It brings to my mind how difficult individual accountability becomes, particularly when previous experience of exposure, such as at the TRC or at the Motherwell case, invoked vulnerability, judgement and shame. I left their office frustrated and thinking about the limitations of apology in bringing about healing. As much as the Mothers use the word perpetrator I noticed in all my meetings with these men that they avoided this word.

At the end of this meeting Wagener handed me a book called *The Other Side of the Story* (Stadler 1997), depicting a war of terrorism aimed at civilian families. This book spoke to me about memories and identities built on accusation and defence of such accusations. These become the entrenched and selected stories we make of history in order that we might live with ourselves.

3.9   Travelling to the Western Cape to meet with Cronje

Through Van der Merwe I managed to contact Cronje. I wanted to meet with Cronje for two reasons; one was to find a way of apology and the other was to find out more of the truth as he was directly involved in the operations that led to the killing of these young men. He was there on the scene, responsible for the operation to eliminate the Nietverdient Ten as well as the Mamelodi Nine. It was not easy to persuade him to meet with me as is evident from the small part of the telephone conversation I shared in chapter two. As I was negotiating on the phone to meet with him his comment was 'Even talking to you now is re-traumatising me. I want to forget the past and put it behind me'. It was only when I said: *'But how can I write about this without hearing your voice' that he said 'so when can we meet*?'

During the meeting I had with him at his home in the Western Cape he described betrayal, particularly from the past regime and the lack of accountability for the orders he was given to exterminate these boys. Foster et al (2005:105) put it this way:

> In October 1996 General Johan van der Merwe supplied supporting testimony in the TRC amnesty hearing of… Cronje…. This testimony attempted to straddle two diverse needs; on the one hand, to stand by those who had served under

him, while on the other hand, trying to protect command levels of the SAP and political echelons. These potentially conflicting needs were resolved in the following way: according to Johan, except in specific operations for which they had applied for amnesty, neither the command level of the SAP nor the government had authorised human rights abuses or other unlawful actions. However, the boundary between lawful and unlawful actions became increasingly blurred in the context of an escalating and unconventional war raged by the ANC and its allies, and Security Branch operatives had at times acted overzealously in their attempts to restore law and order. The statement containing this position became the standard document attached to most Security Branch applications explaining their motives and perspectives.

Cronje also felt angry and trapped by the Mothers' request for an apology. Why should he need to apologise for carrying out his duty in a regime and an ideology that betrayed him and dismissed the commands he received as overzealous? This resonates with Gobodo-Madikizela's (2003:62) account of her interview with Eugene de Kock, when she describes the way De Klerk dismissed De Kock and his colleagues as *'bad apples'* who broke the boundaries in a security department. These covert operations in other words did not officially exist. I thought more about apology and who should apologise to whom and for what? Cronje grew up in a small town in the Karoo where for three generations he had listened to his parents and grandparents say that any black man carrying a suite-case was a communist. My conversation with him was full of anomalies, ambiguities and historically constructed identities and meanings attached to racial superiority. And yet before leaving he said *'This current government is not doing a bad job. They haven't betrayed me as the last regime did and they pay my pension'*. The complexity of living in historically bound contexts and the accountability that goes with this belonging becomes so difficult to measure and grasp.

It was the evening of the day I had visited him in March 2005 that I received a phone call from him. He sounded nervous and agitated and asked me how I felt the meeting had gone. Then, out of the blue, he blurted out *'I am sorry'*. It left me not quite knowing what to say. I tentatively asked him what happened for him to ask this question. He used only two words, left hanging over the space of the phone *'my conscience'*. It made me wonder about the effects of carrying out orders and risking your life for a regime that had betrayed you, and now me attempting to stir his conscience from sleep. This simple comment made me think about his reluctance to meet with me in the first place and the effects of talking with me. It made me think

about the role of silence and forgetfulness in the reproduction of violence and physical illness (Reeler 1998, Farrell et al 2002, Hess 2002, Good Sider 2001 Minow 1998). Cronje spoke to me of his own suffering from serious physical illness as well as post traumatic stress disorder.

I began to wonder about the risk of talking and meeting with me and the personal cost for him to speak. I walked away free, with my research in hand, while he was left trapped with memories, medals, his stirred conscience, silence and an idealism dissolved in shame. I thought for a long time about the medals and certificates of bravery on the wall of his house and perhaps the mockery of meaning attached to what was seen as heroic. I thought about Eugene de Kock in one of his interviews with Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) in which he said if he wasn't white and fighting for a nationalist ideology, he would have been black and fighting in the ANC. How easy it seemed to me at that time to shift identity when courting an ideology.

At the end of our conversation Cronje decided that his wife would apologise to the Mothers. She was a mother herself and as a mother, he said, she could identify with the Mothers in Mamelodi and their pain in losing a son. It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the way in which he offered for his wife to do this. He suggested that she write individual letters to the Mothers of the Mamelodi Ten as it was this group that I spoke of with him. I agreed to talk about this with the Mothers and send their addresses if they agreed to this.

Following our conversation I wrote Cronje a letter. I include some extracts here.

> April 1st 2005
>
> Dear Jack,
>
> I steered our conversation a great deal around the word sorry. I am genuinely trying to make sense of that word and how it plays with our history going back to that Anglo-Boer war, or the 'English' War as your wife calls it.
>
> ....You said that you fought partly because you didn't want a black government and yet now there is one here, you say 'but they are doing a good job and taking care of me as a pensioner'. In some ways it seems as if you feel they have betrayed you less than the National government. ...And now

you talk about having black friends, hunting friends who you entertain in your home.

....At the end of our time together, when I thanked you for talking, you said something about being responsible and that as the person responsible for what happened you felt it was your responsibility to talk with me. Blaming others or defensiveness might have been an easier tack for you to take, but you didn't do that. Instead you talked about taking responsibility for your actions and the effects these have had on others, even though it was as you say a war situation.

...I want to thanks you for phoning me after Jo Mamesela told the press that the bones found in the Winterveld were not of the Mamelodi 10. You phoned me to say that Jo is a liar and not to believe him as the explosion in the kombi would not have turned the bones to ashes, because you were there. You didn't have to phone me twice, and it meant a lot to me that you cared enough for the mothers for them to not be anxious about those remains.

Yours sincerely

Brigid Hess

Some months after my visit to him Cronje changed his mind about writing letters to the Mothers. It was after I had returned to Pretoria and had consulted with the Mothers concerning the letters that his wife was going to write. The Mothers had said: 'If he writes individually to the Mamelodi Ten Mothers then the rest of us are left out. It is better for him to write four letters to the different groups; the Mamelodi 10, the Mamelodi Nine, Mamelodi Three and the Exiles'. I wrote to Cronje explaining to him that the Mothers had requested he write four letters to the groups of Mothers so that no one would be excluded. Following this letter he telephoned me and said: *'I offered a hand and they want my arm. I offered for my wife to write individually to the Mothers of the Nietverdiend Ten and now they want something different. I am not sorry and I won't now write.'*

It perhaps indicates how fragile authentic participation is with the enormity of history facing us. It seemed as if I had intruded, hoping for what seemed like a straight forward apology, but was faced with the painful complexity of lived experience and the effects of a war that was blinded by ideology.

It reminds me of Sartre in the preface to Fanon (1963:29) when he says: 'It is better for you to be a native at the uttermost depths of his misery than to be a former settler. It is not right for a police official to be obliged to torture for ten hours a day; at that rate, his nerves will fall to bits, unless the torturers are forbidden in their own interests to work overtime'.

At the time of my visit to Cronje the exhumations of the Mamelodi Ten were underway in the Winterveldt. Cronje telephoned me. He had read in the newspaper a report in which Mamasela[2] had said: *'I was there when their bodies were blown to pieces and their bones burnt to ashes'* (Rademeyer: 2005:19). I mention this incident in my letter to him and thought about standing on the threshold of alternate identities. Dominant discourses around justice and truth within a context of a liberation struggle make it difficult for alternate identities, or for accountability and apology to emerge. In one context a person can be a hero and in another, a murderer and in another a person who cares about Mothers who he has never met by saying to me over the phone *'I don't want the Mothers to be hurt again'*.

After thinking about this I asked one of the Mothers, Joyce Mabena how she would cope if she happened to be the mother of one of the perpetrators. Her reply was *'I wouldn't sleep at night thinking about what my son had done'*. I wondered what she would think if her son had returned to fight and what would constitute legitimate killing and what would not. I asked Maria the same question on another occasion. Her reply was: *'Jeremiah also might have turned out to kill other people'*. This begins to complicate some of the questions attached to war. Maria it seemed was able to entertain *the other*, not as some monster terrorist, but as a human being who did bad things. She could also imagine her son doing such things. Mabena on the other hand seemed to have separated herself from the *other*.

To work within a victim/perpetrator paradigm does not allow for multiple identities and create contexts where we are able to inhabit the relational space of our humanity through the ethical position of seeing the face of the *other*. This does not of course remove the accountability for the effects of dehumanising policies on a whole

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[2] State askari, police collaborator who lured the 'boys' away from their homes in Mamelodi promising them to take them to join Umkhonto weSizwe, the armed forces of the ANC

population of people. It does however suggest that accountability can be courted through relational practices that built participation. Through creating a place for alternate identities to emerge I suggest that apology can happen as a by-product of such relational activities that are built on trust.

In May 2006 I contacted Cronje to ask a favour of him. Friends of mine were moving to the town where he lives. I asked if he would mind buying some flowers for them with some money I would send down to him. This relational action of trust seemed to shift our relationship to a greater level of reciprocity. It was after this that he offered to come to visit the Mothers. He would not give his word on this, but after a few more conversations over the phone we negotiated a time and place. I promised him that the meeting would be private between the Mothers and me and that I would also give my promise that the Mothers would not be aggressive with him. This was on the condition that he would refrain from saying things like *they knew what they were doing*.

We met around my dining room table and the atmosphere was tense. He asked the Mothers '*So what do you want to know*?' and one Mother asked: 'Why did you kill our children?' This somewhat reductive and rhetorical question led the conversation towards a defensive argument based on apartheid propaganda that he was protecting the country from violence. The Mothers became angry and said: *'They were only children at school, they had not killed anyone'*. I began to regret the invitation and thought it foolish and too risky to have set up this conversation at all. The Mothers looked away and Lizzie asked: '*Are you sorry for what you did?'* His answer was *'No'*. It was at this point the Mothers said *'then we have nothing more to say to you'*. Cronje got up to leave. As he stood I asked him the question '*Jack, what did you hope to get out of this meeting*?' The Mothers then told him to sit down. He sat down and replied '*I do not want to be seen as a murderer and I want you to forgive me*'. It was at this point that the Mothers, in an extraordinary moment said: *'We forgive you'*. Each mother in turn said *'I forgive you'*. Lizzie said: '*those were killing days'*. Joyce added to the conversation '*God forgives you too'*. This was in contrast to the TRC where Joyce said God would not forgive. It was a fragment of a moment of the abundance of grace that did not depend on *sorry* to be instituted. The conversation turned a corner and Maria said: '*I just want to ask you one question. Are those bones in the Winterveld our sons, because Mamesela said they were not'*. To this Cronje said: '*Those are your sons'*

91

bones. I was there'. Maria showed him the photos of the burnt out Kombi[3] and he said *'That was the kombi'*. It was as if the Mothers opened a prison door for him, but he remained inside, with an obsolete ideology. Having said this I deeply appreciated his ruthless honesty about his stand as well as his accountability for what he did. He went so far as to say *'I am the one responsible and as for the other policemen who stood with me at the TRC, don't blame them because I gave them the orders'*.

If it took over a year for this to happen it is hard to tell how this conversation will work in our hearts and minds. We took some photos of us together, one of which can be seen in the poem *Off the Street*. It seemed as if he was on the verge of tears when he left. He allowed the Mothers to hold hands with him and to pray for him. This was a *kairos* moment and it awaits its own transformation.

This has challenged theologians since the democratic change to consider what it means in today's context to bring transformation, healing and to nurture the fragile kingdom of God in South Africa, with its legacy of division and violence, held in the collective social memories of the nation (Cochrane 2001, Botman 2000, Balcomb 2001, Pieterse 1996). Identities are constructed and reconstructed among multiple meanings associated with what it means to be human and to not take advantage or to not kill another human being. Practically these multiple constructions invite theologians in South Africa to find ways to avoid the reproduction of texts that script people into objects to be controlled, tamed or eliminated. Collective memories and group identity work together to create meanings that screen out alternate meanings of what it means to be human. Group trauma (Hess 2002, Weingargen 2004) also works with different forms of silence that sanction dominant narratives based on creating categories of *us* and *them*.

3.10   Listening responsively in relationship with voice and silence

Voice and language are important tools with which to craft metaphoric meanings that we attach to experience (Shotter 1993:50). Voice and language also help to create a safe context in which to participate authentically. Voice however is dependent on the capacity of the person listening responsively to what is both said as well as not said

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[3] A passenger bus/car that seats about ten people

(Weingarten 2000, Shotter 1993). Collective memories in South Africa can of course be listened to in many ways, as can be illustrated by my narratives of meeting with the men responsible for the disappeared in Mamelodi.

Responsive listening in the context of this research attempts to build on voice as an important metaphor for meaningful participation as a route to transformation. However if voice is dependent on responsive listening, this presupposes that this is done in relationship with other people. If done in relationship to those who hold the same opinion, one of the risks is the reproduction of the same text. As can be seen from the narratives described in this chapter, I have attempted to bring voice from silence in multiple ways through responsive listening from a different position, from another place in history and through an ability to look strangers in the eyes and deliberately choose not to hurt them. Responsive listening is limited in it pre-supposes that there is a listener (therapist) and talker (client). My engagement with the Mothers as well as the perpetrators was more of a dialogical two way conversation.

Responsive listening cannot be done outside a capacity for authentic participation built on trust, where people who share their experience are not taken advantage of. Just the fact that Van der Merwe chose to meet with me in the presence of his lawyer, indicates perhaps the nervousness of texts that are not represented in a way that is honouring to the person concerned. This is particularly so where dominant identities are subject to the gaze and judgement of society. Alternate identities are extremely fragile, as can be seen through my relational engagement with Cronje and the silence that accompanies shame.

Gobodo-Madikezela (2005), in research she did on the effects of necklacing in the Cape Flats during the 1980's talks of terrible silent shame associated with this atrocity of being seen as a collaborator. She describes a moment of entering the back room of a township house to sit with a mother's grief and shame. The mother's daughter had been accused of being the girlfriend of a policeman/collaborator. She describes the mothers' silence. She describes the lack of entitlement to speak up for the atrocity of such a heinous crime. I would describe Gobodo-Madikezela's responsive listening as an eternal and quiet moment of authentic participation.

A cloud descends over her face as I mention her daughter's name. Her eyes become a well of grief, her face a picture of anguish. There is a pause, a painful pause. She starts to speak, but no words come out. She looks away. As her eyes well up with tears, she reaches back for a piece of cloth lying on her bed. She holds it in her hands, but instead of wiping her eyes she looks down at the cloth, stretching and turning it as if within its folds she might somehow discover an answer to my question, that it might somehow slip from its folds and save her from having to speak words that are still unspeakable.' (Gobodo-Madikizela 2005:259).

Silence can of course mean many things. It could for example represent what Mbembe (Parsons 2003 see chapter five) calls conviviality, where people collectively just do not talk about the past, a quiet resistance, as a way perhaps of holding onto their own versions of history. This was my experience of Zimbabwe when I entered in 1981 (Hess 2002). I noticed it at this time in the way people avoided answering me directly about the Rhodesian War. What was not said appeared to still hold such power, as if it was present but absent, present but not talked about, because there was no safe enough context to talk about it. The blanket expression was at the time 'We want to put the past behind us.'

Silence can also be used to side-track accountability. This happens a great deal through state or media sanctioned silence through the selective ways in which stories are told or not told. State sanctioned silence has happened throughout history in the ways in which history is told and through ways in which people are pardoned without any form of redress to procedures of justice. A number of people have written about this in the context of Zimbabwe and the silence that accompanies impunity (Reeler 1998a, Farrel et al 2001, Reeler 2003b).

In narrative therapy White (1990, 1995, 2002), using ideas developed by Foucault, describes discourse as that which controls what can and cannot be talked about. In other words silence is a socially sanctioned practice. Silence in itself becomes an action and a discourse or practice that forms the object of which it speaks (Foucault 1972:49). Silence as a socially sanctioned practice can in this way exclude people from a right to speak. In the context of this present work I often found myself trapped in a position where I felt I had to earn a right to speak, or I spoke and was faced with a *knowing* kind of silence. Earlier I reflected on my position as a white woman in Mamelodi and the heaviness of responsibility to not speak *for* or *steal* the Mothers' stories, as well as the

passive silence that the Mothers seem exert in complying. It has not been easy to find my own voice of participation within this. Of course therapeutically you wouldn't be trying to find your own voice as the focus is on resonating with a client. However, in practicing authentic participation within this journey, I somehow knew I had to ethically move beyond this position in order for reciprocity of relationship to happen.

A helpful tool that I have found in this pursuit is the narrative practice that works at exposing some of these taken-for-granted assumptions and finding language for them as commodities that can be talked about and challenged as social practices (Shotter 1994:178). As a narrative pastoral therapist myself I make use of these tools as a way of understanding the constitutive force of language in my relationship with the Mothers, myself and the perpetrators. Through challenging discourses of silence by means of responsive listening and authentic participation, alternate discourses are generated that bring voice from socially sanctioned silence.

There are many writers (Danieli 1998, Weingarten 1999, 2000, 2001, Gobodo-Madikizela 2005) who have explored silences associated with trauma and the unspeakable pain of the not yet talked about. In this capacity silence would appear as something destructive, isolating and so toxic that if it were to find expression it becomes too difficult to listen to responsively in relationship to another person.

Silence has accompanied me in many different ways and I explore it here because a participatory relational frame seeks to create safe enough contexts in which to participate with silence so that it is able to emerge from the vortex in which it has been trapped.

Silence can perhaps only be released through responsive listening as can be seen from the vignette in my first encounter with Cronje. Sometimes however it is particularly difficult to listen responsively. For example I have found it difficult to listen to some of the Mothers' stories. I am not sure if this could be because I identify with them as a mother, or because I am white and identify in some way with the perpetrators. One of the effects of listening to their stories is that I have woken on two occasions with nightmares about them. As I try to make meaning from this experience there is another explanation that could play a role in this silence. It could be about finding resolution

and completion to stories that seem to have no end or horizon in sight. These are incomplete stories that seem to have no beginning, middle or end. It feels as if these painful stories are dumped at my feet, and I am partly left in limbo scurrying around seeking some form of apology so that the stories can find an ending.

It is as if my ability to listen responsively is diminished by an inability to engage with the story's incompleteness (Shotter: 1993:52). If my ability to engage relationally is compromised through socially sanctioned silence I cannot stress how distressing this has been at times for me.

I cast my mind back to conversations over the years and what we can talk about and what we can't seem to talk about. One of the most difficult topics to talk about has I think been my own position as a white woman and the assumptions attached to this. On a number of occasions the Mothers have said '*we are hungry*'. On the surface it appears to be an innocent comment, but language is never innocent. On one such occasion I experienced a vast and consuming anger rising up within me. It was as if they expected me to provide them with food (Even as I write this I am turning this story into a form of binary opposition in which I refer to the Mothers as 'them'). The particular occasion that made me *mad* was two and a half years after beginning my journey with the Mothers, which seemed to make it worse. I felt as if I was not getting anywhere; I remained scripted into a colonial object, that of provider. It was the way in which they looked at me with eyes that seemed to penetrate into my being, as if to say *you owe us*. I offered to share my own packed lunch. They told me again that they needed money to buy lunch. I resentfully gave them money (this had happened on numerous occasions over the three years, but I had thought our relationship had moved on). It seemed as if there was a silent unspoken assumption about me as a white woman which I was trapped within. I was too angry at the time to talk about it, but the following week I did. I said '*I felt cross that you expected this of me*' and we were then able to talk about it. Looking back on this incident, the difference the two and a half years made was that I could talk with them in a way I could not have done earlier. I like to think that a small part of transformation happened in my own bravery of talking about this with the Mothers, as a way of finding a resting place, or a horizon.

Engaging in conversations with Vlok, Cronje, Van der Merve and Wagener has also produced many inconclusive moments where I have experienced helplessness within the process. Time has been however on my side and through a slow process of building trust, identities have shifted and changed, maintaining an '*unfinalizability* and indeterminacy of the hero' (Bakhtin in Frank 2005:973). My own capacity to hold this ability to keep identity from being finalised could have something to do with the fact that I was not living in South Africa during the apartheid regime. In some ways I feel as if I am a partial outsider to South Africa. Would this then make it easier in some ways to listen responsively in South Africa, but more difficult in Zimbabwe, where my own livelihood was affected by those who hold powerful positions and therefore had far more control over my destiny. Would my capacity to listen and respond have been compromised also by guilt if my father or grandfather had inflicted suffering on the Afrikaaner in the Anglo-Boer War?

Weingarten (2000) speaks of moving from silence towards finding voice within community through what she calls witnessing stories in ways that invite awareness and empowerment. She says: 'Voice depends on witnessing. This turned my attention away from voice itself to the contexts within which voice is produced; it turned my attention to witnessing' (Weingarten 2000:392). In my case it turned my attention to creating a context for relational honesty, because I am immersed within an ongoing relationship with the Mothers. In this regard my position cannot only be as a compassionate witness, it demands something more reciprocal so that awareness does not collapse back into both unawareness and empowered blame.

What has been helpful in the writing of this text has been an ability to talk about different ways silence has walked with me and thinking about the less talked about fragments of participating with my own voice in relationship with the Mothers as well as the perpetrators. I have found it in small spaces where language has not been saturated with socially sanctioned colonial practices. To be able to craft not yet talked about experience within a linguistically and relationally generative process can in the light of relationship work its own transformative practice that shifts meanings towards a mutually reciprocal process. But this is a highly risky process of exposing my own vulnerability and letting go of the reins of research enough to risk the idea that through relationship and through building trust within community my own vulnerability will not

be taken advantage of. Reflecting back on this process, it has been enormously costly to me and I have felt taken advantage of, silenced, blamed, demanded of, and often wanted to give in to the dominant currents that would drown a different way of finding voice in community.

3.11   The role of forgiveness in breaking with silence

The Mothers asked that the perpetrators apologise and tell the truth in order for them to offer forgiveness or comfort to them. Forgiveness is a slippery word that Reeler (2003) says does not necessarily bring empowerment. In the light of this current work the Mothers are very clear that *'we will offer forgiveness and consolation to the perpetrators when we know they are sorry'.* Forgiveness was an idea the Mothers and myself focused on earlier in our walk together, but it seemed contingent and conditional upon the perpetrators saying they were sorry. We began to focus less on forgiveness as time went on, particularly after my meetings with the perpetrators. It makes me wonder about forgiveness more as a by-product of action, rather than as a commodity that can be traded in, quantified or defined. Forgiveness according to Levinas (Vening 2005, Tracy 1994, Derrida 2002) is not a commodity that can be grasped or turned over or worked with. It belongs to a different order, that of the unforgivable. It is about the exchange of memories and then the superabundance and supernatural ability to show hospitality to the *other*. Lyle and Gehart (2002:82) quote Ricoeur in this capacity as saying:

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

3.12 Sleeping dogs do not lie

If forgiveness belongs to a different order, and truth is a slippery word, historical ongoing political trauma is provocatively unpredictable. It is to this I now turn as I attempt to find sustainable ways of working with transformation. The phrase *sleeping dogs do not lie* is something Hamber (1998) talks of. It captures much of what happens in responding to and witnessing group trauma and political instability. We think we have put to bed our pasts, like sleeping dogs, until our dogs sniff at an old familiar enemy and rise up. We then find that they are not sleeping at all. The creatures I am referring to belong to historical constructions of identities that belong to the past and our collective memories. These memories slumber, but with provocation of reactivated memory could bite. A great deal of post-colonial theory (see chapter five) has focused on explaining sleeping dogs attached to the unspoken assumptions of racial constructions. Awakening these sleeping dogs will happen and it has happened all through history. If these memories are evoked and awakened through discourses around truth, justice and entitlement, they have a capacity to breed polarization in which one group is entitled at another's expense. This can become a dangerous pursuit, in that in a post-structuralist sense, we write ourselves into history through language and rights based discourses. It reminds me of Friedman (1990) where he gives a fable of a tiger and asks the question 'How do you tame a tiger? You don't, you cage it'. My interest in this research is about participating in memories in ways that do not arouse danger, dogs or tigers. I suggest one way in which this can happen is when as groups of people we risk accommodating the *other* and finding alternate identities that are not based on saturated racial or rights based assumptions.

Racialised conversations serve to remind me of what I might represent where race defines who I am through a collective memory that takes little to awaken from its slumber. This makes me nervous and hyper-vigilant, because at any moment I feel that I could be returned to a racialised category. However, in an alternate reading of this, when trust over time is nurtured in participatory practices, it might appear that the sleeping dogs are restrained from biting. The focus is shifted from the dangerous dogs or tigers that we try to tame towards focusing on practices that inhibit these dogs from biting, in short caging them. It becomes more of an ability to learn to live with the

dangerous dogs than attempting to destroy them. It moves towards territories that promote the power of participatory relational practices that accommodate our history in ways that guilt, rage or blame does not consume us. This does not preclude excavating the past in order to find closure. A relational accountability carries the complexity of truth, lies and lived humanity. The location of interest is shifted towards doing these practices within relationship to the *other*.

I will now return to some of the work that has been done as I have participated with the Mothers in their search for the truth concerning bones of their loved ones.

3.13   Finding the bones

In the final report of the TRC in April 2003 (Mbeki 2003), it was recommended that money be put aside to search out the remains of some of the bones from unresolved cases of the disappeared political activists in South Africa. President Thabo Mbeki requisitioned the National Prosecuting Authority to do this. A special missing persons task force was set up to investigate the cases of the disappeared, but this task force only began to actively hunt for these bones when Fullard joined the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) at the end of 2004.

3.14   Excavating graves; exposing secrets

In March 2005 a special task force within the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) began excavating pauper's graves in the Wintervelt, North of Pretoria. Fullard worked with a team of Argentinean forensic specialists, whose expertise had been developed originally from the disappeared in Argentina. As a group it was an exciting time for the Mothers and me as we had waited for so long for this to happen. The video I took of the exhumations can be viewed (appendix iii) and photos of the exhumations can be seen in the poetry section under *Sophie's story*, *Silent Cry* and *Yesterdays' men*. Fullard can also be seen outside Maria's house with the Mamelodi Ten Mothers in *Silent* Cry.

At the time of the TRC there had been some abortive attempts at finding the bones of the missing people. Now in 2005, they were hoping to find the graves of the Nietverdient Ten, as well as another group of three activists, including Lizzie's Sefolo's

husband Harold. As a group we accompanied the team and sat in a somewhat dishevelled unkempt graveyard watching and waiting while graves that had been left unattended for nearly twenty years were excavated and their bones revealed. We pored over the records that Fullard had put together, including post-mortems and graveyard dockets giving clues to the burials and the condition of the bodies. (see appendix iii).

The post-mortems, carried out at Garankuwa Hospital, in what was then Bophutatswana, indicated that the bodies of the Nietverdient Ten brought to the mortuary were badly burnt. Records from Mauopa Undertakers showed ten unidentified bodies buried in this Wintervelt cemetery on the same day. Photographs were also inadvertently discovered at Rustenburg police by Fullard in August 2005 when she was searching for the remains of other missing persons. They were of the Nietverdient Ten after their bodies were found burnt in the kombi in which they were blown up (see poem *Yesterdays Men* and *Sophie's Story*).

The NPA provided a bus for the Mothers to come and be a part of the exhumations and over a period of three days members of the support group attended. Prof. Dirk Kotzé accompanied me on one of these days to witness the excavations. He took a shovel and said: *'It should be my people who are digging these graves, not the grave-diggers. We should be bringing food to these Mothers under the tree and acting out our collective responsibility for what happened to their sons'.*

3.15   Testing to find the truth about the bones

Truth becomes a cruel and uncompromising task master in such times in a post-colonial context

In order to identify the bones of the exhumed graves thought to be the Mamelodi Ten, DNA testing was done on the Mothers and sent to the USA, along with some of the bones, for analysis. The results were only returned nearly a year after the exhumations were carried out. The results were inconclusive. This brings with it ethical concerns about finding the *truth* and the emotional cost associated with both the delaying of the results as well as the burial of the remains. During this waiting period we had spent time talking in our meetings about a memorial service. We designed a letter and spoke

with the relatives of the disappeared activists in a way that could be inclusive to all who died in Mamelodi. The Mothers we were getting excited about planning this along with a memorial stone. But there was a nagging uncertainty about whose bones would be returned and who would be left with none.

After waiting so long a few Mothers and I met with Fullard. Fullard was also worried about the inconclusive results that the DNA testing showed and the concomitant delay to concluding their re-burials. Doubt hung in the air over whose bones belonged to whom and still does. The inconclusive evidence also brought doubt about who exactly were the boys in the Mamelodi Ten group. This could result in exhuming the bones of the boys already buried, the bones of the Mamelodi Nine, whose parents have had some closure on the boys' deaths. The families of these boys were notified at the time of their deaths and shared their burnt remains although many of the body parts were not identifiable. Joyce Mabena, mother of Jeffry Hlope (Mamelodi Nine) described the funeral and the identification of the bones in this way:

> We went to the government mortuary and there was water everywhere. They had washed the bodies and we were standing in water. The police officers said 'hurry up'. We just had to take bones and pieces. My son had a special gap between his teeth and we identified him because of that, so we are sure we got the right body part. Then the police told us when we were to have the funeral. It was on a Monday because there was less chance of a crowd of people. Even then they said "hurry up and finish". The police were everywhere and we weren't left in peace.

How can I listen with atunement to such a story? It was difficult listening to such a story of violence. Beneath the surface appeared so much fear of *blacks* which acted out in having to *control* through any means. The poem *Sophie's Story* is the way Sophie described finding her son Benjamin's remains.

Twenty years later the bones of the Mamelodi Ten were being identified. Truth about whose bones belonged to who became a tangled web of uncertainty. Doubt resulted in still more delays over the burial of the remains. My current fear (June 2006) is that the Mothers will die before the cases are concluded. In a recent conversation with Maria (March 2006) she said *'I am tired now. When will this end? I want to finish this business and have a memorial service for those who have died. After the Mothers have*

died who will do this? We are no longer victims; all that remains now is for the burial'
In June 2006 Maria and Lizzie took me aside and said '*Bridgid, please will you phone Madeleine (Fullard) and say that we want closure now. We do not want to wait for the DNA results because the bones are too burnt and we will not get results. We would like now to share the bones and find closure on this. We want to share them as the Mamelodi Nine families did*'. This was not said in the big meeting. It was rather said as a way that I could use my position and *whiteness* to talk with Fullard and so help the Mothers. Could this be another way in which they utilised my whiteness to their advantage?

3.16   Respect as a form of healing

Fullard in conversation with me said that to find the bones of the disappeared and identifying them plays a role in restoring dignity in a nation where black people were tossed aside as incidental and not quite human. Identifying the bones was one way that she could compensate for the horrors of the past. Identifying the bones was also a way of finding more of the truth about what happened. Reeler (2003b:4) puts it this way: 'The right to know is not simply the right of any individual victim or closely related persons to know what happened, but is also a collective right, ensuring that history accurately records the violations to prevent them from recurring in the future.' I felt as if I had reached the outer limits of truth and I had become trapped in a never ending cycle of truth and justice based on a principle of *us* and *them*, *victims* and *perpetrators.* An assumption in what Reeler suggests is that finding the truth avoids these atrocities happening in the future.

3.17   How do I explain the weight of history?

The reality of inhabiting the effects our recently lived history is hard. Silence and guilt do their work as I have mentioned earlier. Silence plays its role in attempting to cut away pain in what Gobodo-Madikizella (3003) calls separating ourselves from ourselves in defensive or success driven talk. This is epitomized in my mind by the book T*he Other Side of the Story* (Stadler 1997), in which a white Afrikaana attempts to tell the story from his side, a story upon which there is no politically acceptable platform to be heard. As I read this book I kept wondering what it is that is not heard?

Silence, history and guilt seem to inhibit an ability to participate together beyond hierarchical orders teeming with cases of defence, truth, lies and prosecution. It seems so difficult to find my way through history without being type-cast in a defensive or guilt ridden role. Many post-colonial writers and narrative theorists are writing in the Western world, outside of our lived in context here in Africa, and I wonder how much they can understand or comprehend how powerfully these discourses of shame, blame and silence constitute us and trap us in Africa?

At the time when I began working with the Mothers we focused, as I have mentioned, on finding the bones, the truth, justice and acknowledgement in order to challenge trauma and work towards forgiveness. I hoped to play a role in breaking cycles of revenge, through seeking acknowledgement, apology and forgiveness (Minow 1998, 2002, Good Sider 2001, Reeler 1998a). In this way, I sought to honour the Mother's request to become a part of a healing process that brings greater freedom from our past. In retrospect working in this way was ordering the work using reason over unreason. It was working with what Tracy (1994:104) describes as modernism's trend toward a Western developed ideal state. Mbembe (2005:2) puts it this way:

> In other words, it is on the basis of a distinction between reason and unreason (passion, fantasy) that late modern criticism has been able to articulate a certain idea of the political, the community, the subject – or, more fundamentally, of what good life is all about, how to achieve it, and, in the process, to become a fully moral agent. Within this paradigm, reason is the truth of the subject and politics is the exercise of reason in the public sphere. The exercise of reason is tantamount to the exercise of freedom, a key element for individual autonomy. The romance of sovereignty, in this case, rests on the belief that the subject is the master and the controlling author of his or her own meaning. Sovereignty is therefore defined as a two-fold process of self-institution and self-limitation (fixing one's own limits for oneself). The exercise of sovereignty, in turn, consists in society's capacity for self-creation through recourse to "institutions inspired by specific social and imaginary significations.

Roads that explore trauma, truth, justice, reparation and healing are noble routes and are extensively written about, but have not led me necessarily directly to a mutual reciprocity of care. They have rather led me to a hierarchical ordering of the individual subject. Historical discourses have, particularly from a Western perspective, centred on a juridical quest for what Nietzsche and Foucault have called *the will to truth.* Mbembe (2005) suggests that black francophone traditions, through people like Fanon, have unmasked the West's attempts to exercise monopoly over reason where in the name of

civilization great wrongs have been committed. This does not negate the need for truth or justice, or my role in walking with the Mothers in this capacity. In this research however truth is back-grounded and becomes a by-product of our action and participation together, rather than a central focus.

3.18   Facing some of the difficulties I have experienced

There have been a number of difficulties I have had to face in doing this kind of participatory action research and I mention them here. Loss of voice has frequently accompanied me. Hearing my own voice sounds either too powerful, too bossy or too absent. It was difficult to find a way of blending my voice with the Mothers. A less structured participatory process holds multiple unspoken expectations that are contained within assumed discursive positions. At the time of entering the group I was aware of some of these unspoken expectations but had no way of finding language to express myself without taking control of the process. The negotiation at the beginning was also difficult to establish, partly because I was unsure of my own boundaries with the Mothers. In order to participate meaningfully in the hope of reciprocity perhaps it was necessary to let go of my traditional boundaries in order for a different way of working to become possible.

I have found it particularly difficult to take my focus away from people as either an object or subject of healing. In order to relax into a fuzzy relationship in which the process became the focus of the work rather than the end product was also problematic for me. I had to learn in a slow and arduous way about the ways of healing in an evolutionary unpredictable process. The work became an informal emerging relationship that had no way of being predicted.

3.19   Facing my own fragility

I have already mentioned some of the real difficulties of a participatory ethic and its own limitations. I have had one particular experience in this research that brought me to the limits of this way of working. Through this experience I nearly gave up on this project. The person involved was a white person who wielded enormous power within

the organisation under which the group met. I am uncertain as I write this about including this relationship in the text and would like to omit it, but I would not do justice to this work if I did not attempt to find language for my experience with this person. I have taken a position of using people's real names in this research, but I dare not do this with A. I have to leave this person to the anonymity of A because I am afraid of this person. I have invited all other participants to comment on this text, but I dare not do this with A. It is not that I have not tried to talk with A, I have on many occasions but A has escaped me. I find it hard to accept that sometimes it is not possible to participate with people, perhaps because of the unequal power relationship, or because conversation is dependent on the ability to be attuned to listening.

This is a very difficult experience to talk about, partly because every time I try to language it I feel silenced, inadequate and shamed. I find myself moving into the very position of blame and defensiveness that I seek to avoid. I considered excluding this problem, partly because of the vulnerability it creates within me. On reflection I felt I could not exclude it in the light of the work I am doing, partly because it exposes some of the limits of participation in a context where power is not evenly distributed and in a context where this person has wielded power and control over me.

It was a context in which she appeared both unaware and empowered (Weingarten: 2002). In some ways I have felt colonised by her and *grateful* to A as a person. How then do I write about this experience without going into a series of reasons and incidents in which I defend myself against another? I am trapped by my own position and realise how difficult it is to write honestly about people who remain in power and domination.

I am uncertain in this context about how I can stand in this gap for myself and stand up for some of the practices A has employed using power and influence. Finding reciprocity of participation where something of the nakedness of my humanity becomes exposed appears impossible without a context of reciprocity where my vulnerability will not be abused or used against me. Without such a context truth is selected through the eyes of the person to holds power, in this case A. I do not know how to talk about these incidents without inciting blame of myself, or of A. This again points to the limits of participation. I do not want to go into the incidents here, except to say that I am not

alone in this experience of A. The Mothers have shown concern about the way A treats me. They also talk about many others who have been hurt by A. The Mothers have said *'We will not let A get between us or allow A to chase you away'*. My only resistance to this power relationship has been to be passive and thankful to A; this is the advice I have taken from the Mothers. It also makes me more aware of the clever ways the Mothers resisted the previous regime, for whatever their children said or did returned them to the status of *enemies of the State*. I imagine they experienced feelings of disempowerment, disorientation, inadequacy and helplessness. It can perhaps be seen in some of the poetry and ways the Mothers were trapped into both blaming their sons and at the same time admiring them as heroes of the cause.

I internalised my own trappedness as *not being good enough* when faced with A's competence, cleverness, knowledge and power. If this describes something of my (severely edited) experience, it makes me wonder how A's own vulnerability and fear played a role in my feelings of inadequacy and also how the Mothers are affected by such politics of power and control and polarisation, where we become a threat to one another. In being faced by my own silence and vulnerability I am also perhaps faced with A's vulnerability, but this is no longer something I have any control over.

3.20   Relational moments in the face of fragmentation

There were three particular incidents that became significant during this difficult time from May until September 2004. The first was Dr. Myburg (my supervisor) who asked me: *'Professor Kotzé is someone I would describe as particularly clever. Tell me, does he also make you feel inadequate or not good enough?'* I found this to be a very powerfully deconstructive question that opened up enough space for me to move from being hostage to cleverness towards finding ways around it. Secondly, Prof. Kotzé said *'Hang in there Bridgid because sometimes what appears to be a failure becomes a significant success'* (or words to this effect). Thirdly, I exposed my vulnerability to the Mothers and asked for their advice about this research. I did this after A had requested that I write to her for permission to write this work. It was an ethical quandary to even talk about this in front of the Mothers. I had avoided doing so until A challenged my own ethical position within the research to which A had originally invited me. When I

brought this to the Mothers, they said: '*It is for us to give you permission to write, not the board or A.*'

3.21   Facing whiteness

Historically I am seen as a white woman, who perhaps cannot be trusted. '*Do not trust Bridgid. We cannot trust white people*'. This was a comment from someone from the Khulumani head office. Maria described her response to me as '*But Bridgid is one of us we can trust her*'. Never-the-less the constitutive power of race and the abuse of power has kept me vigilant, nervous and aware of so much that is not said. I am a white person and with this come enormous responsibility to become trustworthy in the light of such historically verified beliefs. This has far reaching implications for the way I practice. For example, if I were coming in to *do* something specific for the Mothers, the focus would be on doing the job. This might be easier to handle. As a participant in this process I am placed within a fragile position. I feel the full gaze of *whiteness* placing me under scrutiny. I have for example felt the weight of accountability to the Mothers in attending every meeting I can and if I cannot attend I will telephone to give my apology.

It is interesting that many of the Mothers themselves do not attend the group meetings regularly and they are not asked 'where are you?' It has left me particularly nervous and exposed to what Foucault might describe as the *gaze* of disciplinary power (Foucault 1979). At what point might I become a member of the group where I am seen as one of them with similar expectations of a human being who makes mistakes? In July 2005, after a conversation that involved attendance, I asked the Mothers how they would let me know when they no longer needed me to be involved in the group. Their response was 'Why should we tell you that when you are one of us'. Might this mean that I am then free to come and go? I place myself under a great deal of pressure not to *let the Mothers down.* Has this got more to do with my own somewhat stoic past? Or has it got more to do with an unspoken awareness of how fragile cross-racial relationships are and how easily actions can be interpreted through discourses of racial privilege?

This is representative I think of some of the difficulties involved in moving beyond our separateness and sustaining a social process that is outside of our taken-for-granted and expected roles in society. Particular problems but also surprises arise in an unstructured shifting context between communities and cultures, particularly when we risk losing control within a process. It has been perhaps my moments of greatest vulnerability and pain within this process that dismantled some of the hierarchies and dualities between myself and the Mothers. Exposing my own vulnerability to the Mothers I found them protecting me. This is what Levinas (1984, 1986, Veling 2005, Mbembe 2005) describes as the naked face of vulnerability. To do this I had to risk what I had previously thought of as un-professional. When operating from such an exposed position, which challenges the accepted dominant discourse around research, words become more measured in my own writing, easily censored and potentially judged as unprofessional, or not measured and clearly negotiated.

Difficult ethical questions come to mind within this context. Who needs to negotiate what and with whom? What is success and failure? As Pattison (1988:161) says: 'If pastoral care is to be creative it will inevitably involve the possibility of failure at every turn'. How do we do this in order to not be afraid of upsetting or hurting others or creating misunderstandings? How do I expose my own failure, which Pattison (op cit: 160) suggests amounts to my naked shame and vulnerability? How do we share in ways that do not incriminate another person or break with an ethic of inclusiveness?

Over the three years of working with the Mothers I have been mindful of the ethical responsibility to earn a right to write about our journey together, particularly in the light of their frequent comment *'People have come and stolen our stories and we see no benefit from their writing. They are the ones who benefit at our expense.'*

3.22 Moments of working together in multiple readings of relationship

The Mothers in January 2005, at a meeting, sat talking about me. I did not understand the Sotho in which they spoke. They translated it this way: *'Others have come and just left with no explanation. You are the only one who has stayed with us Bridgid, and we*

decided to hold onto you with both hands'. This incident has played over in my mind. As I read this text there are many ways of interpreting what authentic participation means in the lives of the Mothers and myself and the risks of letting go of control over the process of participation. Were they afraid that I would leave them and disappear back to the suburbs without a trace? This has been their dominant experience of other white people from both within and outside the borders of South Africa. Has the power relationship been that of tentative anxiety of loss, or of mistrust?

This research can only touch a small part of our work together and in the multiple constructions that we forge I cannot say that we are able to deconstruct all of the power relationships that hold me in a privileged position over them, or an anxious position under them. When attempting to find authentic constructions of interpersonal relationships Shotter (1993:132) says: 'The temptation to make sense of our activities by re-contextualizing them within an artificial, coherent or orderly context of our own devising is very great'. He goes on to suggest that '[w]e cannot avoid using narratives, metaphors or theories, but what we can avoid is becoming entrapped within their confines by claiming any one of them to be the single *correct* narrative, metaphor or theory. They are instruments, not depictions.'

We are trapped within our human condition, which includes multiple identities. An ethical challenge is to face the other and know that in their *alterity* (Levinas 1984, 1986) is that which I will never be able to find the correct narrative of, in other words never to finalise or presume that I can fully speak for someone else. In order to make meaning, certain narratives get selected over others and it would be tempting for me to centralise my role as a form of hero that is held with both hands. To do this would not be *real*, because within this are many readings of my personhood. The point is that to select honour over a lesser description turns into a practice of judging a person to be of lesser value.

In the multiplicity of meanings attached to any one story, there was something different that happened when we did not focus on truth or justice. I witnessed it in certain moments when Vlok met with the Mothers for tea. There was something about the way the Mothers reached out to him as he reached out to them. I am suggesting that through being open to the surprise of participatory practices, unusual conversations are

110

permitted to emerge that are not focused on dominant categories of justice or truth. These conversations emerge in spaces that are generated when we sit down in conversation with one another. I have particularly found it to be when I see myself within the other, whether they were active participants in the apartheid regime, or Mothers who are suffering. These are perhaps *fuzzy* spaces that do not have to be filled with explanations. A participatory consciousness within a self/other relationship in this case happens when we create safe enough spaces to listen to silence associated with shame and the past, without the compulsion to fill all the fuzzy voids with explanations.

How I witness and employ participation in the face of these discursively saturated stories is a slow and arduous process. Speaking the unspeakable without blame and polarisation biting my hand in the process is also fraught with difficulties. There are times in this context that I have metaphorically put my hands over my ears because the stories I hear from the Mothers as well as the perpetrators are too difficult, frightening, polarised and too hard to fathom. One such shocking revelation was that Cronje had been in charge of a notorious detention centre that specialised in torture. This only emerged when the Mothers met with him. For a moment my heart missed a beat remembering the effect on Maria after a recent visit to Vlakplaas. What she learnt on this visit so upset her that she spent a week lying down with terrible thoughts in her head of human flesh being fried while policemen drank beer. In spite of this the Mothers forgave him and he has to live with these memories..

Stuck between the past and the future, I looked towards participation as a way to explore ways of performing different stories of humanity not based on race or victim or perpetrator. White and Epston (1990:9), when talking about the writing and re-writing of texts (written, oral or symbolic), says: 'This analogy made it possible to conceive of the evolution of lives and relationships in terms of the reading and writing of texts, insofar as every new reading of a text is a new interpretation of it, and thus a different writing of it.' Possibility then lies in the meanings we attach to our texts to re-interpret however; there is an appeal in laying down these texts and picking up different ones.

Trust in this context is performed in our interrelatedness and in what Kotzé (2000) calls a *participatory ethic* as we participate with the *other*, which I am arguing, is complicated, toxic and extremely difficult. I find it difficult to walk this road of

interconnectedness, because of the historical constructions of my whiteness, my wealth, my privilege and my perceived expectations that I interpret as being laid upon me like a burden of repair. However, I also know that unless it is a process of authentic participation, where we work together in making new history, it is unlikely to be sustainable within the community in which to create alternate discourses that become worthy to be talked into a truth. What I mean by this is that if I come in to tell or rescue or come with answers, it would not be authentic participation and it would be unlikely to facilitate transformation. More likely I will limp away exhausted carrying Africa's burdens upon my shoulders.

Hamber (1998: 5) comments about the TRC:

> Despite the success of the hearings, the actual psychological impact of giving public voice to trauma has had varying consequences for victims. For some, it has been the final leg of a personal healing journey while for others, it has only been the first step. Throughout the TRC process, there has often been a simplistic assumption that catharsis through telling one's story is sufficient for emotional healing. This is only partially true. For many, although public acknowledgement of their suffering may have restored their dignity and taken away feelings of guilt, psychological healing remains far off and of a highly personalised matter. Such healing usually requires ongoing support from professionals, community groups, relatives and other support structures like religious bodies. The individual follow-up of victims by the TRC has not been as extensive as was hoped. Undoubtedly, the emotional needs of many victims remain insufficiently addressed.

Healing could then be seen theologically as an ongoing sacred process, which happens as we participate within a relational space of community and support networks involving reciprocity of relationship. I suggest here that this is aided by a mutuality of care and vulnerability to another, which is perhaps best written about within a poetic frame. Healing in this capacity is never complete; it is an ongoing process of our relational commitment to one another in this context within pastoral care.

3.23 Sewing the loose ends into the back of the story

For participation to be kept alive in the community we need to find relational innovations that can work collaboratively holding the tension of diverse thinking, so that we can concoct the impossible.

Cross-fertilization of ideas and the birthing of the impossible come into being when we challenge ourselves and cross boundaries between disciplines and thoughts, towards acting collaboratively.

Chapter 4

Placing a participatory theology in context within South Africa

4.1   Introduction

This chapter explores the historical development of practical theology within the larger discipline of theology in the South African context. Particular attention is paid to some of the ways in which theology has worked with the academic discipline as it has sought to find a voice within academic circles. The context in South Africa has of course formed our own ways of doing theology, and contributed to ongoing conversations about ways in which we engage with people in practicing the kingdom of God on this earth.

I mentioned in chapter one that recent South African literature in theology (De Gruchy 2001, Cochrane 2001, Cochrane & West 2001 Balcomb 2001, Ackerman 2003, Richardson 2001, Wüstenberg 2002, Vosloo 2001, Tutu 1999, Pieterse 1998, Müller 2005), is turning its head towards the future context of the nation in South Africa. Exploring contextually relevant ways of holding value within community, there has been a growing interest in ethical commitments to participating with our past, present and future, particularly within the realm of public theology and practices that invite ethical concerns about how we engage with community and integrate our practice in ways that harness faith for the future. Public responsibility and accountability for human rights abuses have gained momentum over the last few years in international and domestic courts of law, where issues of public apology and reparation for violence committed during colonialism and apartheid have been raised (Sarat 2002:236-260). This leads into a public theology and post colonial theologies

There are ongoing conversations within theology in South Africa that focus on ways of re-humanising society. In doing this theologians are challenging some of the assumptions embedded in models that promote individualism as well as communication

and rational explanations as a metaphor for practical theology. Our historical context I believe cannot be separated from our current dilemmas within the discipline. I work inclusively, weaving in voices from the past without arguing one form of theology against another. To argue one against another would be to fall into the same trap of dualisms that I seek to avoid. I rather dig in ground that waits to reveal some of the treasures not yet explored, so that these artefacts might stand alongside other theologies in the lives of those we care with. For this reason I spend time in this chapter exploring ways in which theology in South Africa has engaged with its history over the last forty years.

There is a section in this chapter on post-colonial theology as it has developed in the United Kingdom and the USA. This theology is under girded in chapter five which explores post-colonial theory in greater detail. Post-colonial theology along with other contextual theologies challenges injustice and marginalisation through looking at some of the meanings attached to racial constructions. These theologies are woven into the texture of this chapter, although they are not centred.

Rather than promoting one idea at the expense of another the chapter invites a participation of voices through a constant deconstruction and deferral of the text. In this way it becomes participatory. Methodologically I am committed to participating with all forms of theology. If I did not do this I would move into arguing one against another, which is not in line with my research methodology. Within every text are alternate readings and fragments that have not yet been discursively brought to life, and there are also dominant readings of texts that are life-giving. The themes that develop in this chapter are the particular contextual challenges within theology of finding participatory practices that can entertain life-giving and healing constructions of our shared humanity given our current context of separation in South Africa.

I have divided this chapter into three sections as a way of ordering the text and carrying it towards a participatory approach to theology.

In order to carry along the voices of the Mothers I work with I will be inserting conversations into the text. This chapter becomes a participation of voices including

theology, myself, my supervisors, the Mothers and some of those involved in the previous regime.

PART I

4.2   An overview of practical theology in South Africa

Practical theology in South Africa has been influenced by different trends within the discipline of theology. In a *practical* way it has taken on a mantle of contextual liberation theology that has emerged from its own history and liberation struggle. Liberation theology has privileged the voices of those who are marginalized by the abuse of power. It has worked extensively in this paradigm with both Marxism and critical theory (Graham & Poling 2000:165). Academically however practical theology has tended to turn towards the West for its guiding principles as an academic discipline in search of a definition and a theory that can be accommodated by other scientific disciplines (Pattison 1988:19-32). As with the social sciences it has been kept busy with the interwoven relationship between theory and experience and how this gets written and communicated within an academic discipline.

Tracy (1983:61) has commented that lived experience has had a long and sometimes arduous walk with theory and practice because theory is heavily laden and comes with a history that influences practice. This indicates the complex interrelationship in the discipline between theory and praxis. The assumption is of course that the two concepts of theory and practice are separate, as is the encounter between Man and God. As this chapter unfolds itself I will work at complicating this idea.

Heyns & Pieterse (1990:6) work with the concept that practical theology concerns itself with the human encounter between God and man and the way this becomes practiced this in the world. In other words practical theology is a dialectic mediating the gospel between God and man that can only be experienced in action. Through centralising action and communication as the operative words they define practical theology as 'actions that propagate the gospel and promote God's coming to this world'. Action in itself is a difficult word to define or separate out from a text in that within a

post-structuralist reading, words themselves are never passive but are actions that mould us and form us in seeing and understanding the world in certain ways. Likewise the ability to imagine God coming into the world is open to multiple interpretations and is dependent on the trace of prior experience and understanding as to how God is situated within lived experience and the ideologies that have formed us.

4.3   Voices in local African Theology

The Mothers I work with have defined God as someone who is already among us in everything around us, particularly in the good things we do (see page 242). God is not someone who needs to be brought to the earth; he is there within creation, which, within an African hermeneutic holds to a long history with African tradition (Du Toit 1998, Anderson 1998, Lartey 1994). As I write this and hold the multiple voices of the Mothers I work with in this text, I continually search out ways to meaningfully extrapolate and analyse the lived action of this data of talk about God. It appears to elude me apart from the fluid idea found in the Gospel of John that 'God is love'. With this idea goes the thought that love cannot be seen or measured or even talked about because it best seen in action, in gesture, in short hidden within relational practices.

Working with multiple identities and meanings around God is something that as theologians we can learn from the African initiated church. This theology has influenced and shaped communities of people in Africa (Pato 1994, Aguilar 2002, Lartey 1994, 2001). In creative ways African people have found ways to work with their inherited wisdoms and faiths resisting the colonisation of their minds and souls by missionaries who imposed beliefs from the West. These wisdoms in my opinion do not appear to throw them into what De Gruchy (2001) describes as a schizophrenic position. The Mothers have taught me what I know about an African theology in which the academic separations that exist on the shelves of universities do not seem to be important. The image of God seems to dance in many forms in our meetings together, but always recognised and honoured through the rituals of singing and praying that open and close meetings. It has not seemed to matter of what religion the Mothers are. They talk of a fully just God to whom perpetrators must answer, as well as a God for everyone. They do not appear to be trapped into seeing God as something separate from

themselves or their environment. Some belong to the Zionist Christian Church, others to the Anglican, others to Methodist, another is Muslim.

There is a working assumption that *God is* and needs no more explanation. God is an all powerful being to whom you turn when people let you down. I have sometimes thought that because people have let them down in so many ways, they turn to a higher being that will fight their cause. I suggest that this is true of most communities that find themselves disempowered. If these Mothers were given the forum within academic circles to define their theologies, I have often wondered what they would want to say about God and how they see God in action in this world (Cochrane 1999a). Lizzie (2006 in reflections) said 'I can say he is everywhere, especially where there is good being done'. I will comment more on this in Chapter seven, which will work with the mother's local knowledges and scriptures they have used to describe the work we have done together.

There appears a great gulf between the ordinary person who does theology in their lives and the theologian who makes a living from theology. Balcomb (2001:62) exposes some of the problems associated with social analysis and the social sciences by saying that analysis does not amount to *doing* theology. Who then is 'doing theology? Is it theologians or people on the street? Cochrane (1999), working with texts from an informal settlement in KwaZulu Natal, spends a whole book exploring the idea of who gets to say what theology is. Müller (2005:4) working with what he calls a post foundational approach to theology suggests that good theory has often left Practical Theology only with theoretical abstractions. The "theories for *praxis*" which are created, often remain distant from the real world'. His argument rests on a research project, focusing on children living with HIV and AIDS. His concern is the rift and lack of integration between practice and theory. Realities of communities grappling with life in the face of violence, death and economic hardship are difficult to place in a hermeneutic circle or capture in academic writing. It is often within the more prescriptive theologies that we witness some of the fastest growing congregations in South Africa. It is mindful to remember this, lest the academic discipline of theology becomes too far removed from the experience of the people in whose service it purports to speak. However, it is also within the more normative models of reformed theology that the heresies of apartheid were bred and this work attempts to hold these theologies

in a deconstructive reading of any one rendering of what it means to live out our faith here on this earth.

4.4   Voices in empirical research

In order to make sense of the raw data of the relationship between God and man there has traditionally within the discipline of practical theology been a strong emphasis on working empirically. An empirical-analytic approach is based on concepts associated with critical rationalism, working towards scientifically verifiable results (Van Wyk 1995:86). This approach uses an empirical theological methodology which develops a theoretical methodological base (Van der Ven 1993, Heitink 1999:7, Van der Ven et al 1997). Data is collected and tested against theory which adapts itself according to the data collection. This arose from a context where theology in the last century was struggling to be accepted as a science of equal status with other academic disciplines (Müller 2005, Osmer 1997). Theology in this way, using Habermas's idea of a universal moral validity, sought to regulate moral claims searching for the conditions under which fair and open moral argumentation can take place (Osmer 1997:59). Respect, fairness and in particular a theology of justice was sought after. Theology was then in conversation with practical philosophy, the social sciences and ethics.

Practical and pastoral theology that have developed in this vein, mediate Christian faith in the praxis of modern society with the aim of bringing about change and transformation (de Jongh van Arkel 2001, Heitink 1993, Heyns & Pieterse 1990). Using Habermas's critical theory of action it draws together the social sciences connecting theology to the rational sciences with the express purpose of developing theories that enable change and transformation at both social and individual levels. Habermas refers to this as *lifeworld*. It relates to two institutional realms, the public and the private sphere (Van der Ven et al 1997). Theology in this vein is sometimes described as communicative action in the service of the gospel. Action informs theory and theory action, with context as its point of departure (Cochrane et al 1993, Woolfardt 1992, Pieterse 1998, Heitink 1999, Van Wyk 1999). Action is seen as something more than the theory of talking about God, and has allowed theologians in South Africa to engage more with the correlation between God and man, theory and praxis as seen in a

dialectic relation between theory and praxis which is defined within a historical context (Heitink 1999:149). Tensions in this dialectic generate energy and meaning between theory and praxis, God and humanity, society and life world, action and reflection, preacher and the text, gospel and people, faith and praxis. Heitink calls this a bi-polar approach, which he says (1999:177) 'safeguards against biases and provides the opportunity for a critical contribution from a theological angle'.

Theories of communicative action have played an important role in both formulating and challenging some of the more deductive theologies that have centered within the protestant tradition around the Word of God and how to communicate this deductively to congregations in South Africa (Maddox 1991:162). Deductive theologies have given way to more inductive practices and focus on a reflection on these practices (Müller 2005). This has particularly happened in the face of new developments in the human sciences and the move from modernism towards more post-modern thinking.

Van der Ven, Dreyer and Pieterse (1997) write about greater social awareness and sensitivity to what they call the normative-ethical aspects of practical theology, on the understanding that it is not so much about what we believe, but more about how we *communicate* the gospel. To this end practical theology in South Africa has looked outwards to the broader society, other disciplines and in more recent years has been less informed with the *what* of the *word of god* and more concerned about *how* we practice inductively in the interface between God and humanity, making use of Firet's idea of practical theology being a 'theory of action'. This shift in thinking was initiated in South Africa by Bastian in the 1960's (Van Wyk 1995, Heyns & Pieterse 1990, Maddox 1991).

Generally my reading of practical theology as an academic discipline in South Africa has become a hybrid of rigorous academic discipline tempered by the crises we face in the South African context. This has mingled with African and European traditions. Theoretically it has had a strong leaning towards Eurocentric individualism enshrined in theologies coming out of the Western dualistic traditions (Dingermans 1996, Van der Ven 1988, 1993, Van der Ven et al 1997, Heitink 1999, Ackermann 1993).

One of the assumptions that empirical theologies as well as liberation theologies have made is that we work through bipolarity between God and man, justice and injustice, poor and rich, the good and the bad. This has been reflected in South Africa, where we have lived and breathed a deeply divided and fractured society.

4.5   Integrative theology

In recent years there has been a concerted effort to work with an integrated form of theology (Heitink 1999). Heitink calls for a more holistic approach in understanding practical theology as an organic whole, linking the dialectic of theory and praxis in more seamless ways with our past. Tracy (1983:76-81) for example has called theologians to seek more integration between reason and praxis. Pieterse (1998:176-177), taking the South African situation as his point of focus, presents an integrative definition of practical theology which brings together the critical, contextual, liberational, transformative, communicative, hermeneutical and empirical aspects.

An integrative approach helps to utilise aspects of theology without knocking one idea in order to promote another. However, an integrative approach largely works with familiar ingredients of the rational, where a subject/object split maintains a privileged position. I am particularly curious in this research about ingredients that might not be so familiarly worked with; ingredients that invite a co-constructive paradigm of participation in which the boundary between the subject and object becomes blurred The focus becomes the relationship between people rather than the relationship between reason and praxis, or action and communication. These are chance and risky ingredients that would be difficult to capture within a more traditional research paradigm where the self of the researcher is separate from the researched. The greatest risk for me has been the commitment of immersing myself in the life experiences of the Mothers and the responsibilities that accompany that relationship. Ethically this relationship cannot end because a research project ends. Lieblich (Smythe and Murray 2000) comments on a similar risk in participatory research she undertook on a Kibbutz in Israel. Relationships are not easily captured by the tension of theory and praxis, action and theory, justice and injustice or reason. A participatory theology (Kotzé 2001, 2002) works with an idea that to participate is a particularly unstable relational process that

cannot be predicted or distilled, and within it are many contradictions and multiple meanings attached to the voices that speak. Although these ingredients may be familiar to us in our every day relationships, they are not necessarily organised into an academic structure. To work with that which is to come, the unpredictable is therefore to court instability and risk.

To analyse the multiple beliefs of the Mothers I work with would be difficult within a paradigm of communicative action. It would lose many of the loose threads generated through relationship and participation and their way of doing theology. To understand it in a dialectical relationship of theory and praxis does not fully access the reciprocity of theology in the making as we act and perform together within relational practices. Theological reflection can itself become a highly sophisticated dogma that hides its very exclusivity and the ability to co-construct relational practices that generate new meanings. This is not to say that working in a participatory way is capable, or has the language to capture lived experience and relationship. The processes of which I speak never seem to stand still for long enough to form an analysis.

Challenges face us today in South Africa in attempting to find language for this less ordered ambiguous participation that continually appears contradictory. An opportunity to explore ways of challenging the current vocabulary, which works within a paradigm of polarity, calls me to attempt alternate forms of theological reflection. Bi-polarity has a tendency to argue one thing against another. Within a bi-polar philosophy are the ingredients for maintaining separateness and in this lies a limitation. Models based on communicative action are also perhaps limited within some of the more modernistic assumptions built on social theory and cognitive psychology. Their role for the future in South Africa might be limited and their metaphors weary.

Foucault (1970b) in his writing on the *Order of Things* has pointed out that it is only in the last one hundred and fifty years that man has become the subject of his own enquiry, out of which social theory has evolved. It is interesting to note that Dingermans (1996:84-86) has interestingly voiced this through giving a platform to *individual* theology, built within the Foucauldian idea of man as a subject of his own enquiry. Individualist thinking has pervaded our thinking over the last century in the West and therefore in Africa too. Balcomb (2001:61) somewhat controversially argues

that social theory has become equivalent to the word of God in modern theology. He also suggests that the reproduction of rights based theologies maintains an enemy, or a battle metaphor. It seems to me that it is time to lay down our weapons and participate together in ways that transcend social theory and allow it to retire to a place where it can offer us wisdom rather than truth. Balcomb suggests this could lead to a phenomenological encounter with the *other* in the ways we tell and hear stories. In the next chapter I explore this idea of self-transcendence through the philosophy of Levinas.

Critiquing a sacred cow theology that served to bring about transformation in South Africa does not mean that it is no longer needed, but just that in a fight for liberation many other aspects of transformation lay unattended. It is theology, to use Brueggemann's terms (1993) under negotiation.

It is also mindful to remember that lest these theologies become consigned to outer darkness, empirical theologies that have built on people like Paul Tillich have a great deal to offer in attempting to ground some of the multiple realities that have a habit of evaporating in the aromas of post-modern theologies. I work in this thesis with an idea that Tillich (2006) captivated my imagination on, that of *kairos moments*. This is a moment of insertion in history that arrives when least expected and turns into a moment of eternal significance. He suggests that these unpredictable *timely* moments can not be planned or organised through rational means. Kairos for Tillich was full of ambiguity and a tension of *not knowing*. Tillich was known for his correlational approach to practical theology and yet within this tension he inserts wisdoms that cannot be reduced to any one methodology. Bulman (1997:476) says this of Tillich:

> Kairos was for Tillich a tool for "reading the signs of the times"-a necessary category for a Christian interpretation of history. As we quickly approach the dawn of the third millennium, we may well expect to hear many readings of prophetic signs. Tillich's notion of kairos is a useful concept for preserving the passion and enthusiasm of millennial hope, while avoiding the pitfalls of prophetic literalism, the radicalism of misguided utopianism, and the pessimistic catastrophism of premillennial dispensationalism. While a kairos cannot be brought about by human effort, it does present us with a moment of free decision. It is "the time in which something, can be done" and provides a way of showing that present historical commitment and action really have something to contribute to the "supra-historical meaning of history."

Kairos moments appear to defy man's ability to subdue or control his/her environment. Throughout this research a rhythm of *kairos* has become apparent in times of vulnerability and crisis.

4.6   Voices as a contextual theology of crisis

Pieterse (1998:154), speaking on behalf of most theologians in South Africa, suggests that practical theology is by nature a crisis discipline that seeks to reconcile the kingdom of God with actions on earth through transformative practices, influenced by ideas from liberation theology as a theology of crisis. Heitink (1999:3) for example refers to Firet's idea of a church in crisis; which was for Firet, writing from a Western context, the crisis of church non attendance. The context in South Africa has called for its own theology of crisis emerging from a history of colonialism and apartheid (Pieterse 1998:15, Heitink 1999:2, De Gruchy 2001). The context in South Africa has demanded that we not only engage with how we communicate the gospel and its interrelationship with theory, but how we communicate the gospel has paid more attention to acting in crisis associated with the heresies and separatisms of apartheid. Practical theology has invited us, through difficult circumstances to face the other and the political effects of the political and ecclesial privileging of one race against another (Veling 2005, Tracy 1994, Guttierrez 1974). In this work these grounded ideas are also in relationship to the unpredictable aromas of kairos and post-modern theology, which slip through the sieves of control and defy categorisation.

The South African context has thus challenged theologians to cultivate a relevant practical theology of a transformative-ethical orientation within its own history of colonialism, violence, poverty and apartheid (Van der Ven et al 1997:110). Theologians in this context have been influenced by black theology and liberation theologies as developed by people like Gutierrez (1974) in South America in which theology takes a deliberate position in its orthopraxis with a preference for the poor. By focusing on orthopraxis practical theology turns away from theology in service to the gospel and academia, towards theology in service to the poor. Graham and Poling (2000:165) however complicate the idea of a theology in service to the poor through exposing texts

that suggest that those who really made history are the poor and marginalized but their voices are silenced and their knowledge and wisdom seen of lesser importance than *theologians* who are given a more public platform. This has been very true in this particular research journey. The Mothers are rarely given a platform upon which to talk their wisdom and theology. They are rather imminently *helped* to fight for rights and not invited to co-construct with those in power a local knowledge of freedom as a relational practice. This is evident at the end of this research journey when newspapers focused on the prominent figures of Vlok and Frank Chikane. I will comment on this in the postscript.

In other words liberation theology has a tendency of working within a Western dialectic tradition, where defense of the poor is done by those who hold power and is also complexly set in opposition to the rich and powerful, by those who hold a political agenda. I am not suggesting that this is not helpful, but rather I suggest that this model is limited in its capacity to walk beyond a victim/perpetrator paradigm.

4.7 Contextual theology as liberation

Contextual theologies in South Africa have flexed their muscles on how we act in the face of crisis and injustice enshrined in the emblems of apartheid and the fundamentalisms ingrained in religion that supported the status quo of normative and confessional theologies (Heitink 1999:171, Pieterse 1998, Van Wyk 1995, 1999). In this contextual theologies have moved the locus of their engagement away from practical theology as a science of communication, and engaged with issues of justice and righteousness. They have been criticized, particularly in academic circles, for their lack of attention to theory. They have used prophetic voices on behalf of the marginalised, and called for a stop of abuse by the state and puppet politics of the church which often accepted uncritically political assumptions that contributed to the marginalising and silencing of groups of people (De Gruchy 1994, Tutu 2001, Kotzé 2002, Cochrane et al 1994, Bosch 1991, Ackermann 1993, 1996).

Contextual theology has also paid particular attention to a critical reflection within the hermeneutic circle, on the Christian faith (de Gruchy 1994, Balcomb 2001, Cochrane et

al 1993). A hermeneutic circle is the idea that action informs theory, which in its turn affects our practices, upon which we must critically reflect. Critical reflection of praxis happens when we challenge some of the assumptions that we might have taken for granted as we do theology. It is one thing to challenge some of the heresies that are embedded in beliefs around apartheid, particularly from a righteous position. It is perhaps harder to critique and challenge assumptions and beliefs that we hold onto within a liberation framework because these are our blind spots and we rarely see their ambiguity or contradiction. This is particularly so within a dialectic tradition of debating one extrapolation against another. Another complication of the hermeneutical circle is that there are so many points of insertion and spring-boards as points of departure. For example, the points of departure I use in this text may be contextual, but these points cannot be separated from the many other theological points of departure.

Reflecting on what I have just written there are very few occasions that come to mind where significant challenge in this work has not been accompanied by a significant threat, throwing me into a defensive position in which I am blinded by either my own fear or my own knowledge. It becomes urgent in this respect to create safe places where our actions can be challenged in ways that do not threaten our relational identity or our sacred cow theologies. Critical reflection in this instance also needs to allow for blind spots in ways that invite others, both academically, as well as in different communities, to critique and challenge some of the assumed truths that cannot be looked at from within our limited field of vision. Maturana and Varela (1992:23), social biologists put it this way: 'We do not see the "space" of the world; we live our field of vision…. It is so obvious and close that it is very hard to see.' It is risky of course to accept this fact and to invite others along who might watch our blind spots and challenge the bastions of our faith. The risk is that our way of seeing might either disintegrate or be eclipsed by other people's knowledge. Cochrane (2001:39) says: 'As we walk this road together of trying to piece our past into and inclusive hope for our future, it is fraught with risk.'

The context in South Africa has called the churches to be relevant to the signs of their times and to make a stand against the heretical beliefs upheld by apartheid, thus challenging assumptions that had upheld such practices. This also brings with it blind spots where moral high ground makes claims about the way forward, forgetting that this too is blind to its own ideology. I know that within my own work my passion and

belief in participatory practices easily places me in a blind place where, as Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002) says 'you fall down potholes while looking at the stars'.

This is an ongoing process and this research contributes to the ongoing conversations concerned with 'what now?' built against a background of contextual, correlative and liberation theologies that have gone before.

4.8   Prophetic documents that stand as testimony to freedom

Documents have been crafted over the last thirty years in South Africa that have taken a stand against injustice, working with an imminent God who is seen to side with the poor and voiceless in an attempt to bring the kindgom of God to this earth. These documents began with the *Belhar Confession* in 1982, which denounced apartheid as a sin, a heresy, and a mockery of the gospel. This was followed by the *Kairos Document* in 1985 which was signed by more than one hundred and fifty churches (Nolan 1994:212). Then in 1986 the *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* called evangelicals to repentance for not having preached a prophetic and radical gospel. In 1988 the *Relevant Pentecostal Witness* called for the return to Pentecostalism's roots among the poor and oppressed, and the 1989 the *Road to Damascus* challenged people to repent for the roles they played, consciously or unconsciously, through taking sides with the oppressor (Cochrane & West 2001:31). Theologians and pastors like Desmond Tutu, David Bosch, Nico Smit, Albert Nolan, Manas Buthelezi, Allan Boesak, John de Gruchy and many others stood in solidarity with black churches against the heresies and injustices of the apartheid system.

4.9   Problematics and regimes of truth

Following the democratic changes in South Africa in 1994, the TRC sought a paradigm shift away from liberation theology, which exposed the errors in the systems of constraint that the apartheid regime promoted, towards healing and reconciling, which has led directly to this research.

Truth moved away from the ecclesial liberation discourses around heresy in the church and the emphasis shifted towards truth as a more personal engagement with acknowledging and the confessing individual, and group culpability for the heinous crimes committed with impunity and blessing under the previous regime. Perpetrators who disclosed the truth about what happened were generally granted amnesty. Victims in their turn were promised money in the form of reparation.

There was a great emphasis placed on the truth. Lapsley (Worsnip 1996:161) says: 'The truth has to be told and that is an extremely important step for the process of healing to take place'. This resonates with the Mothers who say '*we must know the truth' and 'they have not told us the truth'*. They do not feel as if they have heard the truth, although the TRC proceedings accepted as 'truth' the testimonies of the perpetrators. Many of the Mothers feel that perpetrators were given amnesty without disclosing the truth. This has left a residue of resentment with the Mothers and the more as a group we have focused on this issue; the more it appears to have grown in its *truth* status. The Mothers have also said '*How can they sleep well knowing that they have not told us the truth. We need to know why they killed our sons'*. Referring back to my initial engagement with the Mothers, these have consistently been the issues they have asked me to engage in. I sometimes hope we have moved to another place where truth is not centred, but it seems that as long as we centre truth within a therapeutic counselling capacity, the more it has refused to dissolve. Working in a post-structuralist paradigm however, words have no inherent meaning on their own. I might well be caught here within normative understandings of the truth. At a later stage in this thesis truth finds alternate definitions which are not based on some pure unadulterated transparency that holds no ambiguity or contradiction. Truth turns more into a life-giving practice in a relational space.

Speaking with Wagener (2005) he said '*but whatever we say they tell us it is lies. How can the truth as we know it be received when we are faced with such anger and hostility?*' Fullard (2005), the investigating historian from the NPA has said that the cases of the Mamelodi Nine and Mamelodi Ten are some of the clearest testimonies from the TRC, leading to evidence that connect truthfully to the accounts given by the perpetrators. Truth in this context is unstable and context dependent and in many ways untrustworthy because as Du Toit (1995) points out human cunning will probably

conjure up new truths in which the irony of torture extracts the truth! Jo Mamesela, perpetrator turned State witness, provides a good example of this. He testified at the TRC concerning his involvement with the Mamelodi Ten and Mamelodi Nine. It is generally known that he befriended the boys in Mamelodi and lured them away, promising them training in the armed wing of the ANC. Having read his testimonial given at the TRC, it appears particularly untrustworthy. He claims that he did not know them. It does not concur with the Mother's eye witness accounts of him being in Mamelodi. His testimony is full of inconsistencies and stories concerning the two groups of *boys* (Mamelodi Nine and Ten). He paints them as warring, aggressive township gangs who ran away to save themselves from necklacing. The Mothers say *'Why would they run there? They do not know Kwa Ndebele'*.

Documenting accuracy and truth brings with it a potential for healing, but also a potential for rupturing valued beliefs and re-traumatising a community. I have often felt trapped with the Mothers when they say *'we need to know the truth'*. For three years I have been caught in what appears to be a never ending cycle of pain and partial and fragmented truths told by human beings from different life worlds and contexts. I will discuss a more extended conversation on this in a later chapter.

Du Toit (1991) for example in his article *The End of Truth*, working from a Foucauldian understanding of disciplinary power and control, talks of truth being context dependent and dependent on those who hold power and are therefore able to control and define that which is the truth. If power is held within relationship through a complex web of control and resistance, as Foucault (1977, 1980, 1981) would suggest, I make an assumption that through a participatory relational ethic, power relationships can alter, bringing both voice and an ethic of relational accountability to others, and this becomes a two way process. A relational ethic takes focus away from truth as a regime and focuses on relationally accountable practices. Such practices move away from looking at cause and effect and rather concentrate on relationship as a locus of interest and enquiry.

Cochrane (2001:38) cautions us about finding the truth of any one argument when he says: **'**To possess the truth, to close it down, to impose it, to demand that all bow before it, is to act unjustly. It is a tyranny'. Du Toit (1995) likewise cautions us that within the

truths of these very liberations are abusive practices. This is not easy to remember while we are busy with our noses and feet in the fields of oppression. It is often only afterwards, with the luxury of hindsight that we can see the effects of our own truths on communities and see that their own ideology was blind from their capacity to also murder.

Dualisms, grown in the soils of our history and the search for *truth* are present in every day conversations about *'us'* and *'them''*. Listen to conversations and within most of our talk is a separation of interests.

To illustrate this I would like to tell a story. In November 2004 I was standing at Freedom Park in Pretoria, talking with a church minister who works with the South African Council of Churches. We stood overlooking the University of South Africa (Unisa), while the fountain of the prayers of the dead sent up a fine spray of water. We were attending a service of healing for the families of disappeared activists. It was convened by the CSVR (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation) and the church minister was there as a guest speaker. He spoke to me afterwards and said: '*We meet with white church ministers and tell them that reconciliation has not yet happened and they look at their watches and say "we have an important meeting to attend, we must look forward and not back.'*

It felt as if I had nowhere to go with his statement. It appeared so over-laden with meaning, past pain, rage and complexity. Guilt danced in my mind and I remained dumb without language (Danieli 1999, Weingarten 1999, 2000, 2001). What could I say in this polarisation of identity? I was aware of being trapped as a white person into a historical category of perpetrator and I had no language for what I was experiencing. I imagined myself in the situation of a white minister at the South African Council of Churches. I thought about looking at my watch. I would have liked to ask him what he understood as reconciliation. I would have liked to talk more, but I was dumb. I felt as if I were under some kind of historical gaze that I felt I could not escape from. It was as if there were dangerous memories and the clock ticked as if remembering so much past history that could not be talked about. The clock just seemed to freeze me into representing *whiteness* that I could do nothing with but stand dumb and trapped into a role in which I represented, a villain. It might of course be my own paranoia that I

would interpret the conversation in this way, and he may not even remember it as something significant. I have spent a year reflecting on this memory and wonder what might need to happen for it to be *time* to talk about these memories. If I were to ask the white ministers, I wonder what they might say. How might they have remembered, or not remembered such a meeting? These were some of the multiple thoughts that fought over my attention in my head at that moment as we stood together. I glance at my watch and the time ticks on.

Race within a South African context becomes extremely difficult to talk about without resorting to binaries, causes and effects. It has taken me three years to move into a place with the Mothers where I feel I can begin to be seen as a human being rather than as a white person, but still I sometimes experience my position as perhaps schizophrenic.

De Gruchy (2001) reflects on what he refers to as a schizophrenic position that he held from the late 1960's as a staff member of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), which took up a no tolerance position on racism and apartheid, and his position as secretary of the Church Unity Commission which sought ecumenical unity and participation. The two positions appeared to contradict each other and force him into an either/or position. I would like to ask him how he managed to hold this contradiction when in the light of the heresies promoted by apartheid and the church there was no place for conversation?

PART II   A NEW CONTEXT

4.10   Liberation through other means

Having briefly traced the dominant trends in South Africa and the influences within the field, where theologians have in the past attended to the crises witnessed in the South African context, a new context has emerged since the completion of the TRC. Theologians are left to attend to our current context and find new life giving practices within the crises we find ourselves in within the church today. Graham (1998:146) challenges us to shift our gaze away from crisis within the church towards equipping

communities to ethically practice listening to one another. I will argue as this chapter continues, that many South African theologians are concerned about a new and different crisis; which calls for the practice of re-humanising society in the face of our history and the *other* whom we see as separate from ourselves (De Gruchy 2001, Cochrane 2001, Balcomb 2001, Ackerman 2002, Richardson 2001, Wüstenberg 2002, Vosloo 2001, Tutu 2000, Veling 2005, Levinas 1984).

Balcomb (2001:57) in his article *Is God in South Africa or are we still clearing out throats?* reads some ancient texts looking for clues in the old Hebraic wisdoms. He suggests, working with texts of Thomas of India, that theology should be focusing on the relational humanisation of society.

Cochrane (2001:54) speaks of the challenges of change when he says:

> With the changes in South Africa since the painful birth of democracy, a new need has emerged, that of facing the signs of our times through ways of re-humanising subjects and objects, black and white. This calls for a paradigm shift in thinking and in the questions we are asking about change and transformation in a society that is still deeply divided on racial lines and the theories we have used to interpret our times. Pre-eminently, the most visible shift is the emergence of a constitutional democracy and the formal end of the racially defined world of apartheid. On its own this has brought new challenges with it, and reshaped old ones. As we are rapidly discovering, nevertheless, this shift does not mean the end of racism and its effects. Nadine Gordimer and others have said it pithily: five years contends against three centuries in this respect….. It sought to alter the direction of the debate on religion in public life in South Africa, in particular to move it beyond mere oppositional rhetoric, without losing the critical edge that we had to take out of the struggles of the last decades. It was seen as part of a much longer, more deeply rooted process in which religious leaders, thinkers and believers are, or should be, all engaged.

In the face of such monumental shifts in society Cochrane and West (2001:25), work with a public form of theology that scans the larger discourses. They explore the wider context, concern themselves with the continuity of the relationship between the past and present subjugated consciousness and the arousal of dangerous memories that are evoked through prophetic recovery of memories from the past. They contend that genuine reconciliation must go by way of memory of suffering without leaving 'traces of suppressed dialogue festering in the bloodstream of the social whole.' They ask a question about the role that this relationship might play in a public theological

hermeneutic for the shaping of a transformed South Africa. Suppressed dialogue will however always be around. I am rather interested the role of participation plays in restraining the remnants of suppressed dialogue from erupting in new forms of oppression.

Looking toward a future ethic in South Africa of assimilating and exposing dangerous memories is a never ending process. Accountability to the past in this way is, as I have suggested, complex and fraught with dangers. Dangerous memories can so easily ignite fires that keep us in a *dumb* and frozen position. Post colonial theologies helps somewhat to stabilise dangerous memories in a bid to explore the conditions and the effects of colonialism on the collective mind. But in my mind it still works academically rather than in the field and also in a subtle form of blame in its search for a cause. It attempts to build philosophical bridges to forms of interpretation, but unless this is grounded in practice only works at clearing throats.

4.11 Centering relationship. De-centering theory, trauma, truth and dangerous memories

My work has not led me directly into stories and dangerous memories. The Mothers' stories and memories have rather been de-centralised, along with models of communicative action and liberation, in favour of relationship. Centralising participation and relationship makes the assumption that communication happens in every interaction and that healing and language becomes a by-product of our relational activities. The Mothers themselves have partly guided me in this pursuit as they did not ask me to work with their stories, or communication, but rather as a group counsellor with specific requests.

I am informed by narrative and participatory practices, where healing is not sought by means of the trauma, but rather in scaffolding a context for re-storying the past. (White & Epston 1990, White 2000, Payne 2000, Carey &Russell 2002). This is practiced at a local level of involvement within community.

Cochrane and West (2001) suggest that public theology, which has tended to engage at the discursive and larger political level, needs to play a more significant role in finding ways to do this at a local level as this is still not well developed. They say: 'Precisely this kind of work has been undervalued if not contemptuously thrust aside in the last fifteen years or so, in favour of an overtly political, outwardly directed, liberation theology' (Cochrane & West 2001:35). This research is attempting to look at the local level through forms of healing that require a deep poetic participation with a group of people who are in the process of finding a voice.

Facilitating ways of transformation and healing within a local community calls to our imagination, the symbolic and the gentle rhythm of ritual. Narrative and participatory practices invite us to engage at both a local community level as well as at the bigger dominant discourses around colonisation in which we are immersed. Van der Ven et al (1997:114) describes this well when they say '[t]he dominant character of this colonization resulted (in Habermas's terms) in establishing a solid economic and political system, which guaranteed the maximization of money and power…... Here inter-societal and intra-societal colonization go hand in hand.'

There is a resonance between Habermas's ideas here and Foucault's work on discourse and power. Foucault in The A*rchaeology of Knowledge* unveiled some of the motives behind colonisation in Africa and the globalising effect of Western democracy and capitalism following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This has, within the public and global sphere, brought about its own form of empire, or what has been termed a neo-colonialism (Keller et al 203:7).

The conversation at Freedom Park in November 2004 often returns to me and I think about the complexity of words that were spoken and my position within the words that were spoken. Words are not innocent and come loaded with hidden discourses and histories. Post-colonial theologies take a closer look at this relationship where the colonizer and the colonized are caught in embedded assumptions around racial privilege and historic abuse. Contextual theologians during the 1990's in the USA began to recognise some of the complications and ambiguities that are embedded within the paradigm of oppression and duality. Keller writes about the multiple and overlapping effects that are often historically and culturally situated (Keller et al

2004:7). She says: 'We need – as theology has always needed, whether it admits it or not – timely theories that can better attune our faith to the new problems and potentialities of its context'.

4.12 Post-colonial theology

In this I turn to voices outside of South Africa. Chapter five explores more thoroughly post-colonial theory as it has been developed particularly by two African theorists, Achille Mbembe (2000, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) and Franz Fanon (1963).   Within theology there are a number of people working with post-colonial texts using what Keller et al (2004:8) refer to as the Holy Trinity of post-colonialism, Bhabha, Said, and Spivak. Current post-colonial theologians, such as Marion Grau, Catherine Keller, Joerg Rieger, Mayra Rivera, Sugirtharajah and Mark Lewis Taylor have all been inspired by both this '*holy trinity*' as well as other post-structuralist thinkers, such as Derrida and Foucault. Their focus in general has been on gender and inequality (Keller et al 2004, Graham 1996), as well as an engagement with theological anthropology. Michael Nausner (2004: 118-132) talks about what he calls American 'homeland security'. His work is of particular interest in this research as it challenges constructions of what Mbembe (2000, 2004) and Foucault (1981) call *sovereign power.* This power is explored in detail in chapter five of this writing. The main theme of this form of power is about identity that is wrapped around allegiance to the State and fear of an enemy. Nausner works in an interdisciplinary way with philosophy, politics, human rights and social anthropology to explore identity constructions anchored in homeland security. His theological argument lies in exposing the false ideology of such a sovereign state and the implications this has for theology. There is resonance here with the 'homeland security' developed by and through the apartheid state and this argument will become clearer in the next chapter which focuses on postcolonial theory and the sovereign state.

Mark Lewis Taylor (2004) also writing from within the USA argues that post-colonial theology lacks any social or moral moorings in the USA, by the fact that the country still supports their nation's colonising pursuits in the name of an ideology of freedom. He traces two strands of post colonial philosophy, that of Kant and his ideas on the rational and moral human being, and those of Spivak, who draws on Levinas and

Derrida to find ways of imagining God as 'the radical alterity that the self as the "narrative centre of gravity" is programmed to imagine in an ethics of responsibility' (Taylor 2004:48). If I understand Taylor correctly it is to imagine God not in a rational form but as the great 'I AM' that is represented in the face of the other, in the case of this research, those who embody difference. In the light of the previous discussion of practical theology as developed in South Africa, this idea challenges the dualistic divide between God and man and theory and praxis. It engages with what Graham and Poling (2000) call a practice of listening to the multiple voices of the *other* to find alternate readings on our humanity. This links with Levinas's (Veling 2005) concept of God as the 'other', the one who cannot be explained.

Post-colonial theologians are addressing these issues within their own contexts in the USA, the East and in Britain. However, there is no specific writing in South Africa on identity and post-colonial theology. The context in South Africa calls us to pastorally attend to the deeply embedded discourses around race and identity and explore meaningful ways to invite different ways of negotiating relationship (Burr 1995, Gergen 1991, 1994, Kotzé and Kotzé 1997, Brueggemann 1989, 1993). As indicated earlier, alternate ways of relating are present within the history of South Africa, just as Graham and Poling (2000) found in their research conducted in America between victims and perpetrators.

Moving towards alternate identities is not so easy when colonial regimes fixed racial identities through colour coding, cemented spatially in deciding who could do what, where and when. The real effects of this in South Africa still prevent a free play of meanings in our shared humaneness. With both colonialism and apartheid this was accomplished   through exterior forms separation and segregation (Fanon 1963:27), and also through interior discourses of disciplinary power. In a Foucauldian reading of disciplinary power (Foucault 1977, 1980, Flaskas & Humphries 1993) we begin to police ourselves through the internalisation of assumed beliefs. In the context of South Africa, White and European were to be aspired after.

Keller (2004:12), in referring to the reproduction of both sovereign and disciplinary power projects colonial discourses onto current politics. She says: 'The British Empire with its "civilizing mission"- and, in eerie repetition, the U.S. superpower with its

"democratizing mission"- have functioned by offering themselves as the ideal to be imitated. It is known (but concealed) that such imitation can only fail.'

Sugirtharajah (2004), writing from Britain, has a particular interest in India and the East. He comments that in the last 50 years there has been a great reluctance to consider the effects of the British Empire on the peoples it has colonised. He says (2004:22): 'While other disciplines have grappled with the wider cultural implications of the empire, European colonialism has never been a popular subject for theological inquiry in Western discourse despite the very substantial links between the churches in Britain and the missions in the colonial world.' He goes on to claim that more books have been written in Western theology that concern themselves with kindness to animals and the environment rather than about colonialism or race. He mentions two books written in the last fifty years, one by Warren[4] and the other by Niebuhr[5]. He suggests that both of these authors dismissed colonialism as an inevitable stage in the development of civilisations. He goes on to say that Britain has continued to complacently avoid confronting the reality of empire and its postcolonial consequences (2004:27). He envisions an ability to entertain multiple constructions of the self, resisting the privileging of either the local or the global. This would be what Bhabha refers to as a *hybrid* idenity. What might then be the practical conditions that might facilitate these hybrid voices? A danger in my mind of unravelling the past in such a way is that of cause, effect and victim driven entitlement that focuses on blame rather than a hybrid identity. It becomes an enormous challenge for practical theologians to create contexts where acknowledgement can happen without it returning to a rhetoric of blame.

It awaits our attention to find language that is not saturated in blame and exoneration of *us* and *them*. South Africans have been born into what is probably one of the last outposts of the empire, and most cultural groups, with perhaps the exception of the British, have suffered from the effects of marginalisation and injustice within living memory. Injustice has been one of the major contexts for the current liberation theological debates (Cochrane 1999a, 1999b, 2001, De Gruchy 2001, Ackerman 1994, 2003, Kotzé 2002).

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[4] M.A. Warren, 1955 *Caesar the Beloved Enemy: Three studies in the Relation of Church and State.* London:SCM Press
[5] Niebuhe R 1956 *Nations and Empires: Recurring Patterns in the Political Order.* London Faber and Faber

Historically theologians in South Africa have not had the luxury of standing back to look at identity and the influence of colonialism, because they have been so heavily engaged in the field, addressing issues of injustice, which are frequently emotive and painful and urgent.

Different ways of knowing must not in the context of this research silence the complexity of our historical construction, a part of which is an internalised Western belief in individual rights and justice as well as community rights. In this way a participatory theology can never be after, because the context in South Africa still is in crisis (De Gruchy 2001, Ackermann 2003). It still works with a judicial system based in justice and rights and the crisis of injustice. The work I do with the Mothers involves challenging injustice and addressing poverty, but this particular research enquiry is about the role that participation plays in creating different meanings around deeply embedded racial constructions and identities, and how this might play a role in the transformation of society and generate different ideas within the theory of practical theology.

PART III TOWARDS PARTICIPATION

4.13 Relational theology

Theologies of participation are relatively new territory in South Africa and not well chartered or tested and therefore research of this nature carries risk. It is perhaps the great uncertainty or unpredictable nature of the future that invites the comfort of familiar structures. Familiar structures under the rubric of liberation theology create certain stability, a clear goal, and greater certainty around juridical practices concerning truth and justice. Chapter two explains how this research moved away from justice as a focus and onto participatory practices. Participatory theology is a particularly fluid way of working in relationship. In among the daily activities and ongoing poverty, meaning and language emerge as products of our relational action within a context of a township. Sons and daughters dying with HIV/AIDS, orphans and poverty also play their tunes as we participate together. In chapter seven I attempt to allow the

complexity of lived experience, HIV, family life and survival to dance along in the text. This is an attempt to include the processes of participation that are difficult to place in a well ordered format that this writing writes about. The poetic section inserted in the middle of this work also attempts to dance with multiple lived experiences through the metaphor of photography and words, both the Mothers and my own, captured in a poetic form.

4.14   Continuing a poetic engagement in theology

The poetic, as mentioned in chapters one and two, is an area within theology that is breaking ground in finding language for what it means to participate together. Graham and Poling (2000:180), use liturgy as a poetic way to build bridges across the chasms of race. They suggest that a liturgical and poetic awakening helps to retrieve the traces of forgotten memory. I suggest it also helps to retrieve it without treading dangerously into a net of *truth* that binds people in polarised identities. Cochrane and West (2001) suggest that Christianity has a history of adapting to the context of the times in flexible metaphoric ways using performance, the imagination and mystery as a form of resistance to dominant political power. They also talk of the *irrational* level of symbols and images and narratives that connection at the local level, which embodies a capacity for both adaptation and survival.

It suggests a way of opening windows into other worlds and the otherness of people who understand differently because the poetic invites multiple interpretations of lived experience. Within a current post-modern context there are multiple and competing voices all clamouring to be heard. Practices that invite poetic forms of writing and doing contribute to some of these multiple interpretations without forcing any one object to the centre. A self in relationship similarly moves attention from an object or some core self towards a self in relationship (Graham & Poling 2000).

Poiesis, as an art form of imagination in theology is often understood as worship, symbol, piety, love and mysetery (Bosch 1990:431) as I suggested in chapter one. *Poiesis* includes social memory, which is so often immortalised in stories and poetry and in the current research includes dangerous memory. Brueggemann (1989:5) in his

book *Finally Comes the Poet* talks about a prose-flattened world where truth has been reduced and rendered inane without entertaining the not yet known. He says:

> It is precisely the daring work of fiction to probe beyond settled truth and to walk to the edge of alternatives not yet available to us. It is this probe behind our settlements that makes newness possible. The more tightly we hold to settled reality, the more likely the alternative construal of the poet will be dismissed as "mere fiction", for the alternative envisioned in such speech is a proposal that destabilizes all our settled "facts", and opens the way for transformation and the gift of newness.

Poetic writing opens up possibilities of entertaining alternate and multiple readings of a text, allowing for interpretation and re-interpretation of narratives without reducing any one narrative to an essence of single meaning, recreating an elasticity and flexibility in our theological reflection. Using language in this way also offers a platform for participation with one another beyond the current theories of polarity that have informed us in South Africa. A poetic anticipation extends a hand to those seen as the oppressor to allow them to become a part of the re-building of a newly imagined South Africa, where we do not assume the *rainbow nation* is a reality, but we build it colour by colour. This involves dialogue with the past and with our humanity. Ackerman (2000:32) argues that we have an ethical imperative to become involved with generating dialogues between oppressors and oppressed rather than to theorise and talk about it.

4.15 Inviting other stories

Graham and Poling (2000:181) say: 'In our work with victims and perpetrators, it is not the evil and suffering that is compelling, but the contrast of their pain with a resilient hope that would not die. This contrast begins to unlock the depth of levels of experience for our participation and research.' The practice of not only listening but also co-constructing different meanings from our past, generated through multiple identities and multiple art forms is centralised in my research through the narrative practices that I work with. This is founded on the idea that healing and transformation is sought through participating in practices that promote alternate meanings attached to the stories we tell (white & Epston 1990, White 1995, 2000 Burr 2003, Gergen 1991,

1994, 1999, Hart 1997, Hoffman 2002, Lax 1992, Kogan & Gale 1997, McNamee & Gergen 1992, Thomas 2002).

4.16 A theology of turning around to face the other

Quoting from Gustavo Gutierrez back in 1974, and using ideas that Levinas and Tracy have put forward, Veling (2005) invites us to turn around and face the other. Veling quotes Gutierrez as saying 'To enter the world of the other… with the actual demands involved… is to begin… a process of conversion.' Gutierrez was speaking in a context of poverty and disempowerment. I am using this phrase rather to talk about anyone who we might consider as *other*, continuing the process of conversion. The text itself becomes unstable and open to multiple interpretations, which in turn open the text to work for the kingdom that is to come (Cochrane 2001:37). The text becomes a free-play, away from Western thought that privileges one member of a binary pair (Derrida in Powell 1997:25). Into this text we invite the *other*, knowing that their imprints and the traces of theology and difference are present within the text that comes under the critique of deconstruction.

Entertaining the unpredictable, the unknowable, is to permit vulnerability and what Levinas (Veling 2005) calls the nakedness of the face of the *other*, another person who is not the same. The challenge, according to Levinas is our ethical response to this vulnerability. The other in this respect calls to mind many things, beliefs and people, including our history and the theologies that we once held so tightly to.

4.17 Multiple readings of faith within a context

As mentioned earlier, this text works with a Derridian understanding of truth, where ideas and thoughts are not split off, or in opposition to another, but rather look for the traces of all texts that are within our thinking and within our theologies, whether at grass root level or in academic institutions (Morton 2003, Dick & Kofman 2002, Powell 1997, Wolfreys 1998). This work then accommodates continual reflexive critique of its own writing.

141

In the next two chapters I explore both the philosophical underpinning of such an assumption and the social construction of relational responsibility, where any one construction stands in relationship to another rather than in opposition to a different theology. Relational responsibility is founded on an idea that there is essentially no *you* or *me,* but that together we have a capacity to generate new and different meanings around relationships that participate in *life giving* practices (Gergen 1998, Kotzé 2001, 2002, Heshusius 1994, 1995, Ackerman 1994). This creates a platform for engaging with the *other* in ways that promote an ability to entertain multiple constructions of embedded truth and constraint within our actions. By this I refer to the idea that within any dominant discourse are alternate discourses that are controlled through multiple power relationships held together through the many ways in which we have become constructed within any particular historical context.

Destinations using a participatory ethic are not as clearly defined as a liberation ethic that united the church through being at war with heresy. Destinations need maps and theories to guide them as did a liberation ethic based on a confessing church. We cannot work outside of discourse and theory although we can hold a complexity of multiple theologies and theories. We select information in order to make sense of our understandings and repress, censor and discard texts that do not make sense within our paradigm. Brueggemann (1989:60) suggests that censored texts, when they do emerge can be dangerously subversive and need time to find a voice before they become interpreted. He says: 'When voiced, they linger a while, with power, in our imagination.' This subversive power or energy is hopefully palpable within this text. Unleashing silent monsters from the past in order to both tame and re-language them is harder than I initially thought. At the very end of this thesis one of these monsters emerges in what I would call a *kairos* moment. It happens when Vlok engages with the Mothers in an unusual symbolic act. The press and public were generally unsympathetic to this gesture. It seemed so much more convenient to work with cynicism and *truth* in a way that places blame upon one man, thereby exonerating the other from any form of culpability in a pharisaic politically correct act.

This can also become indeterminate and problematic as well as dangerously subversive, escaping the nets and webs of discourse. However, to let go of multiplicity and the random in theology is itself in danger of turning into another fundamentalism, or

returning to the paths of the familiar rhetoric, where one truth excludes another. Cochrane (2001:37) speaking of the future of theology in South Africa says fundamentalisms 'work against "what is to come," in order to protect "what is" from "what is to come". Why? Because "what is still to come" is unknown, uncontrollable. It escapes all authority except the authority of faith, to which none but the faithful themselves can testify, if they can testify at all, if they are allowed to testify at all, if their testimony can be couched in an acceptable language at all'. Without excluding history, theological constructs and discourse, this work is indebted to a public theology that engages the larger picture of what is happening *out there* and how I can move into the picture without assuming that the picture that I create constitutes the whole landscape.

4.18   Becoming grounded in participation

I have suggested that communication models in theology based on logic, truth, justice, and the rational are limited in bringing about transformation. Participatory practices play an important role in the continuing conversations in theology. This is not to argue against the importance of stability and consensus through communicating needs and finding common language for facts, norms and feelings (Heitink 1993:135).

There is also a role for the gift of not knowing, for instability and surprise where the poetic plays with the unpredictability of the future (Cochrane 2001, Brueggemann 1989, 1993), where God cannot be pinned down. Levinas (Veling 2005) suggests that God is altogether infinite and separate and cannot be talked about or placed under a microscope. God comes at unpredictable moments of revelation from somewhere else, from outside and remains infinite and uncontainable. This resonates with Tillich and his work on *kairos*.

An image of God emerges upon this landscape when we see god within the face of another, particularly someone who we see as different from ourselves. Within the *other*, whether black or white, an architect and upholder of apartheid, an academic theologian, a black mother who has lost her child to political violence, I see myself and my own past, as well as another, whom I can never know. As Brueggemann (1993:16) says:

'The new mode of theology now permitted and required reflects an acknowledgement that all claims of reality, including those by theologians, are fully under negotiation.' It invites us to lay down our battle metaphors and risk what Balcomb (2001:61) calls a transcendent phenomenological encounter with another.

Balcomb (2001:60) and Kotzé (2001, 2002) use Küng's idea suggest that change happens when there is a paradigm shift at three levels – theology, church and in the social structures of the ordinary person in society. Cameron (Cochrane & West 2001) would contend that shifts happen when structures become too rigid and lose their capacity to engage with the imagination of the ordinary person. Liberation theology in the past engaged the imagination of the ordinary person in fighting for a better future.

Ways of generating imagination beyond racial categories excites me and invites me to participate. It moves race and separation away from the centre of the stage through engaging with one another in every day affairs. What might have been different in the conversation in Freedom Park if the church ministers who looked at their watches had exposed their vulnerability and constraints of time and asked the employee of SACC for his advice?

Might it have made a difference? Are the very assumptions of superiority, efficiency and privilege not within the glance of the watch and the inability or the unawareness of the dangerous memories triggered by the *other*, the *black man* or the *white man* in this context? If this is the case, how do we grow communities of awareness without experiencing a threat to our own existence? Brueggemann (1993:59) proposes what he calls a fresh honouring of ambiguity and an unlearning of practices that hold taken for granted assumptions. He uses the concept of *Freudian slips*, which do not fit with rational criticism, but slips out through uncontrolled means, such as watch gazing. He goes on to say: '[T]he parts of the bibles that "do not fit" creedal theology or rational criticism may turn out to be most important. The text voices what ill fits and often offers it to us in the form of details, but we do not sufficiently linger over those details. A good exegete, like a good therapist, will linger over precise wording, the odd incongruity, the repeated accent, in order to notice what commonly remains unnoticed' (Brueggemann 1993:59-60).

The shifts in thinking that we are experiencing in the world today are challenging the very foundations of the questions we have been asking concerned with scientific positivism that seeks mastery and control over justice and truth. Context, history, culture, the particular and personal are now considered not only important but imperative in the way we seek to understand theology in the world around us. It is sometimes understood as an *interpretive* turn where fact always remains ambiguous because facts cannot be understood outside of a context and even then they are selected by those in power to control and maintain a status quo. Bosch, in this book *Transforming Mission,* and writing within missiology (1991:430), contends that interpretation involves the risk of error, inappropriate questions and wrong clues. To interpret the signs of the times, in spite of error, we need a compass, a compass that helps to identify forces that run counter to God's reign at work. Centralising any form of dehumanising practice in this work is a compass that I hold and separating myself from another is part of a dehumanising practice.

Brueggemann (1993:8) suggests that '[i]n place of objective certitude and settled hegemony, we would now characterize our knowing in ways that make mastery and control much more problematic, if indeed mastery and control can any longer be our intention at all'. Questions concerning justice, knowledge, truth, action and theory in relation to praxis are shaken in a world where truth is both moveable and a political construction in the service of well travelled thoughts that have been convincingly argued within theology.

Kotzé (2002) using a participatory ethic draws from Heshusius (1994) and Reinhartz (1992) when they talk of a paradigm shift towards the dynamic of a relational ethic, where my journey becomes a part of your journey, challenging the idea that the researcher can stand separated from the researched. Ricoeur (Cochrane 2001:38) in saying that acting is accompanied by suffering – because to suffer means that we become aware of the *other* also challenges the boundary between the researcher and the researched. To become aware of the other means that I am aware of myself because I could be the *other* and have the capacity to do what the *other* does. Cochrane (2001:38) and Gergen and McNamee (1999) argue that it is within relationship that we understand justice and act ethically. It is then in our life together that justice becomes significant. Cochrane suggests that to not possess the truth and to keep it open is to act justly. It

diminishes the actualization of a human being. It causes suffering; or excuses suffering. It works against the truly other and tries to force the other who is different to be the same. To confront that statement would indeed be a challenge for theology!

Whose voices then do we hear in our research? Brueggemann (1993:9) suggests that: 'We are now able to see that what has passed for objective, universal knowledge has in fact been the interested claim of the dominant voices who were able to pose their view and to gain either assent or docile acceptance from those whose interest the claim did not serve. Objectivity is in fact one more practice of ideology that presents interest in covert form as an established fact.'

Brueggemann (1993:11) continues with his argument for a shift in consciousness between the knower and the known, the researcher and researched. He says: 'As we stand before the text, no longer as its master but as its advocate, we will have to find new methods of reading.' The text in this work becomes a dance of participation between the Mothers and my self in relationship with one another. The research emerges from a long and intricate journey we have made together and culminates in us as a group reflecting on our journey together. In this way it works hard at finding pastoral ways of relating that deconstruct a position of power and privilege.

Brueggemann goes on to suggest that within a post-Cartesian dualism our knowing consists not in settled certitudes but in the actual work of imagination. Imagining is always about that, which is yet to come, what he calls the 'as if' of St Paul that redefines a slave as if they are free. Brueggemann calls this a subversive function of imagination which imagines a different text, a text not defined by a dominant construction of a people (1993:15). In this way he connects with Cameron. He contends that the failure of the imagination in modernity has affected both our morality as well as our political ethical postures. Brueggemann's interest is to find some of the pieces with which to fund greater imagination in a post-modern world where the act of imagination has a capacity to work with lost and yet cherished worlds of the re-imagined. I particularly mention this here because of my interest in imagining lived experience through a poetic form in my writing, which is tentative and less certain. It is a way of re-imagining a world of contradiction without having to dissect it in a socially analytic way and a way of quietening down those voices of polarity.

Brueggemann (1993:65) has an interesting idea about finding reinterpretation of scripture through *drama* which is in a social construction sense performative and open ended permitting me to play a role that was once reserved for others. He (op cit: 67) says: 'I suggest that faith as drama matches the daily, lived reality of our lives. For in fact, we are not settled, one-dimensional agents. We are in fact characters in many dramas, sometimes trying to bring the parts into a coherent whole, sometimes trying to break out of an oppressive coherence, sometimes exploring a new freedom within that constancy, seeking to guard both against frozenness in which the characters congeal, and against a kind of ad hoc mode of life in which the characters lodge their credibility in fits of incongruity.' In the following two chapters on post colonialism and relational responsibility, these ideas form a prism of diverting colour into multi coloured rainbows of connection. This is done through entering one another's life worlds and entertaining the *other*, the stranger as yourself.

Generating different roles, imagining alternate positions of identity and performing this in an ongoing script on stage becomes a role of this writing and work, Within the drama of this writing the play is performed and performed again and again until new scripts emerge. This metaphor has also become a part of what the Mothers and I are doing in the context of this research. I have been influenced by the Mothers I work with and they have been influenced by me as we work together at bringing the kingdom of God to this earth and re-writing scripts that have been previously saturated in separation. To be influenced is both subtle and deliberate. I go to them for advice about what to do and sometimes I haven't. I have made mistakes which is part of the risk taking process. Lizzie (November 2005) agreed with me that I have made mistakes in trial and error. '*You have made mistakes Bridgid, but you have learnt from us'*.

My own impatience that has tried on many occasions to impose ideas that are not born from within the group have frequently trapped me into the recursive loop of the coloniser and the colonised, the oppressor and oppressed, in what I imagine is in the service of a benevolent dictatorship. My compass has been to sit with my own frustration, to own it and to attempt to allow my own human *vulnerability* to expose my uncertainty and frustration through honest conversations with the Mothers. Beyond the mistakes and insensitivities I have judged myself for making, we have persevered and cared together. This journey is not about clever conversational techniques, or a well

147

planned strategy. It is about trial and error, tears and pain and a sticking to the process of caring and valuing others as human beings in a poetic way that is under negotiation.

4.19 An ethic of values

Values are difficult to define, but within this research cannot be understood or grown outside of a relational focus. Browning according to Pattison (1993:37-46) has been alone until recently in recalling or languaging a position for values in pastoral care, deploring the slide into short term individualistic therapeutic goals. He calls for a moral framework of goals and values that brings meaning and purpose back to the life of a church. He uses moral reasoning to distil the experience of love and then to find rational language for this. Writing within a framework and context of the disintegration and fragmentation of values in North America his work appears prophetic. Through languaging and systematising 'do to others as you would have done to yourself' it helps to birth and distil that which people already know. What might not be appropriate here is the already lived with morality and values that the Mothers I work with know about. How might their knowledge of value be different from someone from Western Europe and what ethical wisdoms do they have that might not fit in a frame of moral reasoning? As Pattison (1993:46) comments: 'It is one thing to evolve norms and goals for pastoral care in general. It is another to integrate the ethical dimension in practical pastoral care.' An *ethicising practice* might be to work with a relational ethic of mutual accountability, not assuming that we know what accounts as ethical for a group of people who we do not always understand. Pattison (1993:49) concurs with this when he says: 'it is not a case of *whether* a value and ethical dimension should be a part of the pastoral relationship, for that cannot be avoided. Rather, it is a matter of trying to sort out in *what way* it can be part of the relationship so that it avoids the negative features of judgmentalism or moralism.'

4.20 Conclusion

This chapter has held many threads of practical theology as it has developed on different continents according to their contexts. I have argued that a Western context has had a great influence on the way we have engaged and distilled theory from praxis.

I have also drawn in the currents of liberation theology and without using one against another I have attempted to engage with recent literature in South Africa, as well as post-modern theological challenges to explore the challenge that lies ahead of us in South Africa, where the poetic and relational invites us to engage in a pastoral participation where we can talk with our colonial history and racial constructions without these dangerous memories being either neglected or in control of our humanity.

Chapter 5

Participating with relational identity in a post-colonial context

September 16th 2005

> *I visited Maria again today. There she lay in the same place, on the concrete floor, propped up by two pillows and cushioned by a reed mat and a tartan blanket. It was hot under the tin roof and she lay inches away from the TV on one side and the dining table on the other. 'Vlaakplaas goes round in my head' said Maria. De Kock is playing with our minds. That is what upsets me. Perpetrators do not tell the truth. They fried our people while they drank beer and laughed'.*

5.1   Introduction

This chapter explores certain social constructions associated with racial identity in a post-colonial context. There are a number of curiosities within the chapter, particularly associated with some of the historical constructions of racial identity and how it has worked with certain understandings of power and domination. I will particularly look at the dynamics of power as developed by writers such as Foucault, Said, Spivak and Fanon. Literature in post-colonial theory exposes certain historically embedded assumptions, often in conjunction with psychoanalytic theories and theories around discourse.

One such assumption is that Africans are different and inferior to Europeans, and in need of civilisation. Frankenburg (1994) for example describes it as *essential racism*, where hierarchy, history and biology create an embedded assumption of white as superior. Worby (2000:101), in research done in Zimbabwe quotes Godfrey Huggins

(Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia), who in 1941 said: 'It is essential for the preservation of the European civilisation, that the African should be advanced'. Said (2003), writing as a Palestinian, exposes the idea that the *Oriental object* only exists within a Western imagination. The subject is therefore defined and represented by and through a Western discourse as an object of Western creation and therefore a subject which is controlled through this discourse of *civilisation*.

These particular historically situated constellations and social constructions are relevant in many ways, but in this research I am interested in some of the ways in which the African is known in relation to the European, as a form of contrast to. This exposes some of the binary oppositions out of which the apartheid state evolved, particularly associated with what Foucault calls disciplinary power and the *art of governance* (Foucault 1980).

Disciplinary power as a form of governance within this context was not about conquering territories through physical might, but it became the conquering of people's minds through discourses of control and superiority. Apartheid was partly promoted and nurtured on a cusp of this art of governance emerging from modernistic beliefs bred in Western ideas concerning development, superior morality, separation and industrialisation. An insidious effect of such power is as Fanon (Wyrick 1998:28) says 'Africans want to become white'. During the chapter I will bring in some of the voices and knowledge of the mothers as they engage with these power relationships. These will be taken from field notes that I have made over the last three years and conversations I have with the mothers as well as those who were responsible within the apartheid regime.

My aim in this chapter is to understand and challenge some of the genealogies, or tactics (Foucault: 1970, 1970b, 1975) which become the taken-for-granted assumptions about racial and academic constructions of identity built upon such beliefs. I say academic, because participatory action research seeks to challenge forms of analysis that privilege western ways of knowing and interpreting over local knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge in this research is not something that I can go in and collect like ripe apples from a tree. It is rather enacted and performed between us as participants as we co-construct practices that are not entrenched in colonial discourses. I attempt to

avoid reproducing a text where the Mothers become subjects to my way of western knowing, in preference for privileging local wisdom and knowledge that can stand alongside academic texts. This is not to say that other forms of research are not valuable, but I am particularly interested in the role that this form of participation plays in challenging some of the historically situated identities in order to perform *healing practices.*

This chapter develops by seeking ways of relating that are not based on separating our identity from one another as a subject or an object of study, but through relational activities performed on the stage of post-apartheid South Africa. I do not assume in this that the stage is representative of some grand narrative, because the particular stage I explore is a partial and fragmented piece of life that is very particular to the context that I am immersed within.

I hope however that this chapter will help to situate the past in the present and to challenge people in South Africa to find alternate ways of relating that are not based on separating ourselves from another person. In doing this I also hope to demonstrate just how difficult this is. Within this I participate with memories of conversations held over the last three years with the Mothers and with those who perpetrated violence in the name of an ideology. I do this to situate the text as close to lived experience as I can, so that it is grounded and relevant to the work I have done with the Mothers as well as some of the perpetrators from the previous regime.

I use these ideas as a platform to ponder the future of this relationship. It has been a relationship that has been deeply scarred by colonialism and violence, yet so full of alternate descriptions and identities that have not yet found grounding within the languages of the social sciences or theology. These are descriptions that await our imagination to form them and speak them into equally legitimate discourses of knowledge where one truth does not silence another. I am interested in finding ways of participating that are not dependent on one group of people winning at the expense of another group in society. One of the questions then within this text is how can the Mothers journey become a part of my journey and how can my journey become a part of their journey? (Reinhartz: 1992) I am not suggesting here that these participatory practices have not been present in the history of all nations. This work is concerned

with for-grounding these practices so that they might be written about and languaged within the discourses within which we live. Using some of Foucault's work on power and discourse as well as Levinas's work on the face and trace of the *other* I work at exploring ideas around participating beyond the great chasm of separation and rationalism towards an ability to participate in our shared humanity and our shared responsibility.

5.2 Civilised societies

The embedded assumptions concerning racial superiority developed and grew out of a number of modernistic and rationalistic beliefs coming from the West. Firstly there has been and still is an assumed belief that people move on a progressive trajectory from the primitive towards the civilised European, from deficit toward wholeness, from pathological toward the integrated individual. The *natives* serve their purpose as a measure of where we have come from and are evolving to (Said 2003:202). In other words an African needs to progress towards becoming a European. Said (op cit 316), in examining texts for example of Lewis in twentieth century America, exposes Lewis's *expertness* in speaking *for* the Arab world, as if Arabs exist only in relation to the European. I argue in this chapter that these assumptions find themselves very often in the ways in which we construct research and analyse texts without inviting an authentic participation with the very people to whom we owe our knowledge.

5.3 Power discourses

Secondly racial identity in a post-colonial context is difficult to access because of some of these taken-for-granted assumptions that work in what Foucault refers to as **disciplinary power**, which he calls a modern from of power in which the individual subject polices and controls himself. As White (2002:36) says: 'It is a power that is everywhere to be perceived in its local operations, in our intimate lives and relationships.' It is what Foucault referred to as **p**olitical with a small p as opposed to the **P**olitical which has more to do with forms of governance that are administrated from the top down. Foucault (1980) sought to illustrate the many ways that we live our lives on the inside of the web of power relations of this system of modern power.

He illustrated this idea using Bentham's concept of the panopticon, which he describes as a Columbus's egg of vast proportions. Developing this idea Worby (2000:110) suggests that in the name of *development* the *native* population was *controlled* under disciplinary surveillance and organised in the name of logic and rationality to work according to a Westernised ideal. This Foucauldian understanding of modern power is deeply embedded as a historically *racialised* construction of society and is evident in South Africa in for example the organisation of the townships, which were built and organised around a system of surveillance. Using ideas from Fanon's description of townships, of the police and the barracks (Fanon 1963:38), Mbembe (2000) suggests that space was used in South Africa as a form of control by categorising areas of occupation. The townships were kept separate; they were places of iniquity and drunkenness, of lack of safety. You still rarely see a white person in Mamelodi. I am frequently asked '*But are you not afraid to go there*?' Embedded in such a comment is of course an assumption about black violence and what constitutes safe. One of the Mothers, Joyce Mabena, in her explanation to me about being separate said:

> You must understand Bridgid that the whites did not want to see us. They put up a 'stop nonsense', like an invisible wall because they did not want to see us. We weren't allowed to buy liquor either. My father sometimes was given a bottle of whisky by his employer for Christmas and he would take it out in secret and offer it to his friends. We were treated like children.

Foucault describes disciplinary power as a bourgeois invention. It was used to develop industrial capitalism through less obvious means involving the individual subject and discourses of interiority. He argues (1980:37) that disciplinary power was superimposed upon a sovereign power which generated juridical systems of codes developed within democracy, establishing a public individual articulated within a collective sovereignty.

Binary positions that maintain identities built on us and them, child and adult, responsible and irresponsible as well as the individual subject are everywhere evident in South Africa. They are evident in forms of modern disciplinary power as well as in more classical forms of power that Foucault refers to as sovereign power. Power relationships have kept alive categories of separation, often masked through doing things for others rather than with them. Foucault linked the idea that power and knowledge work together. If those who hold power generate knowledge and this power

154

is held in group process, knowledge can be generated, performed and co-created in alternate group processes, in the light of this research journey it is through documenting participatory practices.

5.4 Trapped inside historical constructions

It would appear from what I have written so far that both the black African and white coloniser have been, and still are, trapped within a polarised and colonised power relationship, that of giver and receiver, subject and object, civilised and primitive, democratic and non democratic, which is difficult to escape from. It is being perpetuated through categories, for example, of victim and perpetrator, traditional and rational, our culture as opposed to your culture, African and non-African. This colonial construction continues, in many ways, to drive a current post-colonial context in South Africa, where the rules and concomitant benefits are deeply embedded within a Western democratic system of governance, often enshrined in the individual rights within the constitution. This is not to say that other forms of governance are somehow pure and unadulterated, but current world politics appears to be driven by dominant Western super-powers and modern disciplinary discourses that hide privileged knowledge from itself through the moral subject (Foucault 1980, White 1996). It is important to note here that I am not challenging these power relationships, because it is not possible to live outside such discourses. I am rather placing them under the critique of deconstruction in order to expose some of the effects of such positions on the people in South Africa who live within their webs and to explore ways of restraining the reproduction of such texts. I will give an example here of such an assumed and unaware position. As a part of the tenth anniversary of democracy in South Africa a BBC film team arrived to document the Mamelodi Mother's lives. Here is an excerpt from my writing at the time.

> February 2005
>
> Maria was angry today. A film crew arrived and wanted their stories. Maria was asked to accompany them and introduce them to the Mothers. She was told 'You will be paid'. She said 'I worked hard Bridgid all day on the Saturday even though they arrived late. My grandson guarded their cars. I brought them to the mothers and the mothers were angry with me because they were not offered anything in return for their stories. At the end of the day they asked me

"how much must we pay you?" I said "what you want" and they gave me one hundred Rand. Imagine all that work for one hundred Rand'

I wonder if when people come they think that they are doing the poor African a service in broadcasting their stories? So I wrote and asked the person in charge of the crew this question. She replied to me "But we thought we were helping these people to have their stories told". I think I might have thought that before working with the Mothers too. How is it that I could have been so arrogant and insensitive? When I contacted the BBC I requested that they pay one hundred pounds into the mother's bank account, but they never did.

5.5   Enemies and the sovereign state in South Africa

I have talked about modern power and the art of Western governance. It is also important in this writing to talk about another form of power, a power that Foucault describes as sovereign power. Ideological superiority has been built on both disciplinary power as well as a more obvious power of sovereignty.

In *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault (1997) works with three forms of power. He extensively explores the history of sovereign power, using Hobbes's *Leviathon* as a point of departure. According to this working of power, power is invested in a unified system of governance and exercised over ownership and economic productivity of land, as opposed to previous forms of power, such as Machiavellian power, which was more to do with conquering land, rather than putting the land to productive use (Foucault 1980). It is interesting to note that on first sighting democracy which developed from this art of governance hides its unification from itself through creating multiple political parties. However, each party is built on a form of unification against a common enemy, which perhaps led Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002) to say: 'Where there is *one* there is war'. Foucault argued (1997:65) that where there is politics there is war, in that it pitches one person or group against another.

Sovereign power within this construction is a power that is based on creating an imagined enemy in order to secure your own safety. Forms of sovereign power are relevant in South Africa in this particular research through an apartheid ideology that named and labelled communism as the enemy. This was a terrifying enemy that lived and worked and was trained behind the iron curtain. Vlok (2004), the then minister for state security in South Africa said in conversation with me 'It was the fall of

communism that led to the fall of the apartheid regime, we had nothing left to fight for'. It was communism into whose hands the African was lured. Cronje (2005) said it so graphically about his experiences while growing up in the Karoo: 'Any black who carried a brief-case was considered a communist and an enemy.' This was a belief held by both his parents and his grandparents. In other words it spanned three generations and had become elevated within their community to the status of truth. In order to ward off this enemy, the African had to be controlled on the assumption that he posed a threat to security and development, unless he became a *tamed savage*. At the TRC hearing of the Nietverdiendt Ten, in the case of Naude (Truth and Reconcilliation 1999), who was involved with the extermination of the Nietverdiendt *boys*, Naude says 'The point of the co-operation was to combat the onslaught of the enemies of the State. I had certain limitations according to which I was to act. Among others, the General told me that we could only carry out operations which would have a great impact on the enemies onslaught in the state. We had to use minimal violence and we had to maintain absolute secrecy.'

There are many ways of warding off dangers, but during apartheid in South Africa the fears and dangers of annihilation that communism represented called for and legitimized defending society at any cost, mastering and controlling chance events through mechanisms that involved editing who may speak and who may not, and who may live and who may not. Communism was seen in the face of every black man who carried a suite case and in every riot and protest. The enemy was named, identified and created and had to be destroyed in order to secure the sovereign state.

One conclusion from this argument is that we become both threatened and separated from our humanity, or the part of ourselves which is represented by the *other, the one who is savage and untamed and communist.* In other words the person who is different becomes a threat to democratic civilisation and in these way both sovereign as well as disciplinary powers generated identities that were difficult to escape from in South Africa. This particular constellation of history, time and power challenges us today to find ways of living together in this world without imagining an enemy.

Mbembe (2005) calls this the dark side of Western conceptions and ideology. Post-colonial theory has tended to focus on the effects of the discursive position of the

157

dominant Western, sovereign positions where black and African carry the shadow of Western civilisation. More recent theory however, theory particularly based on Spivak's analysis, derived from Levinas and Derrida's thoughts on deconstruction (Morton 2003), expose the *othe*r, not as someone separate, but as an integral part of ourselves or the text, because that which is not said is implied through that which is said.

Colonialism has allied itself with rationality, Western dominance, and the sovereign state. It has happened, and we are left with asking ourselves what now? Where on the horizon of Africa can we draw the moral limits of this sovereign state and generate ways of mutually advantageous reciprocity?

5.6   Imagining Africa through the eyes of Western rationality

Mbembe (2001:1) begins his critique on the *postcolony* with the words: 'Speaking rationally about Africa is not something that has ever come naturally. Doing so, at this cusp between millennia, comes even less so.'

His critique is grounded in philosophical traditions against a backdrop of Western philosophy, which in the last century has been steeped in social theory within a modernist idiom. He argues that social theory has worked at analysing social behaviour as an accurate perception of modern Europe.

> When examined, it turns out to rest on a body created, for the most part, at the time of the first industrialization and the birth of modern urban societies; modernity itself as a phenomenon has been primarily understood in the perspective of Western rationalism In other words, from Max Weber to the deconstructionists, the link between modernity, rationalism, and Westernism was seen as more than merely contingent; it was seen as constitutive of all three, so that it is precisely this interlinking that is the "distinctive feature of the West' distinguishes it from the rest of the world (Mbembe 2001:10).

5.7 Morality under erasure

The modern subject, steeped in Western rationalism and Western morality, which itself has been in an intimate marriage with the church comes under critique. This critique itself has a history upon which current theorists build. Levinas (Bernstein 2002:5), in his opening sentence of *Totality and Infinity* says: 'Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality'. In conversation with Vlok (2004) he readily said to the Mothers and myself '*those were bad days*', in some ways implying that he felt duped by a false morality upheld within the apartheid regime. Nietzsche (Sautet 1990:97) in 1881 had warned the West that practices that promote the rationalising and individualising modern man turn out to be highly immoral, because they are built on a *will to truth*. Foucault (1979) in his lecture *the Order of Discourse* picks up on this line of thought, as does Du Toit (1991) in his article *The end of Truth*. Said (2003:203), in an exposition of the constitutive force of language in forming truth quotes Nietzsche as saying '[T]ruths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are'. Said (2003), although not embracing this somewhat nihilistic notion of truth, uses it to illustrate just how powerfully truth has been fashioned by European doctrines of superior knowledge and power to constitute reality. This then brings to question ideas of both the moral subject as well as ethical practices. Kotzé (2001, 2002) elaborates on prescriptive ethics. He draws us toward the notion of what he refers to as participatory ethics, which become practices that are negotiated among people, rather than prescribed through outside moralising norms. In this way ethics as a topic is closely aligned to participation as a practice.

5.8 Speaking for people

There are many ways that control is perpetuated and stepped over as if it were some low lying fence. I experience subtle ways of control through discourses where organisational structures *care for*, or *speak for* others in a relationship of dominance and power. We become ensnared within forms of binary opposition that compromise our capacities as human beings to be people. People in Africa, of whatever shade, have become trapped within colonial discourses, repeating sovereign and modern forms of power ideologies of separation. I am no exception to this. There have been a number of

occasions where I decided to help the mothers with 'empowerment' through making things to sell. I insert one such occasion from my field notes:

December 2004

I feel so despondent today. I have tried SO hard to help to make things better for the Mothers. I thought we agreed together to make bead ear-rings and cards. I went out to buy the materials and we all seemed to enjoy making the ear-rings. Then I asked if their grandchildren would like to come and help as school holidays have begun. I have imagined a little cottage industry beginning. Only one child came and the granny looked at me as if to say 'here is your child labour'. Maybe it is because I am despondent that I am looking at it this way. However hard I try it seems to be me as the 'driver' or the 'provider'. This isn't the first project of course. I feel so trapped by their poverty and helplessness. Maybe it is my own helplessness and guilt. Who knows? I just wish there was someone I could talk to. I feel like running away.

There appears to be very little language for this desperateness and trappedness. I give this as just one example of this *doing for* the Mothers.

Different readings of our relationships and our humanity are not easy to find when living within such powerful discourses. Within a post-colonial discourse alternate readings of relationship appear to also be left in a vacuum without language. There is no way forward or back as long as we remain in the domain of the rational and sovereign, where we either understand ourselves as superior, holding the purse strings so to speak, or we see the other as a threat to our own survival. This happens in many ways and many means when as human beings we are reduced to single descriptions which are decided upon by another person or group of people. I have watched this happen to the Mothers on numerous occasions. For example they have been summoned for a meeting, but when I ask them what for, they say they have not been told. On another occasion they were told to give a photo of their sons to their head office. For many of the Mothers it was the only photo they had. They were not sure again what it was for. These photos have never been returned to them. These are not deliberate acts of dominance, but non-the-less remain deeply embedded within the structures of society.

5.9 The 'other' of whom I speak

In a complex chapter called *God's Phallus* Mbembe (2001: 212-231) discusses the madness of the lethal cocktail of Western rationality in the service of a monotheist God, who can be named and claimed for a *chosen people*. The thread of this argument is consummated in separatism, superiority and *otherness* as well as the heretical arrogance that claims a god created in His own image. Those who are not chosen must be converted or conquered. Mbembe (2005b) uses Palestine and Israel as an example of this, where each serve what would appear to be their own definition of the same monotheistic god; each version being a threat to the other. Because of this threat, each group breeds their own *entitlement* to truth. The *other* must be destroyed to secure their safety. It befalls the sovereign state, in allegiance with disciplinary power to either convert or tame the *other*, to become the same, or to destroy them. It returns to a poisonous multiplication of a religious fervour based on both knowing God, and the individual's capacity to claim salvation. Mbembe (2005) argues a whole tradition of Western philosophy from Greek debates to Hegel's dialectic, is one of knowing my self through the one I recognise as my enemy. Through this argument Mbembe contends, along with Foucault, that politics itself only exists as long as one has an enemy that must be overcome. It is beyond the scope of this research to explore this philosophy further except to say that the pattern of separateness built into identity is relevant to a study such as this that seeks to challenge the constructs of a separate self and other. Ben Okri's book *The Famished Road* (2003), gives a graphic, if fictional rendering of the destructive force of a Western style of politics in West Africa. I suggest that within the South African democratic system are the very seeds that need to be exposed for what they are. In other words, it is not about changing a system but rather growing awareness around it in order to ward of the hidden dangers embedded within it.

5.10 A Psychoanalytic construction of identity. Splitting the good and the bad

Psychoanalysis, although sometimes criticised for its tendency to pathologise problems as *sickness* (White & Epston 1990) in a modernistic Western reading of man, has however been a bed rock in its reading of modern man and his identity. Psychoanalysis

and the unconscious process of the mind, whether individual or collective, is threaded into the writings of most Post-colonial writers. Work done by Fanon (1963), Nandy (1983) and Mbembe (2000) all draw heavily from psychoanalysis. To explore something of a psychoanalytic reading of identity I refer to an unpublished paper written as a critique of Zimbabwean politics, by a friend and colleague Catherine Butterly (2004). She suggests that post-colonial identity in Zimbabwe has a long collective and unconscious history of knowing itself in relation to the coloniser or the aggressor, which I would contend has certain parallels in South Africa in its adherence to forms of disciplinary power. In the case of my research, this knowing *in relation to* the coloniser is deconstructed within this work with the Mothers, exposing both the constitutive and repressive effects of this power relationship. This unconscious identification is linked with Foucault's concept of disciplinary power which is invisibly present and not talked about. It is even eradicated from conscious history, in order to hide itself from itself and to tell history from a particular position and becomes a glass ceiling that appears not to be there. This is not new in history of course, but the insidiousness of colonial identity that is tied up with a relationship to the coloniser, who does not acknowledge his own complicity becomes a series of negations. Fanon (1963:313) goes so far as to say: 'When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders'.

Mbembe (2001) argues that acts of violence and metaphorical rape from a colonial phallus produce an intimate dance, held in the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser, the subject and the object. With no formal conscious recognition of this process this relationship between the coloniser and the colonised can find no conclusion (Mbembe 2001, Said 2003). Narratives within this reading of unconscious process hold no time frame; no beginning, middle or end. They just exist in a timeless vacuum, remaining in a kind of purgatory of the eternal present, which Mbembe (2001:178) refers to as *contemporareousness*. I have experienced the enormous undercurrent of this contemporareousness when I continually scan the horizon for a resting place where the Mothers' stories can find a beginning, middle and an end. This evokes anxiety at a collective level that somehow has to be reduced by one means or another. One of these means is through revolution and another through controlling of the perceived enemy. This would have happened perhaps to the Afrikaana, an anxiety of the African, who

posed a threat to their collective belonging and identity. This anxiety was then reduced through means of control.

Western discursive positions on the African within the context in which I am writing expose powerful constitutive effects that these power positions hold within the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser. I become aware of this discursive position when for example Maria says '*I cannot rest until I find Jeremiah's bones and bury them'*. For twenty years the Mothers were left not knowing where their loved ones were. Could these comments, along with their request for me to become a part of finding their bones, play a role in searching out new worlds outside the bubble of *contemporareousness* and the anxiety that is reproduced within this vacuum?   It could in some ways fit with the Mothers group experience of being kept in the eternal present because how can they find a future without first burying their sons? There appears to be no language for this void in our collective experience. In this space of mutuality both the dominated and those who dominate are left with what Mbembe, using Fanon's earlier talk of the native as a zombie, calls '*zombification*' where each robs the other of vitality and they are left impotent. We are then all caught up in another dance or a language game of conviviality.

It is as if whole sections of history have been wiped from the slate, with the effect of identity being left in an eternal present with no beginning or end, split away from what is permitted to be said and provoking enormous anxiety. Fanon (1963:58) says: 'This disintegrating of the personality, this splitting and dissolution, all this fulfils a primordial function in the organism of the colonial world'. In other words through separating group identity it becomes what Fanon calls (op cit:250) a 'negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"' In this reading of identity I am only a person in relation to what I am not, or in polarization to a group of people who become a threat to my existence.

This of course is only one explanation of such experience, which has many possible readings. Nandy (1983:10) for example, writing from India has another explanation based more on the ownership of superior physical sovereign power. He says:

'Colonialism was not seen as an absolute evil. For the subjects, it was a product of one's own emasculation and defeat in legitimate power politics. For the rulers, colonial exploitation was an incidental and regrettable by-product of a philosophy of life that was in harmony with superior forms of political and economic organisation." Parsons (2002:13) connects Nandy's recognition of the psychological and relational aspects of the colonial experience. He suggests this is similar to Fanon's earlier view that "[t]he settler and the native are old acquaintances. .... For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence…the condition of native is always a nervous condition." It makes me wonder whether the colonisation of Africa has had greater ability to foster destructive forces of discourses of interiority and disciplinary power over the African, thus penetrating more profoundly into identity, than for example over the Indian or the Orient.

Mbembe (2001:104) develops his ideas of white male penetration: 'It is only through such a shift in perspective that we can understand that the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be characterized as convivial, a relationship fraught by the fact of the *commandment* and its "subjects" having to share the same living space'. This indicates further that identity is not something that is separate from another, but rather it is held in relationship with another, referring to the idea that we perform relationship as we act together and in what Wittgenstein (1967) calls a hurly-burly of human actions. If this is the case then it would follow that to destroy or control another person becomes my own imprisonment.

The TRC worked hard at bringing back erased memories, but it remains for us as theologians and social scientists to find ways of sustaining alternate discourses where groups of people are not positioned in opposition to one another. Work remains to collectively re-integrate and re-imagine our relational identity in ways that might not grow on hidden and invisible polarisations negating one race in favour of another. Butterly argues, using Kovel[6] and Klein[7], as well as Bion[8], that within an oppositional identity, the integration of multiple identities becomes difficult, and bad experiences are

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[6] Kovel, J (1988). *White Racism. A Psychohistory.* London Free association Books.
[7] Klein, M (1958). *On the development of* Mental *Functioning. London In Envy and Gratitutde. London: Virago Press (1988).*
[8] Bion, W (1961). *Experience in groups.* London : Tavistok Publications.

then projected onto the enemy in what is called a *paranoid/schizoid* position, in order to reduce our own anxiety. The tension of carrying contradictory self identities in this instance is severely diminished. This then prevents a human ability to know that within the aggressor is held the possibility for ones own aggression. Butterly suggests that Africans have been caught in this *paranoid/schizoid* place, where the dark side of the Western imagination, carrying that which is uncivilised, dangerous and violent. This dark side is expelled onto the African psyche. In this context the African remains stuck in a timeless vortex, anaesthetized through dominant discourses that erase alternate descriptions of them as competent, non-violent and able.

Butterly argues that according to Klein, and using the analogy of a mother and child, a child expels their waste products onto the mother and the mother in turn is experienced as dangerous and hostile. Mbembe's interpretation of contemporaneousness or zombification (Mbembe 2001:5, 17, Parsons 2002, Fanon 1963, Said 2003) makes a certain amount of sense, in that in many ways it appears as people in South Africa live partly in an eternal present without a past and with no future except in a Western imagination, needing to expel their own excrement on the *other* the one who is different. This is true of the white as well as the black African. As I hope I have made clear so far in this study, this fits in many ways with my experiences with the Mothers where I have been excreted upon and where I have also wanted, in a primordial way, to excrete upon them. To give an example, in chapter two I described an incident where Maria was told not to trust me because I was white. For Maria to have re-told me this story in a way that challenged this construction is to me a fragment of significance in re-storying identity in ways that allow the excrement to become the compost to grow different ways of knowing one another.

The white African in South Africa has historically had similar experiences, where their history of suffering and survival appears to have been erased from world history allowing no conclusion. This has happened within this text for example when Cronje showed me his wall of medals which were not supposed to exist. It has happened in subtle ways. An example of this is a mural at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. It depicts a British governor in the eighteenth century chasing the Arikaans people way from the Cape. On first sight it does not appear that he is chasing them away as he is shaking their hands and wishing them well on their journey, along with the gift of a

bible. On a closer reading of this picture however a more sinister picture emerges, that of the powerful, *civilised* English gentleman confiscating land in the name of his God. The stoic Afrikaans family smile absently as they accept their fate in the face of the powerful coloniser of the time. They were left to wander in the wilderness searching for a conclusion to their story, present and yet absent.

One of our students at the Institute for Therapeutic Development once showed me a photograph of her grandmother which for me illustrates the idea of living a life in which she appears to be absent. She said: 'It is as if her soul was destroyed. She sits there in the photo erect and proper, but she is not there.' This photograph was taken at the time of the Anglo-Boer War. To be collectively split away from our own humanity within psychoanalytic readings of identity could mean many things, but in this research I am particularly interested in the role it might play in de-humanising practices that get reproduced within the ongoing history of a nation.

Quoting from Elliot[9], Butterly suggests that victims take on the identity of the oppressor thus serving to bind unconscious fantasy and to intensify the fear of racial retaliation. Butterly contends that this is a difficult process to reverse because the ego becomes impoverished by the loss of a major part of the self resulting in a strong confusion between self and object and a consequent diminishment in reality testing.

South Africa within such a psychoanalytic reading of collective identity has been deeply split, projecting and expelling onto groups of colour parts that the dominant white group in society cannot accept as their own. This process is then repeated and rather than losing momentum, seems to be gathering ominous power as time marches on, through collectively binding this split away identity onto yet another group of people.

In an earlier work (Hess 2002) when researching white identity in Zimbabwe, a research participant exposed this by saying '*black people are not vindictive*', indicating this split. I have often thought about the multiple meanings of such a comment. It could be that a hidden colonial assumption is that black people are vindictive. It could be that

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[9] Elliot,A. (1994). *Psychoanalytic Theory: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

the participant idealised his own culture, shrugging off a capacity for violence. It could also imply that white people are violent. Speaking racially of violence then has a capacity to reject our humanity and capacity for the reproduction of violence.

The significance of such constructions in this current work is to both take such collective identity seriously and to find ways of moving towards integrating an ability to work with our humanity, what might be termed a *depressive position* where we can intercept a collective group *psychosis*, which, I argue is not only a *black* phenomenon, but has a familiar theme of identity in both the coloniser as well as the colonised. This, within a social constructionist reading of identity is held within relational practices, through sketching identity as it interweaves in tapestries of relational activity. It is about creating a safe enough context for anxiety to be reduced without projecting it onto another group of people, or defending one position against another. Vlok in conversation about the Mothers over the phone in August 2006 asked me: 'What was the sin in apartheid ?' The conversation went like this:

> **Adriaan**: Many Afrikaans people ask me this question. What do you think?
> **Bridgid**: I think it is more the ideology that excludes another that is evil or what you call the sin.
> **Adriaan**: I was thinking it is my pride…. I mean it is about the command to "love your neighbour as yourself." I did not do this. I did not love the African as myself and this was a terrible sin.
> **Bridgid**: It seems as if it was your survival against theirs. What might have been the consequence of loving the African as yourself? How might that have affected your own prosperity?

This conversation got me thinking even more about the conditions that give rise to an ability to assume responsibility without the fear of fragmentation, or the fear of my own demolition in favour of another's survival. What was it, even in our conversation that was inviting reciprocity of awareness and alternate forms of reducing anxiety within a relationship? This conversation continues on the very last page of this thesis in a most wonderful, sacred and surprising moment of confession. I would like to think that this process of working respectfully with our humanity invites accountability within a safe enough context. Even as I insert texts within this living document, vlok is going through this thesis, working with it and as he says 'digesting it'.

167

Finding adequate language and safe enough context to permit multiple identities to dance together without shame or domesticating them cannot be a simple process. It calls for practices that foster authentic participation.   In my three years of participation with the Mothers I have been seen s the *bad object* as well as the *colonial white object* through whom they can find a voice. Finding alternate identities that are not based on this *split* has been a long, arduous, risky and costly process. Chapter seven will reflect on this process with the mothers.

5.11   Globalised identities

Western philosophy and psychology cannot be cut away from African identity because through colonialism, and more recently globalisation, we live together and have shared history that has constructed us together. In many ways the African as well as the European is constructed through lenses of dominant Western discourse, and continues to be constructed through lenses of globalisation, dominant world powers, and a world driven by a market economy, where Africa has to play to the tune of Europe and America. As much as the African is constructed through Western powers, education and ideology, the European has also been constructed through the effects of rationality, as well as through the African. We are in a mutual relationship where both our identity and our future are invested in the ways in which we have been constructed together and how we work together in the future.

5.12   Limits of Sovereign Power

Bio-power, the third form of power that Foucault talks about expresses the outer limits of the other two ideas on power. It is the form of power over life itself and decides who can live and who can die. According to Mbembe (2005b) biopower is a constellation or trajectory of these two other powers taken to extreme. Burr (2003:69) drawing from ideas of Sawicki and Foucault says that 'repression and the need to use force is rather to be taken as evidence of lack of power; repression is used when the limits of power have been reached'. Mbembe (2001) works with the ethical position of constraint and terror as limits of what is human, with reference to the sovereign state (2005b). Drawing on Foucault he says: 'To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to

define life as the deployment and manifestation of power' (2005:1b). Foucault, in his lectures *Society Must be Defended* (1997:258) describes a new form of sovereignty, associated with late modernism and says the 'death-function in the economy of bio-power to the principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger'. In the economy of bio-power, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state. The limits or extremities of this power, where power transgresses the limits of morality (whatever morality is), becomes the place where power has a capacity to suspend the very law that instituted it (Mbembe 2005b, Foucault 1997). The limits of sovereignty have within a post colonial context been bred through rationalising the power to control who lives and who dies, bringing about what Mbembe (2005b) and Foucault (1997) call *The State of Exception*. This is perhaps what Arendt (Lechte 1994:182) refers to as the totalitarian state, where ordinary law abiding citizens, who are not involved in **P**olitics, are turned upon and eliminated.

The argument resides in the idea that the transgression of this power is a continuum of the trajectory of Western rationality; that of a fully conscious reasoning subject, who attains political freedom using individual choice governed by reason. In other words, a Western form of democracy, which is based on a choice embedded in binary oppositions. Working with this hypothesis, a participatory ethic attempts to challenge the conditions that perpetuate the limits of sovereign power and helps to alter this trajectory through forms of relational and ethical accountability. This is not to say that power in these forms is to be done away with, as this would force us into another set of binary oppositions. In a Foucauldian understanding of power, power is not something that can be owned or possessed or exchanged as a commodity, as was previously imagined by people like Hobbes, Machiavelli, Rousseau, or Marx, who believed that power was about taking ownership of collective productivity (Foucault 1997, Mbembe 2005c). The interest in this research is to use relational and a *friendly* power to generate and acknowledge alternate ways of participating in a racialised society.

Working with the historical accumulation of power dynamics, a different set of questions emerge, questions that do not concern themselves with who owns power, but rather how we can work relationally with power so that we might find sustainable ways that challenge forms of domination and control through Foucault's different readings on

power. Foucault's work on power (1980) is particularly helpful in that it engages with questions that are not directly related to who or what has power, but rather he employs a methodology (what he refers to as archaeology) where questions move away from the idea of who has power towards asking questions that concern themselves with the effects of certain power discourses and the multiple effects of certain constellations of power on creating subjects and subjugation circulating through organisational networks that are designed to ward off any threat to its operational reasoning.

By working with *multiple effects*, his questions open space for many readings, rather than working with a unitary theory. This is in direct comparison with Hobbes' *Leviathan*, which directs power toward the one on top, the sovereign. By moving away from a central theme of the individual reasoning subject, or a unified field of knowledge, it is the peripheral fragments that Foucault focuses on and the multiple effects of this power on a group of people (Foucault 1976:29). Foucault argues that through a Western imagination certain power struggles, such as class revolutions, racial emancipation developed in favour of other forms of power relationships. He goes on to suggest (op cit:29) that '[r]acism is, quite literally, revolutionary discourse in an inverted form…. State sovereignty thus becomes the imperative to protect the race.' Fanon prophetically predicted the extremities of this form of power when he spoke of a former European colony: 'It succeeded so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness, and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions' (Fanon 1963:313).

Mbembe addresses the limits of power by drawing on ideas of transcendence and finitude. He explores current political warfare building on post-holocaust philosophers Arendt and Levinas (Mbembe 2005:5). Arendt's argument he suggests returns to challenge and critique the roots of racial categorisation and difference in its capacity to separate people from others. Arendt, he suggests, links the politics of race to the politics of death. She suggests that the separation previously reserved for the *savage* shifted in the *civilised* world to any group who could be defined as different and therefore a threat to group survival. Working with sovereignty as a hierarchy of moral, racial and rational superiority and entitlement, has become endemic in Africa and within the continent I suggest that we are challenged with a condition that is subtly feeding upon itself,

particularly through individual *rights* based systematised beliefs that promote difference.

Current constructions of violence, the *other,* the politics of individual entitlement and rights based politics are constituted in the history of our thinking and in order to find alternate readings of both history and our future in Africa that are not determined by colonial discourse I will explore here something more of the constellation of colonial beliefs around violence, separation and absence. Parsons (2003:15) says: 'The fact of decolonisation, however slow, however painful, did not end colonialism although, as will become apparent, there is a profound relationship to take note of here between colonialism and violence. The historically intertwined economies and policies of a postcolonial world appeared merely to take the oppression and exploitation of those more obvious forms of domination and partially conceal them beneath the newness and rhetoric of emergent nation states.' And so violence, along with our own destruction, gets reproduced. This is not to say of course that violence has not historically been reproduced over the millennia through other forms of power relations.

5.13   Decolonising the state of violence

Fanon ends his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) with a call to turn over a new leaf and work on new concepts to try to set afoot a new man in the name of humanity. The prophetic words connect with Mbembe (2001:17) when he says that research on Africa has 'impoverished our understanding of notions such as rationality, value, wealth, and interest – in short, what it means to be a subject in contexts of instability and crisis'. Work in this context concurs with contextual theologians such as Cochrane (2001) and De Gruchy (2001) when they call us to work in this territory because so few people are asking the question about what happens after liberation within this libidinal space. We look for new genres of connecting, where we are not dancing in the vacuum of zombification or binary categories. Archaeologies of different knowledges have not been destroyed, they just await discovery and voice. In order to find alternatives to the repetitive cycles of decolonisation, new ways of utilising power await discovery, relationships based on a different order of understanding.

Violence and the way in which it has become institutionalised in South Africa assists in this work to understand the historical conditions which have constituted racial categories and to comprehend something of the effects on the society it has produced. It is however only helpful in so much as it offers a springboard to find ways of participating in society that nurture meanings constructed outside a colonial position of racial categories and violence. What is useful in this argument is the mindfulness of drawing a distinction between the ongoing cycles of colonisation through some of the assumed and taken-for-granted beliefs. These hidden beliefs constitute groups of people and their identities. What is it then in these readings that might help to contribute something to the disruption or the fracturing of repetitive cycles of dominance? Can a participatory frame help to contribute to this disruption and bring about a voice with which to talk about the fractures of society as a way of exiting the cycle and reproduction of violence?

Sartre, in his preface to Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* aptly speaks of the effects on the police of torturing the native when he says (1963:29): 'And when you have read Fanon's last chapter, you will be convinced that it would be better for you to be a native at the uttermost depths of his misery than to be a former settler. It is not right for a police official to be obliged to torture for ten hours a day; at that rate, his nerves will fall to bits, unless the torturers are forbidden in their own interests to work overtime'. If there is value in the adage that as much as I torture the other I torture myself, the intimacy of the coloniser and the colonised is a relational response and cannot be fully understood without attention to the 'other'.

5.14   Surviving within a post-colonial discourse

Violence, separation, nullification, projection, penetration and rage all play a role in maintaining division, partly because the territory is volatile, dangerous and costly to enter. Levels of anxiety within me rise scanning the horizon for a place to settle the argument and solve the tension. Attempting to cross over and participate in changing patterns of relational identity seems too difficult and unrealistic. I attempt to reduce these tensions in many ways, both in my own life and with the mothers. I release myself by distancing myself from my country of origin, which is Britain. I reduce the

tension and collective colonial guilt with the Mothers through giving time and money and expertise. But the debt is never paid and the 'dammed' spot is not erased. It is an immensely difficult position to sustain when faced daily with the real effects of poverty and colonialism at the coal face of history.

Violence, as argued previously has been historically impregnated into the soils of South Africa. The Afrikaner himself was a refugee from Europe and then colonised and brutally violated by the British, a group without a history except as a *Boer*. It comes to my mind that the Afrikaner escaped the void of the nullification of their cultural values and identity through violent means, rupturing the vacuum to escape their trappedness. Perhaps in the face of the eternal present the Afrikaner resisted this through violent means, carving an identity engineered through the violence of apartheid, as a way of finding a way of rupturing the abyss of contemporaneousness by nullifying another race. He knew who he was through who he was not, by creating a polarisation of identity, projecting the bad object of his own identity onto another race (Butterly 2004). As mentioned in chapter two, the Afrikana also engineered their way out of the politically induced poverty when the nationalist government instituted policies to promote employment for the Afrikaner in government and quasi-government institutions. It successfully achieved its objective to raise the poor Boer from an identity of poverty akin to the native.

In a different way racial categories help to settle the eternal contradictions through creating horizons of identity that find a way of explaining our group identity, but it is always at the expense of another group of people. Foucault (1997:261) predicted that it was not only Nazism that, by using a sovereign right to kill, committed suicide at the point of the State of exception. This play is in fact inscribed in the workings of all States, both capitalist and socialist at the point at which they reach the outer limits of power. He says this is purely conjecture on his part, but none the less, within the reading of any modern state are the conditions of what he terms social-racism. Foucault suggests that the trajectory developed within politics inevitably re-infects and replays the very system it abhors, because it has not either critiqued or challenged the assumptions underpinning its mastery and control of life. Foucault argues that whether it is socialism or capitalism or a liberation struggle based on economic freedom, these categories play directly into finding an adversary, which links itself with racism.

Foucault ends his lectures on *Society Must be Defended*: 'How can one both make a bio-power function and exercise the rights of war, the rights of murder and the function of death, without becoming racist? That was the problem, and that. I think, is still the problem.'

Savagery and violence have had many allies through colonisation, the Anglo-Boer War, and followed by the cruel tactics of the Security Police and army in South Africa. Violence then as a form of power resides within the relationship of colonial, as well as post-colonial identities.

5.15   Subjugated knowledge

These discourses have gained power to constitute our reality today, occluding or anaesthetising other, equally important relationships and abilities to relate with one another as people who hold immeasurable knowledge and wisdoms that do not fit on a measurable scale. These wisdoms form a way of knowing that perhaps escape the nets of sovereign or disciplinary control. They are not in opposition to one another, neither are they subtly superior, as with the assumptions of the BBC when they thought they were doing the Mothers a favour. To act with people in a relational capacity of shared humanity means in this research to find ways of working together that are not dependent on some hierarchical order of civilisation. The aim of this chapter is not to simply expose the epistemological errors in hierarchical assumptions, as for example Foucault did as a historian of thought in the Archaeology of knowledge (1972), and Said (2003) did in his work with the Orient. As a practitioner and practical pastoral care worker, the object of this chapter is to explore alternate life-giving ethical practices that both acknowledge these power relationships within a colonial history and find different ways of sensitively engaging in practices that are not embedded in hierarchical divisions.

5.16   A different challenge

Edward Said (2003:xxii), just prior to his untimely death in 2004 reaffirmed his concern with the current democratic ability to rehash reductive conflicts that 'herd

people under falsely unifying rubrics like "America," "The West" or "Islam". He consistently argued for a form of humanism that embraces our collective voices from history without cleaning history like a blackboard. Talking of the Middle East he says: 'It is quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar (op cit xiii). It is partly the collective voices of history and wisdom that I thread through this writing in each chapter, deliberately scanning history for ways in which our thinking has developed, and attempting to resurrect participatory practices that are present and awaiting language. I argue that as human beings we have to urgently find ways and means of walking towards history without the reproduction of embedded superiority.

5.17 Alternate identities

It is easy to become seduced with interpretations to which we find stories that support stories of shame and race, constructed in the negative, leaving out many other fragments of care that do not fit with postcolonial discourse. Stories of resilience and care cross-racially are seldom newsworthy in the face of the heroic actions of liberation, viewed against a backdrop of negativity, separation and violence. It is also true that within the relational space held between one person and another are possibilities for many other relational identities.

A conversation I had reveals this very position. I was in my car driving out to the Winterveld (outside Pretoria) where the exhumations of the Mamelodi Ten were taking place. A man in his late thirties, a cousin of one of the deceased political activists, said: 'Growing up in Mamelodi, I thought every white man was violent. It wasn't until Nico Smit[10] came to live among us that I found out that there were exceptions to this rule. I only ever knew of white policemen breaking down doors and searching homes.' Sustainable alternate ways of relating within a post colony are costly in the light of racial constructions of violence and splitting of the good from the bad. The crisis calls us to seek out alternate ways of connecting with our history that do not return to the

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[10] Nico Smit was a Dutch Reformed pastor who, opposing the laws of the day, decided that to live out his faith in a congruent manner during the 1980's was to live among the people, the black people in Mamelodi.

eternal present, or to emergency landings, ripped apart in identities that negate another group of people. Alternate readings in alternate power relationships I believe are held within the many conversations I have with the Mothers.

Dominant stories of *truth* and *lies* hold a far more privileged position in the text than the alternate readings of the less dominant multiple constructions of both truth and not truth, particularly in the face of such de-humanising practices.

The dominant discourse of what Foucault and Nietzsche call the *will to truth* has become so centralised and taken for granted that we no longer notice it or even attempt to find language for it.

Binary oppositions, where there remains a choice of either truth or not truth, in this context position you either *in* or *out* of history. Without language of its materiality, the reality of this vacuum disintegrates, because there is no structure or language to represent it. In its attempt to avoid binary explanations Mbembe (2001:5) argues that post-structuralism is also in danger of reducing 'the complex phenomena of the state and power to "discourses" and "representations", forgetting that discourses and representations have materiality' (Op cit:5). In other words they are grounded in material histories of exploitation. Struggles in post-structuralist philosophy have become struggles then of representation within structures of capitalism that are institutionalised as both contingent and violent.

5.18   Excavating the territory of the not yet said

In *The Order of Discourse* Foucault (1970), challenges us to shift emphasis from dominant Eurocentric discourses which have been obsessed with what he terms *a will to truth,* and the discursive practices in which knowledge is formed and produced, towards understanding contexts in which certain events come about. He thus suspends judgement on discourse, but exposes it to the critique that any construction on power excludes other knowledge that awaits their turn in history. Foucault, by excavating this territory, begins to shift emphasis away from any given *truth*, in this case the compelling arguments on identity in the post colony such as Mbembe and Fanon offer

176

us. He challenges us to risk excavating different territory, on the assumption that the production of any discourse is 'controlled, organised and redistributed, by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its materiality' (Foucault 1970:52). If the African then has been subjugated and defined through dominant Western discourses, controlled by dichotomous splitting off the *other* and consigned to the eternal present, what could be the alternate readings of subjugated voices that resist such explanation of deficit? How do we create a context, or as Foucault might say a *regime,* to language the artefacts of resistance that do not fall back into a liberation racist discourse? I suggest that one way of birthing new discourses is through meaningful sustained participation. Subjugated knowledge at a local political level is significant, but disqualified by dominant power (Foucault 1980:82). It is partly this disqualification that makes this particular participatory research so slippery and difficult. However, through creating a context for the re-emergence of these low-ranking, unqualified knowledge alternate discourses are birthed.

The *genealogies* of disqualified knowledge search in those discontinuous fragments that have been left out of the unified theories that support dominant post colonial theories. In *Society Must be Defended* (1997) Foucault speaks of certain all-encompassing, global theories such as Marxism and psychoanalysis as providing helpful tools in understanding discourse. However, he goes on to say that they are only helpful at the local level, in so much 'the theoretical unity of their discourse is, so to speak, suspended, or at least cut up, ripped up, torn to shreds, turned inside out, displaced, caricatured, dramatized, theatricalized, and so on… that critique is helpful' (Foucault 1997:6).

He shifts the question away from *why dominate* towards looking at these subjugated genealogies and the treasures that await our explorations. Moving away from sovereignty as built on fear of the *othe*r Foucault focuses on historical contexts that give rise to certain constellations of power. This he says challenges Hobbes's project on sovereignty and in this sense is useful in this analysis as it moves away from power as a construct that separates us as human beings.

Africa has survived with her local, subjugated knowledge. Africa has refused to be fully controlled and disciplined and ordered through Western theories and discourses. The Mothers describe themselves as strong women in the face of suffering and violence. In as much as South Africa experiences violence, it has also resisted violence and therefore it is well to remember that within Mbembe's *Postcolony* and Fanon's writings, are alternate readings of our times that also await discovery and language within a post colony. In a recent lecture Mbembe (2006) challenged black South Africans to take *ownership* of the larger system in ways that court accountability. He challenged white South African to find ways of belonging in Africa. He finds ways of languaging succinctly that which this participatory action research is exploring. I look to belong, to be accepted and not categorised as *white*. My work with the Mothers also seeks to deconstruct ownership in ways that employ group agency, accountability, belonging and voice.

5.19   Resistance as multiple language games of identity

Identity held in a post-colonial power relationship is a complex phenomenon. The Mothers appear to work at resisting their negation in many clever non-official ways. One way I suggest is through what Mbembe (2001:103-104) calls *conviviality*. Conviviality in this sense means an ability to work alongside another person, or group of people, using different logics, by playing a game of constant deferral in a bid to accommodate, but not fully subscribe to the commandment of domination. I watch the Mothers when *white* people come to ask for their stories or to offer *empowerment* courses. Their bodies and actions often say one thing, but their words comply with what is asked of them. In doing so I notice that they look away, they look down, they don't speak, or they say afterwards *'We will see what they want to do.'* It is as if they play the game but do not fully buy into it, thus avoiding being scripted into a timeless void. In February 2005 a lady came to present a workshop on empowerment. Here are some of my notes I took after the first day they came. I was feeling particularly vulnerable and asked to be excused from this meeting. Maria had said 'Bridgid you are one of us and you will be there'.

February 9th 2005

Maria squeezed in deliberately to sit next to me – that was very comforting for me to have her there and I wondered what kind of resistance is this? There was a large group gathered for this workshop including the chairperson and a number of white ladies. The group was led in English in a rather didactic way. The person leading it seemed to talk with her guilt by displaying her 'African' artifacts and friends. It was as if she were trying to belong. I felt sorry for her as she seemed out of her depth. Her model reminded me of some of the older systemic models we used to use in family therapy. She used concentric circles placing community to the middle which is our heart and relationship with God. The Mothers kept quiet apart from Caroline who gave her talk about so many people coming to take our stories and *'What for? What do we get out of it? We are tired now'*. Maria spoke up to say we are moving forward but it is slow and there is light at the end of the tunnel. I felt sorry for the lady running this workshop. It was as if she so seemed not to understand what was happening in the group.

As I have thought about this occasion I have found alternate meanings attached to what I might before have languaged in the negative as *passive behaviour* from the Mothers. I have begun to learn from the Mothers inventive ways of working in a power relationship, through performing beliefs with dignity and without confrontation (Bruner 1983). When I have asked the Mothers, as a group, what they call this, they have said *'we are watching what they do'*. I imagine they have watched me too, and I have watched them. These actions are what Wittgenstein (Monk 2005, Gergen & McNamee 1999) calls language games that are performed in relationship and strangely familiar to both the colonisied and the coloniser, a shared historical construction within Africans of all colours. This does not mean that we are able to find language for these actions outside of binaries such as passivity or not responsible or whites coming to take our stories.

5.20 Difficulties encountered in a process of finding alternate discourses in the face of a dominant history of violence and separation

Becoming immersed within a process of participation, where certain power constructions are challenged in favour of exploring subjugated genealogies of both the coloniser and the colonised does not happen without a personal cost, enormous risk and patience and time. I have found myself facing my own dark shadow, as well as

sometimes feeling the burden of the dark collective shadows of racial rage placed upon me by the Mothers. In this my reading of psychoanalysis has helped me to tentatively find language for this experience. I have woken from nightmares screaming, as if I was being murdered. I have frequently felt that the work was not sustainable, but something has driven me on.

The Mothers have tested me in many ways with my own intentions, sometimes by passive complicity in ideas or projects, sometimes by not turning up, sometimes through silence and sometimes through confrontation. These have been difficult times. It was however some of the Mothers' ability to spontaneously engage with my own uncertainty and vulnerability that for me has found alternate fragments of relating that are not embedded in historical constructions of colonial power. It was also my ability to acknowledge my own mistakes and to ask for their guidance that I think has found grounding for alternate identities based on relational responsibility. For example in November 2005 Lizzie said '*Bridgid you are prepared to learn from us, that is what makes us want to hold you with both hands.'*

In order to do this I have listened attentively to rage against white people. Most of the Mothers at some point in our journey together have been angry with me. I might visit Ma Caroline in the shop and will see it in her silent, but polite embodied gaze; a form of contempt that gives nothing away except perhaps an astute question that is spat out of the dense atmosphere; for example '*How do I benefit?*' Or '*What are you doing about my missing son in Angola?* A powerless anxiety comes over me and at the same time anger that she could expect so much from me. I feel inadequate but also abused and find it difficult to talk about it with her. At the end of this process however, when I went to give her the collection of poems and photography, I experienced something very different. There was something different about the way both she and her husband embraced me and looked into my eyes. There was something different about the way she scratched around under the shop counter for a photo of them as a family that she wanted included. I had not included any photo of her because previously she had wanted me to pay her for her photo, which I was not prepared to do (her words can be heard in *Silent Cry* and *Words to a silent son in Angola dead*). I have seen it with another Mother when she stormed out of a meeting shouting '*Viva Khulumani…. You whites want to steal from us'*. The same feelings of helplessness and anger overcame

me, upset me, abused me and disorientate me. Left without language to describe it, a colonial guilt and an overwhelming inadequacy creeps up on me; I am trapped and vulnerable in some kind of contemporaneous void. However, other actions with these same Mothers have interwoven into the fabrics of our lives. Over time we have found different meanings, alternate actions, worked not as individuals but in a group participatory process. *Viva Khulumani* for example has been repeated to me, acted in a different way, smiling as if remembering what had gone before in a different form of *conviviality*. The action of practicing participation in this capacity appears to me to cradle ability, over time and with perseverance, to perform words differently with altered meanings. On February 23rd 2006, fragments of altered meanings came my way, when for the first time Maria said to me *'Forgive me Bridgid for saying you whites… but whites have not told us the truth about our sons.'* It was as if alternate meanings of whiteness were being fashioned in a gently acknowledging way.

A more traditional research using empirical and rational interpretations would not capture this spontaneous dance, or experience the traps of living with these conundrums that hold the tension of multiple meanings. Even within a participatory frame I have difficulty finding language for it. Language that initially comes to mind would be framed in colonial constructs of rescuer and the rescued, the giver and receiver, or a continual present. In a self reflexive position I defer these categories, even though I have often experienced what I initially might call *being difficult*, or *not pulling their weight*, or *rude*.   Having become more immersed in the lives of the mothers I have inhabited my own disorientation and shared it with the mothers. I have exposed my confusion and have scrambled for a footing that does not return me to colonised expectations of privilege, white, wealthy, knowledgeable or educated.

5.21   Sustaining alternate discourses

In order to understand something of the intricate relationship between coloniser and colonised, Mbembe (2001:102) suggests that 'we need to go beyond the binary categories used in standard interpretations of domination, such as resistance vs. passivity, autonomy vs. subjection, state vs. civil society, hegemony vs. counter-hegemony, totalization vs. detotalization. These oppositions are not helpful; rather, they

cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations'. Parsons (2002:11) says: 'The more invidious consequences of colonialism, the psychological effects of this binary system of superior/inferior, came as a consequence of earlier experiences of domination and commerce in foreign lands. This is to say that colonialism as a coherent belief system which fuelled wide ranging political movements in the 19th century was a product of interaction between colonisers and colonised, and reflected the exported social beliefs (and conflicts) of the colonisers.' Binary positions are not the full story of relationships in Africa. Alternate descriptions of our humanity await definition, particularly in this thesis through engaging with what Gergen and McNamee (1999) call relational responsibility and through what Levinas calls the face of the other.

To understand post-colonialism in South Africa is of course a complex web of interlocking beliefs, the seeds of which have been carried and naturalised in the soils of South Africa. If Mbembe is right, understanding Africa has not really begun and awaits its own unfolding through constellations and events that make up the present, the past and the future. According to Mbembe Africa has got caught in a western time zone with no history, no going back and no way to find a future outside of western, and more insidiously now post-modernity, caught in a whirlpool of global power, neo-colonialism and consumerism. We are left with what Mbembe calls chaos, arbitrariness, the continual present that has no interpretation within empiricism or rationality. It is experienced rather than understood and seen in our actions, in our ambivalence, in our contradictions and the way we work with conviviality. Mbembe aptly says that we cannot return to some pure utopian race captured in a historic idealisation of what it means to be African. To ask questions around what it means to be *black and African* is perhaps past and dense with entanglement. Questions for our future rest more on how we work together outside a network that courts violence and division. This is philosophically bound up in the sovereign state that generates fear of the *other* in order to protect oneself. It is what Freud might refer to as the 'death drive'. This resonates with theologies of participation that move beyond identities centred on liberation and the perpetuation of liberation struggles which are always pitted against a personified enemy and often the *white man*. Identities built on liberation discourses are in danger of losing human moorings and enter contemporaneously into a void where there is no way back and no way forward, except through violent means. Working within a participatory consciousness (Kotzé 2001, 200, Heshusius 1994, 1995) helps to find

alternate means for relating, given the ways in which we have been historically constructed. The difficult question remains concerning the effectiveness as well as the material cost that authentic participation plays in both unmasking colonialism as well as constructing ways out of it that are not saturated with rationalism. Participation may help to generate different paths towards the future. My own thinking leads me towards collectively constructing a language of representation that does not echo a coloniser. It means privileging the power of relationship in an order of love that transcends sovereign power. This relationship develops over time through honouring different readings of subjugated knowledges.

5.22   Levinas and the face of the 'Other'

The last part of this chapter is an exploration into the work of Emmanuel Levinas's *Peace and Proximity* (1984) and *The Trace of the Other* (1963). I have selected Levinas because of his interest in traversing the territory between ethics and politics, the personal and the political in a bid to find ways out of recursive cycles of violence and separateness. My interest in this arose from a lecture given by Mbembe (2004) on the sovereign state, built on the Hobbesian claim that 'the peaceful order of society is constituted in opposition to the threat of the war of all against all' (Paperzak et al 1996:161). According to Levinas (1984) this idea was built and underpinned by Greek philosophy and western beliefs around autonomy, unity and rationality. As with Mbembe and Fanon, Levinas (op cit: 161) argues that: 'Western democracies use political rationality and its consequent claims to universality and justice to promote peace'. It also invites Foucault's ideas of discourse and the fragments of genealogy that await our attention in the resisted forms of power that lay hidden and yet unmasked in the South African context.

Levinas's writing is obscure and difficult to read, made even more so because it is translated from the French. He is writing as a Jew after the holocaust in Germany. He returns in a new way to a politics of the universal that does not depend on a tradition founded on the idea of a debate and separation of the human and divine. Rather he works at a metaphysical level founded on the universal and the idea that reason should manifest itself in infinite love for another (Mbembe 2005). He argues (veling 2005) that

theology has privileged the imminent over the transcendent, the *other,* the one we call God, who is beyond human comprehension. In this way he inserts infinity, which is not rationally comprehendible, as a point of departure for our humanity.

Levinas (1984:161), who lived from 1906 -1996 over the span of two world wars in Europe, argued that democracy cannot work without firstly entering a place where we can ethically face the other, not in some objective sense, but as a human being encountering another human being who is different to ourselves. To see the other in this context is not about changing the other into something the same, or even finding common ground, or a reciprocity of relationship, but to allow our own naked vulnerability of seeing the face of the other is to be changed by what he calls their *trace* and to take what he calls *infinite responsibility* for the other. He likens this to a fingerprint, a trace that cannot be seen, but is present. This idea is developed further by Derrida (Koffman and Zeiring 2002, Morton 2003, Powell 1007) in which he says that deconstruction is already at work within any text because of the traces of other texts exist within any text.

In his work *Peace and Proximity* (1984) Levinas therefore suggests that politics cannot work responsibly without firstly engaging in the ethical responsibility to another person or people. In this another person, or text, is already present within me and therefore to destroy another person is to destroy something of myself. By ethics he is referring to the ability to engage with the other, someone whom we don't fully understand or control. This would indicate a very different ethic to a prescriptive ethic found in rules and regulations. Mbembe (2004:4-5), in an article called *Faces of Freedom* enquires into the relationship between freedom and ethics. He says: 'It is the question of the relationship between freedom and ethics – a freedom that is aware of itself as an ethical practice – that I would like to examine.' He challenges what he calls the pagan ethos, built into Hobbes' picture of the L*eviathan* and sovereignty as a protection against *violent death.* He quotes Hanna Arendt as saying: 'It is as though mankind has divided itself between those who believe in human omnipotence and those for whom powerlessness has become the major experience of their lives'. Challenging this construct Mbembe draws on Levinas' work and ethics as a practice rather than as a sovereign belief of protection. Levinas goes straight to the jaws of the monster then when he suggests freedom happens when we face our humanity and our vulnerability in

the face of the other, not because we see the enemy reflected in the other, but because we have an infinite responsibility to witness vulnerability, mortality and our humanity in the face of the other . He shifts his emphasis away from the individualist idea promoted by Heidegger that suggests that my death is found in your death. Levinas looks to another order of reality, where my image is not found within you, but rather that my death is your business. This is the epiphany, or a *kairos* moment, where within the face are infinite possibilities (Mbembe: 2005). In his interpretation of Levinas Mbembe argues that Levinas is not a pacifist, as force and violence might be necessary in certain circumstances. Neither does he promote a route of least resistance. Rather he addresses the question about how we can ensure that violence does not reproduce itself as an economy of endless violence and death in oppositional politics.

What then might be some of the conditions under which we can cultivate a society where murder is a scandal rather than a newsworthy topic? Derrida carries on this conversation in his writing *Archive Fever* (Dick and Koffman 2002). He says: 'As soon as there is one there is murder'. To separate myself from another human being then is for another to become an object. An object is dependent on my controlling, taming or disposing of this object that is a threat to this *one*. Derrida (op cit) also draws on Levinas' ideas when in South Africa he says: 'The determination of the self as one is violence. Do we forgive someone or someone something? This is the irony of forgiveness without repentance…. We can only forgive the unforgivable. If it is demanded then it is not forgiveness.'

Levinas firmly situates ethics within **action** and by doing so he manages to avoid the distortion of mutating rules into norms and morals, which are in the service, not of some divine order, but of sustaining the power of control against an enemy. Ethics he suggests is more than encountering another; it is to give without expectation of return in an act of infinite responsibility. This ethic exposes the sovereignty hidden with Western democratic politics; it ruptures the dichotomies between good and bad, which left to themselves create what he calls a tyranny within politics.

Paperzak et al (1996:162) contend that western democratic politics have often legitimated the violence of imperialism, colonialism and genocide because they have left this vital ingredient out. Instead they have moralised and prescribed practices that

in this context are not ethical. Mbembe (2004:4) says that 'in many black narratives of freedom, liberty is imagined first and foremost as the recovery of the capacity to once again take care of oneself – a capacity, which, in political parlance of the twentieth-century, is defined as 'the right to self-determination', of which African nationalisms are a manifestation'. To act ethically is then to free ourselves from the prescriptions and moralising and to become a part of ethical practices that *walk with* the other rather than *do for* the other. Ethical practices involve taking serious account of local knowledge, as Nietzsche prophetically pronounced.

Levinas argues that the ingredient we have left out of philosophy and politics built in a western democratic fashion is the '***humanity within us'*** (1984:162) or an ethical and vulnerable relationship to the *other* in a face to face encounter, rather than through cognitive, historical or theoretical abstractions. It cannot be reduced or defined: it is something infinite and unspeakable and refuses to be rationalised. God, whom he understands as something quite separate from our ability to comprehend (the infinite) does not judge human behaviour. Judgement of morality becomes the responsibility of the self in the presence of the other. In one of Levinas's major books *Totality and Infinity* Bernstein (2002:169), explains morality as a response to the demands of the other. Ethics is a product of the humbling of humanity before humanity as it realises the limits of its power and not the divine dictates of a superior being.

Before the absolute *other,* we recognise our own powerlessness. The danger is that the powerlessness becomes so terrifying and the threat so real, that even given a relational ethic the temptation is to hurt or destroy the other. This erasure is accomplished by resorting to what Levinas calls a tyranny of ontology and the violence this tyranny usually entails towards the other. One either attempts to change the other's ideas, making them conform to one's own ideas concerning totality (in other words to control them through a Foucauldian understanding of discourse), or one tries to murder and outright rid oneself of the contentious difference of the *other* by eliminating the *othe*r altogether. This tyranny of ontology persecutes difference and violates the sanctity of the *other's alterity*. There are many ways I have experienced this with the Mothers and with A, the difference being that I have been able to work alongside the Mothers and emerge with a human face of vulnerability. This human face includes my own feelings of helplessness and incompetence. It also includes my ability to see in the Mothers their

humanness without seeing them as helpless victims, heroes, amazing women or selfish and grabbing. All of these descriptions are true, but I believe we found a way to defer each of these categories in favour of our humanity. It was this that took so long to develop. I suggest that the weight of history appeared at times impermeable. I was not able to do this with A and this could be for a number of reasons, not least A's position of power to be disempowering of me. With this goes the thought that I may pose a threat to A in some way. In the end A was not able to either tame me or destroy me but the anxiety of this pursues me round every corner. I imagine that A's fear of me as a constructed enemy may also have led A to this position where I became a threat to A's survival. In spite of my attempts to talk with A on many occasions it was as if this was too threatening and so A did not come to meet with me. Within a reading of Levinas, it may have been too threatening to look into my naked face, because in this would be seen both A's and my vulnerability. It is as if A could not trust that I would not destroy this. I believe that the Mothers and I managed to withstand this threat through our relational accountability and trust that grew over time and risked this vulnerability in the face of the other.

Levinas (1984:163) suggests that peace based on truth and unity, where we believe in some ideal democratic state and its accompanying promises does not recognise in itself 'the bloody struggles, of imperialism of human hatred and exploitation… and terrorism; of unemployment, the continuing poverty of the Third World; of the pitiless doctrines and cruelties of fascism and National Socialism up to the supreme paradox where the defence of the human and its rights is inverted into Starlinism.' He predicted dark clouds of dangerous human annihilation of destinies built on European politics, science and technology which amount to universalism or imperialism. He contends that claims of truth threaten life itself. He talks about *seductions of peace* (op cit: 164) through rational thought. It becomes less about understanding yourself as an internal construct embodied in individualism; it is more about understanding the other, because it is in the other that we see the eternal possibilities within ourselves. Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002) reiterates this in his lectures in South Africa where he suggests that forgiveness comes from an order of the unforgivable in relation to another human being and cannot be asked for.

Absorbing *alterity* (difference in another person) cannot be understood, because it belongs to the infinite which is outside of man's capacity to understand. Levinas speaks a great deal about the infinite; for example the infinite God that we can never understand; infinite responsibility and infinite possibility. Infinity cannot be controlled or understood or reduced, particularly through logical means.

He argues that peace must answer to something more than truth in any ideal form. Don't try to become the *other*, or force the *infinite other* into a common human denominator because he says the *othe*r is irreducible and unique. To accept the otherness of the *other* is to love and not to change or alter. It is to have a capacity to accept *alterity*. 'The thought that is awake to the face of the other human is not a thought of… representation, but straightaway a thought for…. A non-indifference for the other, upsetting the equilibrium of the steady and impassive should of pure knowledge, a watching over the other human in his or her unicity' (Levinas 1984: 166).

To accept the uncontrollable otherness of another he argues demands enormous vulnerability on our part, because we no longer hold the reigns of control over the outcome or over our relationship. This idea is particularly useful in this research as I expressely attempt to take up a position of vulnerability and a casting my lots to the gods of the not yet known. It has exposed my vulnerability in many ways, through the rigours of academia, through my ongoing relationship with the Mothers, through the exposure of my own history and shadow, as well as through the praxis, which is the critical reflection of my work. Vulnerability is seen perhaps at its greatest intensity when the grid of control over the process of this work is lifted. I expose my position of *not knowing* where it leads. To expose this vulnerability is what Levinas might call looking into the face of the other without defence. Levinas suggests this is to expose ourselves to death, to mortality itself. In this way it looks the *Leviathan* in the eye and says 'I am not afraid of you. I no longer need to expend all my energy on controlling you'. The extreme precariousness of the unique stranger uncomfortably exposes my own nudity before your own.

Exposure in this way is more than a face, it can be a group of people, or as Levinas (1984:167) puts it in this illustration, a queue:

188

> Persons approaching the counter had a particular way of craning their neck and their back, their raised shoulders with shoulder blades tense like springs, which seemed to cry, sob, and scream. The face as the extreme precariousness of the other. Peace as awakeness to the precariousness of the other…. as if the invisible death which the face of the other *(autrui)* faces were *my* affair, as if this death regarded me. In this call to responsibility of the ego by the face which summons it, which demands it and claims it, the other *(autrui)* is the neighbour. We need to find a different destination rather than being unified. Being unified means we are unified against something. Egalitarian and just State in which the European is accomplished and, above all, preserving – proceeds from a war of all against all – or from the irreducible responsibility of the one for the other'.

In his paper *The Trace of the Other* (1963:176) Levinas explores the concept of the "I" as in an independent autonomous person. He speaks of the true "I" must be left to the other, including the traces of the barbarian in us all; it must also welcome the absolute other. He argues that to hold onto an essential "I" is to destroy the uprightness of the ethical movement. The epiphany of the absolutely other is a face in which the other calls to me and signifies an order to me by its nudity (op cit: 181).

> To be an "I" then signifies not to be able to slip away from responsibility…. This surplus of being….. Solidarity here is responsibility…. Responsibility that empties the "I" of its imperialism and its egoism….. The idea that attaches to the other is infinity – desire. To be in the image of God does not mean to be an icon of god, but to find oneself in his trace. The revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality maintains all the infinity of his absence, which is in the personal order itself. He shows himself only by his trace, as it said in Exodus 33. To go toward Him is not to follow this trace which is not a sign; it is to go toward the others who stand in the trace of alterity' (op cit:185).

Bernstein (2002:166) likens Levinas's ideas to Derrida's metaphor of waves crashing in always the same repetitive movement. He talks about there being something more in philosophy than what Heidegger calls *'dasein'* or being. He likens it to Plato's idea that good is beyond being, it is infinity and yet familiar. Bernsetin works with Levinas's idea of relationship as something that is asymmetrical and non-reciprocal to the other (*l'autrui*) involving infinite responsibility to and for the other. This is based on an ethic that does not seek justice, because the infinite responsibility belongs to a different order than justice, it is infinite. According to Bernstein Levinas sees war as something that destroys the face of the other.

Bernstein (2002:173) uses a story told by Hans Jonas to illustrate the infinity of the ethical response. It was a story concerning Anton Smidt, a German soldier executed for giving Jews travel documents between 1941-1942. The story was revealed in a Jerusalem court after the war and was followed by a spontaneous two minute silence. Hannah Arendt comments concerning the ethics that Levinas proposes: 'And in those two minutes, which were like a sudden burst of light in the midst of impentetrable unfathomable darkness, a singe thought stood out clearly, irrefutable, beyond question how utterly different everything would be today in this courtroom, in Israel, in Germany, in all of Europe, and perhaps in all countries of the world, if only more such stories could have been told'. This fragment of memory joins with other fragments of generosity beyond fear, escaping the control of *Leviathon*. It belongs to the person who risks his life to save another, sometimes without even thinking about it.

This research is challenged by an ethic that is seen in action through evidence of responsibility toward another. However, I keep wondering who holds this responsibility here in South Africa? Is it a collective responsibility? A responsibility of the coloniser? If I read this correctly, what happens in a power relationship where the Mothers resist and continue to resist the dominant discourse about power and privilege? I am not sure how it would work in a non-reciprocal and asymmetrical relationship, or equally as victims within a victim driven organisation, there is always hope of more reparation, benefit and compensation in a rights driven organisation.

As for myself I am challenged to witness the face of the other, but in what ways would this extend to the Mothers eternal responsibility? To whom might they be responsible? I find the ideas proposed by Kotzé (2001, 2002) concerning the ethical practices of reciprocity in relationship more congruent with the work I am doing. This is a belief that I am connected to another and my survival depends on the "us" rather than the "I" or the "you".

As I reflect however on what I have just written I bring to mind a recent conversation with Maria (May 2006) in which I tell her of a telephone call I made with Cronje that same week. I had telephoned him to ask a favour of him. A friend had recently moved to the same small town that he lived in. I asked if he would mind me sending to him some money to buy them some flowers. It was quite a risk to do this on my part as I

went beyond some of the accepted boundaries of research enquiry towards a personal vulnerability in which I chose to ask something of him in a personal capacity. In this conversation he asked about the 'Mamas' and then said 'I am coming up your way in June'. I said it would be good to meet with him if he had the time; to which he replied 'Maybe I will visit the Mamas'. It seemed to come, inserted into the telephone wire, as if from nowhere. For a moment I was lost for words, and then I said 'That would be so wonderful Jack'. To this he replied 'I am not promising'. It was as if ambiguity needed space in order not to trap him into either/or. I was telling Maria about this and her response was 'If I had blood on my hands I would also need to have it washed off'. It was as if within these small conversations was held so much of what Levinas talks of. There was Maria's ability to know that the 'if' existed in our humanity. There was my exposure of my own vulnerability and humanity in asking a favour of Cronje, and there was a political and ethical encounter with the *other* the one each side might never fully understand. It is not a coincidence perhaps that Maria, just a few months earlier had told me 'I am no longer a victim'. Does this indicate that she sees something other than fighting as a metaphor for empowerment?

As for unrealistic somewhat hopeful and utopian ideas proposed by Levinas through his very complex and difficult to read work, Bernstein (2002:181-182) manages to bring his ideas into some form of grasp when he relates Levinas's response to such a question:-

> …this is the great objection to my thought. 'Where did you ever see the ethical relation practised?' People say to me. I reply that its being utopian does not prevent it from investing our everyday actions of generosity or goodwill towards the other: even the smallest and most commonplace gestures, such as saying 'after you' as we sit at the dinner table or walk through a door, bear witness to the ethical. The concern for the other remains utopian in the sense that it is always out of place (*u-topos)* in this world'

This chapter has explored postcolonial thought through the eyes of some of Mbembe's writing, through Fanon's reading of colonisation and then through the power dynamics exposed through some of Foucault's works. It concludes with some of Levinas's writing in a bid to find ways of connecting our humanity and vulnerability in ways of relating to the other who has become so alienated from us. Through uncovering some of the discourses around power and sovereignty I am left with a question concerning our

future identity in South Africa about how to find ways of exposing colonial discourse without returning to the power dynamics embedded within them, that of warding off an enemy. Imagining identity that is not a reproduction of the previous discourse is not easy, when a market driven, money saturated economy promotes individual rights and western ideology. I suggest that identities that are not constructed around race or individualism happen significantly a great deal of the time at a local level, and await our attention through finding language and stories that draw our attention towards identities of value rather than identities based on deficit.

Chapter 6

Identity and relational responsibility

This chapter works with a post-modern epistemology within the social construction movement, which underpins this qualitative study. The chapter aims at working with some of the histories of the movement, as it has engaged with collective identity in family therapy, deconstruction, politics, power, social responsibility and post-colonialism.

6.1   Individual identity challenged

In the last thirty years there has been a bourgeoning of literature that has concerned itself with the identity of a person, family or community within a context of others, thus challenging deficit models of identity which were developed around the individual person understood as an autonomous being with a fixed identity (Gergen 1991:41). The family therapy movement and narrative therapy for example have been politically under-girded through its disruption of the more traditional individually based models of fixed identity by post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault and Derrida.

6.2   Identity as imposed by dominant discourses

During the second half of the twentieth century many movements, such as feminism, liberation theology, post-colonial studies and literary and cultural criticism also awoke to historically constituted injustice and power in the normative models of relationship (Hare-Mustin 1988, Gilligan 1982, Hoffman 2002). These movements were timely challenges to some of the embedded discourses around racial and gender identity based in relationships of inequality. These movements are now accepted and acclaimed on the shelves of libraries, spoken about in literature and taught in schools.

The impact of such movements has brought its own challenges. As one group fights for rights, another often becomes marginalised and excluded from entitlement, or becomes

blinded to alternate readings of reality. In other words, it is not easy to find ways of doing justice and finding identities that work towards inclusiveness and equality for all. To be *for* something appears to be in an incestuous relationship with being *against* something else.

6.3   Identity imposed from the West

There are also many gaps for people in Africa when it comes to rights and equality, partly because power for funding and democratic ideology tends to emanate from the west. Writing is predominantly coming from a western world view and applied to an African context. Academically work is also framed and languaged through westernised ways of knowing. Little has been written collaboratively between people who have been discursively positioned within the continent of Africa, the colonised of all racial descriptions.

Voices that do get heard also tend to come from a liberationist perspective, unearthing specific injustices and promoting causes that speak on behalf of those who are marginalised. This has bequeathed its own forms of polarization and has created a dilemma in identity politics as Gergen (1991) has exposed. For example in our pursuit for gender equality *patriarchy* has been termed *evil* (Poling 1991, 1995)*,* casting a shadow upon millenniums of history, both in the west and in Africa and sometimes bringing in its wake a great deal of confusion. It is beyond to scope of this work to ferret and burrow into many of these constructions, except to see something of the patterns that connect such discursive positions with polarization and exclusion.

6.4   Social construction of identity

The social construction movement has gathered momentum over the last fifty years in many disciplines involved with the humanities as well as the sciences, challenging the foundations of essentialism and truth grounded in language as a reflection of reality (Hoffman 1990, 1991, 2002, White & Epston 1990, Gergen 1991, Gergen 1998, Burr 1996, Hart 1997, Hoffman 1990, 2002, Anderson & Goolishian 1988, Sampson 1989). The movement has influenced the way we understand reality, and as Gergen (1998: 34) suggests, it has exposed the flaws in 'foundationalism and structuralism that have

served to rationalize and sustain traditional claims to truth beyond perspective, transcendent rationality, universal morality, cultural superiority and progress without limit'. The movement has shifted the locus of attention away from models that espouse the individual as the focus of interest towards social process and meanings constructed within a given historical and cultural context. The movement has also challenged the idea that we can have a fixed timeless identity. Gergen (1991, 1994, 1995, 1999) has consistently argued that relationship replaces the individual as the focus of attention in how we make meaning in the world around us, and from which identity is born.

If identity is born relationally, it would indicate that it is influenced by the context in which relationship is bred and kept alive. This would then apply to such categories as race, victims, perpetrators, men, women, children, teenagers, history and many other representations of identity.

Foster, Haupt and De Beer (2005:28) for example have worked with various explanations concerning popular understandings of perpetrator's identities. They discuss Moscovici's work on social representation which in which Moscovici suggests that identities are formed by *anchoring* certain facts in a way that creates a coherent meaning. Foster et al suggest that this involves a process of labelling, classifying and naming a person as an object of representation. This leads to a process of *objectification*, where a person is detached from their multiple moorings and is collectively reduced to an object that can be separated out from humanity, as perhaps *evil* or not deserving of participation. Once a person is no longer a person of worth or value, they easily become dismissed, silenced or destroyed. Foster et al (op cit: 29) suggest that this has resonance for politics in South Africa where parties have been, and still are, driven by nationalistic struggles that are *rights* based, giving way to forms of entitlement whose very existence is dependent on winning at someone else's expense. In the last chapter I have argued that a great deal of politics based on western democracy creates forms of dualisms.

Objectifying a common enemy loops back into Mbembe's work on the sovereign state, in which group identity and survival means that people stand united against a common enemy for fear of violent death (See chapter five). Classifying data through discourses of polarisation has the tendency to oversimplify any one reading of a person, leaving

195

aside many other relevant identities which get overlooked in the dominantly constructed view of people. Foster et al (op cit:42), working from Du Toit's (1993)[11] ideas suggest that through this process of blaming and labelling, there emerges a real danger of exonerating oneself from such behaviour. Graham and Poling (2000) theologically address these problems associated with the idea that truth abides with the *poor* and, working within a post-structuralist Derridian position on language (op cit:176) say: 'Words are like exiles, forever wandering, forever cut off from a final resting-place. There is thus a blankness and incompletion at the heart of meaning, born of endless deferral. All we have are "traces", the vestiges and echoes of silenced voices'. This resonates with Veling (2005) in his reading on Levinas, where Levinas challenges man's obsession with *imminence* of being in the world and explaining the world. He refers to our modern need to explain away everything, leaving no space for the transcendent revelation of God. He goes on to say (2005:1 brackets my own): 'In other words, we have reduced everything to our being-in-the-world, and we no longer know how to speak of transcendence, the voice of otherness, the desire of infinity, the revelation of God who is otherwise than our being-in-the-world. He (Levinas) wants to speak against the complacencies of an age that thinks itself free of everything that is other than itself and beyond the embarrassment of a relationship with an unknown God.' It is as if we are good at dissecting cadavers and then giving them elaborate funerals through their very dissection, killing the living documents that cannot ever be fully known. I suggest here that through reductionism which is bred within imminence, we are in danger of chasing God, seen in Levinas's terms as the infinite *other* off limits. Creating space for the *other*, the one that is inexplicable and not reducible or definable becomes the *poetic*, the creative place where participation and humanity can dance with spontaneous joy.

Opening space for the *other*, the one who is different from myself is something that Foster et al (2005) explored in examining the juridical procedures of the TRC. They worked at finding alternate readings of those who perpetrated violence in apartheid South Africa in order to find language for humanity, which connects with Said's prophetic concern for *humanising* society (Said 2003) and Levinas' writing on the face and trace of the other (1964, 1983, 1984). Popular identities for perpetrators they argue

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[11] Du Toit, 1993. Politieke geweld: Die wil om te verstaan. *Die Suid Afrikaan (46. 21-23) November/December*

tend to rely on labels such as *psychopath* or *evil* which are developed through a group selection process, proven and often bred through the media, talked into existence by groups of people and verified through the selection of certain facts. Separating out the *good* from the *bad* then reduces our ability to participate in our own ability to act unethically.

Gergen (1994:198-207) in a study on the identities of young people and the elderly concluded: 'People may portray themselves in many different ways depending on the relational context. One acquires not a deep and enduring "true self" but a potential for communicating and performing a self' (op cit: 206). Shotter (1993:104) talks of the constant incompleteness of description and says: 'Unless we become sensitive to the manner in which our ways of speaking form and shape the topics of our discourse, we shall often be investigating *fictions* of our own devising without recogizing them as such'. Self narratives in other words are immersed in a process of ongoing human interchange, which indicates that in multiple contexts our identities are virtually limitless and subject to our own *fictions*. Gergen (1991:139) has said: 'In the case of "who I am" it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities.' However, these provisional possibilities are only imaginable within a social process that supports and sustains them, permitting language to emerge as constitutive of the ways in which we interpret the world. I am then who I am because of others, there is no identity outside of relationship. This challenges the idea that there can be some autonomous self. Gergen goes on to say (op cit: 157): 'One's own role thus becomes that of participant in a social process that eclipses one's personal being. One's potentials are only realized because there are others to support and sustain them; one has an identity only because it is permitted by the social rituals of which one is part; one is allowed to be a certain kind of person because this sort of person is essential to the broader games of society.'

Identity as socially and historically situated would indicate that depending of the relational context we develop new and different understandings of relationship. I suggest that in South Africa we need to painstakingly create a context in which multiple identities can be sustained in life giving relational processes, which are talked into existence through language as a product of our acting together in performative ways (Brunner 1986, Anderson & Goolishian 1988, White & Epston 1990, White 1995, Burr 1996, Shotter 1993). Relationships offer infinite opportunities for alternate identities to

197

develop, and it is within authentic and trusting relationships that we become open for alternate meanings and relational identities to be performed in life-giving ways.

6.5 Language and its role in forming identity

Wittgenstein (Monk 2005:70) argued that words have an infinite number of meanings dependent on the supplement, or the meanings we attach to a word. Derrida followed this by contending that meanings change according to arbitrary happenings that cannot be predicted. This is what Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Koffman 2002) refers to as *l'avenir*, the unpredictable future, or what Levinas might refer to as revelation of a transcendent God (Veling 2005, Levinas 1984, Mbembe 2005). Brueggemann (2003) refers to this idea as the poetic; a god and relationship that is always open to new possibilities and can never be pinned down. The transcendent eludes us and comes to us inserted at the least expected moments of relationship. Wittgenstein (Monk: 2005:74) suggested that through the unpredictable we find 'a new way of looking at ourselves and the people around us, a way that allows us to see connections between things that we had not seen before.' Wittgenstein leaped from a world of logical types, into one which challenged the dusty shelves and structures of rationalism, to whose allegiance he had previously sworn. The shift appears to me to be somewhat arbitrary, esoteric and difficult to capture. It is only seen in a movement performed within relationship and cannot be captured with logic or the rational, or even within this writing. Wittgenstein uses the analogy of a *fly bottle* that according to Hoffman (2002:131) 'symbolises the flight of the mind when it cannot find a path out of confusing linguistic traps.' Change in this sense happens when we move away from the fly bottle that has trapped us within its system, limiting us to logical forms of enquiry. Change can frequently be sudden and discontinuous, with no systematic pathway that leads in a linear fashion towards a conclusion. Foucault (1970) might call these the less controllable genealogies and fragments of knowledge that escape the control of dominant webs of discourse that I referred to in the last chapters.

Wittgenstein's work in this research is of particular interest in the way he managed to expose the constitutive force of language in how we come to make meaning within the world and find ways out of the fly bottle of logic. Words, he argued (Gergen 1998:1), are a by-product of our relationships, seen in action. Wittgenstein refers to these actions

as language games. We act out language games through reading one another's bodies through what is both said and not said. This links with Mbembe's work on conviviality (see chapter five). In the current context of this work, it concerns meanings attached to race and colour, victim and perpetrator and the roles and actions that read these beliefs which are held in relational spaces that become embodied and elusive to linguistic language.

Words within this new paradigm are unstable and rely for their meaning on the ways in which they are placed within human interaction. For example as I write this text you will be interpreting these words within your own prior experience and drawing your own conclusions from my writing and how you interact with these pages. Barthes (Appignanesi & Garratt 1995:74) has famously proclaimed the author dead, which Ricoeur and Capps (chapter 1) both concur with. As authors we do not therefore control the meaning of what we write as it is dependent on the readers' prior experience and assumed meanings within a historical context. As you read this, you will therefore not only be asking what is in this text, you will be attending to what is both present and absent at the same time (Wolfreys 1998, Weingarten1995) and perhaps wondering how it came about that I selected certain texts, leaving out others. In this sense each reading becomes what has become understood as a deconstruction of the text, or what Myburg (2000:193) refers to as a close reading. Here is rather a long exert from my field notes after my visit to Wagener, Vlok and Van der Merve (Feb 2005) which describes something of the multiple meanings attached to reading, writing and re-reading a text using prior experience.

21st February 2005

I was given time to talk about the work I am involved in and Mr. Wagener said he wanted to know what I am doing because others have come to ask questions and they go away armed with the filtered information that supports their pre-judged case about their 'truth', which tends to be told on the right side of current history. It reminded me of a conversation I had back in 1981 with Alex Smith (son of Ian Smith), who said at the time that no-one in the media was interested in reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The press was only interested in stories that supported heroic narratives. He was involved at the time with the organization called Moral re-armament. He was instrumental at the time in brining his father (the then president of Rhodesia) and the liberation forces together. He subsequently wrote a book called 'Now I call him Brother'. The book seemed to fade and I have remembered this now, there seems such a

familiar ring to these stories. Could it be the familiarity of lost voices to politics?

Wagener spoke from what seems like the wrong side of history. He has been involved with defending many of those who sought amnesty and the latest case against Gideon Niewoudt who is being brought back to court for the Motherwell killings is something currently very painful. Wagener said of this: "From what I could understand Gideon apologized very sincerely in the court, but the mothers said 'he is a liar' and those waiting outside had placards saying 'kill the white pigs'. 'He was ridiculed by lawyers, the press, told he was lying and that they don't believe what he said. You need to understand how hostile these courts are. At the TRC the lawyers for these grandmothers did not want my clients to receive amnesty.' Language again becomes polarized and alternate readings of humanity or *kairos* are filtered out. In such a climate there is nothing to say among the volatility and toxicity of what is being said. It reminds me of the current Zanu PF climate in Zimbabwe where generals are calling for the spilling of the white pig's blood. Wagener then showed me some of the transcripts from the Nietvediendt Ten hearings. Mrs Phiri said in the proceedings 'I want to enquire from the killers, yet they told us that they killed them they told us that they injected them with drugs and they are buried, but I want them to know that their graves are open and even in heaven they will not get forgiveness at all because they killed minor children. Had these children killed people before we would have understood that yes, it was their turn to be killed, but I want to tell them today that they will never get forgiveness from God at all, their graves are waiting for them, waiting open'. The mothers also said when they visited the site that it does not fit with the description of a steep hill and a tree (end of TRC DVD 2). It is difficult because in 1986 this was just a dirt road and now a new highway has been built changing a lot of the scenery on the road, which made it more difficult to identify.

I could feel the pain and dilemma of those caught up in the drama where to change things is to engage with something too toxic. That is how I felt in Zimbabwe I was too poisoned by my own survival. Perhaps my very involvement being one person removed as a British perpetrator now stepping outside the current history helps me to become a healing presence. It seems as if these cycles are so difficult to exit. But by sitting here we are beginning to do this without cameras and without the press wanting a story. We need to be able to write our own stories together of our struggles with history and truth.

Wagener said something like 'What is a just cause? What does it mean to murder? General Van der Merve is sitting here. Is he a murderer?' I am not quite sure about the story but as the general of the police he was in a position of decision making. He had to decide who should live and who should die in these times of war. Does this make him a murderer? What then is the truth? From whose perspective? When the freedom fighter was asked if he were sorry for placing a landmine on a game farm in Limpopo which blew up a farmer's wife and children beyond recognition, he apparently reported 'No I am proud because I fought for freedom and we now have it'. These become such complex questions of blame. I am glad I wasn't in these positions and if I were I too might have blood on my memory too. Does that make me a murderer for being

British? As long as we ask these questions we cannot find a way beyond who is right and who is wrong. If we however ask ourselves, what can we do to create a context of acknowledgement and repair, could this be more life-giving?

Meanings are therefore dependent on what Wittgenstein refers to as supplements, or the meanings and prior experiences that the reader attaches to the words (Monk 2005, Gergen & McNamee 1999). If meanings are attached to words because of prior supplements, actions and experiences associated with a word, we can conclude that meanings around a word for example race, guilt, colonisation or apartheid can shift outside the fly bottle. This can only happen however if we create a social context and coding for a different experience, and this I suggest is a long and arduous process that involves authentic participation with groups of people who have come to certain conclusions about, for example, white or black identity. It is also a slow process of constructing ownership and belonging within our relational actions. Finding alternate meanings is difficult because of the very powerful discourses in South Africa that have become laden with assumed meanings around racial identity. The complexity plays in a field of power, where power is not evenly distributed, but is held non-the-less as Foucault has so brilliantly expounded, within relationship to resistance (Foucault 1972, 1980). Through challenging some of these power relationships, that themselves appear to be in a polarized form, the energy that emerges could well be of a different order of power.

In order to socially construct alternate meanings it becomes important to read not only that which is in the text but that which is not said. However, to connect this process of a power relationship, multiple identities and language games, is not something that can be captured in a traditional interview. It happens in a slow relational process where meanings are complexly constructed and negotiated over time. Relational language games seem to me to be often repeated in my experience with the Mothers, as if we are living in a *fly bottle*, as if I don't yet understand the meanings attached to often told phrases like '*We want to know the truth'*. Or could it be that through looking for *truth* we have all become trapped within the fly bottle, constantly knocking our heads against the side? A dilemma for me in this is that I have frequently wanted to exit the fly bottle but have not known how to do it congruently with the Mothers. As I have journeyed with them over the three years it seems as if I have needed to '*sit put and wait'*. 'Sit

put' is a phrase that I often hear the Mothers say and it has captured my imagination as I have wondered about the wisdom and complexity in such a phrase. That which waits to be connected and talked about through our relational games seems to need to get repeated until we can find a way of dissolving the bottle. However, that which is waiting to find meaning often waits for a new paradigm to emerge, in order for it to hold its ground. Derrida's work is significant here, in the ways in which he worked within existing texts to explore different meanings.

6.6   Deconstruction

Derrida, working with Wittgenstein's texts, challenged the idea that there could be any singular meaning in a word. More than that, he argued that within every word and idea are traces of other words and ideas**.** Boyne (1990:91) suggests that he worked 'like a mischievous lubricant which circulates through the texts he examines, and searches through the cracks into places formerly unknown'. His theories of deconstruction are rooted in a philosophical tradition arising particularly from the works of Kant, Heidegger and Wittgenstein (Lax 1992). He challenged the logic of people ranging from Aristotle to Bertrand Russell. He waged a one-man deconstructionist war against the entire Western tradition of rationalist thought, especially the assumption of reason which he sees as dominated by metaphysics of 'presence' (Appignanesi 1999: 77). He argued that laws of rational thought not only presuppose logical coherence, they also allude to an essential reality which works at sustaining logical coherence, whose origin must be free of contradiction. Derrida exposed the flaws in such arguments, and challenged any single claim to truth. He believed that reason has been shaped by a dishonest pursuit of certainty, which he refers to as *logocentricis*m. Structuralists like Saussure had argued that reality is reflected in language built on 'sameness' and 'difference' or binary oppositions, the signifier and the signified, the subject and the object, where ambiguity rests on these binary oppositions and can be explained as such.

Orderliness, logic and rationality led in a direction towards a unified theory of interpretation that created a logical order of theory with a concomitantly valid outcome, the fly bottle that Wittgenstein got trapped within. Structuralists in other words sought

out a *highway code* whose role was to *work out* the general rules that apply to language and experience, a *metalanguage*.

Derrida challenged Saussure's belief in a *metalanguage*, as he did with Roland Barthes, a semiologist, and Claude Levi-Strauss, a structural anthropologist who used structuralism as a springboard beyond what was seen as a *metalanguage* of universals and master codes. Derrida became outraged by the totalitarian arrogance implicit in the claims of reason. 'Deconstruction can be seen in part as a vigilant reaction against this tendency in structuralist thought to tame and domesticate its own best insights' (Norris 1999:2).

Derrida set out to challenge any claim of philosophy to be the sole dispenser of reason. Language, he argued, is more complex and cannot fit any box of any one size. He also believed that we cannot dispense with linguistics, which is constantly complicating the philosopher's project. Language, philosophy and literature, he argued, are inseparably intertwined. Norris (1999:3) suggests that Derrida's writings seem more akin to literary criticism than philosophy where lived experience replaces outside knowledge. Derrida however does not fence off literary criticism from philosophy, but rather breaks down the fences that divide, by showing the richness and complexity of paradox and ambiguity in all the disciplines of the human sciences, none of which stand outside the critique of deconstruction. In other words, no discipline can claim a privileged position.

With the boundary fence taken away, the observer becomes a part of the text, and brings with it his/her subjectivity. There is no pre-existing meaning or authentic reading, something that Derrida feels Western language has tried to reduce to a stable structure. Texts are then radically transformed into reading the *blind spots* rather than any interpretative *insights* where there is a single primal authority on the critique of the text. This current research is in danger of exactly this, of avoiding *blind spots*, because within the paradigm of relational participation is a real and probable dishonest pursuit of idealism. I am caught up within this work and therefore cannot look in from the outside. I am living this work and seduced by the ideas around social construction, identity and deconstruction. In order to be open to the critique of others, I need to be able to hold multiple constructions of the relationships I am working with. This calls for more than a critique grounded in *praxis*, because *praxis* is to do with critical *self*

reflection (Cochrane et al 1994, Ackermann 2000, 2003). It would rather suggest that it is within relationship that we are able to critique one another's work. Derrida however, has cleverly managed to move away from critique in a polarised form, where I make a mistake and you pick it up. He has challenged the idea that ideas work in opposition. He rather says that the *other* is within the very words we say or do not say. He coined the word *difference* to explain this, which permits both the signifier and signified to remain on the page by constantly *deferring* meaning or closure on any one understanding. Working with this understanding words such as white, black, victim or perpetrator are relationally owned and identity is never finalised.

Through doubting any one claim to truth Derrida systematically deconstructed any appeal to reason. He argued that we can never reach any logical conclusion, because no-one can ever enter a primordial intuition of the other's lived experience and therefore claim any privileges. *Difference* eludes the grasp of a pure, self-present awareness. Coupled with this Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Kofman 2002) comments on man's inability to watch himself in an act of interpretation of lived experience. Our actions, he argues, are left to another to interpret, for we cannot watch ourselves, or see our own actions. For example, when referring to Narcissus and Echo in Greek mythology, he argues that Narcissus cannot watch himself, he is dependent on another to watch him. Echo in turn picks up his words and uses them as her own to interpret and give back her own echo of Narcissus's words. Each reading then works, not as some outside force, but within our own lived experience and understandings, shifting, changing, and adapting previous ideas and understandings that might have constituted our actions. Racism for example is not something that can be owned by one group of people but it is a co-constructed concept held between races. Meaning and identity is held within a communal relationship that is not owned by any one reading of life, but is multi-dimensional, deferring any one privileged signifier, in favour of both multiple readings closely entwined in relationship with the 'other' who I assume perhaps is different from myself. .

Without a disruption of dominantly held and assumed beliefs, the constancy of change held in movement is more difficult to sustain. Spivak (Morton 2003:42) in her reading of Derrida's work on deconstruction of the *other* suggests that an ethical and political engagement with the *other* is both painstaking and risky. It is painstaking, in that it is a

very difficult concept to internalise and practice. Multiple constructions easily turn into old and well worn texts of *us* and *them*. This has happened to me in this work particularly when I experience instability, a threat to my integrity or when I feel *put upon*. This work is surely in danger of falling prey to some of the old structures that it seeks to criticise and is threaded through with *racism and separatism*. Morton (op cit: 42) goes on to say: 'What is more, there are no guarantees that the careful thought and articulation of deconstruction will make any difference in real, political terms.' Invoking Derrida's plea for slow reading, Morton (op cit:43) quotes Spivak's plea for 'patient work of learning to learn from the oppressed rather than speaking for them'. My own experience in working with the Mothers in Mamelodi, tells me that the work of transformation is a slow and arduous process that carries risks. However I also believe that without consistent and authentic participation, we are in danger of repeating the old worn texts of the past that have become saturated in language games of giver and receiver, along with hierarchies of power and knowledge, which precludes a sense of reciprocal ownership. It returns to a process of help and aid driven from above.

In order for a disruption in discourse to occur I am paying particular attention in this relationship to the relational spaces that offer alternate readings of a text. I am interested in such attention to participation and the possibility of sustaining new meanings attached to racial categories, particularly multiple meanings attached to our shared *humanity*. These meanings however, if Derrida is to be taken seriously, also need to be constantly deferred in perpetual *undecidability* as opposed to being indecisive. In a practical sense the skills associated with narrative and participatory pastoral care are able to work within a new paradigm of opening spaces for alternate readings of any one happening. At the same time they must remain connected to the real effects and restraints of certain discourses on people's lives. Through engaging this way it links the importance of moving from what Levinas calls the ethical to the political engagement with deconstructing the effects of any practice on other people.

Derrida also believed that the deluded quest of western metaphysics crushed out the imaginative life of philosophy; just as – in Nietzsche's view – it had destroyed the joyous or Dionysian element in classical Greek tragedy. Norris (1994:58) refers to Derrida when he says: 'Socrates stands – with Christ in Nietzsche's inverted pantheon –

as the pale destroyer of all that gives life, variety and zest to the enterprise of human understanding'. Reason's empire would in this case have chased metaphor, Christ and poetry off limits. So much of embodied relational actions defy the scrutiny of explanation. It becomes more of what Hoffman (2002:240) calls knowledge of a third kind that is performed. This is not knowledge as a craft or skill but it is poetic and non-logical, seen in what Shotter (1993:85) describes as an unbroken flow of responsivity in which emotions are not held inside a person, but in our shared performance.

6.7   Ethical practices that draw back a plurality of dialogue when encountering the other

Foucault's work on discourse, McNamee & Gergen's work on relational responsibility and Levinas's writing on the face and trace of the other all indicate that we are left with a residue of relational experience that awaits an ethical encounter with the *other*. Ricoeur's work on language, memory and forgiveness also works towards finding relational space to embrace the other (Lyle & Gehart 2000:73). Ricoeur suggests this ability to engage with suffering without fear of death, belongs to an order of charity that transcends any form of logic. In a similar way Levinas (Veling 2005) talks of the transcendent God that we cannot begin to define or understand. It becomes acted out in unexpected ways in relational practices that defy explanation. It breaks through what Mbembe refers to as the sovereign state, built on fear of violent death. It becomes a human relational ability to transcend difference and disciplinary power. It explains for example why I might risk my life to save a complete stranger. Levinas's work *Totality and Infinity* concurs with Ricoeur although Levinas is working from an ethic of responsibility rather than through a theology based in pain and suffering. Levinas picks up some of the threads of what it means to care with others, even complete strangers, as illustrated in through the face and trace of the other.

6.8   Deconstructing post-colonial theory

Post-colonial theory, as I have suggested in the last chapter (Fanon 1963, Mbembe 2001, 2004, 2005), is only helpful within this research, in as much as it helps to understand something of the social conditions that give rise to racial superiority and

separation. The real effects of such discourses have left many scars on the landscape of post- apartheid identity. This is of course not to say that the landscapes of Africa were not scarred before colonial invasions or since. To cast blame solely on the legacy of apartheid leaches out the complexity of history and the multiple meanings attached to say violence, or genocides in for example Rwanda in 1995 (Minow 1998). Moral or ethical superiority, or the moral high ground of blamelessness, for this immediately excludes culpability in committing such atrocities oneself.

In order to be able to read this complex text it becomes important to explore that which both present and absent, complicating any one reading of race and colonization. As mentioned in the previous chapters, philosophers are engaging more with positions that do not assume polarity, challenging previous ideas that my ideas are in competition with yours. There is however little in practice that works with these forms of deconstruction. As previously mentioned, recent work at the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town has begun to focus on narratives of perpetrators, questioning polarized positions and historically constructed categories of perpetrator and victim, psychopath and other forms of internal constructs that place blame on the shoulders of certain individuals within a political system (Foster et al 2005).

Contextual theologians have engaged for a long time with the idea that the world is not there to be explained, but rather changed, and yet there is little within the discipline of theology that works outside of western logic of change. This thesis attempts to move beyond categorizations of text and context. Moreover, as Foucault (1970b) in the final words of the *Order of Things* has made clear, before the end of the 18th century man did not exist as a object of study. As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date, one that is perhaps nearing its end. Not only in this instance has man been consumed with finding the truth but man has also been consumed with his own identity and his own entitlement to forms of ownership, as an object of knowledge. These discourses of polarity and self-absorbsion are deeply embedded within our understandings and readings of people, whether researcher and the researched or God and man. It can be seen in every avenue of the modern consumer culture.

Man as an individual autonomous, thinking being has also underpinned the human sciences and theology in South Africa. I have argued this point in chapter four through tracing some of the assumptions embedded in both empirical approaches as well as contextual and liberation theologies. The focus has been on man and his knowledge at the centre, rather than alternate genealogies in which man is just one player in a far greater drama. In the case of this research alternate genealogies refer to relational activities that are not based on forms of polarization. It is impossible of course to escape such discourses. We have been grown in them and constituted in them until their assumptions become a large part of our taken-for-granted knowledge.

In my reading of Foucault (1981) it is the discourses of disciplinary power and interiority that disappear into our assumptions about what constitutes truth, right or wrong and it is these discourses of interiority that have focused on man as an individual autonomous being to make decisions based on binary opposites. However, as Derrida, Wittgenstein and Foucault suggest, thinking is not so much to do with cognitive processes but rather through a relational dance that is performed between people, defined through prior experience, and confirmed through current experiences. This concurs with Derrida's understanding of deferral in the interplay of language, as well as social anthropologist Brunner (1985) in his work on performance.

6.9 Social construction as narrative

I will spend some time here weaving in some of the history of narrative and participatory practices. As with the other disciplines I have explored, this too has its own genealogy and history.

Within the social construction movement there has been a great deal of work done on the narrative shape of identity, where identity is understood as a form of social performance (Brunner 1986, White & Epston 1990, Hart 1997, Weingarten 2002, Hoffman 2002), in which, along with the later ideas of Wittgenstein, language is acted out in the shared meanings we hold together (White 1995:14, Anderson & Goolishan 1988:375). Building on prior work emerging from systems theories developed in biology and social anthropology, boundaries between people begin to blur. Through

early systems theory, grounded in human biology and cybernetics, the individual was no longer understood as independent and autonomous, but as a part of a larger system, which itself was more than the sum of its parts.

In the field of psychology, there was a quantum leap from thinking intra-psychically, to understanding man as inextricably involved with his environment. Bateson (1974) a social anthropologist, managed to move science away from reductionist theories of *cause and effect*, toward the idea that man interacts with his environment in circular ways. He was fascinated with cybernetics and became famous for erasing the boundaries in our minds between inner and outer space. However, his 'space capsule' was still very much *structured* and *determined* by the limitations of its outside environment or the fly bottle as Wittgenstein might call it. He looked to a general systems theory or a meta-system to explain normal family relationships. Concepts of stability and homeostasis were used in the early Milan school, Structural and Strategic models of family therapy, to explain how people and families remain stable, sometimes at the cost of sacrificing a member as the identified patient. 'For the benefit of stability, they pay the price of rigidity, living, as all human beings must, in an enormously complex network of mutually supporting presuppositions.' (Bateson 1974:158) These were understood in information based feedback loops, taken from science and cybernetics, vicious cycles and normative concepts of rules, roles, boundaries and hierarchies. Metaphors were taken from mechanics and inanimate objects such as thermostats on a central heating system. Although now seen as old fashioned, and stuck in a mechanistic model of general systems theory, it was Bateson who brought to our attention the idea of *News of Difference,* an idea that where there are two views a third possibility or a *unique outcome* can emerge. Michael White built on Bateson's ideas of double description, and *raising the dilemma* (White1986:169, Hart 1995:180), as did Peggy Papp.

A new movement emerged in the 1980's, known as the Constructivist movement. Families were still seen as self-contained, with the therapist maintaining an *outside*r position, but the *meanings* family members placed on events were taken more into consideration (White 1986:169). The therapist stood in an outsider neutral position perturbing the system by asking circular question that helped the family find the

missing links from among themselves. Metaphors and analogies moved from the positivist physical sciences of machines to metaphors in human biology (White 1992:6) with biologists Maturana and Varella leading the way with concepts of structural determinism and human coupling (Efran & Lukens 1985:24). Language and meanings became more relevant, and objective reality was placed in parenthesis. More emphasis was placed on interpretation, and families were not seen as objects to be manipulated with *expert* outside knowledge, and there was a move away from any assumption about normative family function. Observation of patterns was still important, and one of the golden rules of the Milan School of family therapy was *neutrality*. The family was looked upon as in a *biological isolation booth* and the closed system operated like a 'blind person checking out the environment' (Hoffman 1990:5). People were no longer seen as objects that could be programmed, but as self-creating, independent entities that did not follow any predictable path (Hoffman 1990:5). There were three main criticisms of constructivism. Firstly it took no account of power and inequality, secondly that we cannot stand outside and look objectively at the world or a family, and thirdly that our social context largely constitutes our identity and we therefore cannot be seen as separate from our environment. This led to a third movement, a movement influenced by post-structuralist thinking focusing on language and the social construction movement.

Social construction has emerged in this sense as a constellation of many disciplines including social anthropology, psychology, social theory, and philosophy particularly associated with the post-structuralist movement, where language has played a major role as a constitutive force of our identity. As a participatory action research, this work is concerned with how we are able to both *read* one another through language games, including what Mbembe (see chapter five) has referred to as a particular post-colonial *conviviality*, which is difficult to read or dance unless one is both a part of this relationship and at the same time critically aware of the dance. Cross cultural language games are familiar in a post-colonial context; they are familiar and problematic, partly because it is difficult to access the meanings without being immersed within the context.

Language games can be played according to many rules and many assumptions. Certain colonial rules have a structural capacity to maintain a game of distance from our

humanity. Other games are played according to rules that might not be understood by an outsider entering a community. Heshusius (1984:15) gives a good example of the power relationship associated with an outside researcher who visited an island community and attempted to interpret the meaning attached to '18 and 23'. The islanders had come to interpret these numbers as a symbol of vitality and independence. Mama Day reflects on this researcher's visit to the island community: 'And then when he went around asking us about 18 & 23, there weren't nothing to do but take pity on him as he rattled on about "ethnography," "unique speech patterns," "cultural preservation," and whatever else he seemed to be getting so much pleasure out of while talking into his little grey machine.' The islanders had their own language game attached to these words that they were not about to disclose to the researcher, but in their own ways the researcher and the islanders were also involved in a language game and a power relationship which was difficult to access.

I would suggest that, as an outsider to the community, it takes time and perseverance to find relational dances that move to a tune that can be mutually rewarding. It could of course be argued that a participatory research is overly time consuming and rarely expedient because of the time and energy it demands of you. I would suggest that this form of research is not possible without becoming immersed within community and therefore cannot stand alone as something separate from engagement in community. This research is highly risky and demanding of my person as an ethical being involved in the complexities of our shared humanity.

Participating with a group of Mothers (victims) and men (perpetrators) is generative of new games that enrich our relational capacity of altering meanings attached to the pictures we have about identity. Monk (2005:79) argues that Wittgenstein distinguishes between pictures and ideas in a bid to help change the picture of what we see as an object. In this research it is the picture that is conjured up when seeing a white person, or a British person, or a perpetrator or a victim is challenged within the powerful construction of altered relationships.

Using ideas from Levinas, many of the familiar games in a post-colonial context would successfully protect us from experiencing vulnerability and the *other*. As seen in Chapter five, this was engineered during apartheid through physical distance and

township creation. It has left us with a difficulty in working across these divides and therefore difficulty working with our own vulnerability. Discourses of interiority in which these games are played, are not easy to identify as they work at an assumed level, subtly accounted for in language. This happens in organisations that help the poor and needy. It happens in the ways in which we inadvertently use privileged knowledge in ways that are disempowering to victims. The Mothers describe many researchers who have come and gone, taking the Mother's stories with them in order to analyse the results, never to return with their findings. On one such occasion I was present when a researcher came to ask for the Mothers stories. She was interested in finding out about the difference it makes meeting with a perpetrator. She was specifically interested in the Mothers meeting with De Kock in prison. One Mother stood up and said: '*You take our stories and we are left crying'.* To this the researcher responded *'I will make sure that you are not left without some counselling'.* She was using her prior experience of trauma as an internal psychological construct to offer the Mothers comfort. It seemed to me that she had not understood what the Mothers were saying. The researcher kept referring to her code of ethics and the Mothers willing consent. She also talked of the research benefiting the Mothers on their road to healing. I was left after this experience trying to piece together some meaning from this encounter. Dominant discourses of modern forms of disciplinary power offer limited scope for accessing relationally embodied meanings.

This is in contrast to the more obvious Foucauldian discourses of exteriority that focus on laws and physical control, as in the organisation of for example of the township.

6.10   Constraints of discourse

Our identities are constrained through the discourses we live by, and discourses limit the ways in which we are able to understand our world. As Foucault says in his paper on *The Order of Discourse* (1981:52): '[I]n every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.' The discourses we live control to a large degree what can and cannot be said, because they are governed by

conventions and socially accepted rituals, whether they are methodologies of research, or therapeutic encounters. We live by rules and theories that we generate by making sense of the context we live in. Discourses also play the role of warding off dangers and creating what Foucault calls a *grid* that controls that which we fear the most. In chapter five I argued that Western discourse has a history of warding off death through means of control through the politics of the sovereign state, whose marriage with the West has, in an obscure way, given birth to a somewhat dangerous democracy. This has often been reproduced in Africa. Robert Mugabe, for example, the president of Zimbabwe frequently speaks of the sovereign state of Zimbabwe (Ranger 2005). Foucault (1981:52) continues his argument by saying: 'I will merely note that at the present time the regions where the grid is tightest, where the black squares are most numerous, are those of sexuality and politics'.

We cannot avoid a discursive position, and if the grid is tightest around politics and sex, Foucault argues that these are the very things we are most afraid of and therefore have most control over us (as with Freud and his work on sexuality and unconscious drives). Foucault (1981:65) lays naked the attempts by Western societies to create a *subject* upon which *ideal truth* can be laid open for examination. These are truths in this event that have taken charge of chance events in order to ward off danger. The webs of control that belonged to the police state of the apartheid era have perhaps given way to new ideal truths of exposing the horror of the apartheid, era ruptured through means of a liberation struggle. We live anxiously on an invisible line that divides those who benefited (white) from those who suffered (black).

South Africa is in a transition searching other means of warding off danger to avoid another imminent rupture of perhaps violence or separatism, or, as in Zimbabwe, a return to simplistic formulas of a heroic and idealised liberation struggle. The dangers in this research are concerned with the *other* whom we see as different, dangerous, and therefore powerful. In order to ward off danger, South Africa has policies of black empowerment, victim driven organisations, such as Khulumani, poverty alleviation programmes and many others. We have used democratic language and juridical procedures based on a politic of victim, perpetrator, truth and reconciliation as a *modus operandis*. In other words we are still busy with knowing who we are because of who we are not, but in official language we are called the *Rainbow Nation*. The complexity

of multiple language games played out in the relational fields of any nation are multifarious and multi-layered. Constantly deferring any one meaning on these language games is significant if we are to pay enough attention to the multiple positions we hold in any given situation.

Gergen (1999:206) suggests that within a western paradigm we have privileged discourses that employ blame. He says: 'We wish to blame those in power for their oppression, injustice, exploitation, and so forth. In this regard, the discourse of power shares much with the individualist forms of blame that we are attempting to supplement. In its accusatory form, power discourse frequently has the effect of abominating and alienating the target, with the typical result an intensification of antagonism'. Blame is distinguished here in my mind from accountability. In order for a form of justice to take shape individual responsibility in this respect is not being challenged. Tomm (1999:136-137) cautions us to not confuse relational responsibility with personal accountability, or we lose our moorings and grounding in justice.

How do we then define responsibility and accountability? For what am I responsible? Levinas's challenge of eternal responsibility means that I am not innocently constructed within discourses that have constituted me. I too have been tarnished with judgement in the face of another, through what has been thought, or languaged as *superior knowledge.* I cannot un-do this, or ward off the repercussions of the effects on others, or some of the revengeful thoughts I might have on people who have hurt or compromised me. What I can do however is take a position of multiple response, where no-one escapes the charge of both villain or saint, or more likely, human being; for this is our very condition, our vulnerability.

Burkitt (1999:76) asks: 'To what extent do the conditions for inhumanity reside within our own relational groupings?' A pertinent question, for as long as we are focused on blaming the other, we embroider our own cloth with blamelessness, which to subvert the text is inscribed with blame! McNamee & Gergen (1999:20) suggest that 'certitude walks hand in hand with eradication of the other.' This brings to question so many assumptions around what it might mean to be honest, reliable and just – because within these very categories are hidden the ability to be unreliable, unjust and dishonest.

Contextual theologies call us to change rather than explain the world, to work towards a future where we can take up these positions of responsibility. Where do we need to cast our nets to secure a future in South Africa? An assumption in this research is that we need to cast our nets into the waters of polarisation which are deeply embedded in the structures that we live within. It is not outwardly obvious but is intuited on the other side of the rainbow, where the colours do not merge. It belongs to the realm of control and continued separation in our very humanity, where empowerment comes through knowing I am more deserving than another. These are dangers associated with a subject/object split. The need to address this is urgent, and this research stands in a gap where it seeks to challenge polarisations. At the same time it seeks to expose the discourses that still constitute our thinking, in order to subvert them and so work towards a more sustainable future, where we can take responsibility without blame.

This is a difficult road to travel because on the one hand we need to talk about our histories, in order to address them, on the other hand the more we talk about any one history the more chance there is of it becoming an exclusive truth, a social construction of merit that languages a truth into greater existence.

Hook and Harris (2000) work at recovering repressed histories of victims and subverting discourses and representations of apartheid, using texts of the TRC in order to expose the limits of horror the past discursive order that was constructed as truth. They work on the text of Duma Khumalo (1996), a current staff member of Khulumani (since writing this he died in March 2006), who was wrongfully sentenced to death for the killing of Khuzwayo Dlamini, the Deputy Mayor of the Vaal Triangle. He was sentenced to death in December 1985 as one of the Sharpville Six. Hook and Harris explore the historical texts and suggest that the horror of the texts serve to delineate the past from the present, but they do not give us a discursive position with which to launch into the future. They also expose the texts as symptoms which do not address the real benefits that were accrued by the perpetrators. They conclude by saying: 'More than this, it is through this reading of the symptom that we might suggest that the affects of these texts will not cease to persist until the reasons for their repression become known, until the beneficiaries of racial privilege become able to admit the full horrors of the South African past, and the full responsibilities of the South African present.'

A danger in attempting to look for reasons, get to the bottom of the story, or to hold individuals hostage to the horrors of the past is that this too creates polarities, which perpetuate the defence of the culprit in a hope to ward off shame and our own future culpability in acts of violence. I am reminded of Wagener in the narrative I told in Chapter two when he stood up form his chair, and as a farewell gave me a book called *The other side of the story* about guerrilla warfare. My heart sank. Narratives such as Duma Khumalo's need to be told, but within the story is a real capacity to re-live it, reproduce it and to fan flames of separatism. The question needs to be firmly situated in accountability to the future as well as the past.

Accounts of the TRC succeed in horrifying those who read them that is on the whole, the converted, international by-standers, or the victims. The stories are told in a hope that we do not repeat the past. From my prior experience in Zimbabwe (Hess 2002, Ranger 2005), this has not happened. It does not ward off the material dangers of repetition, or of what Ranger calls patriotic history, where one version becomes the exclusive truth. It is here that I would like to propose a different tack altogether, one that has been promoted by McNamee and Gergen (1999).

6.11   Relational responsibility

McNamee and Gergen suggest at the beginning of their book on relational responsibility that theory is only helpful in as much as 'it may stimulate the imagination and help it to take wing ….in the end, the question is whether one comes away enriched in practice' (McNamee & Gergen 1999:ix).

Western discourse as we saw in the chapter on post-colonialism, maintains a great influence over discursive positions. Some of the language games we play in Africa reconstitute language and performance, embodied in our mannerisms, the ways in which we walk and talk and the stories that we keep alive. In September 2005 Fullard uncovered some photographs of the bodies of the Mamelodi Ten, taken by the police after they were murdered. I felt queezy. One of the Mothers looked at the photos and said '*the bastards'*. I am not sure quite who she is referring to, but I felt as if I stood on trial as a white person. I don't imagine she would have said the same thing if it were her

son planting a landmine on a road, because it would have been done in the name of a legitimate ideology against a legitimate enemy. We become tangled in a noose of rhetoric and history which occludes our own culpability in being the other. However, by even daring to say this I experience guilt that I might tarnish a reputation of a hero! After all do not victims of gross human rights violations have a right to rage? Is it not their right (Reeler 2002) to decide when they want to forgive, or to engage in dialogue with a perpetrator? My argument here is that it should not be left to individuals to decide to forgive or confront. It is too great a task to leave in the laps of individuals. My hope is that in as much as I become involved in a process of relational and mutual care, I am already engaged in this process.

Wolfreys (1998:25) when referring to Derrida's work on truth values says: '[T]he idea of a centre, a central truth, is paradoxical and relies upon the suspension of the very logic which that centre supposedly proves. We have to accept the answer but still ask questions while, all the while, having an idea of what the answer might be. And we must never ask a question which somehow shakes the whole system on which such truths are predicated. Such a question is considered illogical, improper, and sometimes even indecent.'

Gergen (1994:189) enquires into the requirements for telling an intelligible story within the present-day culture of the West. To illustrate this there has been in the last ten years a bourgeoning industry in trauma associated with victims of human rights violations, as well as trauma associated with violence in South Africa generally. It wouldn't seem right to say 'she swooned in a melancholy state'. Does this indicate that it no longer happens? For one reason or another we have developed ideas, discourses and games that hinge on certain social processes of the times we are living in and the meaning we develop from them.

In the context of this research the social construction of racial identity and violence would imply that race is not some given truth, but a social category that has been used to generate certain beliefs that in a post apartheid era we are busy trying to dismantle. Beliefs and racial identities, as I have discussed in Chapter five on post-colonial identity, have been formed around polarized categories of superior and inferior, civilized, traditional, separate and different, victim and perpetrator, good and evil, the

subject and the object, and many more binaries. Theology likewise has been formed around separations of African, reformed, evangelical, womanist, contextual, evangelical and participatory theology, to mention a few. These categories are false because in reality they flow into one another across constructed borders that restrict our imagination.

Identity, research methodologies and theology have assumed a kind of truth status even within this research. In the years since the demise of apartheid, there has been a plethora of literature on human rights, courts of justice, reparation and truth. This has been a political drive in identity politics to identify particular groups who have suffered gross human rights violations. This has led to identifying groups of people who belong together, as with the organisation the Mothers represent (Khulumani), which was set up following the TRC as a support group for victims. In doing this it also excludes and silences those who are not seen as victims of gross human rights violations (Hook & Harris 2000, Foucault 1981). I refer back also to the conversation with Maria about another TRC for those who did not testify and have now been excluded from reparation.

6.12   Identity politics and social construction

Identity politics concerns itself with such groups who have been abused, silenced or marginalised in society. Gergen (1995:1) speaks of identity politics and social construction as 'star crossed lovers' whose journeys have been heavily intertwined, but in his opinion are in the process of separating.

Identity politics and social construction have shared the common ground of challenging dominant positions of power and privilege on behalf of those who are marginalised (Gergen 1995, 1998). The social construction movement has given a political voice and language for critique, particularly of Western individualism and capitalism and therefore promoted identity politics as a way of tipping a balance into a new way of envisioning the world. As Gergen (1998:2) has pointed out:

> For those who found themselves on the other side of capitalism of the last century the movement unmasked the authority of rationalism found a very

willing backing with the politically dispossessed…. Not only did constructionism thus help to incite the political impulse, but it has also generated a powerful set of implements for societal critique. Constructionist inquiry demonstrated how claims to the true and the good were born of historical traditions, fortified by social networks, sewn together by literary tropes, legitimated through rhetorical devices, and operated in the service of particular ideologies to fashion structures of power and privilege.

Identity politics plays a significant role in a process of decolonisation. Social construction however offers these fields new horizons, new descriptions, new categories and identities built on a different set of assumptions, particularly ones that critique objectivism or neutrality underpinned by modernity and its assumptions about individualism and progress. On its own Gergen (1995) contends that identity politics has a capacity to wallow in its infallible truths and become stuck in an industry of victimisation and stylized truths.

Facing a post-colonial time in South Africa I have argued so far in this thesis that a new challenge faces us where we critique our position of polarity that inherently places one group down in order for another to be triumphantly politically correct. Gergen (1995, 1998, 1999) in his move towards what he terms relational politics, proposes alternative rhetorics that work towards relational inclusivity, challenging a politics of antagonism and alienation. Gergen (1995:9) speaks of performing language in ways that do not alienate or antagonise, shifting the focus away from me versus you, to us. This shift has come about in the field of family therapy as has been demonstrated in a narrative approach to therapy (White & Epston 1990, White 2000, McNamee & Gergen 1992, Hoffman 1992). Relational language refers to the relationship rather than to a person, such as asking a question such as 'what is happening in the relationship that might not sustain this polarisation'?

The shift towards relational questioning and relational responsibility exposes the social, linguistic, rhetorical, ideological, cultural and historical forces responsible for generating the world of knowledge in the context in South Africa. This context has been predominantly governed by a history of separatism, calling for the challenge of liberation within the politics of black identity. As Gergen (1999:36) has said: 'In order to achieve these various goals – peace, justice, equality and the like – it was essential to locate a means of discrediting the authority of the major institutions'.

The shift within the social construction movement for McNamee and Gergen in particular has been to move towards what he refers to as 'relational responsibility'. The thread of relational responsibility has been woven throughout his work.

6.13   Interdependency in relational responsibility

In his book *The Saturated Self* (1991:157) Gegen promotes the idea that the individual is not some autonomous agent that reflects reality, but 'meaning is born of interdependence'. He argues that language is shaped neither by nature or mind but by relational process as the locus of generative change (Gergen 1995:7). In his book *Relational Responsibility* (1999) he expands on this idea and enters conversations with others on the topic. This concurs with Kotzé (2001, 2002), working within ethics and theology, and Heshusius (1994, 1995), working within the field of education. Heshusius (1994:15) speaks of a participatory consciousness and suggests that 'if we want to free ourselves from objectivity we need to fundamentally re-order our understanding of the relation between self and other (and therefore, of reality) and turn toward a participatory mode of consciousness.' She speaks of a participatory consciousness as being an ability to let go of the categories of the knower and the known and risk the kinship that develops when we participate **emotionally** with another, letting go of a preoccupation with the 'I' as something separate from 'you'. She argues that before we constructed the idea of the individual and individuation, where a subject and object are seen as separate, that there are many societies such as the native Indians in the USA who were not alienated from a group consciousness but were one with nature and immersed within it. The Mothers I work with come partially from such a context, where they consistently talk of themselves as *one*. I would not want this either to become one idealised concept or picture, because within the Mothers are many alternate constructions built into the fabric and complexity of them as individuals who also play a game of power and privilege and individual rights. Language is therefore never a stable entity and holds multiple descriptions.

I would like to focus here on the ideas I built in chapter five on **vulnerability** and Levinas's work on the face and trace of the other. The idea I would like to follow is the thought that research is in need of pursuing an ability to reconnect our feelings and

knowing in ways that are not separated from our actions or our pasts. It is what Heshusius (1984:18) calls a participatory consciousness. This consciousness concerns itself with an ability to resonate with a mutuality of caring and she suggests that this 'is more necessary than perhaps anything else for relating to the world'.

Relating this back to Levinas's work on the face and the trace seen in the other, I cannot help but notice a link of vulnerability when we risk the shift away from the dualism of subject and object, the knower and the known. Levinas goes further and argues that we have to be *for the other* in an act of infinite responsibility, because in the face of the other we see someone different from ourselves, but nevertheless the person who is different has a legitimate moral claim on us. In this way my reading of Levinas would not depend on a mutuality of relationship.

Burkitt (1999: 75) suggests that responsibility for the other predates self-consciousness and bypasses rational, calculating thought. Emerging from the holocaust, Levinas has reflected perhaps more than any other on the relationship between freedom and vulnerability. Mbembe (2005:4) in a synthesis on freedom suggests that Levinas argues that the human being is vulnerability from top to toe and to the very marrow. As with Mandela in the Rivonnia trial, that freedom involves losing the fear of death in a sacrificing of the self for the future group survival. Burkitt (op cit:76) urges us to pay attention to the building of societies in which the self-other relation is reinforced. He says: 'In a so-called good society, we must be able to surmount the particularistic interests of the egocentric self and the in-group and open ourselves up to the other'. As I have written in the previous chapter, Levinas argues for infinite responsibility for the other, because we are nothing outside of the other. This draws in another dimension into the movement on social construction as it works from a transcendental position of not knowing, not interpreting, but assumes a position of ethical responsibility towards another, who is constructed as a potential enemy, through their difference. This somewhat paradoxical transcendental position may help in contexts where dialogue with a constructed enemy is not possible. I have experienced times where there is no conversational possibility, particularly where a power relationship offers me little resistance but to be accountable to the other by not paying back unkindness with unkindness. The only position I can take is to not polarize, but to also see myself in the face of the other, that I too am vulnerable and capable of such action.

Gergen (1995:9) in line with this concept suggests that: 'There is no means of winning, if winning means loss for the other. To condemn, excoriate, or wage war against a constructed other in our society is inherently self-destructive; for we are the other. They are born of us, emulate us, derive their sense of identity from us – and vice versa.'

The shift towards relationship draws Gergen into what he calls radical relationalsim and *relational politics* where he says (1995:10): 'The aim here is to develop a set of conversational resources that enable people to suspend the rhetoric of individual (or group) blame. Rather, under conditions in which blame is the invited move in the relational dance, we try to explore ways in which a relational discourse can be meaningfully employed. When problems develop, for example, how have "we" brought them about; and how are we related to others such that they are also implicated'. He casts a die which calls for relational transformation of neither *you* nor *me* but us. He draws on earlier work by Vygotsky, a Russian Jew who suffered under anti-Semitic laws and Starlin. He argued for a self known in social process which is an outcome of social collaboration and not vice versa (White 2003). This becomes another way of saying that we are constituted by the *other* in relationship.

Working with radical relationalism, emotions such as anger or apology would not then belong to an individual; individuals might carry the emotions but they cannot exist outside of relational interchange. Anger on its own would have a history and attach itself to prior meanings and experiences that are collectively owned.

Democracy, as I argued in Chapter five is born in a Western tradition of both individual rights as well as opposition to another party. Freedom of individual choice and freedom from danger is enshrined in the sovereign state. Within the social construction movement Gergen challenges us to find a new paradigm, not dependent on separation, blame or violence. These polarisations suppress moral and ethical discussion and within the very bi-polarity are found the devaluation of their very claims. There would then be no moral high ground for accusation, because morality itself is a product of social traditions. Through no accountability to the other, whether a subjugated person or someone who holds office of power, without the other, any politic is in danger of becoming blind to the few voices within the movement that become more equal than others. This then would refer to any movement that is involved in identity politics,

whether feminism, gay rights, individual rights, and a myriad of other identities that are formed in opposition to another. Gergen goes so far as to say that the incessant issuance of new rights, like the wholesale printing of currency, causes a massive inflation!

Relational responsibility concerns itself with ways in which we can shift the focus away from the individual blameworthiness, which ultimately leads to a tooth for a tooth, or is quantified in terms of the TRC through means of amnesty and reparation. Relational responsibility moves us towards what it might mean to value, sustain, and create forms of relationship out of which we can generate common moral meanings (McNamee & Gergen 1999:xi). As a form of accountability it differs from Levinas's ideas in that Levinas's work is working within a more individually situated paradigm although this in itself is not a truism because Levinas would say that I am nothing outside of the other. The thread of common meaning that is carried in this work is the idea of vulnerability against a backdrop of a world that politically entertains safety and state security in the face of death and the other. Levinas's work is also of interest in the way in which it makes an epistemological break with linear forms of accountability by looking to the infinite. Responsibility in this vein is not a reciprocal process, it is an act of personal eternal and ethical responsibility to the other, to whom I owe my life.

However, Levinas does not offer practical ways of achieving this goal and thus appears unrealistic. Levinas's work also resonates with ideas promoted by Ricoeur on forgiveness, which according to Lyle & Gehardt shows a way of allowing space, where people can *embrace the other* (Lyle & Gehart 2000:73). He talks about re-storying the past with multiple readings of it, but also 'liberation of promises of the past which have not been kept' (Lyle & Gehart 2000:81). This involves an understanding of the 'suffering' of both self and other. Lyle and Gehart (2000:82) go on to say: 'This helps end the vicious circle of those who seek to make others suffer as they have been made to suffer, thus perpetuating the terror of history'. It is about the exchange of memories and then the superabundance and supernatural ability to show hospitality to the *other*. Lyle and Gehart (2000:82) quote Ricoeur as saying:

> '[Forgiveness] belongs to an order – the order of charity – which goes even beyond the order of morality…. Insofar as it exceeds the order of morality, the economy of the gift belongs to what we would be able to term the "poetics" of the moral life …. Its "poetic" power consists in shattering the law of the

irreversibility of time by changing the past, not as a record of all that has happened but in terms of its meaning for us today. It does this by lifting the burden of guilt, which paralyses the relations between individuals who are acting out and suffering their own history. It does not abolish the debt insofar as we are and remain inheritors of the past, but it lifts the pain of the debt.'

Relational responsibility and more challengingly a participatory ethic works with an ethic of valuing humanity more than being right or wrong. McNamee and Gergen are particularly concerned with its ability to speak practically to clinicians and those practicing in the field. Back in Chapter one I referred to Ricoeur's idea of the text reading us and it is mindful to remember the type of relationship I am fostering with the reader of the text, the people with whose voices I am working, with myself as the writer and to ask how the text is reading me reflexively as I write.

Lest these ideas on relational responsibility seduce me into a new form of exclusivity, the domain remains in a deconstructive conversation in this text with its history, with post-colonial theory, and with Foucault's texts on discourse and power and knowledge. Finding ways that in a Derridian sense can play in a constant decentred deferral of any one meaning, the text opens itself up to critique, not in the sense of demolition or antagonism, but rather as exploration. The interest in theory for this work is particularly in its ability to be grounded practically within the work I am doing collaboratively with the Mothers. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999:68) point out it is not about a unified field of consensus, but creating an 'openness to uncertain and yet-to-emerge possibilities' within the research. Lannerman (1999:84) is however more cautious and warns of the practical difficulties involved in relational responsibility when one of the people in the relationship is working from a completely different ladder, one that exists in a world of 'oughts' and 'shoulds' and rights and wrongs. Lannerman goes on to say: '[I]f the shoulds and oughts that constitute our conversational identities are dominated by a tradition of individualism then what are the relational alternatives? Can we still play the language game of accountability once we move away from an individualist ontology? Or is the notion of accountability inseparable from the tradition of individualism?' Within this work I am reminded of times when I have felt intensely alone in my pursuit of relational responsibility and have come up against individualism couched in many ways that have presented me with brick walls of resistance. All I can say here is that in generating new more friendly relational discourses it takes time and personal cost in

carrying the many shadows cast upon the person attempting to practically deconstruct a dominant text within a community. In this research the responsibility has fallen upon me.

In as much as the Mothers themselves espouse a collective identity of *ubuntu* they too have turned to individualism, consumerism and secrecy in order to survive within the group and within the discourses that they are born into. I have somersaulted from one ladder to another cutting my way into different realities, sometimes not sure on which leg to stand and sometimes thinking that we all play a game that gives us the greatest personal gain; after all to be ruthlessly honest, if it weren't for this thesis would I have hung in there? I might have done, but I might not.

Relational responsibility, along with the face of the other is transcendentally meritous, but how to achieve it relationally remains to be seen, particularly as my father in law comes to visit for a month next week! A theory is only as good as it works in practice, with lived experience and our humanity and the vulnerability of risk.

Before I close this chapter I would like to introduce into the conversation some thoughts, taken from Terry Eagleton's book *After Theory* (2003). Eagleton has worked as a Marxist cultural theorist and challenges the age of postmodernism in whose soils this chapter has been cropped. He challenges us to re-engage with aspects of modernism and truth in ways that ground us in experience that does not float away on the clouds of cultural and relational utopia. He re-engages with issues of love, evil, death, morality, metaphysics and revolution as a manoeuvre forward in a world saturated with armchair research and philosophy on topics such as malt whisky, romance and sex. Eagleton argues that ethics and politics are both connected to the idea of community thriving, which would concur with my understanding of Levinas. He suggests, somewhat cryptically, that because truth has become aligned with dogmatism we have dismissed it as if it had no value. He suggests that this is a peculiarly pointless manoeuvre. He challenges us to return to embracing thriving communities that are based on certain universal laws relating to life and death, humanity and non-being. In other words, our survival as a global village depends on universal principles of similarity, rather than difference, and our collective group survival. My son recently asked me: 'Mum, if we as human beings were threatened by beings from another

planet, how would that change the ways we behave in the world towards one another?' An interesting question on the social construction of race.

Eagleton has a way of re-introducing the very ideas that we have thrown out, such as universalism. A familiar rhythm appears in his thinking along with Levinas's call to a universal *pre-linguistic* ability to know another human as both different and the same regardless of the cluttered-ness of culture. Eagleton's arguments hold a significant resonance, in that culture, gender and race have bewitched us so that we find it difficult to see beyond these constructions to our human frailty. The social construction movement has, as I have earlier said, focused on culture and historically specific beliefs. Eagleton (2003:160) urges us to shift our hunting ground and begin to look at universalism but not as what he refers to as phoney idealistic universalism known as George Bush, where you comply with democratic values or suffer the fallout. Rather he challenges an ethical position of transcendential responsibility towards one another, our planet and our collective survival that is not cultivated in individual rights, but rather humanity, which again has resonance with Levinas and the face and trace of the other.

In the face of our current crisis of civilisation Eagleton contends that pragmatism is too lightweight a response. There is a growing fascination with *non-being* or what Mbembe and Fanon (see chapter five) refer to as the empty signifier, those who are shut out of the current system and have no real stake in its structure. What then is there to lose for the dispossessed but revolution and the death drive, exemplified in ultimate violence to oneself as well as to others? Eagleton argues: 'It is to be sure, exactly among the wretched and dispossessed that fundamentalism finds its most fertile breeding ground. In the figure of the suicide bomber, the non-being of dispossession turns into a more deathly kind of negation. The suicide bomber does not shift from despair to hope; his weapon is despair itself.' It is an old adage that those who fall to the bottom of the system are in fact free of it and thus at liberty to destroy, as an ultimate weapon of power. It is not surprising that Mbembe calls the black African to take ownership and the white South African to belong. Levinas's work also works in a way with death, but connects us back to our humanity as does Gergen's work with relational responsibility. It re-engages with our frailty of encountering our vulnerability, our human need of other human beings, regardless of race or class.

Chapter seven

Reflections on a participatory process

7.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter in this thesis, apart from a post-script, in which I return to the research question, the research aims, and some thoughts about the future.

In this final chapter I draw from a group of six of the Mothers who I have travelled with over these last three years. In the previous chapters I have participated with literature, my own reflexivity, field notes as well as my own memories of the Mothers and their voices as they have resonated and jarred and reacted with my own. In this chapter I foreground the Mothers voices and weave them into what has been written before. In the light of the call for theory to work alongside practice I attempt in this chapter to link in a practical and grounded way some of the fragments of authentic participation.

I have found this a difficult chapter to write. I am exposed and vulnerable and sometimes tearful as I read through the words that the Mothers speak. There is certain dis-ease in seeing myself through the Mothers eyes and I keep questioning what they left out in order to accommodate me. Building trust and authentic participation perhaps makes it harder for the Mothers to be more ruthlessly honest about me. This too becomes a part of their responsibility and loyalty towards me. Within a deconstructive tradition suspicion becomes a part of the multiple readings of this text through what is said and what is not said. There can be no innocent read of this chapter. As the Mothers speak I hear them standing in solidarity with me and this in itself holds blindness to its own loyalty.

7.2 Reading of this text

The transcript of this reflection can be viewed on the DVD in Appendix (ii). The Mothers's words are edited in order for them to flow within the text. This is in contrast to a more textual analysis where every pause, comma and repetition would be examined for the discourses within the text. The methodology I am working with makes the

assumption that there is no original or authentic text that can be captured. Each reading of it will evoke prior memory and experience and therefore the reader as much as the speaker and writer become a part of the text through the interpretations that are made. The reflection itself reveals this very position in that each Mother hears a reading of our relationship and changes it, owns it, responds to it, as Echo does to Narcissus (Dick and Zeiring Koffman 2002). The text itself becomes a multiple reading of relationship in action and the trace of one person's voice becomes my own, performed and acted out in relationship, generative of new discourses around our humanity.

7.3 Group reflection process

The six Mothers I selected for this reflection have attended meetings most regularly over the three years. A seventh person came to the meeting, whose name is Rudi. He came as a participant and translator. Rudi has worked with the Mothers through his role as an employee of Khulumani. He was tasked at the time of the TRC to document the Mothers' stories and has gained detailed knowledge of the Mothers' narratives (he can be seen in action extensively in the TRC DVDs). He has not attended weekly meetings although he is a trusted member of the Mamelodi community and has developed a respected relationship with the Mothers. He left employment at Khulumani in 2004.

The other people present at this reflection are Dr. Johann Roux (a colleague at ITD and supervisor for doctoral students) and six doctoral students.

7.4 The generation of questions in this reflection process

This reflection began with quite lengthy introductions by those present. This was followed by my research question and some questions that both the Mothers and doctoral students might like to consider. These were translated for the Mothers. The questions were:

1. What kind of relationships have you developed in your group over the last three years?
2. Who do you see is 'Bridgid'?
3. Who do you see as 'the Mothers?'
4. How has your experience of each other changed over this time?

5. What are some of the significant moments, either helpful or not helpful that you remember about being together?
6. How might you know when it would be safe to share painful things together?
7. In what ways might your being together have influenced ideas about race?
8. How do you think she has benefited from journeying with you? What do you think she has learned from you?
9. What do you think that the other mothers have learnt from you Bridgid? How do you think they have benefited from journeying with you?
10. What do you think is important for other people to know about God and God's role in becoming empowered?

The questions I posed above did not appear to feature in a particularly prominent way apart from the one question 'What has Bridgid learnt from you?' Perhaps they were unnecessary and spoke more of my anxiety than a trust in the participative process.

7.5 Joyce Mabena. Thoughts on Ubuntu

The Mothers talk in Zulu, Sotho and English. Joyce Mabena, Mother of Jeffrey Hlope, one of the Mamelodi Nine opens the conversation. You can read more about Joyce in the poem in the middle of this thesis entitles *Off the street.* Joyce is pictured standing next to Jack Cronje, on his left as you look at the picture.

> *Umuntu umubuntu* – that means a person has a particular personality. This is transferred into another person. This personality of ubuntu builds ubuntu. This ubuntu of us becomes one family. It is found in Matthew's gospel chapter 25 which talks about visiting Jesus in prison. It is an ubuntu that helps you build one another. Bridgid has helped us to build ubuntu. She is a human being and I am a human being.

Johann : How did Bridgid go about creating a context for you to say this today?

> When Bridgid came she just came as a human being. She didn't ask for our stories. She just brought our conversations together. She was never in business (did not come with ulterior motives) when she came to us. She came the first time. She came the second time and here she is she is still with us. This shows the ubuntu in her.

Ubuntu is a word often used to romanticise an idea in South Africa that I only exist in relationship to someone else, or the collective. This is a popular idea which is founded in solidarity with others. It is a traditional belief that there is no single person, only a group identity. One reading of *ubuntu* is a sovereign power in which one group survives

against the fear of another group of people, or equally that the individual is expendable to the survival of the group.

Joyce is drawing on another reading of *ubuntu*. This is the idea that as individuals within a collective system of identity a person holds a capacity or a power to influence others through a way of being in community, through a friendly form of power (Louw 2006). It is difficult to place this reciprocal form of power relationship within either sovereign or disciplinary power as it does not fully subscribe to either. It appears to lie outside either exterior ways of governance or interior regimes of disciplinary power. Within a Foucauldian reading of power relations, *ubuntu* in a participatory sense forms a generative friendly power relationship that becomes languaged into existence, bourgeons and flourishes through relational practices where people are deeply respected and taken seriously.

This focus on relationship is in contrast to caring for people, or controlling them. *Ubuntu* could be any of these things and in a post-structuralist way has no inherent meaning on its own. This friendly *ubuntu* seems to flourish in a context of mutuality and nurtured trust. I trusted that the Mothers would guide me to what would help us in this process. It was also about trusting my own belief and knowledge concerning the vastly destructive power into which the colonial subject has been born. Finding ethical ways of deconstructing this power has meant a slow and often painful walk, in which I was constructed as the coloniser, the one who was viewed with suspicion, *money bags* and the one who was there to take with no return.

The Mothers in their turn trusted me enough to allow me to walk with them in spite of suspicions on the way. This is what Levinas refers to as an ethical response to the *otherness* of another human being, the one I cannot fully understand or comprehend. It is a form of power that relies more on a process of being with rather than doing for. In this capacity it becomes what Kotzé (2001, 2002), Heshusius (1994, 1995) and Gergen (1991, 1994, 1995, 1999) refer to as a self/other relationship. The way in which Joyce describes this might best be captured in a poetic form, in which her body and tone of voice contribute to the meanings she performs before a group of people. It cannot be fully captured or talked about. It becomes an aroma which defies adequate description

except through the poetic metaphor of being with. It is also seen as a by-product of our acting together within a relational process (Gergen 1999, Monk 2005).

Ubuntu could be interpreted as a space to be human without attempting to make someone else the same. This forms a multiple and ambiguous relationship with sovereign power. It could be seen as a presence that diffuses separateness and embraces diversity. As Ricoeur (Lyle & Gerhart 2000) and Derrida (Dick & Zeiring Koffman 2003) suggest of forgiveness, it appears to belong to a different order than the order of truth, culture or justice. *Ubuntu* is also a highly idealised form of relationship and as much as Joyce describes me in this way, it also excludes other aspects of my *self in relationship* that do not fit with this hallowed identity.

7.6 Lizzie Sefolo on the active role of a participative counsellor

Lizzie continues the conversation. Lizzie can be seen in a poem and photo called *I can raise my voice.* It was a poem I wrote following a long conversation with her about her husband Harold and her long and painful search for him after he went missing from his shop in Witbank. You can also see Lizzie on the first page of the poetry with her hands in a prayerful position and the shadow of Adriaan Vlok in the background:

> Bridgid came as a counsellor. We were very pleased that she came as we had asked for someone to help us with our pain. We tried to come out of the pain we had through talking about it. We did not only talk about pain, we focused on other things like sewing and beadwork.
>
> There were places we could not go because of being black. We got access to some of these places and people through Bridgid. We managed to meet with Adriaan Vlok and go to the prison to meet De Kock. We asked her about meeting with these people. She went to find out and came back to the group with information so that we could make a decision. We managed to go to Mr. Vlok to ask his about our husbands and children. He explained to us that he was not present but would speak to General Van der Merve who might be able to help and see if he could talk to the policemen who were in charge. We wanted to know if the perpetrators are sorry about what they did. –or are they still in the mood for killing? It means that there are those killings that the devil is still there. The devil was there for whites and blacks. It was the time when the devil was working with the people both black and white. Bridgid helped a lot. I can't hate a black man because he did this. I might hate someone who is innocent.

People are not same. She always sympathised with us. We did not focus on our pain but today we find that we are healed.

Johann: She did not just talk. It sounds like she did something. What did it mean to meet with Mr.Vlok?

I am relieved. Like Vlok – sometimes they were pushed to do that. Life was like that at that time. It was good to meet him. We were able to ask some questions. He answered those questions and he also asked us questions. He described life at that time of war.

Lizzie begins by talking of my role as a counsellor. She talks about their need as a group for me to assist them with their collective pain. She goes on to speak of some of the aspects of our participation that were particularly meaningful to her. It seems significant that I did not pry into their trauma stories and this is corroborated later on in this conversation by Maria. This was difficult for me not to do. I would have found it much easier to have interviewed each Mother separately and written up a family tree and the dramatic and tragic story of heroes and death. The Mothers did not ask for this. They seemed very clear about what they wanted, although this cannot be generalised. Others had come to ask for their 'stories' and I felt an ethical commitment not to do this, but rather to be led by them. Their stories emerged as time went on and this seemed also important. For example Sophie had written out her story for me and two years after this I mentioned something to her about this and her comment was 'So you remembered'.

In narrative practice the focus is not on returning to trauma, but on scaffolding (White 1986, 1990, 1995, 2000) alternate descriptions and ways of knowing that lie outside the dominant discourse of, in this case, trauma. This was not deliberately done on my side, although as a narrative pastoral care worker it perhaps goes to show how much certain practices become a part of one's work. I was aware however of not *breeding trauma* and within the first eighteen months of working with the Mothers I was led to think differently about words such as forgiveness and truth, as was evident in chapter three of this thesis. I did not deliberately shift the focus away from truth and forgiveness, but allowed relationship to develop with all participants as a focus of enquiry rather than truth or trauma. This permitted space for alternate identities to emerge which greatly took me by surprise. I surprised myself with the power of relationship, particularly

where the focus is moved from blame and forgiveness towards the possibility of humaneness in the face of another human being.

I am not suggesting here that a participatory relational process is possible in all circumstances. For example it did not work with A. I put this down to two reasons. The first is that A remains in a powerful position and in the face of this power my resistance was passive. A had also selected information about my fallibility over time which excluded other identities. A seemed to find ways of using my vulnerability against me. Secondly, there came a time when dialogue was not possible because for some reason I was caught up in a power game in which I felt as if A's survival depended on destroying me in a sovereign form of power. This would indicate that I was a threat to A and A's survival. A participatory process worked with the perpetrators because they were no longer in a position of power and authority and would never return to a position of power. It also worked because of what Vlok called a 'softly' approach, in which I sought out their humanity. The Mothers likewise were also not in a position of power over the perpetrators or me, although in some ways they were. This happened with Cronje when they held the power to forgive him or not when he said 'All I want is for the Mothers to forgive me'. It also happened with Vlok at the very end of this thesis when they had the power to scorn his vulnerability. This becomes an enormously risky act of relationship performed in moments of intense vulnerability.

Lizzie talks about other means of freedom that have involved activities such as making dolls, painting fabric and designing poetry to capture lived experience that lies outside dominant narratives. This would make no sense if it were not relational. Relational healing practices are familiar in many cultures through activities such as basket making, quilting and other communal activities, although it appears as a not so talked about practice in today's world. In the light of Lizzie's comments such relational practices in which healing happens as a by-product of care and 'being with' in an unstructured format may be significantly important in South Africa today.

It is interesting that Lizzie talks about black and white as if it fades somewhat into the background. She is entertaining multiple descriptions of what it means to be human. This is not to say that her words represent other Mothers. Adelaide and Lilli both later point out that race is involved, and in fact cannot be avoided in collective memory. In a

participatory consciousness, where hierarchies are challenged, it is interesting how Lizzie talks about my *whiteness* getting them places where they might not otherwise have access to. For example my whiteness seemed to bridge a gap and permit me access to meeting with Vlok and De Kock, as well as Cronje in the Cape. This would have been particularly difficult for them to do. It was as if the group employed my whiteness as a way of accessing difficult places and people. In this way race begins to take on a different form. It becomes a way of employing racial privilege for the common good. History cannot be erased, but it can be transformed in practices of mutual benefit.

7.7 Joyce reflects on her role in meeting with Vlok

Joyce continues the conversation, her thoughts perhaps triggered by what Lizzie has languaged:

> I was the first of the Mothers to go with Bridgid to meet
> Mr. Vlok in Centurion (a suburb of Pretoria).
> An Arts and Crafts shop is where he was working.
> 'Let us go for coffee' he said.
> I had never tasted such coffee
> The milk separated from the coffee (latte)
> Where would I have ever tasted such coffee?
> He talked about his work at that time in 1986
> He said how he has changed
> He was not there at the killings…. He just seemed to give orders
>
> He said he had changed. He was hurt himself
> God took his wife.
> I wanted to know about this hurt. Was he really hurt like us?
> 'My life has changed' he told me
> 'What has changed your life?'
> 'I am now a Christian and work with the Gideons'
> 'Are you sure you have changed?'
> 'I have changed'.
> He told me about his helper at home.
> She is a Methodist like me
> Now it seems they live like a family.
> 'If you have changed Mr. Adriaan Vlok we would like you to meet
> with the other Mothers.'

I recorded my own memory of this first meeting with Vlok in chapter two of this work. Reading now what Joyce said reminds me of how unafraid she seemed to be of him. She seemed to take a leading role in interrogating him in a strange reversal of roles.

Over the following year after we met with him, Joyce made a few comments to me about him. These were comments such as '*I don't think he is really sorry*', or '*did you phone him or did he phone you?*' It was as if suspicion cautioned her to be careful in her belief of him and his change in image. I also remember her saying '*It is only because he lost his wife that he is sorry; he would not be sorry otherwise. God has done this to him*'.

This caution gives way to her description in this text which happened more than a year after her other comments about him. In a research process such as this one, change happens slowly as a process of trust is built up. It can also happen unexpectedly in moments that cannot be predicted. These more timely *kairos* moments stand outside chronological time and become inserted into the reading of our times (Bulman 1997). Moments of insertion and transformation can perhaps happen more readily within a process that is not in a hurry to get to an end destination and within a research process of participative action. Fragments of knowledge that are left to the margin, hanging without a context, stand on the threshold of what appears impossible. These are moments that cannot be planned or controlled and only inadequately recorded in a poetic frame.

Language emerges as a by-product of our acting and being together, in ongoing negotiation of meanings that can never be fully captured. This ongoing negotiation can be seen in this chapter as this text develops and people pick up on significant ideas that others speak. I am referring to Gergen's ideas on relational responsibility. It resonates with ideas of Levinas concerning the face and trace of the other, the one we can never fully understand or control. The ethical response is to respect and not harm the other, the person who I can not understand. It also connects with Frank (2005) in his reading of Bakhtin when he talks of the ethical responsibility within research to not bring finality any one meaning concerning a person.

It helps to answer a question I asked in the previous chapter concerning the Mothers' own ability to see the face and trace of the *other* within the perpetrators. When I wrote this in the last chapter it was with genuine curiosity tainted with exasperation. I had felt tired and sometimes resentful that I have so often seemed to carry the weight of the *face of the other*; the trace that I must not hurt or abandon. I seem to have carried this responsibility for a long time on this journey without seeing any fruit from this labour.

Hearing Joyce speak in this way indicates to me that change can happen and has happened when I least expected it. Even as I write this word 'any' it has pushed me into binary opposition, blinding me from the many occasions I have experienced a surplus of generosity with the Mothers.

7.8 Local knowledge that embraces mystery and an ability to language relationship

Lilli takes up the conversation. Lilli's son was killed in 1994. He was a policeman in Standerton and the case has not come to a conclusion. She did not testify at the TRC. You can see her in the photo attached to the poem *My son died*.

> Mysterious
> Mystery questions
> As a parent to crying children
> Is Bridgid
> Creating energy
> Love that does not favour or discriminate
> Closely watching, bringing gifts and clothes
> Life
> Continues after all
> White woman
> Not appearing as white
> Kind, generous, not discriminating
> Replaces my stolen sewing
> By choice

Lilli uses interesting language when she refers to the mysterious. I have placed her response in a poetic form as it seems to fit with her interesting choice of the words *mysterious*, *white*, *energy* and *choice*. These words in themselves may lose some of their meaning to translation and yet within the aroma of the words are many relational meanings that are generative of alternate racial constructions. Lurking behind her very choice of words are perhaps beliefs about what it means to be white and discriminating. A great appeal of post-modern theology is its open-ended ability to entertain mystery without dissecting or quantifying truth. She also uses the word *love* as an expression of treating the Mothers the same and not discriminating between them.

Her respect of me perhaps belies the polarization within the text. It generates nervousness within me about my own performance within the group. Against the backdrop of apartheid and colonialism is a debt that is paid and paid again, sometimes

with kindness and generosity but sometimes with resentment. As I reflect on this, it appears to me that as time has ticked on and authentic relationship can be built in spite of problems, jealousies and resentments. In recent times there has been a greater freedom on my part to give generously, more as a friend than a rescuer. Small generous gestures that Lilli has made for me have helped to deconstruct race as well. Pillows she made for me last Christmas and a card that was very meaningful to me. There has been a sense of a superabundance of reciprocal care that has emerged from our relationship over the years.

7.9   A pastoral response to the meaning of love.

Maria continues the conversation and picks up on the idea of *love*. Maria is the group co-ordinator and can be seen in a number of poems and photos: *A Mamelodi Mother,* the poem Hamb*a Kahle*. You can also see Maria in the poem *Yesterday's men*:

> Bridgid shows love.
> She never screams at the Mothers.
> She laughs and smiles in our homes and greets everyone politely.
> Bridgid is like a child born to me.
> She arrived at a time when we were hurting.
> We were victims.
> We were angry with the perpetrators.
> We talked about many things and I began to change.
> From a victim to a survivor
> She is interested in us as people and the problems that we face.
> We find now that we are free
> She is reliable and does what she says
> We visit her home
> We have a party
> A gift for everyone
> She phones us
> Her family also like black people
> It makes us happy
> She was there when Everite died
> Beside us
> Eating our food
> I was afraid she would not like it
> She remains the same
> All I ask is that she does not change
> It is because of Bridgid that we found the bones
> She has helped us and stayed with us

Maria talks of me as her *daughter*. Lilli earlier refers to me as a *mother*. It would be easy to buy into a patriarchal and colonial text of power if Maria had not said that she sees me as a *daughter*. Through deferring any one meaning of this text, the Mothers themselves begin to deconstruct assumptions around what it means to become a part of a family grouping. Within Maria's text however is also nervousness about my role and perhaps a fragile hope that I will not reject her.

In chapter two I wrote my own version of Everite's funeral. It did not cross my mind at the time that I would not like their food. My concern was the way in which I became elevated within the group and was invited to sit next to Maria. Race, privilege, nervousness and elevated status cannot be avoided because they are a part of our collective memories. There is no way of fully deciphering this scene because within it is a colonial identity, a friendship, a respect and one built on privilege and nervousness of me as the only outsider to the community. What becomes significant is the letting go of these categories and labels and allowing them to work their own course of history without giving them undue attention.

An important fragment in this conversation for me is that I was able to participate with multiple identities in what seems a significant and tragic moment in a family's life. This does not fit into any form of dominant discourse and can best be described as a friendly form of power.

A significant mention is needed here of consistency. From early on in my walk with the Mothers I have been aware of people who have come and gone without any form of a trace. People have arrived to capture the data of their stories and left. They left without a trace. Still others have come to care for the Mothers or to make decisions for them and again left without any explanations. This happened with two people while I have been with them. 'A' came to meetings for a year, often driving the meetings and offering courses on empowerment. 'A' stopped coming very abruptly with no explanation to the Mothers and this made them angry. Another person from ITD also committed herself to coming and stopped attending with no exit plan. Might this speak of the difficulty of remaining within a relationally accountable space? The difficulty of exiting as a white person? Or the assumption by the Mothers that white people come

and go with no respect to them as people, thus maintaining a subject/object split and a gaze upon them as the subaltern?

Building trust in community happens when, over time, relationship is built around the meanings attached to a community's needs as well as their skills. There have been dominant meanings attached to *white* people that have thickened the dominant colonial story, that white people take and do not give, they exploit and do not care. I am sure, as with the BBC crew, this would not be their intention. The importance is that as communities we grow in our own awareness of the multiple negative effects and meanings that our actions have on others as well as our collective pasts. It is urgent that we find language for this and risk putting it out there on the table, worthy of examination and scrutiny.

7.10   An ethical commitment to not 'quit' in a post-colony. Adelaide

In the next section of text Adelaide picks up on the theme of consistent care when she says '*she won't quit'*. This in many ways captures my earlier comments on the difficulty of authentic participation when there appears an insurmountable history of oppression, both behind and in front of the nation of South Africa. Levinas' writing on the face of the other, as well as Gergen's writing on relational responsibility do not fully access this difficult form of participation involved in the cost of not hurting or showing unkindness to another in the face of history. There is a great risk and cost in being accountable, not just to my own past, but to the collective guilt and benefits accrued to the colour white in Africa. I have found it difficult not be become paralysed by it. I have documented some the difficulty and pain of my whiteness and privilege facing the *other*. Psychodynamic constructions of race as proposed by Butterly in chapter five of this thesis help me to understand something of the projection of identity and the enormity of this task. Finding alternate descriptions that move towards integration comes at a great cost of personal involvement. I risk splitting those parts of my own past that become intolerable, as well as holding those parts of the Mothers and perpetrators pasts without resorting to blame or idealisation.

Idealisation is present in this text. Although I had been a part of the ongoing conversations with the NPA, it was definitely not because of me that the exhumations

happened. Fullard was employed by the NPA in 2004 to find the remains of the disappeared in South Africa. Idealisation of my humanity in the face of my colour is also downplayed in this text.

Listening to what has gone before Adelaide makes some measured racial comments.

> There are many people who come and go in our group. Some people arrive at our meetings who are suspicious of Bridgid and want to find fault with her. But she just doesn't quit. She just keeps on coming even though some people want to kick her out. We have managed to hold onto her with two hands.

Built into the very words are racial descriptions and undercurrents that Adelaide picks up. These undercurrents have happened both with black as well as white people.

Embedded in Adelaide's comments is also a theme of *staying with the process.* This could be read of course in many ways. For some of the group it might not have been helpful that I remained with the group. For others it became a very significant part of staying in spite of difficult circumstances.

From here the conversation moves towards my own learning from the Mothers. Elonya (one of the doctoral students) asks the following question: 'I have heard a lot about what Bridgid means to you. What has Bridgid learnt from you?'

7.11   Being accountable to my own process of feedback

Maria follows this by asking me directly what I have learnt from them as a group.

> 'Bridgid has learnt a lot from us. **Say** something you have learnt from us Bridgid.'

It appears a simple question, but it threw me. I was not prepared for it, even though I had suggested the question earlier. It placed me under a spotlight, the same spotlight that the Mothers had been under until now. It forms a web of accountability in our relationship where I also am accountable to them for my own learning. Maria seemed

very certain that I had learnt a great deal from them and it pleased me to think she would say this.

I will divide my own text into two parts. The first concerns my own vulnerability and signifies the enormous shift in process when I allowed myself to be cared for by the mothers.

> Maria is right. I have learnt many things. I have learnt about the importance of prayer. Maria is always telling me 'just pray Bridgid'. When I was very hurt and vulnerable Maria gave me good advice and she stood beside me.
>
> You taught me Maria about waiting and not rushing. I have tried to learn patience from you.
>
> You have taught me about sadness and suffering too.

This second part of the text concerns my slow learning process of working with the Mothers rather than for them. I spent many weeks and months planning and preparing income generating projects with the Mothers. They all fell by the wayside although the benefit has been reaped in some unexpected ways, such as the unobtrusive fellowship we shared while we made things together. I continue:

> Another thing – I have learnt how resourceful people are. Like Lilli – how she sews and uses her skills.
>
> I see Adelaide making beautiful things from bits and pieces. She makes dolls. Why do people come in from outside assuming that they know better? If only they knew what the Mothers are already doing.
>
> Why can't people ask what people want? Adelaide is already up and going she needs finance to do more of that. (Not only does she make dolls but she also runs a crèche). Organisations don't want to give money to things that are not high profile.
>
> Rudi: It is the truth.
>
> Johann: It is important to say this. They need support to do better what they are already doing even without a fancy business plan. People already have enthusiasm. That is something important to write.
> Rudi: She is making dolls from pieces of rags they are beautiful. She just thought she has two great grandchildren – she knows what she wants in life. She doesn't just sit around. Lilli is the same she shares what is supposed to be done. Even when her machine was stolen she doesn't just sit and cry. People don't just sit back – they want to do something. That is also therapeutic. During the past

they would have been crying this would not be the same, they are victorious today.

Johann: We underestimate this. Being able to have these conversations without tears and anger that is a tremendous achievement.

The conversation develops and weaves its way in and out of the complexity of lived relationship, moving and shifting ideas, forming language and discourses of which they speak. This small relational reflection becomes a flexible medium for forming and re-forming relational identity. Different people within the reflecting group talks and reflect on what it means to care and pray generating and consolidating ideas, picking up on the bits and pieces of what went before. I will repeat what Wittgenstein (1967:567) said about humans behaving together: 'What determines our judgement, our concepts and reactions, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against we see any action'.

7.12 A prayer and spiritual wisdom within the rich tradition of Africa

From some of these ideas Maria returns to the wisdom of prayer. It is wisdom that given time and patience transcends hate and murderous thoughts, but it could also be construed as feeding into powerlessness. It is a reflected wisdom that is formed in the face of the *other*, the one who has hurt her. This is a very different position from the text she spoke to Drum magazine (beginning of chapter one). Participating with the *other* in this instance seems to come and go and is difficult to maintain. Even with a safe enough context, it does not guarantee an ability to participate with the *other*. Maria continues by talking about the impact of meeting perpetrators face to face.

I was taught to pray.
I managed to look these people in the face. This is not just on paper
I then saw that they are human beings like me.
Whatever they did, they are still human beings.
The Devil had total control over them at that time.
It helped to understand why Vlok did these kind of things.
I asked the Lord help me to forgive.

7.13 The importance of privileging human-ness rather than clever-ness

Johann: Do we need this face to face encounter? In a leadership position you need to take accountability for what has happened. Having an eye to eye meeting did that help? I think as part of a research institute have to learn how we work with people and with we train. What was the difference in Bridgid's approach and others who came and went? They go into society to do work like Bridgid did with you. It is important for us to continually learn. The difference is that many people came many people just went. What is the difference between these approaches? If we can understand that it will help us in our training.

> We sit here not as victims any more. We can sit here without crying.

Johann: Is there something in this approach that makes you strong enough? I hear you saying three things:

1. Bridgid gave her own humanness. She came as a human being not to be clever.
2. When she said she would do things, she did them.
3. When she engaged with people she did it honestly and openly. She allowed others to touch her life. She did not do this quickly in and out.

There is a theme in my journey with the Mothers concerning their stories not being taken or stolen by people who come and ask for them. Their stories after all make news and have drawn the attention of the media over the last few years, particularly since the NPA began excavating in the Winterveld in March 2005.

Focusing on alternate fragments and stories in this sense begins a process of creating new and power friendly discourses around what it means to participate in humanity rather than expertness. It moves the locus away from the story as such, to people in relationship with one another. The shift is away from dualisms, that of giver and receiver, carer and cared for towards reciprocity and mutuality. The move is subtle and is found within the relational participatory practice out of which emerges reciprocity of care.

Maria picks up on the echo of Johann's words concerning mutual care:

> When Bridgid came to the group she did not ask for our stories.
> Bridgid is quite different to those other people.

> They used to come in quickly and write and write and promise to come back
> and then you would never see them.
> Then others would come and take our stories.
> Bridgid never came to do that.
> She brought her humaneness into the group.
> She did not try to be clever.
> She allowed herself to be changed and touched in both ways.

Being touched and changed through engaging with other people is important in a participatory ethic, where my knowledge is not privileged over someone else's. It is even more important in a context such as South Africa where privilege has been exercised in profound ways through western research methodologies. The Mothers themselves expose some of the immoral claims embedded within some of the assumed ethical procedures of consent forms. Cleverness is also deconstructed by Maria through the positioning of knowledge as something that we create between us and learn from one another.

A part of this building of trust and co-constructing cleverness has been a participatory ethic of signing consent forms after trust was built. It was trust and not signatures that indicated an ethical position of mutual care and benefit. In this way I opted for a hand written letter that I negotiated with the Mothers during a meeting. I wanted them to be more in control over the words they would select in giving me permission to write about our journey together (Appendix i). It speaks of becoming both immersed and vulnerable to another person. It also indicates risking letting go of control over one's own ideas of how things should be done.

Lizzie then continues this theme by saying:

> What I remember is she knew she was coming to meet people who had been hurt all these years. She wanted to remove the pain. There were people who came before and after. There were people who came with drawings but they did not understand this pain.
>
> Bridgid's approach was quite different. She did not come to write the stories and leave. She came as another human being. We began so see a different life. She showed a different way. For example we did not cry with her. We began to laugh and learn acceptance. We started to support each other. Others tried to take us back into the pain and it did not help. We told this lady not to return to us. We didn't want to say this to Bridgid. We are at home with her. We learnt to accept life is being together. There is a sadness that others have not persevered.

For example our chairperson used to come with her. She introduced Bridgid to us but she just stopped coming with no explanation. That hurts.

7.14   Working with a friendly power relationship built on being human together

My own position within the group, where I lacked *title* or *entitlement* has placed me in another way in a particularly voiceless position, or in a particularly privileged position. Prof. Kotzé had suggested in 1994 that this very position could be powerful and helpful in the process. I could not see this at the time; I was blinded by my own tears.

I have no job description to fall back on, particularly in relation to 'A' who held power in the organisation, leaving me particularly exposed and vulnerable to criticism. Power however that participates within a context of group trust and accountability might be difficult to describe or to penetrate in its generative ability to bring transformation. This could be a power associated with resistance and loyalty within a participatory group process that forms new objects of which it speaks. It is a difficult form of power to quantify or capture.

In another way seeing such a process over time has helped me to participate authentically and with vulnerability. It has facilitated the deconstruction of the boundaries between the self and the other, the coloniser and the colonised and given the Mothers an opportunity to also care with me in vulnerable moments.

Before this process becomes overly romanticised, I have held a particularly privileged position. Firstly to financially afford to work in this way without outside funding indicates a socially privileged position. Secondly, to afford the time to do this work when, if it were to be paid, it would not be financially viable, needs careful consideration. Thirdly, to say I am a member of the group without particular status is not possible given the historical privileges in South Africa.

7.15   Romanticising relationship within a racial context

Rudi now continues this conversation about participating within a community. In listening to the following section I felt uncomfortable. I could imagine myself as a teacher at the time of the riots when to sport a white skin did not seem safe. Perhaps my position as someone who chose to enter a community without monetary value attached to my commitment played an important role in this participatory process. But had I been dependent upon a teacher's income and prepared in the 1980's to teach in Mamelodi, I might have seen this as a form of resistance to the apartheid government. This also makes me nervous. Embedded in Rudi's evocative story is dualistic thinking in which I am better than another person and therefore with the backdrop of the stage painted, I had better not turn into a 'racist'. Being the exception to the rule is a tiring identity. It is so easy to slip back into the sea of dominant racial construction. Listen to Rudi's words and depending on the reader's own history and background they will evoke different meanings:

> In 1976 white teachers used to come into the township in their cars every day. When the uprising started in about 1977 they went on their daily business in a 'custer'. This was a police armoured vehicle. That is the difference between them and Bridgid. They were teaching black children for a living, for a salary. Bridgid has now been with us for 3 years not for a living not for a salary. She is there because she wants to be there.

7.16   Constructing God within relationship

The conversation shifted at this moment to an interest in God. Chené (a doctoral student), asked the Mothers: 'If God could speak now what would he say about your journey with Bridgid over the last three years?' Maria then takes up the conversation, followed by Rudi's thoughts on God and then Adelaide and Lizzie:

> God is amongst us, we are not alone.
> Where God is not present there is no love and no communication.

> Go out to the world and show the world what love is.

> We are learning. Tonight there will be a lot of talk in Mamelodi about today.

> This is how you spread the word of God, by doing it.

She is like the love in 1 Corinthians
She does not stand outside crashing cymbals
She comes inside the church

We say: 'Let us pray' when we open our meetings.
We ask the Almighty to open up our words. Bridgid respects this
He opens up inside of us and we tell him we are having a problem.
We ask the almighty so he will be with us.
I called out to God: 'Do you see what is happening?'
God answers prayer.
This is the same with Bridgid

God is sending us out to those who are crying today.
We must always assist them because we have been assisted ourselves.

A participatory theology in this respect is difficult to define outside of relationship. It appears to move beyond the boundaries of African or western ways of knowing or doing, towards a deeper awareness and kinship within the church of the people it serves. It reflects the idea of being together with the *other*, the stranger God whom we can never fully understand. God is performed within a relational space with another human being to whom I owe my freedom. It is a theology that demands an ethical and eternal responsibility that would not impose its own preconceived thoughts and ways. This is particularly relevant given the racialised history of this country. In this way it moves outside of dualisms. Having said this, embedded within the words that the Mothers and Rudi speak is the *other*, the one I *know* and have already decided about. Words betray themselves to the actions that the Mothers set against their thoughts through creating contrasting ways of working and doing. This cannot be avoided, but it can be critiqued.

The difficulties of maintaining a position of respect of the *other* in this research has been more through a power relationship with A. I have been tempted to turn to my own defence and it has been difficult to refrain from constructing A as an enemy. I have avoided entering conflict with A, but a research such as this cannot offer all the answers in such a situation. Although outside the scope of this research project, other contextual approaches may be more useful, in which there are certain practices which are fundamentally not acceptable.

Concerning my relationship with the Mothers I am left always vigilant; always aware of how history has read me in its colonial past. I am aware of the powerful and dominant

discourses that could easily script me into the role of *other*, the one who *comes and goes*. My particular role and particular interest in this research was to explore the role of participation within pastoral care and not to set it up against other forms of pastorally engaging with communities. I do not deny however that ethical practices challenge theologians in South Africa to tread carefully in a land that is littered with land mines and conversations so often consigned to a convivial silence.

The remaining part of the conversation with the Mothers focused on the role of the poetry we wrote together. Maria sums up the way in which she would like this poetic form to be written when she says: '*Those poems are very important. They talk about our lives at home. I would really like to see Bridgid use those poems in her research work so that those poems could assist others in their lives for the future.*'

7.14   Future recommendations

There appears to be a strong theme that supports the idea that authentic participation plays an important role in relational healing practices in a post-colonial context such as South Africa. I suggest that there is a link between time spent building trust and the surplus of surprise of outcome within a framework of participatory pastoral care. This is particularly hard to measure because it does not belong to the order of logic or western forms of rationality and is therefore not easy to map in conventional ways. It belongs, along with forgiveness, as Ricoeur and Levinas have suggested, to a different order all together, one that cannot be measured on a justice scale. It is best described as *kairos*. I also found a strong correlation between healing and that of building relationship and trust.

This way of working is very exacting, particularly in the way it engages with the history of South Africa in a context of privilege, race and suffering. I do believe however that such exacting ways of being in this world have happened throughout history. Perhaps because they do not generally seek to hold a 'power' position, they are not often seen, noticed or written about. I would be very interested to work more with some of the stories of participation that have happened in the recent history of South Africa that have challenged oppression in a relational way that moves beyond racial compartmentalism. One example of this was one of the

Mothers, who at the death of Beyer Naude said 'But I thought he was black'. Participation is not something new but I hope that this thesis has attempted to find language for some of the fragments of participation that have been left out of traditional research methodologies. A serious limitation in working in such a participatory way is the unpredictable nature of such a journey. It is difficult to map or put on a time scale and results in life-long relationships. This becomes a limitation in that it limits this way of researching in any one person's lifetime to maybe one lifework. I would recommend however that it be employed in situations where people are already deeply immersed within a relational process of engagement.

POSTSCRIPT

ON BEYOND ZEBRA [12]

Said Conrad Cornelius o'Donald o'Dell,
My very young friend who is learning to spell:
"The A is for Ape. And the B is for Bear.
"The C is for Camel. The H is for Hare.
"The M is for Mouse. And the R is for Rat.
"I know all the twenty-six letters like that...

...through to Z is for Zebra. I know them all well."
Said Conrad Cornelius o'Donald o'Dell.
"So now I know everything anyone knows
"From beginning to end. From the start to the close.
"Because Z is as far as the alphabet goes."

Then he almost fell flat on his face on the floor
When I picked up the chalk and drew one letter more!
A letter he never had dreamed of before!
And I said, "*You* can stop, if you want, with the Z
"Because most people stop with the Z
"But not me!
"In the places I go there are things that I see
"That I never could spell if I stopped with the Z.
"I'm telling you this 'cause you're one of my friends.
"My alphabet starts where your alphabet ends!

My alphabet starts with this letter called YUZZ.
It's the letter I use to spell Yuzz-a-ma-Tuzz.
You'll be sort of surprised what there is to be found
Once you go beyond Z and start poking around!

So, on beyond Zebra!
Explore!
Like Columbus!
Discover new letters!
Like WUM is for Wumbus,
My high-spouting whale who lives high on a hill
And who never comes down 'til it's time to refill.
So, on beyond Z! It's high time you were shown
That you really *don't* know all there is to be known.

Then just step a step further past Wum is for Wumbus
And there you'll find UM. And the Um is for Umbus
A sort of a Cow, with one head and one tail,
But to milk this great cow you need more than one pail!
She has ninety-nine faucets that give milk quite nicely.
Perhaps ninety-nine. I forget just precisely.
And, boy! She is something most people don't see
Because most people stop at the Z
But not me!

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[12] Dr Seuss. 1955. Random house. New York

The dream of the Kingdom is always *to come,* over the horizon, just out of sight. Pastoral theology is constantly challenged by the changing contexts and new horizons that present themselves in the world, reaching for that which appears just out of sight and impossible. In this way it is concerned with both the contextual imminence of Christ on this earth as it nurtures the kingdom of heaven; bringing justice and healing for all, as well as the eternal longing for another kingdom of which this earth only sees a dim reflection.

Pastoral theology in a different way needs also to concern itself with timeless truths relating to our humanity; absolutes, issues of good over evil, avarice and power that continue with a familiar theme, millennium after millennium. Different ages and different contexts find their own relevant ways of addressing these issues.

Pastoral theology in yet another way is about the Christ who is already present in this world. This is the Christ that is present in every human being's capacity to care rather than hurt. As Levinas would suggest, it becomes an ethical and political act of being faced by another person and choosing not to take advantage of them. This is often the Christ that appears in surprising and mysteriously unobtrusive ways. It is the Christ that lives in kind gestures; the Christ who sits with someone or a group of people at a time of sorrow, listening, caring, encouraging. It is the Christ that appears in communities through relationship and through the risk of exposing vulnerability to another human being. It is also found in an ability to sacrifice something of *self* in order that *we* can live in what Heshusius and Kotzé call a self/other relationship, in which the autonomous isolated individual can look to a greater accountability within shared humanity, in order to address some of the signs of our times. It is a pastoral care that seems to artfully hide itself from the gaze of being captured and can equally so easily is trampled upon. It is also a theology that holds onto the privacy of the sacred, refusing to expose it to the cameras of the press. In this way it is a theology of conception, whose very fragility is tucked away behind closed doors and only opens for inspection after its birth, when others may be invited to join in the feast of wonder (Kotzé 2006). It is the Christ seen in *kairos* moments that is hard to describe because it is so often enigmatic and allusive. It is a theology that refuses to stand still long enough to be analysed or undressed. It is a theology captured in moments of significant happenings that cannot be predicted, organisied, or adequately languaged. It is a theology of risk that seems to

happen in moments of lingering and letting go of both certainty and control over the process. This is something of the theology in this long thesis that has captured my imagination. It is a theology that dances in the gaps of dominant discourse, whether academic or social and the minute I attempt to *bottle* it or *can* it, it evaporates. A theology of the gaps would not be possible without the structure of other theologies, and as I have argued throughout this thesis, a participatory theology of the gaps does not stand in opposition to other theologies, but rather picks up on the fragments that are perhaps less attended to within any dominant discourse and places them within a poetic form.

Other theologies have helped to organise my mind and my actions. My research position has been greatly assisted in creating organised structure for this work. If I did it again I would like to explore this topic through the lens of African traditional theology as a point of departure. Post-colonial theories have helped me to understand many of the ways we have been positioned in history through colour, privilege and colonial assumptions; beliefs that disappear into the veins of society. I find these metaphors profoundly helpful, as I do a more analytic frame within psychology. I have found Foucault's work, as well as Derrida's ideas exciting and enticing in their resonance with my experiences around identity and discourses of power. These have all pointed me in a direction that has allowed me to hold multiple realities in my mind and form a self critical stance to knowledge as I have known it. This position has also allowed me to stand with a small part of knowledge and be cloaked in the security of previous voices and wisdoms, believing that I will not be drowned or destroyed by that which has gone before, but rather protected and enhanced. These have all created a foundation and a safety net upon which I had the courage to climb the trapeze of participation and take a risky leap into the unknown territory of participation in a South African township.

This work has explored the thread of separation between subject and object; a dualism that has been deeply embedded in western ways of thinking since long before the Descartes' landmark of rationalism and the modern man. This challenge has led me to tracking and tracing some of the areas in which theology has got tangled in the separation of a subject from an object. The challenge for me has been to attempt to cross a racial divide that has separated people in South Africa for longer than living

memory can tell. This of course has had a long and painful history and while unpacking some of these assumptions I have found that a reciprocity of care has surprised me in moments when I least expected it. I have called these *Kairos* moments in the way they insert themselves at unexpected and unpredictable moments into any given text. Perhaps if there is something I have learnt through this process of participation it is about creating a context of trust and safety in order for these moments to happen. This has occurred when I have used my expertise to create a context for the spontaneity of surprise. They become a *free-play* witnessed in a poetic ability to work outside dominant paradigms.

I have exposed something of the problems as I see them in paradigms that have focused on binary positions and separations in theology and the social sciences. I have attempted to avoid arguing one idea against another or ways that separate God from His subjects, researcher from researched and action from theory. I have been prejudiced in this through an assumption that one of the enormous challenges that face theology today is to find ways out of binary oppositions. It is a belief that our survival as human beings is dependent on finding alternate ways of categorizing and living with our humanity. One of the ways in which I have done this is to attempt to create a safe enough space within human interchange for the surprise of *love* to happen between people. To do this it has taken patience and uncertainty.

One of the stumbling blocks that faced me in this work has been the deep divisions of racial identity that has stalked me in South Africa. The discourses around race and superiority are enormous and this remains a significant challenge in South Africa. Privilege and history have their own ways of discursively throwing me into either a benevolent *rescuer* of the subaltern, or perhaps a position of paying a debt that I cannot pay. Either way I have experienced the trappedness that my *whiteness* has placed me in. I cannot escape this position, although it has loosened it's stranglehold on me as I have risked letting go of my own privilege and have become more acquainted with vulnerability and uncertainty. It has also lessened its power over me as I have consistently remained with this group of Mothers; in spite of experiencing many moments when I thought I would fragment, lose myself, or be broken by it.

The alphabet does not end, although dominant discourses and politically correct language might persuade us otherwise. This work has attempted to explore something of lived experience that stands outside of the dominant alphabet. It begins to generate conversations around different words and letters on the understanding that pastoral care is constantly challenged to find contextually relevant practices that are formed from that which has gone before, in an attempt to birth other ideas that may resemble and belong to the greater flow of theology.

There were three aims that I had when starting out on this research journey.

Firstly I aimed to attempt to find ways of participating in a community that challenged hierarchical and racial privileges embedded within some of the dualisms connected to colonial and modernistic discourses. I have both done this and not done it at the same time. Looking back on this journey with the Mothers, it seemed as if I was at first welcomed with open arms and embraced by the Mothers as a kind of *knowing rescuer* who could help them out of their pain. It was only after some months that I began to experience a resistant hostility that was difficult to find language for. As I hope is clear from the text and some of the poetry that I wrote at that time, I experienced a long wilderness of trappedness during the process, which was not only driven by race and its sinister history. It happened with A. who is from my own race, it perhaps comes both from those who hold power and knowledge as well as those who are in resistance to it. I appeared left dangling in the middle, with the powerful at the top, able to cut the rope at any time, and the voiceless beneath, who looked to me as a ladder to the top. I was equally not at all certain whether those below would cushion my landing. I had to take the enormous risk that they may walk away thinking my business was none of their concern. Metaphors found in more psychoanalytic understandings of the process of expelling the bad parts of ourselves onto the mother's bad breast comes close to my experiences at this time. I suggest that this was a two way process of both the Mothers and A doing it to me. It makes me wonder about how I might also have done it to them.

I would refrain from using a traditional understanding of transference here, in that both the Mothers and I were struggling with the weight and influence of historical constructions of race. In a healing role it became my responsibility to be *faced by them* and to maintain an ethical consistency and accountability in my relationship with them,

to not run away or speak for them. This became even more evident in relationship to other *whites* who had come and gone, or been seen as inconsistent. One way or another it seems so difficult to hear their voices, the impossibility of the task they set before me and the multiple meanings attached to their requests. Whether this experience is described as *transference* and *counter-transference,* being faced by *the other* or *relational practices of power*, the important thing here is the idea that faith perseveres, believing that alternate descriptions of humanity can be found in relational participatory practices. These descriptions challenge some of the deeply embedded assumptions around racial categories, particularly in the face of vulnerability. I was able to do this with the Mothers and with the perpetrators, although not with Ms. A. This I believe was to do with the different power relationships I was in. It is a reminder to me of how easily blinded we become to the *other* when in a position of power. I stand with other contextual and liberation theologians here knowing that there is a time for talk and a time to refrain from talk, because it does not always work.

In order to hold this ethical value of *being faced* within this particular research framework the work has been an intensive and time-consuming. This was made more difficult by the fact that I was new within the community of Mamelodi as well as South Africa and needed to build trust, which, in order to be authentic, was a slow and arduous process. The usefulness of this way of working for pastoral care could be a growing awareness and cognisance that hierarchy, power and race are difficult to deconstruct and hard to approach because of the time, energy, anxiety and patience that is involved in a participatory process such as this. For people already working within communities within a cross-cultural context, this form of research and pastoral care practice could have a great deal to offer in deconstructing power and hierarchy as well as in capturing lived experience that lies outside dominant discourse.

I might have been more cautious and more structured in being clear from the beginning about the limitations of my own participation. Curiously enough the risk was rewarded through permitting me, after two years, to let go of the process, admit defeat in some of the income generating ideas I had, and allow the Mothers to come alongside me in authentic human interchange. As for future work in this vein, my work, my thesis and my way of living have been inexorably altered. My work has dissolved into a way of living as a human being with other human beings.

Secondly I aimed to explore healing practices based on participating together across racial and cultural boundaries. Healing practices play a central role in pastoral care and the ethical and political position that comes with participation focuses not so much on the healing but on the relational power of authentic participation where the self and the other move into a vulnerable and unstable position of risk. Healing is an illusive word and although the Mothers described themselves as *healed*, healing has been more a by-product of our less predictable relational practices. The surplus of surprise has been the relationship between healing and forgiveness, both of which arrived at moments when I least expected them. It perhaps indicates the importance of focusing on relationship rather than more concrete measurements found in truth and justice metaphors. Although centring participation in this work, this does not preclude the importance of the more concrete routes taken in other practices. Rather it indicates that different practices can play complementary roles in bringing about healing and transformation.

Thirdly through centring participation as a relational practice I have aimed to understand something more about the sustainable role of caring with people and learning together what mutual and reciprocal care might mean. Through attempting to dissolve historically privileged categories I wanted to know something of the role that it might play in bringing about transformation and healing in South Africa. I hope to contribute to an ongoing theological conversation about how to bring a voice to doing theology in a participatory way and to be a part of humanising society through finding stories that challenge the belief that Africa is a 'scar on the face of this earth'. This has been a difficult challenge, partly because it is so hard to quantify and is best seen through the inadequate language of story and poetic writing. Working with some of the ideas on language evoked by people like Wittgenstein and elaborated upon epistemologically through the social construction movement, it has pointed me to meanings held within a poetic relational frame. The very sustainability of alternate identities is carried through the meanings constructed within the stories we tell of one another. If this research journey can tell an alternate story to racial privilege and be talked about among the families that I have been among, then it plays a role in finding alternate sustainable relationships that are not racially based. It may also play a role in seeing relationship acted and performed in multiple contexts with both victims and perpetrators. This begins to find alternate stories about who we would like to become.

This again is impossible to quantify and can only be measured in the inadequate metaphor of the first rains in Africa after a long dry spell. The sustainability is I think partly held in the words of the Mothers when they said: *'Why should we ask you to leave, you are one of us'*. This indicates something of the sustainability of relationship, but also the cost of authentic involvement within a community when the self and the other are eclipsed within relationships that do not dominate.

It seems very relevant today that practices of power relationships that do not dominate or silence another person or group of people are of enormous importance. Being *faced* by another has, in this work, been both ethically challenging as well as somewhat silencing of my own position as a white woman who sits on the fence between Africa and Europe. In retrospect it would have been interesting to focus more on some of Foucault's ideas on the *Care of the Self* in relation to the other. Caring for the *self* is not something that I have developed an art for and it appears inseparable from the care of the *other*. This becomes something of a self/other relationship in which another's journey becomes my own, and my vulnerability is your concern.

The story does not end. I thought I had put my field notes to rest and was about to conclude this research. Then something most unexpected happened that became nationally newsworthy. How to tell this story as either an ending or a new beginning is difficult to say. I will begin to tell it from the perspective of my field notes.

August 25th 2006

Catherine, a Sangoma and Mother of one of the Mamelodi Ten had a dream last night. Her son returned to her. He came in a dream, as wisdom often does. He revealed himself to his mother by exposing his white legs and feet. He said 'See and look at me your son'. His face was hidden, only his legs and feet, and they white, not black or brown or crimson. Catherine thought how strange this could be, for it seemed to have no meaning on its own. How could it make meaning, a black boy carrying white legs? The meaning lay over the horizon and just out of sight, waiting for today.

Adriaan Vlok came. He wanted to see the Mothers for another visit. It seemed urgent. So the Mothers trailed into my home, up the stairs, dressed in stockings, suits and smart dresses. Adriaan spoke. 'I have sinned against God and against you Mothers. I thought I was superior but I am not. I was proud. Please forgive me for the part I played in apartheid'. He went down on his hands and knees and asked if he could wash the Mothers' feet.

'Wash my hands', Said Lizzie; 'I have stockings on my feet'.
'No, your feet', said Adriaan.

And so, with tears he washed their feet and Catherine let out a howl of emotion, for her son had told her of this extraordinary event of a white man who held the power to seemingly exterminate him with repressive laws and orders to secure safety in the country. This same son returned with prophetic news that spanned different worlds and brought good tidings of great joy.

Adriaan gave each Mother a bible inscribed with the words 'I have sinned against God and against you. I have not loved you as I ought'.

And Maria said: 'This bible stands as a monument for us today. It will remain in our homes for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren to see that you came to say you were sorry. You are the only one who has done this for us.'

And so knowing the *truth* seems to have many faces, one of which is, in the words of Lizzie Sefolo: 'To know the truth is to be satisfied'. It appears that facts on their own are not a particularly satisfying diet. Facts, along with words, seem so inadequate when faced by the humanity and vulnerability of another human being. Creating spaces and contexts where truth is so much more than the written word, or reparation, or revenge or punishment. Truth becomes an ethical practice of authentic participation. To look into another's eyes and experience their humanity, is to look into the eyes of God and say as Maria says Let us remember these terrible things so that they never happen again.'

As much as the conditions for inhumanity reside within our own relational groupings (Burkitt 1999:76), the conditions for our humanity also reside within relational groupings. It happened here at a moment of enormous risk and generated a national debate about forgiveness and accountability. There was a frenzied focus in the nation about blame and it appeared as if Vlok was left to carry the dark shadow of apartheid on his own shoulders. The community that seemed to point the longest fingers were the Afrikaans people who had suffered in a pointless war, and the English speaking community who cleverly played cynical cartoons about 'Vlokking' in the papers. It indicates that through polarisation people focus on blaming the other. While those on the 'right' side of history embroider their cloth with blamelessness, they inadvertently write their own blame and blindness within the text. As McNamee and Gergen (1999:20) suggest: 'certitude walks hand in hand with eradication of the other'.

Although the African community did its share of stone throwing, they were generally the people who welcomed Vlok's apology. The Mothers were not phased and chose to generally be left out of the debates as they said they were tired now and needed rest.

Vlok risked the ridicule and the collective rage of the nation, alienating him from his own people and making him a laughing stock of others. When I asked him what keeps him going his response was 'Am I to obey God or Man?' His fundamental belief in a God who speaks directly from on high turned from justifying apartheid toward accountability to the ones he had sinned against. In this no theology can ever be settled or adequately grasp or understood. Such acts of faith are acted on by those who hold an uncluttered and perhaps naive belief in God.

An assumption in this research has been that mankind becomes so easily trapped in the waters of polarisation, blame and control which are deeply embedded in the structures that we live within. These are some of the dangers associated with a subject/object split. Ben Okri (1998:6) captures something of the illusive dance of participation where he holds the ambiguity of multiple realities in a poetic license while living tentatively between this world and others:

> My son, sometimes we find ourselves living in the dreams of the dead. Who knows the destination of a dream? How many worlds do we live in at the same time? When we sleep do we wake up in another world, in another time? When we sleep in that other world do we wake up here, in this world? Is history the converging dreams of many millions of people, living and dead? Have I just died and am I now living in another zone? Are we asleep all the time? .... His speech frightened me. Something incredible must have happened to him in the forest when he was burying the dead carpenter. It was as if he had burst out of a tight space which had been confining his raging spirit.

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Appendix i: Letters of consent

Appendix ii: Exhumations and reflection with the Mothers

Appendix iii TRC in Mamelodi