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UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Khokha umoya, Take a Breath: Exploring the Use of Nature in The Practice of South African Drama Therapy

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Research report submitted to the Wits School of Arts (Drama for Life Department) at the University of the Witwatersrand's Faculty of Humanities, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Drama Therapy.

Supervised by Warren Nebe

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Marlize Swanepoel, Faith Busika, Lindy Kremer and Paula Kingwill, I appreciate and *honour* you.

Futhermore, I cannot begin to speak of ecopsychology without honouring the woman who fate appointed to assist me in becoming a drama therapy student: my mother. The earth may be my home, but I cannot forget that it was my mother's womb in which I first resided. My mother was (and is) a good mother. I doubt if it would have been possible for me to endure the challenging journey of breaking free beyond the conventional binaries of nature and culture, if I did not grow up in the proverbial village of South Africans who raised me. They believed in me and taught me about acquiring knowledge through existing *in* the world, rather than observing life from a distance.

In exchange for my presence, I was introduced to the bartering of the intangible things in life: songs, stories, knowledge about the medicinal properties of plants, games, rituals, proverbs and phrases such as 'Khokha umoya'.

Proverbs can be used to give insight about a country and attempt to reveal the richness of culture within a particular country. Similarly, the richness of culture can be identified when one considers the common phrases used by the inhabitants of a country. One of the phrases that I have been introduced to throughout my upbringing is the phrase: "Khokha umoya". One is able to translate this phrase into English, namely : "Take a breath". However, I believe that the English translation of this phrase does not do it justice. To me, the phrase encompasses an entire attitude and outlook on life. My father worked at a paper mill for most of his life. A phrase that became common lingo between my father and a Zulu-speaking friend was "Khokha umoya". My father and this lifelong friend would "Khokha umoya" when they needed to distance themselves from the labour at the paper mill, when they needed to take a breather and gain insight about a situation or view the world from a different perspective. I would argue that this phrase encourages a mindful practice of being in the world and thus, it is possible to borrow this phrase for a therapeutic context.

I now believe that I did not enrol into primary school as an empty vessel that needed to be filled with objective knowledge; the 6-year-old me was already filled with a wealth of various kinds of knowledge. As a botanist at heart and a drama therapist by profession, I hope to catalyse this powerful wisdom attained through first hand experience, in my clients.

The natural world has had the ability to provide a sense of healing all along, and so, the little girl whose daddy used to dab *aloe vera* onto her nails to prevent her from biting them when she got nervous before going onto the stage for a recital, grew up to become a bigger little girl who confidently believes in the possibilities that occur when nature and drama therapy merge in South Africa – and beyond.

ABSTRACT

This case study discusses the use of nature in a South African drama therapy practice through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews conducted with four South African drama therapists who use nature in some regard in their practice. This qualitative study investigates the relationship between South African drama therapists and the natural world, placing particular focus on the ways in which nature may have influenced the practice within a diverse South African context. The use of nature in drama therapy and healing practices is not new, and yet, the use of natural elements and nature in drama therapy practice has not been extensively documented – neither locally nor globally. Thus, the documentation and discussion of the use of nature in South African drama therapy practice is necessary.

In the beginning of this study, the researcher provides some background to inform the reader about her personal relationship with nature as well as the call for transformation that ignited this research. The research aim and an articulation of the questions that are posed throughout the study are then stated. A conceptual framework is used in an attempt to define ecopsychology by considering Mother Nature in relation to 'the good enough mother' as well as the parallels which exist between ecopsychology, humanism and drama therapy. A literature review is conducted in order to acknowledge the existing literature pertaining to the uses of nature around the globe, as well as the role of nature in ritual and theatre.

The method used to collect data regarding the relationship between drama therapy and nature is discussed, followed by a discussion of the findings. This study culminates in the presenting of a proposed quadrant of drama therapy (consisting of the client, therapist, nature, and drama) followed by some closing remarks on the challenges, benefits, and recommendations of using drama therapy and nature in tandem.

Keywords: Nature, Indigenous, Drama Therapy, Ecopsychology, South Africa.

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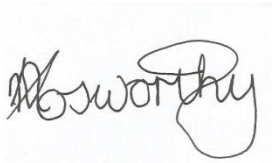
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Plagiarism Declaration:

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COURSE CODE:	WSOA7082A
SUPERVISORS:	Warren Nebe
TOPIC:	Khokha umoya, Take a Breath: Exploring the Use of Nature in The Practice of South African Drama Therapy

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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2. I have used the author date convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this essay from the work or works of other people has been acknowledged through citation and reference.
3. This reflection is my work.
4. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as their own work.
5. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.



18/09/2020

…….. ……...

Signature Date

CHAPTER 1

Chapter one
is a large, juicy plum
that is ripe with information about the background.
You will be introduced to the main problem that I found
and the reasons why this research was worthy of doing.
Take note of the research aims and the questions that I kept asking.

1.1 Background: *Back(ground)*

"What do you want to become when you grow up?" – as a child I found this question challenging because I wanted to catalyse change and growth in the lives of other human beings through drama therapy, but I also wanted to become a botanist, applying the knowledge which my dad had taught me about the healing properties of various plants.

I grew up in a society in which the blending of the two disciplines was met with scepticism. This memory alludes to the fact that instances of duality are still very common. Dualism perpetuates Manichean thinking: an approach to culture in which binary opposites are used for the purpose of categorisation (Hook, 2013).

The dichotomy between nature and culture is one that I have grappled with for a very long time, and I continue to focus on this separation between human beings and the natural world in this research study. This is achieved through the exploration of the ways in which human beings and the environmental elements, are able to interact in a way that disrupts the nature-culture dichotomy that has existed as a tool for domination, as humankind evolved over time and attempted to control nature, thus assimilating nature into culture (Fukui & Ellen, 1996; Heras-Escribano & Pinedo-García, 2018). The polarisation of values applicable to the nature-culture argument does not seem to be congruent with an African worldview, as it is said that the philosophy of holism is practiced by members who follow an African worldview. This notion of holism refers to an interpretation of the world where everything is believed to be interconnected (Mkhize, 2013). The notion of synthesis is therefore seen as ideal.

Traversing across time to the year 2019, I found myself questioning the dualism existing between humankind and nature once again. I was working as a drama therapy student at a public health institution in which the physical building was failing to provide the sense of safety and consistency that Rey (1994) suggests a healthcare institution should. As a result, the drama therapy session took place on the grass outside the building, near the vegetable

garden created and maintained by the in-patients. In this instance, even though the mental healthcare system proved to be unreliable, the attempt at maintaining the therapeutic relationship which had been established between the in-patients and the drama therapy students continued.

After the session, I recalled some of the accounts of practicing South African drama therapists from various racial, cultural and age groups who also engaged with clients outdoors, albeit intentionally or unintentionally. I was also reminded of the natural objects which are often present in drama therapy sessions, both in my training as a drama therapist thus far and whilst conducting my own sessions with clients. I remembered stories used by drama therapists in the South African context: stories about the natural world. I increasingly began to consider the relationship between nature and the practice of South African drama therapy as well as ways in which South African drama therapists are disrupting and transforming the nature-culture dualism.

1.2 Introduction: *It takes a village to raise a child*

"It takes a village to raise a child"; I have heard this African proverb so often that it began losing its potency. Not once have I considered what the ramifications would be if the proverbial village failed to exist. Nebe (2019) shed light on Mamphela Ramphele's suggestion that when a society fails to create a village in which to raise the child, the child will strike a match and burn the village to feel a sense of warmth. This addition to the well-known African proverb ignited within me an increased awareness of how I could, myself, contribute to the building of a warmer, more inclusive mental health village in South Africa as an aspiring drama therapist.

When considering the proverbial village, it becomes necessary to consider the webs of relationships that exist between several beings. Cosmic unity can be used to refer to the connection between God, the ancestors, humankind, animals, plants, and inanimate objects (Mbiti, 1969; Verhoef & Michel, 1997). It is thus possible to suggest that within this interconnected system, everything influences and can be influenced by other aspects. The knowledge that one attains about the world is thus acquired through a dynamic process of interaction rather than observing from a distance.

Lepere (2019) explains that in many South African cultures, the root of the beetroot is boiled and eaten, while the leaves are prepared and enjoyed in a manner similar to spinach. The consumption of the beetroot in its entirety with no parts wasted, stimulated me into thinking about the notion of holism once again. The use of the beetroot analogy to illustrate the concept of holism can be considered as a reflection of the interconnectedness between humans and nature. Furthermore, this way of demonstrating a concept using a lived experience, highlights how knowledge can be attained through participating in the world. In contrast, when considering a traditional western perspective, the *knower* stands apart from the object of *knowledge* (Mkhize, 2013).

Traditional western approaches to psychology are assumed to be value-free and universal, resultantly, they are imposed upon non-western populations (Mkhize, 2013). Sinha (1986) states that modern psychology is essentially a western product that was introduced into developing countries with the general transfer of knowledge and technology. This unilateral transfer of knowledge, values, ideas, and practices can be regarded as cultural colonisation (Gergen, *et al*, 1996; Sinha, 1990). The privileging of western ways of knowing thus laid the foundation for the marginalisation of other knowledge systems. However, Mkhize (2013) claims that there has been an increased dissatisfaction with the imposed western knowledge systems, values, and practices in the past two decades.

The challenging of imposed western presuppositions is in alignment with the goals of critical psychology. Critical psychology continuously attempts to reflect upon the diverse ways in which people of multiple classes and cultures create meaning in their lives (Parker, 1999). Mkhize (2013) thus advocates for a critical approach to psychology in South Africa which is emancipatory and takes indigenous people's languages and beliefs into account. Similarly, Holdstock (1979) recognises the need to include African indigenous healing systems into the health sector in order to provide holistic mental health treatment for a larger population of South Africans. It is necessary to note that health can be conceptualised in the African context as relating to a state of imbalance between the different beings in the cosmic unity (Makanya, 2014). The individual can therefore not be divorced from the greater community. It is thus evident that the need to incorporate African belief systems and indigenous knowledge into the health and psychology sectors is pivotal.

Indigenisation can be defined as the hybridisation of imported frameworks with unique elements of the cultural group in question (Mkhize, 2013). Culture can broadly be defined as the knowledge that is passed down from one generation to the next within a society (Mkhize, 2013). This body of knowledge is organised systematically into cultural meaning systems that include language, values, assumptions, behaviour, conceptions about illness and health (Mkhize, 2013). It is suggested that in current times, attention should be paid to the ways in which cultural meaning systems are in dialogue with other bodies of knowledge, rather than arguing for complete immersion or separation (Maffi, 1998). The seemingly foreign model of traditional western psychology can thus be blended with elements of indigenous knowledge in order to make the practice more suitable for a South African context.

Not only am I concerned with making the practice of drama therapy more suitable for a South African context, but I feel the need to immerse my lived experiences and knowledge that I regard as indigenous in my life, into this research study. Thus, I make the choice to use a poetic style of writing to introduce each chapter, because this research topic, the interviewees and the discoveries that I have made have been as inspiring to me as the landscape is to a romantic poet who feels the need to honour a beautiful sunset.

Throughout this study, I draw parallels between a drama therapist and a botanist, because I believe that drama therapists are unique botanists who catalyse growth and transformation in the lives of human beings. Another metaphor which is used in this study is a consideration of Earth as a Mother. I thus use the pronouns ‘she’ and ‘her’ interchangeably with Mother Earth. I deliberately choose to refrain from capitalising the words West and East, as this study focuses on reclaiming knowledge that is indigenous to South Africa while acknowledging global contributions to the field of drama therapy and ecopsychology. As a token of respect to the African continent, I use African proverbs about nature to frame the various sections in this study.

It should also be noted that ecopsychology refers to the deliberate exposure to and experiences in nature. ‘Nature’, in this study, can be defined as landscapes with living organisms, including plants, human beings and other living organisms (Bratman, Hamilton & Daily, 2002) which exist in a continual process of reinstating a form of balance, and includes natural objects and themes existing in nature (Bergen & McLeod, 2006), including the earth as a nurturing mother and ability to connect with a Higher Power.

Lastly, all quotes are indented and appear in italics. This stylistic choice includes the quotes taken directly from the esteemed drama therapists that make up the research sample, as this research story is not told using solely my voice; this is a story that honours the voices of the four South African drama therapists who took the time to share their thoughts with me about the unique relationship between nature, drama therapy and South Africa. The ethical considerations of using their direct statements, and revealing their identities was discussed with the individual respondents and their consent was obtained before commencing with the interviews. The appropriate ethical clearance to conduct the research was also obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand and is also further discussed in the Methods section of this study.

In the beginning of this study, I lead into my personal relationship with nature as well as the call for transformation that ignited this research. The research aim is identified as casting light on the experiences of drama therapists who work in, and with nature in multicultural South Africa; and I articulate the questions that are posed throughout the study as 'How do South African drama therapists engage with nature as part of their practice?' and 'In what ways has the natural environment impacted the content, structure, and practice of drama therapy practice in South Africa?'. I set out a conceptual framework in an attempt to define ecopsychology by considering Mother Nature in relation to 'the good enough mother' as well as the parallels which exist between ecopsychology, humanism and drama therapy. I continue into a literature review that acknowledges the existing literature pertaining to the uses of nature around the globe, as well as the role of nature in ritual and theatre. The methods I use to collect data regarding the relationship between drama therapy and nature are discussed, followed by a discussion of the findings. This study culminates in the presenting of a proposed quadrant of drama therapy (consisting of the client, therapist, nature, and drama) followed by some closing remarks on the challenges, benefits, and recommendations of using drama therapy and nature in tandem.

1.3 Problem Statement: *A river does not flow through the forest without felling trees*

The African proverb "A river does not flow through the forest without felling trees" can be interpreted to have different meanings. The proverb could suggest that disruption (due to the moving body of water) can bring about a certain level of change (in the form of the trees being removed). This change can be viewed as a problem, but it can also be viewed as a

possibility. Perhaps the new path forged by the river could be beneficial. This ability to view instances of disruption in a positive light is what Frankl (2011) refers to as the 'chance' and 'challenge' in every situation, where the challenge gives one the chance to attain a kind of fulfilment. Perhaps it is conceivable to identify the possibilities which arise when dealing with the problems presented by a 'sick' mental healthcare system, as Nebe (2016) calls it. My intention is not to negate South Africa's mental health crisis, but to meet it and respond to it by moving toward a transformed drama therapy approach. There are ways in which the practice of drama therapy in South Africa is transforming in order to become increasingly more responsive to the needs of South Africans – and these developments need to be documented for the sake of the current and future drama therapist, as well as the South Africans who constitute the village in which our current and future generations will be raised.

In this particular study, I consider the problem to be the influence of an individualistic, traditional western approach to psychology on a South African mental healthcare system (Mkhize, 2013). It is thus possible to say that South African approaches to therapy necessitate a transformative shift away from the cultural colonisation mentioned in the introduction of this study. Zapata (2020) explains that mental health systems can be decolonised by moving toward a collectivistic approach. Considering the dire state of the natural environment in current times, I would argue that the collectivistic approach implemented within a South African mental health context should be extended to include not only a system of human beings, but the more-than-human world as well, thus creating a relational therapy which encompasses relation to self, others and the earth.

In a country where indigenous ways of knowing have often been subordinated, it may be beneficial to consider how the concept of *indigenous knowledge* is used within South African drama therapy. Throughout South Africa's history (specifically during the period of colonial oppression and the influence of apartheid thereafter) the word 'indigenous' has often been associated with a sense of primitiveness; this association brings about scant appreciation for the kind of knowledge which is attached to this word (Semali & Kincheloe, 2002). Indigenous knowledge however, can be defined as a reflection of the dynamic ways of knowing of the individuals residing in a certain area, including their understanding of their position in the world and how that relates to nature, culture and history (Semali & Kincheloe, 2002). The concept of indigenous knowledge is elaborated upon in the following definition:

> *"Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) refers to complex systems of knowledge which are transmitted from generation to generation, contained in living memory, and constantly recreated by communities in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history. IKS implies intuitive, holistic knowledge rather than the analytical, at times fragmented, knowledge of western knowledge systems." (Ciro, et al, 2011:82).*

It is thus possible to suggest that indigenous knowledge can be viewed as being related to one's intuition and instinctual information rather than merely privileging rational thought. Furthermore, inherent in this system of knowledge is the world view that we are deeply interconnected to the animal and earth life. Influenced by this world view which centres around the importance of interconnected relationships, the concept of 'nature' in this study is viewed relationally as opposed to defining the term in isolation. The concept of 'nature' can therefore be described as an indivisible whole which is composed of many interconnected relationships (Bouchardon, 2019). When one considers the ways in which indigenous knowledge systems (and nature in particular) is used in the practice of drama therapy, it is possible to comment on the possible presence of an interdependent relationship between nature, drama therapy, the client and the therapist.

1.4 Rationale: *Until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter*

A Call for Transformation

There is an African proverb which suggests that "until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter". This proverb, which conveys the essential need for members of the African continent to begin telling their own stories rather than allowing external forces to represent them, is highly applicable in the current society of South Africa. The South African society is one in which a sense of progressive politics calls for social transformation to become increasingly prominent. This trend can be identified when one considers the magnitude of recent decolonisation movements as well as the celebration of indigenous knowledge forms in the country.

In a context in which indigenous knowledge systems have been subordinated by western ways of knowing, it becomes necessary to consider the powerful act of reclaiming silenced voices. Some would go as far as suggesting that 'silence is violence' (Pillay, 2016). Pillay (2016) considers institutionalised silence to result from a colonial-influenced division between theory and practice (similar to the nature-culture dichotomy referenced in the introduction of this study), leading to the development of slow and subtle violence which holds the potential to harm groups of individuals who are in need of empathy and activism. However, Pillay (2016) does suggest that one is able to be an activist in the combatting of this silence by seeking justice against post-colonial discrimination, understanding historical and racial influences, and engaging in dialogues about transformation in a process of problematizing the subordination which stems from colonisation. The need to emphasise narratives which engage with and emphasise the notion of transformation in South Africa can be seen as a result of the uprising acts of South African students who began to realise that the call for the decolonisation of higher education was pertinent. This need to problematize and confront colonial influences in education is demonstrated in the 2015 #Rhodesmustfall (RMF) and 2016 #Feesmustfall (FMF) movements. The FMF movement was ignited at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) after the RMF movement catalysed the need to analyse the public sphere (Pillay 2016).

Drama for Life (DfL) is a university department situated within (WITS) which prides itself on the fact that it is continuously responding to its current context. This department is characterised as being committed to social transformation and healing in South Africa, extending to the African continent. DfL (2016) expresses the need for South African youth to lead in order to contribute to processes of change in the educational realm. It is suggested that DfL provides a supportive community in which South African youth together with theatre practitioners and teaching staff are able to work collectively to decolonise arts education (2016). One of the courses offered by this department is drama therapy.

Drama Therapy as a Transformative Tool

Drama therapy can be defined as the intentional use of drama processes in order to facilitate change in the client, leading to possible therapeutic relief, the maintenance of health and wellbeing and the possibility for the occurrence of personal growth (Jones, 1996). The use of drama therapy in South Africa is still a relatively new and unknown practice and

subsequently, the education and training of drama therapists is still limited to a single university. Drama for Life's (DFL) Drama Therapy Programme, is said to be an Integrated Approach which foregrounds principles of relational humanism and liberation pedagogies. Training to become a drama therapist at the institution includes the use of various forms of intervention and therapy which comprises of the use of role-play, games, metaphor, and ritualistic practices, to name but a few.

The term 'drama' carries with it many theatrical connotations, and thus can be misleading, as drama is said to have been an integral activity which was used from the beginning of time to allow humankind to express thoughts and feelings (Jennings, 1974). When one looks at the origins of the word 'drama', one finds that it stems from the term meaning 'action' (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). The term 'therapy' implies the treatment of some form of ailment (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2017). The marriage of these two terms results in a practice that allows for the client to take 'action' in 'treating' the challenge which may hinder their personal sense of growth, thus providing a creative arts therapy alternative to the traditional forms of 'talk therapy' in which the client verbally expresses their thoughts and feelings to a therapist (Wiener, 1999; McNamee, 2004; Gillis, *et al*, 2014; Betuel, 2019)

Considering the medium of drama used in drama therapy, Jennings (1987) suggests that drama is not the chaos, but rather the container for the chaos and the means of exploring it. This use of drama as the therapeutic vehicle is mentioned by Crimmens (2006) who proposed that drama therapy is not merely the combination of drama and therapy; in addition, a third, distinct way of helping people is the result of this combination. The drama therapist therefore gleans from the most appropriate aspects of drama and therapy.

One advantage of drama is provided by Heathcote (1997) who suggests that when using drama as a medium for change, drama allows for the human material of the facilitator and the participants to make contact. This notion of human interaction which is often very evident in a drama therapy space therefore gives rise to a sense of dynamicity as the energy in the space is likely to differ depending on the nature of the interaction between the therapist and client. Furthermore, Jennings (1987) explains that imagination is an important quality that the drama therapist is advised to continually practice.

The continual use of one's imagination allows for the drama therapist to remain in the distanced world of the story or metaphor with the client, rather than imposing control over the client in the process of interpretation (Jennings, 1987). Growth is therefore not to be imposed

onto the client. Instead of engaging in the act of interpretation, it is necessary to note that the drama therapy client can be thought of as the storyteller of the narrative which may develop in a session and it is therefore up to this storyteller to make sense of the events which unfold. Once again, the drama therapy session is constantly moving and the therapist is advised to practice a sense of flexibility in the session, as the client determines the direction.

Drama Therapy Research as a Transformative Tool

Indigenous knowledge systems in South Africa have been viewed as inferior due to a history of colonisation and decades of apartheid (Le Grange, 2012). This research therefore aims to generate new insights from a South African perspective, as there is only a small (but growing) body of South African drama therapy literature, such as that written by Kingwill (2004), Makanya (2014) and Nebe (2016), to name a few.

The practice and use of nature within drama therapy with specific reference to the exposure *to* and experiences *in* the natural environment have not been documented, so this study is the first of its kind in this context. Furthermore, the knowledge generated in this study has the potential to increase understanding around the way future drama therapists in South Africa may be equipped to practice within their particular contexts. Due to the fact that this research focuses on South African drama therapy practice, and the fact that I am a drama therapist-in-training, it is necessary for me to highlight the personal implications associated with this research. As a drama therapy student, I have personally experienced the powerful effects of combining nature and drama therapy. It is suggested that the client's journey towards self-discovery is appropriately guided by the therapist who has embarked upon a similar journey through the completion of the training (Syz, 1996; Roysircar, 2004; Watson, 2006). In the spirit of experiencing something first-hand before guiding clients through a similar journey, I explored a drama therapy method called: *Healing the Wounds of History*, a drama therapy approach used to address trauma caused by intergenerational and intercultural conflict, as outlined by Volkas (2014).

Volkas' (2014) drama therapy style is influenced by something that he witnessed in nature on his pilgrimage to Auschwitz. Volkas explains how the ashes dumped in nearby ponds during the Holocaust spread across the surrounding terrain, transforming it into a beautiful landscape of wild flowers. Volkas (2014) proposed that there is an inherent transformational quality that

exists in both nature and drama therapy. The analogy of working toward growth after disruption became the focal point of the journey towards self-discovery for me in my training as a drama therapist.

After I briefly took myself through Volkas' *Healing the Wounds of History* process in a performance as research model, I began to reflect on my personal experience. One thing that stood out for me was the power of the Volkas' image of a destructed landscape transforming into a beautiful field of wild flowers: this image was something that I remained connected to throughout the painful process of attempting to heal my own wounds as a 'born-free' white child in South Africa who often felt that I had inherited the role of a perpetrator. Throughout my experiencing of Volkas' method, I was often overwhelmed by the feelings of pain, despair and guilt of being a South African child who possessed a large amount of privilege.

In my personal life, I have observed how the pain and destruction were able to undergo a process of change in order to transform me as an individual with greater awareness. Often, horticultural processes such as pruning and composting do not appear to be pleasant at first, yet it is these processes that enable significant growth. This analogy was applicable to my experience as a white, middle-class South African drama therapy student and I have a hunch that this transformative process is relevant to present-day South Africa. I believe that there is an opportunity presented for South Africans to move through the destruction and cultivate fields in which flowers can be grown in the South African landscape. I did not only consider my background and my close relationship with nature; I also began to contemplate my current position as a drama therapist in training and what Volkas' natural metaphor could mean for me in a professional realm as an up-and-coming drama therapist. I began to consider the numerous occasions in which I worked outdoors; or with natural objects; or with themes of nature. I noticed that there are similarities between my lived experiences as a drama therapy student and the personal recollections of many drama therapists practicing in this context. Natural elements are used by South Africans belonging to various cultural, racial and age groups. It is necessary for me to continue exploring these similarities with regards to the influences of nature in a South African drama therapy (and documenting them) as I continuously consider myself in relation to others, because no human being is an island: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.*

1.5 Research Aim Including Research Question: *Where there is a big tree, small ones climb on its back to reach the sun*

The aim of this research report is to cast light on the experiences of drama therapists who work in, and with nature in multicultural South Africa. This will be achieved by meeting the objective of facilitating interviews with drama therapy practitioners in order to identify the shared experience of engaging with the natural world and then looking at the comparisons or contrasts which may be drawn between the individual perspectives. This research study thus attempts to investigate the relationship between South African drama therapists and the natural world, focusing on how it has possibly influenced their practice within a diverse South African context. The use of nature in drama therapy and healing practices is not new (Berger & McLeod, 2006), and yet, the use of natural elements and nature in drama therapy practice has not been extensively documented – not locally or globally. Thus, the documentation and discussion of the use of it in our practice is necessary. This research has the potential to create opportunities to learn about a topical issue related to drama therapy via the lived experiences centering on the practice of drama therapists who work in South Africa. Additionally, it may be useful to assess if there are any benefits of this integration of elements of ecopsychology into South African drama therapy in order to make recommendations for future research and practice about the usefulness of nature in mental health, with specific reference to South Africa where this kind of research has the ability to contribute to the decolonisation of mental health practices. This exploration focuses specifically on the unique relationship existing between drama therapy practitioners, nature, and the South African context, even though literature from the global context will be considered. It may be necessary to note that the scope of the research focuses on the practice of drama therapy, however, it is possible that the drama therapists consulted may also refer to their training; or how they use influences of nature in other capacities.

The following research question and sub-question (which can be regarded as the focal point of the inquiry or the ‘big tree’) and additional aspects that are explored as part of the data gathering (the ‘smaller trees’ that may assist me as the researcher in illuminating the experiences of other South African drama therapists) are explored in order to attempt to meet the objectives set out in the research aim:

- How do South African drama therapists engage with nature as part of their practice?
    - In what ways has the natural environment impacted the content, structure, and practice of drama therapy practice in South Africa?

CHAPTER 2

Chapter two
is the morning dew,
because it provides vital concepts on which this research study is based,
just like the first drops of daily water that each blade of grass tastes.

2.1 Conceptual Framework: *A small axe is not sufficient to cut down a large tree*

In order to begin answering the research question, I began to enquire further into the possibility of finding theoretical substantiation for the possible parallels between a restoration of the earth and human mind. I came across a term that I have not heard of before: ecopsychology. My very limited knowledge of this concept could be likened to a *small axe* which would not be sufficient to cut down the *large tree* that is a Masters Research Report. I began to delve deeper into the existing body of literature written about ecopsychology in an attempt to conceptualise my own definition of ecopsychology that would be appropriate for the purpose of this research study. I thus began to develop my *axe* into a larger, more suitable tool to be used in this study.

Mother Nature: the 'good enough mother'.

In this research study, I attempt to define drama therapy with reference to the 'good enough mother', as well as the concept of 'ecopsychology' by alluding to Mother Earth. The 'good enough mother' is considered one who allowed her child to believe that they were in control of the breast during the breastfeeding period, leading to the infant being able to trust their "capacity to create" and explore (Papiasvili & Mayers, 2011: 190). It is possible for the concept of the 'good enough mother' to be applied to a therapeutic setting. In this case, the 'good enough therapist' creates a safe, supportive space- which can be likened to Winnicott's 'potential space' in which the child feels safe enough to play independently in the presence of the mother (Pearson, 1996).

When considering the possible parallels which can be drawn between the 'good enough mother' and the 'good enough therapist'; it may be beneficial to consider Emunah's (2009) call for the drama therapist to 'access our internal nurturing parent' (Johnson & Emunah, 2009). Emunah (1994) explains that the tools in her approach to drama therapy are derived from drama while the goals are rooted in psychotherapy; this is reflected in her definition of

drama therapy: *"*Drama therapy is the intentional and systematic use of drama/theatre processes to achieve psychological growth and change,*"* (Emunah, 1994:3).

Humanism and Growth

The emphasis on growth and change is influenced by Roger's notion of self-actualisation. Emunah (1994) explains that the approach is largely based on humanistic theories, with particular reference to self-actualisation. Rogers' belief in human growth through self-actualising processes rather than being preoccupied with notions of pathology can be seen in his stating that the client is the focus as opposed to the problem at hand (Rogers, 1942).

It is however necessary to be mindful of the human beings who may experience difficulties in the self-actualising process. Rogers concluded that people are prevented from self-actualising when the inherent tendency to move towards growth is blocked (Corey, 2013). He suggests that this blockage begins in childhood when the child is only viewed as 'good' when conforming to societal standards (Sue & Sue, 2007). The individual thus internalises the societal conventions and as a result, the quality of personal uniqueness and the freedom to make choices which are dependent on the subjective perception of the world, are therefore limited.

Humanism in the South African Context

When considering humanism in the South African context, it proves to be useful to consider the work of Erasmus (2017). Firstly, she encourages human beings to demonstrate love. This expression of love is extended to the individual (self-love), to the social (ethics) and to the world (decolonising humanity) (Erasmus, 2017). As human beings we therefore have a responsibility toward ourselves but also toward each other. She references Bauman (2005:166): "To use is to take, to value is to give"; capturing the essence of her call; a call in which human beings live respectfully with and amongst one another. She proposes that we use the term 'humaning' rather than 'humanising', because *humaning* can be seen as a lifelong process of life-in-the-making with others. Similarly, Ingold (2015) explains that to 'humanise' is to impose preconceived ideas of what it means to be human onto another. Furthermore, Ramose (2009) explains that humanness can be thought of as a condition and as

a state of becoming. It is thus possible to suggest that the dynamic human being can continue forging interconnected relationships with the self, others, and the environment in the perpetual process of becoming.

I believe that the continual process of evolution encapsulated in the concept of 'humaning' is appropriate when referring to Emunah's approach. I remain inspired by her consideration of the process of self-directed *growth*. Perhaps semantics has a role to play in my fondness of this approach, as I always showed an interest in the field of botany (as previously mentioned in this research study). This approach to drama therapy focuses on expanding the healthfulness of the person. Emunah (2009) explains that a safe space that can facilitate growth is created so that the client may discover the 'good' aspects of the self and when these aspects are met with warmth, acceptance and understanding then the client may feel ready to reveal the aspects of the self that are viewed by society as 'not so good'. To put it simply: my understanding is that a 'good enough therapist' creates a container (using drama) in which the client can show the 'good' aspects of themselves, and feel comfortable enough to also present the 'not-so-good' facets of themselves.

The use of drama as a container makes sense to me, because I view 'drama' from Heathcote's perspective. Heathcote (in Prentki & Preston, 2009: 200-206) proposes that the principles of drama can prove to be very useful in our everyday life, motivating that "Drama is such a normal thing". It is therefore our perception of drama which could allow us to view it as something extravagant. When considering the inherent propensity of human beings towards drama, as mentioned before, it is possible to suggest that drama is *natural* insofar as it is inherent in the lives of human beings.

Drama can be thought of as one of the many layers of multitextured drama therapy. Returning to Emunah's (1994:3) definition of drama therapy, it is possible to suggest that drama is used in order to achieve a sense of psychological growth. By defining drama as *natural*, it becomes necessary to articulate my thoughts on psychology. I always perceived psychology as being derived from traditional western ways of knowing and relating solely to the study of the mind. I wondered if it was possible to think of psychology in a way that could be related to my (developing) research approach; a humanistic drama therapy approach underpinned by the theme of *growth,* inspired by my love for being outdoors and experiencing nature.

Humanism and Ecopsychology

The links between a humanistic approach and ecopsychology can be quite literal if one considers the emphasis on 'growth' in both of these disciplines. Furthermore, Aanstoos (1998) is of the opinion that humanism and ecopsychology have in common the belief that the human being lives life authentically, striving to live as a 'being-as-a-whole'. Ecopsychology is a growing field that acknowledges the negative impact which the seemingly divided relationship between human beings and the natural world has on one's mental, physical, and emotional health (Kuhn, 2001; Pilisuk & Joy, 2001; Roszak, 2001; Roszak, Gomes & Kramer 1995). Ecopsychology is based on a philosophy which addresses society, therapy, and environment in order to bring about possible growth and positive change in both humans and nature (Roszak, 2001; Roszak et al. 1995; Totton, 2003). It is suggested that in ancient times, processes of healing focused on the mind, body, and soul in order to bring about relief and restore health (Roszak, 1999). All psychotherapy was once understood to be cosmically connected:

> *"Once upon a time, all psychologies were 'ecopsychologies'. Those who sought to heal the soul took it for granted that human nature is densely embedded in the world we share with animal, vegetable, mineral, and all the unseen powers of the cosmos." (Roszak, 1992: 14).*

Through the philosophy of ecopsychology, Roszak (1999) continues to propose that we consider the ecological context of human life in the re-envisioning of what psychology is, rather than create a new sub-discipline of psychology. Ecopsychology infuses the presence of the natural world into the theory and practice of psychology (Roszak, 1999), thus the relationship between humankind and the earth has the potential to be transformed. Psychology can be defined as "the study of the mind", when one considers the two Greek words from which it originates, namely: *psyche* (soul) and *logos* (the study of an object) (Weiten, 2013). This view of psychology as the study of the mind possibly implies a focus on the individual mind as opposed to the human mind in relation to other beings and the environment, nevertheless, a re-envisioning of psychology is possible because there is a sympathetic connection existing between humans and the earth, which can be considered a nurturing presence throughout the years (Metzner, 1999). Ecopsychology can be described as "radical", insofar as it encourages people to consider their relationship to the "more-than-human-world" (Metzner, 1999:4).

Distinctions can be made between environmental movements that aim to have an impact on legislation and those that challenge the foundations of a worldview. From a holistic perspective, ecopsychology is generally considered to be the latter (Metzner, 1999). When considered from a holistic perspective, a greater sense of receptivity to indigenous and ancient knowledge systems is said to be associated with ecopsychology (Metzner, 1999).

Ecopsychology in this research study

For the purpose of this research, ecopsychology thus refers to the ways in which nature can be utilised in an attempt to understand and heal the soul (Kowalewski, 2004). Nature is viewed as a home for human beings, as the nurturing mother earth and as an extension of the self, because ill-health in the environment is congruent with illness in human beings (Roszak, 1992). Makanya (2014:302-306), in her attempt to answer a question regarding the appropriateness of drama therapy in South Africa, defines health in the African context as relating to a state of imbalance, focusing on the implications on an entire community rather than an individual. The individual can therefore not be divorced from the greater community. The concept of 'healing' in this study is thus influenced by a holistic worldview and thus refers to therapeutic relief and the restoration of health by acquiring balance. Furthermore, this study views the soul in relation to the African word *Ubuntu*, which comprises of the core elements of being human, namely: *umzimba* (body, form, flesh); *umoya* (breath, air, life); *umphefumela* (shadow, spirit, soul); *amandla* (vitality, strength, energy); *inhliziyo* (heart, centre of emotions); *umqondo* (head, brain, intellect), *ulwimi* (language, speaking) and *ubuntu* (humanness) (Le Roux, 2000:43).

When considering notions of holism and interconnectedness, it is important to bring attention to a transpersonal approach. Transpersonal Psychology is based on an assumption regarding the fundamental health and wholeness of human beings rather than foregrounding pathology (Linden, 2009: 213). This approach extends beyond psychology, as it can be described as an influential principle in the Omega Transpersonal Approach to Drama Therapy: an approach that can be used in tandem with various drama therapy methods, which is underpinned by a number of principles, namely assuming health over pathology, shifting the view of identity from a limited sense of self to an essential Self, embodying therapeutic issues, making that which is unconscious conscious through the use of metaphor or symbol, exploring various archetypes, embracing love while viewing all emotions as sacred, creating sacred spaces to

facilitate healing, fostering unity, seeking mastery through self-discipline, striving to achieve balance, identifying and achieving a sense of purpose in life and creating life as a work of art (Linden, 2013). The principle of fostering an experience of interconnectedness and unity appears to be particularly relevant for this research study:

> *"The Transpersonal Drama Therapist works to create experiences of unity, connection, and interdependence of all living things, including human beings, animals, plants and the environment. It also relates to a holistic healing approach, working with the body, mind, heart and soul connection." (Linden, 2013:19)*

The umbrella concept of ecopsychology has influenced different kinds of therapy. More recently, there have been several kinds of therapy which are associated with nature. In adventure therapy, for example, nature is regarded as a location in which the therapeutic process, characterised by concrete tasks, takes place (Beringer & Martin, 2003; Itin, 1998; Richards & Smith, 2003; Ringer, 2003). For the purpose of the proposed research study, I will also be considering the emotional, metaphysical, and spiritual aspects of nature, which are often not addressed by adventure therapy (Berger, 2003; Beringer & Martin, 2003). These additional aspects of nature are encompassed in ecopsychology. Similarly, a triad of humans, nature and therapy is explored in the concept of nature therapy. Nature therapy is strongly influenced by the philosophy of ecopsychology and thus views nature as a dynamic partner in the therapeutic process, rather than a mere setting (Berger, 2004). Furthermore, this nature-informed approach proposes that connecting to natural elements, themes inherent in nature, and rituals involving nature, one is able to touch and gain insight to deeper parts of the self (Berger, 2004, 2005).

In addition to eco-psychology, nature therapy is an integrated therapeutic approach which draws on elements from drama therapy, shamanism, and adventure therapy amongst others (Berger & McLeod, 2006). The concept of conducting healing work in relation to elements of nature is not new. This concept can be traced back to ancient times when communities found themselves living in nature and shamans would utilise natural resources in performing their rituals and creating traditional medicine (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Wolfe (1988) explains that a shaman could be regarded as a point of connection between the land of the living and the other worlds, practicing divination and healing by performing rituals and taking on the illness of the unwell. It is suggested that a shaman of this kind can, in a sense, be regarded as an ancient therapist (Grainer, 1995; Jennings, 1995, 1998; Jones, 1996; West, 2000). Drama

therapy with its roots in theatre and performance and early rituals has always been intimately tied to nature. Emunah (1994) lists dramatic ritual as one of the five most influential sources in her approach to drama therapy.

When discussing the use of dramatic ritual in drama therapy, Emunah (1994) draws particular attention to the significance of using the circle in drama therapy sessions. Emunah (1994) explains that the circle possesses a deep symbolism which is connected to religion, spirituality, and psychology and which reflects the theme of totality, including a return to home, life, and death and even a sense of rebirth. In a sense, Emunah (1994) draws parallels between ancient rituals and drama therapy, going as far as finding similarities between the shamans who led ritual dramas and the drama therapist, though there is the acknowledgement that the social context may differ. Similarly, McNiff (1975) claims that the arts therapist can possibly be regarded as a channel for the client. One can therefore possibly draw parallels between the drama therapist and the ancient healer.

In light of the various branches of ecopsychology discussed above, it is therefore necessary to articulate *my* working definition of ecopsychology. After considering the aforementioned information on ecopsychology, I applied these viewpoints to my lived experiences in- and with nature in order to come up with the following definition: ***Ecopsychology is the restoration of health and growth through a process of deliberate exposure to and in nature.*** It is necessary to note that nature in this instance refers to landscapes with living organisms, including plants and non-human animals as outlined by Bratman, Hamilton and Daily (2002), and includes natural objects and themes existing in nature as described by Bergen and McLeod (2006).) The concept of a mutually-beneficial relationship between human beings and the earth is promoted by Conn (1998).

Exposure *to* the natural world is experienced through the space. Considering the famous analogy used in the beginning of this essay in which the world is compared to a stage, one can then think of space as existing in the natural world, and consequently any empty space can then be regarded as a bare stage (Brook, 1968). Experiences *in* nature are understood through the senses, and humans are said to make sense of the world using their senses (Abram, 1996; Jennings, 2011).

My definition of ecopsychology is also formed by the South African context. Being contextually aware, I considered Mkhize (2013), who explores the concept of an organic view of the universe when he suggests that in a traditional light, it is assumed that human

beings will have respect for and live in harmony with nature. It is possible to suggest that there is some degree of commonality in the challenges faced by human beings around the world, such as dealing with birth and death for example, but there are differences in the ways in which these challenges are resolved (Heelas, 1981). In order to address the diversities which exist in human populations, indigenous conceptions of human development in psychology need to be considered.

Moghaddam (1993) expresses that the training of psychologists is often aligned with the modern sector. He continues to explain that psychology students are encouraged to conduct research that is relevant to the needs of the modern sector rather than focusing on the needs of a society. This lack of addressing the needs of developing societies comes to the fore when considering that the teaching of African knowledge systems in South African higher education institutions is largely left to disciplines such as philosophy and theology, rather than psychology (Shutte, 1993, 2001; Teffo & Roux, 1998). Furthermore, some argue that psychology's ability to address detrimental patterns in society proves to be limited thus far (Kidner, 1994; Higley & Milton, 2008). These limitations extend to include the environmental crisis as it is often negated that we as human beings *are* the environmental crisis rather than experiencing an environmental crisis (Evernden, 1985; Motsei, 2004).

Considering the theme of interconnectedness, it feels appropriate to draw attention to the possible need to reframe environmental conservation as a process whereby we initiate healing and cleansing. both in the environment and in ourselves (Motsei, 2004).

It appears that there is a need for a non-dichotomous and relational form of psychology (Douglas, *et al*, 2016). It thus becomes necessary to not only consider a critical approach to psychology in South Africa, but to consider a critical approach to a contextualised drama therapy infused with indigenous knowledge dating back to ancient healing processes in, and with nature.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter three
shows the reader that there are esteemed scholars supporting me.
Take note of how nature is referenced in the east, the west and the African continent.
The early roots of ritual and drama are spoken about next.

3.1 Literature review: *If you want to lean on a tree, make sure it can hold you*

It is necessary to review the existing body of literature to determine if there is documented knowledge which supports this research; knowledge which I can *lean on* while making my argument. In reviewing literature one can start to see the gaps in knowledge that may exist pertaining to the ways in which South African drama therapists may work with influences from the natural world. Seeing as though this research study aims to contribute to the decolonising and contextualising of a South African drama therapy practice by recognising the value of indigenous knowledge, rather than privileging western-ways-of-knowing, it is necessary to consider the relationship between health and nature in eastern and western philosophies as well, in order to prevent the perpetuation of exclusionary practices.

Views on nature in the east and the west

When considering modern medicine, the body, mind, cognition, emotion and spirituality are often viewed as being separate entities, where the doctor treats the physical symptoms of the body, the social worker attends to the emotions and pastoral guidance is requested to address the spiritual aspects (Chan, *et al*, 2002; Ng, *et al*, 2005.). In eastern philosophies, health is viewed as a holistic concept encompassing the individual and the accompanying environment existing in a harmonious equilibrium (Chan, *et al*, 2002; Baer, 2003; Lee, *et al*, 2018.).

Although the western conceptualisation of medicine tends to separate the body, mind and soul, there is research that indicates the benefits of nature on the physical and mental health of human beings. Traditional western perspectives such as objective ways of knowing in which the researcher stands apart from the attained knowledge, are being used to quantify the importance of a relationship between humans and nature.

Researchers are now collecting and analysing data in order to comment on the vitalising effects of being outdoors (Ryan, *et al*, 2010). For instance, placing one's bare feet on the earth (a process called 'earthing' or 'grounding') is said to have a measurable positive, physiological impact on the research participants (Ober, *et al*, 2010; Chevalier, *et al*, 2012).

Indigenous view points on nature from the African context

It appears that the quantifiable, western ways of knowing give the relationship between human beings and the natural environment gravitas as it provides seemingly convincing, measurable evidence. It is, however, necessary to think beyond the western ways of knowing and consider the South African context in which this research is meant to take place. Mkhize (2013) explores the concept of an organic view of the universe when he suggests that in a traditional light, it is assumed that human beings will have respect for, and live in harmony with nature. This worldview maintains that a person does not exist alone but belongs to a community in which individuals attend to responsibilities to others and to the natural environment (Ogbonnaya, 1994). Similarly, Myers (1988) maintains that most indigenous African societies emphasized the present and the past, thus living in harmony with nature rather than asserting control over the environment.

Maffi (1998) suggests that in ancient societies, the inhabitants employed ecological thought and thus did not draw distinctions between nature and culture. It is possible to suggest that the notion of interconnectedness extended to the realm of spirituality and the natural environment, as indigenous societies would perform rituals when planting or harvesting crops (Mkhize, 2013). It thus appears that indigenous societies treated all forms of life with respect, co-existing harmoniously and not consuming more than they needed for healing and sustenance. It is possible that indigenous healing practices form part of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems. It thus becomes necessary to continually engage in a process of understanding- and even integrating - healing practices from African traditional wisdom into the practice of drama therapy (without compromising either one or conflating the two). For instance, a *sangoma* can be described as a traditional healer that performs rituals, practices as a herbalist, counsellor, and healer after receiving a call from the ancestors (Semenya & Mokwena, 2012). Being called to become a *sangoma* is thought of as a vocation rather than a profession, because the *sangoma* does not choose to become a healer as is the case with psychologists or therapists (Semenya & Mokwena, 2012).

The organic view of the universe is also addressed by wa Thiong'o (1992), who elaborates on indigenous culture, particularly his own, going as far as suggesting that drama has origins in human struggles with nature, and with others. This notion of interconnectedness between human beings and the natural environment is echoed in Chinyowa's (2014) explanation of African ritual traditions. Chinyowa (2014) suggests that African theatre traditions are not merely for entertainment purposes, but are ritualised institutions that serve a variety of important functions. Similarly, it is suggested that there are many cultural practices which contain elements of performance, yet these practices serve the function of uniting a community rather than being merely entertaining (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). African theatre traditions are performed in such a way that the participants serve the people while simultaneously serving the deities and celebrate life giving forces in a way that reflects an African worldview (Chinyowa, 2014). Art is thus not produced for the sake of art, but rather art is art for life's sake (Chinyowa, 2014).

Theatre, Ritual and Nature

Due to the organic merging of theatre and ritual, it is therefore not possible to separate these two practices (Chinyowa, 2014). Schechner is a key scholar who focuses on the relationship between performance and ritual. He proposes that there is an element of similarity between performance and rituals. Schechner (1994) suggests that rituals are performative in nature due to the fact that they centre on the execution of certain activities, similarly, performance is said to possess a ritualistic quality, as the actions used are repeatable due to a process of codification. Schechner expresses that although there are differences which exist between performance and ritual; these two practices have similar functions. The functions of healing, celebrating, educating, entertaining and contributing to societal harmony are therefore expressed to be common when considering ritual and performance (Schechner, 1994). The differences between these two practices are dependent on context as well as where the emphasis is placed (Schechner, 1994).

Another key scholar exploring the relationship between theatre and ritual is Peter Brook. Brook (1968) suggests that theatre can take place anywhere. He explains that any empty space can be regarded as a bare stage. Brook speaks of a society which is no longer connected to ritual and ceremony (Brook, 1968). The value of ritual in theatre expressed by Brook is a sentiment which is reflected in Turner's anthropological practice. Turner (1982) views theatre

as an important space which allows for “intercultural transmissions”. Turner admits that perfect transcultural understanding is very difficult to attain, however, he proposes that when people are invited to enact one another’s rituals and social dramas, the members who are involved can develop new insights (1982). Therefore, a process of transitioning is embarked upon.

Turner speaks in great depth about transitional phases in ritual, making use of the term “liminal” which is derived from the Latin word for threshold (Turner, 1982). This element of transformation discussed by Turner is an aspect which Grotowski spent much time focusing on. Grotowski invested much time and energy travelling in order to glean from the traditional practices belonging to the diverse cultural groups which he encountered (Bithell, 2014). It is believed by Grotowski that the combination of these traditional practices with technique and a “re-injection of ritual” leads to a conducive space for a heightened sense of communion to occur between actor and spectator (Bithell, 2014). It is this heightened sense of communion which holds the potential for social and personal change to occur (Bithell, 2014).

The social and personal change mentioned by Grotowski can be seen in the work of the drama therapist. It is believed that subjects going through the transition phase endure an ambiguous period of ‘becoming’ which is often referred to as the ‘liminal’ stage (Turner, 1982). Jennings (1995) acknowledges that the drama therapist and the shaman both work within the liminal space of ‘becoming’. Emunah (1994) suggests that there are similarities between the shaman and the drama therapist. She does however acknowledge that the shaman takes on the illness of the client while she facilitates the expression of the client’s inner world.

I would argue that both the shaman and the drama therapist work intuitively with the self, others, and the environment. The triad existing between nature, self and society in South Africa has deteriorated partly because of apartheid and colonisation (Le Grange, 2012). Another critical thinker who addresses the effects of colonisation is Arthur Lessac. Lessac (1981) suggests humans hold a ‘twin brain’ with two modes of functioning. Through this proposal, Lessac explains that each individual possesses the capability to function on an instinctive level, as well as the ability to lead a life governed by rational decisions. It is suggested that through processes such as civilisation and colonisation, much emphasis has been placed on the rational region of the brain. As a result, Lessac suggests that there are

many human beings who function as half-people, depending on the working of only one side of the brain.

However, Metzner (1999) argues that the empathic rapport with the natural environment is reborn in every infant. Similarly, Le Grange (2012) acknowledges that the triadic relationship can be mended by promoting the quality of humanness. Ramose (2009) explains that humanness can be thought of as a condition and as a state of becoming. It is thus possible to suggest that the dynamic human being can continue forging interconnected relationships with the self, others, as well as the environment in the perpetual process of becoming.

After consulting some of the existing literature, it is evident that there is documented knowledge about the African philosophy on health and healing with an emphasis on the role of nature in African thought. There is also information about the role of nature in the east and west. The literature unearths the negative impact associated with the exclusion of indigenous knowledge forms, and thus points to the need to approach systems of knowledge from a critical stance. An intricate relationship between space (particularly the communal spaces occupied by indigenous people during the performance of ritual) and theatre is highlighted by the existing body of literature. The need to consider a critical approach to a contextualised drama therapy infused with indigenous knowledge dating back to ancient healing processes in and with nature, thus remains topical.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter four
is where I do not look at the fern only, but at every individual fern spore.
I explain how I undertook a systematic consideration of each particle
and support my choices using journal articles.
I speak of the research approach, sample, ethics, data collection and analysis
that I used to construct a plan so that this study did not culminate in a crisis.

4.1 Research methods: *There are no shortcuts to the top of a palm tree*

When the word ‘research’ is broken down into its parts: ‘re’ and ‘search’, it is possible to conclude that the process of research requires one to look again. I would thus propose that the research process is a systematic inquiry of reviewing literature, other people’s perspectives, and one’s own lived experiences. This process is one that necessitated thorough planning in order for me to reach the proposed goals rather than merely taking shortcuts. I thus proposed a plan for myself to reach the goals set out in my research aim, so that I reached the top of this ‘palm tree’ called Masters Research Report in drama therapy.

Qualitative approach

The very nature of qualitative research is to try and understand things within their natural environments, consequently attempting to make sense of them by the meaning that people give them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The fact that the aim of the research was focussed on the lived experiences and unique perspectives of users of a particular practice at a certain point in time, means that the logical choice was a qualitative approach with a particular paradigm directing the interpretation and analysis of the gathered data. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) explain that qualitative research is different from quantitative research in that qualitative research allows the researcher to move flexibly back-and-forth between the processes of data collection and the analysis of that data, if required. It is therefore beneficial to note that the research process for this study was cyclical in nature rather than linear.

Case Study

There are several different research designs which are contained within a qualitative approach. One such qualitative design is the case study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The purpose of a case study, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:146) is to deepen understanding regarding a person or situation (or a small number thereof). A case study focuses on either a single case or a small number of cases within their natural setting (Leedy & Ormrod 2010:146). This method therefore allows for the specific examination of data within a particular context. Traditionally, the term 'case study' refers to the thorough investigation of a single case in order to make hypotheses about a particular phenomenon, whereas in a contemporary light, this design can be used to explore the experiences of a particular group of individuals, thus serving as the systematic study of a particular unit in order to generalise the findings across a larger spectrum of data (Yin,1981; Kenny & Grotelueschen, 1984; Gerring, 2004).

Although this research study may not be regarded as a 'traditional' case study, it gleaned from the case study design as far as it focuses on the experiences of four purposefully selected individuals who are perceived to be dealing with the same phenomenon. This research thus focuses on four South African drama therapists, who are currently practicing within a South African context, as specific cases, in the attempt to gain insight regarding the possible exposure to, and experiences in nature, with respect to South African drama therapy. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015) the study of a small number of cases may pose limitations due to the fact that there is no guarantee that the findings can be generalised. This generalisability is however not a fundamental measure of the value research may hold.

Sample

This research study made use of convenience sampling. The term 'convenience sampling' refers to the use of subjects who are readily available (Christensen, *et al*, 2015). Christensen, *et al* (2015) explain that the validity of this sampling method is low. However, to improve the validity of the sampling technique, the individuals who are used as part of the sample are located due to the fact that they possess the characteristics necessary to qualify them as members of the population of interest. The individuals who were used as part of the sample were identified based on characteristics necessary to qualify them as members of the

population of interest, in this case drama therapists in South Africa, who the researcher perceives as working with or in nature in some way. Due to this deliberate selection of participants, a purposive sampling technique was used (Christensen, *et al*, 2015).

Purposive sampling is an example of a non-probability method and may thus be influenced by bias (Tongco, 2007). It is possible however to use data collected through purposive sampling as valid data in research studies where the sample is representative (Tongco, 2007). It was therefore advisable for me to select four participants that are diverse with regards to gender, race, and age so that the sample would be reflexive of a multicultural society. However, the majority of drama therapists practicing in South Africa are females. Due to the fact that one of the very few male drama therapists in South Africa is my supervisor, it was not appropriate for me to approach him as a research participant. The four research participants who engaged in this research study were thus all female. The four participants were diverse in age (ranging from 25 to 40 years of age) and came from various religious, cultural, geographical and educational backgrounds.

As a drama therapist-in-training with a background in both drama therapy and applied drama, I feel the need to acknowledge the strong influence which an engagement with applied theatre had on my training as well as this research study. I would argue that (in accordance with my suggestion that it is necessary to move beyond the binaries which are enforced through dualistic thought patterns (Mkhize, 2013) referenced in the introduction) there is not a stark divide between the fields of drama therapy and applied theatre, but that these two disciplines are complimentary. Throughout the process of conducting the interviews with the four selected participants, I was guided by Chinyowa's (2008) use of Nicolson's metaphor of a gift (which he uses in order to explain participatory engagement between applied drama facilitators and the participants) in which a top-down approach is rejected in favour of a bottom-up approach where the community takes agency.

When Chinyowa (2008) uses the gift metaphor, he suggests that the applied facilitator should refrain from thinking of their presence in the community as a gift; instead, the facilitator is encouraged to engage in a mutual exchange of 'giving' and 'receiving' with the participants. I thus made the conscious decision to not merely focus on the outcomes of the interviews, but to rather be affected and affect others through a process in which human connection could be experienced. Furthermore, I was stimulated by Prentki and Preston (2009) to tell a story of the use of nature in South African drama therapy 'with' members of the South African drama

therapy community, rather than telling the story 'for' the community. I thus conducted the interviews in order to tell a story about the possible interrelations between nature and drama therapy in South Africa *with* the four participants: Lindy Kremer, Faith Busika, Marlize Swanepoel and Paula Kingwill.

Ethical considerations

Before collecting the data, it was necessary to receive ethical clearance, as human participants were consulted for this research to be completed. The use of pseudonyms was an option presented to the participants. Ultimately however, anonymity could not be guaranteed since the drama therapy community in South Africa is very small and the experiences discussed have a likelihood of being unique to individuals. I applied for ethical clearance and obtained my certificate of ethical clearance in November 2019.

After discussing possible participants with my supervisor, I contacted a few members of interest and began scheduling interviews depending on the availability of the participants. I was able to conduct one interview in person while the other three interviews were conducted via 'Zoom' video call (which allowed for the best technological alternative to a face-to-face interview). I made it clear to all research participants that anonymity could not be assured but nevertheless asked them if they would prefer the use of a pseudonym in an attempt to conceal their identity to a certain extent. Additionally, I did ask for permission to be granted before recording the interviews for transcription purposes. Informed consent was obtained from each of the four participants and both the Informed Consent Forms and Participant Information Sheets can be found attached as appendicies. The participants collectively agreed that they were not opposed to having their respective identities concealed. As a sign of respect, a copy of the final research report was sent to each participant, in order to ensure that each interviewee was comfortable with the content stated in the findings section.

Data Collection Instruments

This case study consists of interviews held with South African drama therapists working in and/or with nature in some way. Leedy and Ormrod (2015:281) explain that the interviews conducted in qualitative research are generally flexible as opposed to being highly structured

and rigid. The interviews conducted for the purpose of this study were therefore semi-structured. The same type of general open-ended questions was asked to all four individuals making up the sample. The interviews were recorded (in audio) in order to make transcription simpler and to offer a reliable record of the interviews conducted.

Upon transcribing the findings from the audio recordings of the interviews, I realised that I was able to make numerous discoveries about myself as an individual. Furthermore, I was able to identify fresh perspectives that I had formed regarding the origins of drama, the principles of nature and human beings as a whole. I made discoveries about myself and drama therapy that go beyond the scope of this study and these pragmatic realisations that were sparked in conversation with the four participants demonstrate how the process of conducting qualitative interviews can be therapeutic in a sense (Rosetto, 2014).

Additionally, there were numerous moments when the respective interviewees would express that they wanted to take note of their statements because they found themselves articulating their viewpoints in an authentic manner. Perhaps this authentic expression was stimulated by the non-directiveness of the interviews, as I was inspired by Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) suggestion that interviews too can be guided by the interviewee, thus drawing upon Rogers' notion of self-directed growth. Each interview thus had elements of commonality (which give rise to the themes discussed in the findings); yet each interview was very unique. Faith Busika recalled numerous memories of outdoor play and thus foregrounded the permission to play, while the conversation with Lindy Kremer centered around theory about gardening and grief. Paula Kingwill took me on an unexpected yet rich tangent relating to the topic of veganism, while Marlize Swanepoel spoke of the bushfires which raged in Australia at the end of 2019. In each of these interviews I was able not only to deduce something fruitful for this study, but also for my life.

Data analysis

After the data was collected during the semi-structured interviews with the participants, it became necessary to analyse the data. Leedy and Ormrod (2015:316) propose that this 'raw data' be organised into a sort of database. I created this 'database' by transcribing the audio-recording of the four interviews and sorted the captured data accordingly. I finished the transcription of said data in the beginning of January 2020; allowing me to proceed with the

analysis process. Leedy and Ormrod (2015:316) propose that the information be perused to get a general sense of the data before the data can be coded and classified into themes. Lastly, the collected data is analysed through a process of categorisation and interpretation regarding the emergence of common themes, or synthesised to form a final description (Leedy & Ormrod 2010:146).

During the process of analysis, it proved to be useful to pay specific attention to the six steps of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six steps are: *familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report* (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this research study, the approach of conducting a thematic analysis seemed to be the most appropriate in order to synthesise propositions in the concluding statements of the final report.

The themes which emerged through the process of thematic analysis are divided into five sections; namely:

1. Defining nature
2. Space (experiences *in* nature)
3. Senses (exposure *to* nature)
4. The resourcefulness of nature
5. Questioning the term ‘ecopsychology’

CHAPTER 5

Chapter five
Indicates that nature is still very much alive
and that nature within a South African drama therapy practice has the opportunity to thrive.
I explore how nature is defined, spaces, senses and the resourcefulness of nature,
as well as ecopsychology as a term and how it still needs a lot of exposure.

5.1 Findings: *He who shakes a tree stump shakes himself*

Throughout the process of interviewing the four research participants, I discovered that I was not only delving into an exploration of nature; I was also exploring the core of my being as a whole. Before discussing the findings with reference to the specific themes that emerged in the thematic analysis, I feel the need to introduce the reader to the four human beings that I had the privilege of speaking with. I hope that the findings discussed later on in this study may serve as a honourary recollection of their practice and their lives as a whole.

Lindy Kremer

A drama therapist who completed her training at DfL and epitomises the concept of combining both theory and practice. She is a diligent researcher who gained insight regarding many theoretical perspectives on the use of gardening as a practice in dealing with bereavement. However, not only did she survey existing literature in search of theoretical underpinnings for her work as a drama therapist, but she deliberately chose to engage in natural spaces at one particular site where she worked. This demonstration of utilising theory in a practical manner disrupts the colonial-influenced division between theory and practice that Pillay (2016) speaks of (see the rationale). Furthermore, Kremer's ability to fuse theory and practice stands testimony to the fact that she embodies the values of the institution where she attained her training.

She demonstrates DfL's philosophy of decolonising arts education by defying the conventional binaries. In the conceptual framework, I speak of the way in which ecopsychology infuses the presence of the natural world into the theory and practice of psychology (Roszak, 1999), and her recollection of her work in the garden of a school with a young boy who lost his father showcases how the natural world and psychology can be explored simultaneously. Through planting a plant of the client's choice, a "Forget-me-not"

in the school garden, Kremer created an opportunity for the child to reconnect with nature, his late father and the school community who would assist him in nurturing the plant to keep it alive. She encourages one to think of nature as a large, open room in which many possibilities and challenges may unfold.

Faith Busika

A drama therapist who realised the power of play at a very young age and resultantly gives herself permission to play as an adult. In Busika's opinion, a stone is not just a stone, rather it can become animated to represent numerous people, places, or objects. 'Drama' is not the only tool that she uses in her therapy, as her early childhood experiences equipped her with a wealth of resources to use when working with the youth in particular. Through playing with stones and narrating stories about the stones in her childhood, she learned how to negotiate meaning, she began to think conceptually, she practiced solving problems and could think in an abstract manner.

Stones were not the only resource that nature provided her with. Busika recalls that she used to lather her legs with sand in order to pretend that she was wearing red pantyhose. Her ability to narrate stories was nurtured under a tree in her mother's garden. Today, she is a drama therapist who has not forgotten the power of playing with stones, sand and telling stories. Nature was Busika's first playground, to this day she honours that playground in the work that she does at the school where she practices as a drama therapist and at DfL, where she is responsible for the training of future drama therapists.

Marlize Swanepoel

A mother and a drama therapist who does not only hear other South African mothers but truly listens to them. She is interested in attachment relationships between mother and child, but her interest in the topic extends beyond the bond between mothers and children in human beings. Swanepoel has a unique view on the important relationship between Mother Earth and humankind. She stimulates others to think about the land as the first concept of home, and therefore we should respect it. This respect which she pays to Mother Earth, and

encourages others to give as well, demonstrates how the line existing between activism and therapy is indeed very fine.

The line between the professional and personal realm is very fine as well. Swanepoel maintains that the therapist needs to be held before holding the client, and perhaps Mother Earth provides the nurturing support that the therapist needs. If a therapist's role is to create opportunities for the client to take a moment to reflect on reality while replenishing oneself to continue, then the therapist needs to find moments filled with replenishment as well. For Swanepoel this replenishment is sometimes as simple as taking a moment to pause, and breathe deeply together with her clients, who come from creches in underprivileged communities, and a specific eating disorder unit. Swanepoel learnt from her clients that most of the time, the best place to breathe deeply, is when one steps outside.

Paula Kingwill

Is a South African drama therapist and cattle farmer who expresses that she cannot be the container that holds the client's desires and fears, but she can catalyse the process during which the client builds his or her own bucket. A container in which the client can hold the positive aspects of the process and perhaps internalize after some time, thus leading to a process of growth and transformation (2004). Kingwill (2004) continually acknowledges her professional role as being both a cattle farmer and a drama therapist. This stance of accepting both roles rather than making an either/or decision is a demonstration of going beyond binaries: accepting nonduality.

The principles of nonduality demonstrated by Kingwill are inspired by her philosophy which focuses on the fact that human beings should not be oriented toward happiness, but rather should strive to attain a sense of balance. This law of balance is one that she observed over time in the natural world. The natural world has not only taught her about balance, but has enriched her with a great amount of wisdom, as a drama therapist, a mother, and a human being. She regards nature as her 'co-therapist', as she believes that she does not facilitate moments of reconnecting for the clients who attend the retreats on her farm called 'Reconnect on the Rest' alone, but nature provides much of the stimuli's needed for clients to reflect on their current realities and to make the necessary changes.

Nature ignites a sense of grounding, places one in the present moment of here-and-now and stimulates one to become aware of the self and the other, and therefore the therapist is not the only catalyst for positive change.

Defining Nature

I identified the need to articulate my own definition of nature after one of the research participants asked me what I meant by the term 'nature'. I realised that it was difficult for me to articulate in words what I refer to when I speak of 'nature'; so, I felt the need to ask each of the four research participants for their personal definitions of 'nature'. I found myself resonating with an aspect of each of their definitions, and thus I was able to articulate my own definition of 'nature'. I was able to listen to the stories of individuals that I consider to be 'experts' and this process allowed me to 're-search'; to look again in order to create new knowledge for myself and possibly others.

- ***The four elements in nature: Air, Water, Fire and Earth***

'Nature' has a different meaning depending on the personal frame of reference of the person who is defining the term (Bouchardon, 2019). When asked about a personal definition of 'nature', Lindy Kremer paused for quite a while before answering. After some time, she explained that this question was "a hard one" and that the meaning of nature (in her opinion) is very subjective. She continued to express that the natural elements (such as air, water, fire, and earth) were an obvious relation to nature from her perspective. Speaking of the four elements of nature, I am reminded of a story told to me by Faith Busika about Moreno, the 'Father' of *psychodrama*: defined in simple terms as an approach to therapy in which a group comes together and explores an enactment of one participant's life (Karp, 2005). Busika explained that Moreno's philosophical principle is really about what you take in and what you give out. She then spoke of a short story in which Moreno shares about his childhood and how he was a very sickly infant; he then tells of a midwife who gives the advice to "Take that child and put him in the sun. Put him in the sun". Busika recalls how the sun healed him.

- ***Parallels between Nature and Humankind***

Thinking beyond the four elements of nature, Lindy Kremer emphasized her interest in the correlation between human existence and the natural world in the following statement:

> *"So for instance, in nature, everything has male-female, everything: plants have male-female compartment the same as a human being, you know- the way in which the seedlings flower, the way in which the world uses things, it's exactly the same way human beings do. So, there is quite a 'mirroring' process that takes place between the two. So, I'm not really sure where we start and stop and where the natural world kind of continues on from that… I think that- for me- nature is very much a part of human life. Like- we are nature."*

Similarly, Paula Kingwill elaborated on the semantics of the term 'nature' when she mentioned that she prefers to speak about 'nature' not as an isolated term referring to something which exists apart from human beings, but she chooses to include human beings in her understanding of what 'nature' means. She maintained however, that we as human beings sometimes put ourselves apart from nature, but nevertheless, she suggested that we will be part of the impact as the environment begins to change. She suggests that we will be destroyed as much as any other element of nature will be (because we are a part of nature; we are not separate). Paula's expressing of the dire consequences of a separation between man and the earth made me realise the importance of reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems which value the connection existing between man and nature, as the Canadian Anthropologist Wade Davids suggests: *"We in the west, with our way of thinking of the natural world, we are not the norm — we're the anomaly"* (CBC Radio, 2020:SP). Somé (1999) echoes this need to recognise the importance of indigenous knowledge, as he believes that Africa holds a vast amount of wisdom that encourages its inhabitants to find healing in the nature that surrounds them and exists within them.

Paula Kingwill continued to summarise her definition of 'nature' by stating that nature is us and all that is around us, but there are elements that are destructive towards that cycle and there are elements that are supportive of it. She suggests that nature is not always benign or kind or happy, a common misconception we humans have, and that there is a fundamental law of balance in nature and that balance needs to be maintained. When balance is disrupted, then harm happens and when balance is maintained, health occurs. This concept of balance is described by Kingwill as a simple way of thinking about the functioning within nature.

- ***Nature as the nurturing mother***

Continuing on the topic of 'simple' ways of considering the natural world, Marlize Swanepoel articulated her preference to define nature based on the first thing that she thought of at the mention of the question, rather than intellectualising her response. She explained that the first thought that popped into her head when she was asked about her personal definition of 'nature' was the term 'Mother'. She elaborated on this term by expressing the connotations of holding and nurturing that she believes the term 'Mother' possesses. The conversation between me and her then traversed to additional concepts associated with the 'Mother' that is 'nature'.

Marlize Swanepoel immediately recalled another piece of work that she was involved with at the time, namely: 'the womb of the mother was the first land'. The conversation flowed until we reached the topics of 'home' and 'land'. While conducting the interview with her, I was sitting at a desk made from indigenous South African wood, a desk that belonged to my sister in our childhood home in South Africa. The difference was that this time, the desk was situated in Australia (in my family's new home) in a time during which the Australian bush fires were raging. Swanepoel and I recognised the significance of my sitting in Australia while speaking about 'home' and 'land', because she studied abroad and found herself often focusing on the concept of the first land being her homeland.

Unpacking the concept of 'Mother' even further, I asked Swanepoel about her thoughts of my conceptualising of 'Mother Nature' as 'the good enough mother'. I asked her this specifically because of her interest in attachment theory. She then suggested that the inhabitants have to believe that Mother Nature is a good mother (even when she throws fire, as was the case in Australia in December 2019 and January 2020). Swanepoel then encouraged me to share my thoughts as one of Mother Nature's daughters and I was able to articulate my beliefs in a way that I had never done before. I was able to express my privileged position as a child who was able to interact with nature regularly.

I had both a mother and father who had time to spend together with me in the natural environment. I had a sister who would play with me in the garden and a black domestic worker who would teach me her worldviews about the natural world. I think that there is a divide in the relationship and I feel that I was privileged enough to be raised with that respect which Mother Nature deserves to be given.

I explained to Swanepoel how I grew up with my father in the garden, playing outside, making food out of leaves, smelling the flowers and I feel that a lot of children nowadays do not have access to that. I think that technology does play a big role, but we cannot negate circumstances and the socio-political environment.

It felt as though my personal testimony of my relationship with Mother Nature had the ability to evoke a clear, motivated statement from Swanepoel about the possible relevance of attachment theory in relation to the relationship between human beings and the earth. She commented on the emotional distance existing between many mothers and their children in South Africa due to trauma, postnatal depression, suffering and hardship. Swanepoel raised the question: If a child cannot connect to their own mother, how can they connect to Mother Earth?

The conversation centering around the concept of 'Mother' did not only give me insight about the relationship between human beings and Mother Earth, but it gave me a new perspective on the relationship between attachment theory and the earth. The relationship between an individual and the earth cannot merely be seen in isolation: the relationship between a child and the primary caregiver has an impact on the way in which the child engages with various other relationships in life (possibly including the relationship with Mother Nature).

In a country like South Africa in which there is a lot of trauma, suffering and hardship as outlined by Swanepoel, a healthy attachment between mother and child is not always easy to attain and thus a healthy relationship between Mother Nature and child is also negatively impacted.

This focus on the concept of 'mother' and the possible presence of trauma which may exist in various forms in the mother-child relationship and in the human-earth relationship led me to consider the role of drama therapy in addressing trauma:

> "*We have an obligation to continue to refine and develop more sophisticated and targeted approaches to trauma within drama therapy, and to find ways of empirically testing our work." (Sajnani & Johnson, 2014:20).*

Perhaps, it is possible to respond to Sajnani and Johnson's (2014) call for drama therapists to positively impact on the presence of trauma in South Africa by considering the distressed relationships existing between mother and child, as well as between Mother Earth and its human inhabitants. The concept of 'The Mother' and all that it encompasses can thus be explored through a drama therapy approach which recognises the importance of exposing clients *to* nature and creating opportunities for clients to have experiences *in* the natural environment. Experiencing drama therapy and nature simultaneously enables the client to explore a soothing, gentle, and non-aggressive therapy, which is regarded as a profound response to South African psycho-social trauma.

The topic of 'Mother' was also addressed by Faith Busika. She explains that her relationship with nature began amongst the trees that surrounded her mother's house. She recounted memories of her younger self spending time beneath a tree with yellow flowers (that felt like her own unique house) where she would narrate stories with her friends. Resultantly, she feels a deep respect for the trees surrounding her mother's house and strongly disagrees with anybody in the community who wants to fell the trees because of their connotation with witchery (because she believes that "there is a lot of magic in those trees".) This magic that she experienced amongst the trees is extrapolated to her experiences in nature as an adult. It seems as though the tree with the yellow flowers cultivated Busika's love for *Instomi:* an oral storytelling tradition which uses a collection of stock images and tales which are further embellished through an interactive process of collective contribution of details to make each story unique (Ciro, *et al*, 2011).

- ***Reconnecting with Nature***

When asked about her definition of nature initially, Busika simply replied with one word: "Yoh". She then explained to me that her use of this term was not to communicate a sense of defeat or bafflement, but rather her hesitancy to verbalise the glorious experience that nature gives her access to. The word that she uses to describe her experiences in nature is 'Godly'. This term is then expanded upon:

> *"I experience it as 'Godly' and that's one of the spaces where I feel that I'm connected; I'm aligned, I am in tune- really understanding who I am… but not only that, there is a clear understanding of my minute self in relation to- in fact I feel that there is something more divine and bigger than me."*

In concluding, my definition of nature is subjective and dependent on my world view. Furthermore, I found myself being able to resonate with aspects of each of the four research participant's unique ways of defining 'nature' from their respective perspectives. I strongly relate to the notion of reinstating balance as emphasized by Paula Kingwill, I find myself believing that I am a part of 'nature' as suggested by Lindy Kremer, I resonate with the connotations of the nurturing mother that Marlize Swanepoel ascribes to the earth and I come from a belief-system similar to that of Faith Busika, and thus I too have experienced a connection with my Higher Power while engaging in, and with, a natural setting.

Considering these discoveries that I made while speaking with the research participants (and reflecting on my own thoughts in relation to their views on nature), I am able to add a layer of depth to my working definition of ecopsychology. Therefore, in this study, ecopsychology is the restoration of health and growth through a process of deliberate exposure to- and in nature. 'Nature' in this study can be defined as landscapes with living organisms, including plants, human beings and other living organisms (Bratman, Hamilton & Daily, 2002) which exist in a continual process of reinstating a form of balance, and includes natural objects and themes existing in nature (Bergen & McLeod, 2006), including the Earth as a Nurturing Mother and ability to connect with a Higher Power.

Space (experiences in nature)

Something that really stood out to me as a researcher was the ability of the outdoors setting to ignite a feeling of connectedness with a Higher Power. For the purpose of allowing a multiplicity of clients and therapists to possibly relate to this concept, I use the term 'Higher Power' as opposed to the term 'God'. This usage of a general term which can be used by individuals regardless of their religious views is a concept that I have borrowed from the 12-Step Programme (as developed by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) founders Wilson and Smith in 1935 (Parker & Guest, 1999)).

- ***Finding a Higher Power in Nature***

I was made aware of the connection between an outdoors setting and the life-giving, purpose-enhancing force of engaging with one's Higher Power particularly when conversing with Faith Busika. She explained that she feels that there is a strong spiritual factor that she associates with being in nature. She elaborates on the strength of this relationship by stating that she 'hears' God's voice when she is there. She recalled one particular occasion where she found herself partaking in a hike with members of her congregation:

> *"On the hike I was quiet. On the hike there was singing. On the hike there was trees, magnificence, water, mountains, and I could really be connected- spiritually. And I came back to this thing of 'you are just a particle, there is something more divine'- and it is important for me to remain humble in that way*."

- ***Growing in Nature***

I would argue that drama therapy assumes that human beings have an innate capacity for potential but that environmental stressors often inhibit this potential. I would suggest that the practice is humanistic, as I perceive drama therapy to focus on the individual rather than the problem, which is a key defining factor of humanistic theories (Rogers, 1942). Through this focus, the individual is encouraged to grow and thus can eventually address the presenting problem without becoming dependent on a professional.

From my experience, drama therapy fosters a place for safe exploration to reignite this potential. Furthermore, I would suggest that the example in nature outlined by Faith Busika demonstrates how the individual is able to *grow*, by encountering a humbling experience in nature- as she indicated with her hiking expedition. I am of the opinion that growth for the individual is important for the therapist too, as one could say that before a therapist is a professional, the therapist is primarily a human being.

Additionally, the hiking example illustrated by Busika can be seen as reflective of the suggestion made by wa Thiong'o (1992) regarding the origins of drama that are based on human struggles with nature, and with others. This notion of interconnectedness between human beings and the natural environment is echoed in Chinyowa's (2014) explanation of African ritual traditions. Chinyowa (2014) suggests that African theatre traditions are not

merely for entertainment purposes, but are ritualised institutions that serve a variety of important functions including spiritual growth and thanksgiving, thus making these performances of rituals (which often occur outdoors) an important aspect of one's life.

- ***Ritual in Nature***

The relationship between nature and drama was addressed further by Marlize Swanepoel, who identified the element of ritual in both nature and drama. She provided an example of instances in which she used ritual and drama therapy in an outdoor setting such as performing fire rituals with clients at an eating disorder unit. She explained that the fire ritual is beneficial, as it enables the client to literally burn something with the intention of moving toward a state of replenishment and renewal after this seemingly destructive act. This theme of moving from destruction toward a renewed process of growth is reflexive of Volkas' method referenced at the beginning of this study.

It is necessary to consider the various definitions of ritual. Defining this term can be difficult. Schechner echoes this need for approaching the term with caution when he states that "even to say it in one word, ritual, is asking for trouble" (Schechner, 1993:228). Ritual can take on many forms. Rituals can stimulate one's imagination, create a sense of boredom, excite, move, stimulate, evoke memories, initiate extra-ordinary experiences, rituals can simply refer to the repetition of mundane activities (McCauley & Lawson, 2002). It is therefore evident that the concept of ritual is paradoxical in nature, as it encompasses that which is sacred, as well as that which is considered secular. Schechner is a key scholar who focuses on the relationship between performance and ritual. He proposes that there is an element of similarity between performance and rituals. Schechner (1994) suggests that rituals are performative in nature due to the fact that they centre on the execution of certain activities, similarly, performance is said to possess a ritualistic quality, as the actions used are repeatable due to a process of codification. Schechner expresses that although there are differences which exist between performance and ritual; these two practices have similar functions. The functions of healing, celebrating, educating, entertaining, and contributing to societal harmony are therefore expressed to be common when considering ritual and performance (Schechner, 1994). The differences between these two practices are dependent on context as well as where the emphasis is placed (Schechner 1994).

Ritual is prevalent in the practice of drama therapy; in fact, dramatic ritual is described as one of the most influential sources in the practice of drama therapy (Emunah 1994:3). Ritual in drama therapy is described by Emunah (1994:22) as a container that is able to hold the powerful feelings, images and unconscious associations that may emerge in a therapy session. The grounding provided by the inherent structural qualities of ritual is a theme which emerges in the conversations held with the drama therapists in the research sample. Marlize Swanepoel suggested that ritual provides a sense of structure and therefore enables healthful containment in a drama therapy session. The recurring theme of the drama therapist using aspects of ritualised structure in order to construct necessary boundaries in the context of drama therapy can be explained further by Emunah, who suggests that a ritual within the therapy session can be something as simple as the return to a specific activity at the beginning and ending of a session (1994).

Considering dramatic ritual as one of the most influential sources in the practice of drama therapy, it might be of value to review the notion of dramatic play, which happens to be one of the nine core processes in drama therapy, as proposed by Jones (1996). The notion of play seems to occur several times when considering the conversations held with all four research participants. The reoccurrence of this notion of play within a study which briefly addresses the concept of ritual can therefore be motivated when one considers Huizinga's suggestion that "play is not *like* ritual; ritual *is* play and play *is* ritual" (Copier 2005:16-20).

When one considers the presence of dramatic ritual and dramatic play in an outdoor drama therapy session; it is possible to suggest that nature provides a site to perform structured events as well as providing us with what Lindy Kremer refers to as a large, open room in which to explore (see beginning of the findings section). In fact, Fjørtoft (2001) describes nature as a playground. It appears that the use of nature as a setting can be beneficial for the conducting of drama therapy sessions. Not only does nature provide a setting for therapy, but it can also offer literal space for human beings to occupy, as mentioned by Kremer:

> *"I think that sometimes as containing as a space is, there can also be this need to want space; literal space to wander, to walk, to take some deep breaths."*

- ***Containment in Nature***

Kremer explained that the outdoor setting held a different energy to an indoor therapy room in that it provided a peaceful atmosphere in which the client could address his feelings of grief. However, it is important to note that although the outdoor drama therapy did have benefits, there were shortfalls as well. Kremer made it clear that the client that she engaged with in nature was not as expressive in the outdoor garden at the school where she was working as a drama therapist (specifically due to the presence of onlookers at the school environment). Being witnessed by others can be a validating, therapeutic experience, as suggested by Jones (1996); however, it seemed to me that the presence of the onlookers at the school in this instance can be regarded as voyeuristic rather than therapeutic. It thus becomes necessary to think creatively about the ways in which nature (or the 'open outdoor room' as Kremer calls it) can possibly be used as a beneficial space for therapy.

Kremer mentioned that the client still felt free to perform certain actions, such as watering the "Forget-me-not plant" (which held symbolism regarding the passing of his father). According to Jennings (1974) any form of creative expression can be described as 'drama'. It thus seems plausible to suggest that the client performing the act of watering the Forget-me-not was in fact engaging in 'drama'. Perhaps it is not necessary to rely on verbal forms of expression.

It appears that there are challenges with regards to containing the outdoors space so that the client feels safe enough to engage in the therapy (and safe enough to interact with Mother Earth and the therapist who channels the 'good enough mother' (Pearson, 1996; Papiasvili & Mayers, 2011) or internal nurturing parent as Emunah (2009) calls it). Kremer suggests that the drama therapist using nature as a setting for therapy (like she did with the client who planted the Forget-me-not) should consider using both indoor and outdoor spaces for the therapy:

> *"We would start our sessions out in the garden. We would have a moment there; it was very ritualistic, that is how we would begin. Then from there, we would move back into our therapy space to either move on to a different task in terms of telling a story or drawing something (or sometimes even to just sit and discuss what it is that was on his mind that morning while we were watering), but just returning to the space to allow for that extra bit of exploration."*

The suggestion of integrating indoors and outside spaces can be seen as yet another example in which the either/or logic is replaced by the both/and way of thinking; a way of thinking which transgresses the Manichean thinking: an approach to culture in which binary opposites are used for the purpose of categorisation which stems from processes of colonisation (Mkhize, 2013). Perhaps the integrated approach to indoor and outdoor therapy locations could allow the client and therapist to access the beneficial aspects of incorporating nature into the practice of South African drama therapy, because clearly there are benefits:

> *"Well, I think just the fact that we went every time to visit the space and that there was this- you know- watching this thing that he planted grow, you know, there was number one pride in the fact that he had grown this plant…. And he was managing his own grief. Having patience with himself and the plant."*

Additionally, some ideas to consider with regards to containing the outdoor therapy space were discussed by Paula Kingwill. What I gathered from my discussion with her was that the therapist and client are able to communicate with one another and negotiate the containment by focusing on the client-therapist relationship. Through speaking with Kingwill, I was reminded of 'Poor Drama Therapy' (Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, & Schnee 1996:293-306) in which the intimate encounters between the client and the therapist are regarded as the essence of the therapy. It is often suggested that, clients attending therapy experience some sense of existential discomfort and thus, it proves to be beneficial for the client and therapist to engage in mutual encounters of intimacy. In Poor Drama Therapy, the therapist is required to forfeit the authoritative position of being an objective observer and analyst.

Kingwill also suggested that the dynamics of therapy shift when the therapist is working with a group of clients:

> *"With a group, the group is easier because the group makes its own container, they are themselves and they do that."*

This suggestion is in accordance with Yalom's (1995) suggestion that the drive to be connected to others is both primal and innate, thus the group can function as a therapeutic agent.

Senses (exposure to nature)

> *"The Ancients said that the animals are taught through their organs: let me add to this, so are men, but they have the advantage of teaching their organs in return."* (Von Goethe, 2001:548).

Not only did the four drama therapists speak of experiences in nature; they also spoke of various sensations experienced during the exposure to nature via the five senses: taste, touch, sight, smell and hearing. Sensation is the process whereby sensory organs (the eyes, ears, nose, skin and tongue) are stimulated by a physical stimulus in the environment (Weiten, 2013). Perhaps, this focus on sensation relates to the act of 'feeling' in therapy. A drama therapy approach in which clients are able to explore the environment with their senses in a process of literal feeling has an impact on the expression of emotion.

- ***Bringing nature indoors***

Faith Busika expressed that there were times when she could not take clients out of an indoor institution because of various boundaries put in place by the psychiatric unit where she worked. It was thus only possible to conduct drama therapy sessions in the occupational therapy room. She explains that with the clients in the psychiatric unit, she felt a great need to experience nature- like taking a breath of fresh air. She continued to explain that although the clients could not be taken outdoors, she and her co-facilitator were able to bring nature into the indoor room through the use of themes which occur in nature, stories about the natural world, as well as actual objects from nature: such as sticks, stones, leaves and sand. Busika explains that she experienced the often highly-sedated clients as being 'alive' during their engagement with the natural objects.

She mentioned that she would often make use of the natural materials in a projective way. According to one of the pioneers of drama therapy; Sue Jennings (2011), projection play begins in the early years of development when the child starts to explore the external environment, thus encountering toys and objects which may be used to symbolically represent things in the world. Gaffney (2000) explains that this level of play includes drawing, transforming objects and using story. Playing symbolically encompasses the substitution of imaginary situations with real ones and can have an impact on developmental,

psychological, ecological, cultural, pedagogical, and methodological points of view (Louw & Louw, 2014; . Petrović-Sočo, 2014).

Faith emphasized the power of a stone in particular by referring to the ability of a stone to literally ground the individual who holds and experiences the quality of the stone in the hand. The way in which she spoke about the stone almost brought the stone to life in front of me. Perhaps her tendency to personify the stone comes from her childhood experiences of playing with stones. She mentioned how she would often play games with stones and tell stories through the stones, literally giving them a voice. Another medium which exists in nature that Busika speaks of using in her therapy sessions is sand.

- ***Playing with Nature***

Jennings (2011) suggests that early sensory play experiences involve touch, holding, textures and smells, visual movement, and colour. The exploration of sand (with its various textures and granular movement) can therefore be viewed as contributing to the sensory play experiences. It is interesting to note that Busika does not only use sand within the therapy session, but she encourages the client to play with sand during personal play time on the playground. She stated that she does not take children into nature when she conducts therapy sessions at the school where she works, but rather, she uses their experiences in nature as an extension of the drama therapy. For example, she encourages them to continue a process of creative expression by playing with friends in the sandpit during break time, or she encourages them to engage with their senses by performing activities such as smelling flowers in the school garden. This example of encouraging clients to smell a flower can be regarded as an act which promotes sensitivity and awareness. Lessac (1996) suggests that through the development of civilisation, society began intellectualising the search for aesthetics (which can broadly be described as the philosophy which focuses on the appreciation of beauty), and in this quest, human beings rapidly began losing touch with the notions on ‘esthesis’, which refers to the study of the nature of sensation (Lessac,1996). Anaesthetics can be regarded as daily activities that we perform that reduce our capacity to feel sensitivity and awareness (Lessac, 1996). It is possible that the example regarding the scent of a flower thus encourages the client to engage with esthesis once again.

- ***Nature is not always ‘Nice’***

Considering the experiencing of nature through the senses, it proves to be useful to note that experiences in nature will not always be 'nice'. When considering the exposure to nature's elements, namely earth, air, fire, and water, it is only expected that at times the exposure to the natural environment will be unpleasant. Paula Kingwill highlights how harsh the natural environment can be by referring to the severe drought that she is experiencing in the environment in which she offers drama therapy retreats:

> *"So, that is kind of on a non-therapeutic level, but I think also in terms of relating within a therapeutic space, it is about understanding that it doesn't always have to be nice… To try and eliminate what is uncomfortable is a really bad mistake."*

Similarly, Marlize Swanepoel illustrated a particular example in which she tried to convince a drama therapy group that she was running to return to an indoor setting (due to icy weather conditions). She explained that on that particular ice-cold day, the clients expressed their need to conduct the therapy session outside, because they suggested that they need space in which to breathe. So, she conducted the group outdoors in the cold where the clients were shivering- but able to experience the act of breathing fresh air in a spacious environment.

The Resourcefulness of Nature

- ***For Clients***

Marlize Swanepoel explained to me that her supervisor introduced the concept of nature as a useful resource to her some time ago. During the interviews conducted with the four drama therapists, it became clear to me that this theme of utilising nature (without exploiting it) was a common focal point. The possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between the earth and human beings can be seen as being reflexive of the harmonious interconnected way of living in, and with, the natural environment (Myers, 1988; Ogbonnaya, 1994; Maffi, 1998; Mkhize, 2013). Through my conversations with the four drama therapists, it became clear that nature can be viewed as resourceful for the client attending drama therapy.

Both Busika and Kremer explained that nature can be engaged with in a way that stimulates the client to take agency. Busika suggested that she was able to use nature respectfully as a resource and that this reliance on nature as a child had a significant impact on the way in which she presently conducts drama therapy sessions. She explained how she would play a

banking game called *diketo* with stones, she would rub red-coloured sand on her legs to 'put on her pantyhose' and she would sit under a large tree- pretending that it was her house in which she would engage in the storytelling tradition called '*Intsomi*'. Busika is of the opinion that when she was growing up without the luxury of possessing Barbie dolls and expensive toys, she was able to transform the things that nature provided her with into creative playing aids. She commented on the fact that presently, she is still able to use stones, sand and her ability to recycle objects which exist in her immediate environment as 'tools' for her therapy sessions.

Busika mentioned that she tries to facilitate a similar mindset of engaging with nature respectfully in the children with whom she works. Playing in the sandpit at breaktime, smelling a flower on the way to therapy and holding a stone in order to facilitate a feeling of groundedness are some of the ways in which she cultivates the practice of utilising whatever it is that one has access to in one's environment. Lindy Kremer also suggested that nature assisted her in encouraging one of her clients to take agency of his own therapy and his process of grieving after his father's passing away. One might even suggest that nature can be regarded as a 'co-therapist' as Kingwill calls it (refer to the beginning of the findings section).

Kremer explained that because of the fact that the client dealing with bereavement was able to select his own plant, plant it in the ground, provide it with water and visit it whenever he wished, he could take pride in the fact that he was responsible for the growth of this plant- he had a sense of agency. Furthermore, even though the period of drama therapy between Kremer and the client ended, the client could continue to visit the plant even after she had left. Thus, the therapeutic experience associated with the plant is not only linked to the therapist, but the client could take responsibility of his own therapeutic journey and have a tangible reminder thereof.

Marlize Swanepoel also contributed her view on the incorporation of nature as a site for therapy sessions and the possibility of agency which is consequently fostered in the client attending drama therapy. She highlighted one particular example in which she listened to the members attending one of the drama therapy sessions that she facilitated. She explained how the members of this particular group pleaded to be outdoors (despite extremely low temperatures). Swanepoel explained that she felt an intuitive need to not only hear these individuals, but to truly listen to what it was they needed at that moment. It is possible to

suggest that the clients in this circumstance felt confident enough in making their own choices regarding their therapeutic trajectory- thus a sense of agency was possibly nurtured. Furthermore, one can suggest that in this illustrated example, the individual rather than the problem was foregrounded. This notion of viewing the client as the focal point of the therapy is a key defining factor of humanistic theories (Rogers 1942). Through this focus, the individual is encouraged to *grow* and thus can eventually address the presenting problem without becoming dependent on a professional.

Marlize Swanepoel explained why she thinks the desire to occupy natural environments rather than 'loud' and 'chaotic' community halls seemed to be a re-occurring theme in the drama therapy sessions that she facilitated. In our interview, she drew upon the common phrase: "When you are finished in class with the teaching, you can go outside to play" to highlight the typical narrative of allowing children to go outside to play after completing the 'real work'. She emphasized that uninhibited freedom, coupled with no particular expectations of achieving academic success is associated with an outdoor setting.

Through this particular conversation with Swanepoel, I was reminded that perhaps, the 'real work' occurs when we 'go outside to play'. Courtney suggests that dramatic play can be used by the individual in order to gain proficiency over activities, expand role repertoires, practice for real life and express hopes or dreams (cited in Emunah, 1994). It is interesting to note, however that the terms 'childhood' and 'outdoor play' are no longer as synonymous as they used to be (White & Stoecklin, 1998). In current times, children are said to be given very little time to explore and interact with the natural environment due to concerns about their safety, physical boundaries due to urbanisation and working parents who do not have time to supervise their children (White & Stoecklin, 1998). This decline in outdoor experiences is surprising, especially when one considers the physical, intellectual, and social development benefits which are supposedly linked to the engagement with challenges and risks in the natural environment (Little & Wiver, 2008). There are some approaches to early childhood development that regard the natural environment as a valuable component in the educating of children (Torquati & Ernst, 2013), yet the common expectation for children to receive an education while sitting behind a desk, still exists.

Marlize Swanepoel is of the opinion that it is useful for the therapist to create opportunities for children attending drama therapy to engage with the natural environment because, "it is where they play anyway".

Curtis (1999) suggests that it is vital for the health care practitioner to allow room for the child's imagination and creativity (which emerges during their natural play) to surface. It thus seems plausible for drama therapists to engage as 'pseudo-mothers' who enable children to engage in processes of outdoor play, especially when considering Lahad's (2014) explanation that drama therapy is a form of active imagination that has tremendous potential in treating trauma. Healing or relaxation is experienced by allowing the psyche to play like a child, thus children who play can therefore be seen to be more resilient (Lahad, 2014). The power of the relationship between the child and nature is emphasized in the following statement quoted in Chown (2014:15):

> *"…best of all has to be jumping in puddles and splashing oneself and playing in real mud after it has been raining. It is important to have contact with nature and for damaged children, it can be a very healing experience"* (Jennings, 2011:163).

- ***For the Therapist***

Marlize Swanepoel highlighted that nature is not only a possible resource for the client; nature can be seen as a beneficial resource for the therapist as well. The example used by her to illustrate this point was the conscious decision to always look for something beautiful in the immediate environment to replenish oneself after addressing the dark, sometimes taxing matter through the therapy. Swanepoel explained that she would often just lift her gaze to capture the beauty of the mountains in the Cape in order to replenish her resources after she had facilitated a drama therapy session. This example provided by her is reflexive of the romantic view of nature, as outlined by Bouchardon (2019:27):

> *"The Romantic view of nature focuses on aesthetics. It does not differentiate matter and spirit, but welcomes the emotion awakened by the experience of the natural world – an experience that prompts neither analysis nor prayer but feeling. This aesthetic response inspires the work of all artists who marvel at the glories of a sunset or the majesty of a tree."*

This existence of both darkness in the form of challenging, painful subject matter addressed in the therapy and light in the form of natural beauty once again demonstrates the drama therapist's ability to move beyond a state of dualism. Paula Kingwill maintains that there is always place for the dark and the light in nature and in our lives, because according to her, we

are not separate from nature. Kingwill suggested that this ability to appreciate nature in its entirety, and not just when it is 'good' or 'nice' stems from her early childhood experiences in and with nature. She mentioned that the farm which acts as the site for her therapeutic retreats is where she grew up. Thus, she regards this site as one of her greatest teachers. It was suggested by her that she attributes a great amount of her wisdom as a drama therapist, a cattle farmer and a human being, to the constant presence of nature in her life.

Elaborating upon the wisdom that some believe the earth to possess, I am reminded of one of my personal rejuvenation practices in which I feel a sense of wise Mother Earth evoking feelings of being grounded within me as a therapist. Often, after conducting drama therapy sessions, I feel extreme bodily tension in my shoulders, neck, and spine. One of the embodied explorations which I believe proves to be conducive to the alleviating of excess tension in the cervical spine, is actively resting with my palms facing upward and my knees bent so that the soles of my feet can be anchored on the floor while my body is held by the ground. Shewell (2009) mentions Tortora and Grabowski's explanation of the advantages of lying in this supported spine position (semi-supine position), describing that in this position the forces of gravity no longer act on the spine in a longitudinal manner and thus, the compression on the disks in the spine is reduced, allowing for elongation of the spine to occur. I find it beneficial to revisit this exploration on a continuous basis in order to reinstate balance between the parts of my body. This act of replenishing the body after it has been subjected to strenuous activity is one of Bartinieff's Fundamental Principles; namely Exertion-Recuperation (Hackney 2002:42).

This inherent need that I feel to connect to the ground as a form of my own healing and restoration is explained by Sinatra, Oschman,Chevalier,and Sinatra (2017:10):

> *"Throughout history, humans mostly walked barefoot and slept on the ground, or they used footwear and bedding fashioned from animal skins that become permeated with body perspiration or ground moisture and thus permitted transfer of Earth's electrons into the electrically conductive body. Through this mechanism, every part of the body could equalize with the electric potential of Earth. Modern lifestyles, however, have increasingly created a barrier between humans and a natural conduction of Earth's electrons into the body."*

During the exploration of lying on the ground while being held by the earth, I find the ability to respond to the information from my physical body parts, as well as my internal cues, very

valuable in restoring a sense of balance. Perhaps a shift from western logic to the reliance on an internal wisdom is advantageous. Hurt (2009:102-103) uses Lessac's terms to describe this bodily information received from the joints, muscles, and alignment as "*proprioception"* while the intuitive knowledge of feelings and breath is defining as "*interoception".* Breath is thus an important element of embodied explorations, which is why it is included in this study. Swanepoel and Busika mentioned the need for a therapist to be grounded and to foster an awareness of one's own feelings as a therapist before engaging with clients. It thus appears that the concepts of proprioception and interoception could be useful for the drama therapist. Furthermore, it seems that my personal ritual of being held by the ground enables me to continue nurturing the self-awareness that these two therapists spoke of.

Additionally, Faith Busika speaks of the various kinds of wisdom that she was able to attain through her engagement with nature as a child. She refers not only to an intellectual form of wisdom, but a bodily concept of wisdom as well. She expressed that she constantly feels the need to engage with nature in a physical way, such as hiking, for example. Upon recalling her childhood experiences in nature, she made yet another discovery about the impact of nature on her physical being. She recounted the adventures that she embarked upon as a child: sliding through trenches of sand, hiding in the thick of trees with yellow flowers and running through red sand. She explained to me that she got such a thrill from those experiences; that the adrenaline and the challenges presented to her by the physical environment enabled her to discover the limits of what her body could achieve as a young child. This recollection of adventurous expeditions in nature reminded me of my own adventure. I was immediately transported back in time to a large, grassy hill: I recalled so vividly how I used to tear open an empty cardboard beer box and slide down the hill. I knew that if I fell; the grass would surely soften the fall and that a few grass burns would be likely- but the exhilaration of using my own body to travel through space made it worthwhile.

Part of the exhilarating experience was knowing that I could not control the course of my grass-sliding. Similarly, Busika explained that jumping into the sandy trenches was dangerous, and that her childhood-self never knew which *skabengas* (or vagabonds) would be waiting around the corner. In a similar sense, Kingwill mentioned that the drama therapist cannot predict what will occur in the therapy session that takes place outdoors; a tree could fall, a tortoise could make its way into the circle or a bird could fly by. It appears that there is a certain sense of spontaneity and relinquishing complete control associated with nature.

This notion of spontaneity in nature can be seen in the discipline of dramatic arts, with specific reference to improvisation (Johnstone, 2012); which can be defined as performing without preparation (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). Furthermore, spontaneity can be seen as a valuable quality in the therapist (Meares, 2001). When considering drama therapy specifically, it is evident that spontaneity is regarded as valuable, especially in the Developmental Transformations approach in which the perspective-shifting and life-altering capacity of the theatre is honed in on (Butler, 2015). The spontaneity in the session is vital, as Spolin (1999) explains that spontaneity allows for a sense of personal freedom and a willingness to explore beyond one's frame of reference.

The spontaneity fostered by a health practitioner who is trained in both drama and psychotherapy within a natural environment (in which spontaneity is stimulated) thus might allow for a greater sense of freedom for the client.

- ***For the purpose of using drama***

In order to engage spontaneously during an improvisation, it is suggested that the actor be in a state of presence (Barker & Borko, 2011; Urmston & Hewison, 2014). It appeared to me that nature does not only have the ability to stimulate a sense of spontaneity in human beings, but it also facilitates a state of presence. In the intimate encounters between the client and the drama therapist in Poor Drama Therapy, it is clear that the roles of actor and audience are not reserved for the client and therapist respectively, but instead, there is a sharing of these roles (Johnson, et al. 1996:293-306). It is thus possible to suggest that both the client and the drama therapist acquire a state of being present.

Both Busika and Kremer explained situations in which they felt extremely connected to the world, and in return, the world exuded large amounts of energy in return. Rodenburg (2008) describes this mutual energy exchange as the Second Circle energy state. It is in this state that one is said to be fully present.

Rodenburg (2008) suggests that in order to establish levels of connections with people, places, or objects, one needs to reach outwards through the act of breathing. All four therapists, mentioned the role of nature in facilitating simple, natural breathing patterns. Breath is described by Munro and Larson (1996) as fulfilling a double function: namely sustaining life and activating an action. This initiating of action applies to the production of voice as well; therefore, the breath is seen as the generating mechanism of sound.

The concept of breath is valuable with regards to this study, as this study views the soul in relation to the African word *Ubuntu,* which comprises of the core elements of being human (mentioned in the conceptual framework), one of which is *umoya* (breath, air, life) (Le Roux, 2000:43). Furthermore, not only can the practice of breathing facilitate a state of presence, it can be used to generate vocal expression.

Vocal expression seems to be an important aspect of drama therapy, as Lindy Kremer explained that sometimes, she could sense that her client felt the need to express himself vocally but felt inhibited due to the constant threat of being seen by others on the school grounds. It is often because of a fear of judgement that individuals do not explore the range of the human voice. Pikes (2004) states that the concept of 'The Whole Voice' allows for an individual to explore between and beyond the dualities to unveil dimensions of the voice such as male/female, light/dark or good/evil, in order to transcend ordinary expression. Continuing on the topic of the use of the voice in drama therapy, Bithell (2014) explains that there is a movement called 'The Natural Voice Movement, which focuses on the 'natural' uses of the voice such as singing during moments of community celebration rather than singing for the purpose of entertaining others.

It is through various physical explorations (which I embarked upon during my time as a drama student) that I have come to discover the connectedness between breath, body and voice. Arthur Lessac (in Acker & Hampton 1997:18) refers to this relationship between the physical, vocal, and emotional aspects of life as the "trinity configurations". In light of this discovery, it proves to be beneficial to experience voice pedagogies through an embodied approach. Schmalzl, Crane-Godreau and Payne (2014) support this belief of embodied

learning being advantageous, by emphasising Thompson and Verdana's beliefs about human cognition being indivisible from the physical body in which that knowledge is contained. Similarly, it is suggested that a body-based approach to creative movement can have transdisciplinary implications; especially with regards to social and ecological systems (Copteros, Karkou & Palmer, 2017)

This belief that the knowledge housed in the body can have an impact on how human beings engage with the world around them, is reflected in the concept of indigenous knowledge systems (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). It is therefore possible to transmit indigenous knowledge which arises in response to history, the environment or nature through the use of the voice and the body- as is the case in many forms of expressive arts therapies, one might say. wa Thiong'o (1992) suggests that drama has its origins in human struggles with nature, and with others. Throughout my engagement with the four drama therapists, it became clear that the four seasons existing in nature are a common theme used in their drama therapy sessions. Lindy Kremer explained that she used the growth cycle of a "Forget-me-not" plant and the way in which it reacted in various ways to the changing seasons, as a metaphor for grief with a client whose father passed away.

Paula Kingwill stated that the seasons have something valuable to teach human beings, as we would not appreciate summer if we did not experience the harshness of winter, and thus all seasons are necessary in life. Faith Busika explained that in a clinical institution in which she could not take clients outdoors, she could tell them stories about nature and the themes which occur in nature- such as the changing of the seasons. Marlize Swanepoel mentioned a group therapy process which she participated in outdoors. The group session dealt with the topic of transitions. She explained that the experience of this particular process was so much more visceral and embodied, because she could experience the surroundings transitioning from one season to the next and this aided her understanding of the transitions occurring in her own life.

When considering transitions, it is possibly beneficial to note that in the realm of theatre, the stage may be regarded as a transitionary space of becoming, which is called the 'liminal' space (Turner, 1982). Furthermore, a nature-informed approach proposes that connecting to natural elements, themes inherent in nature, and rituals involving nature, one is able to touch- and gain insight to deeper parts of the self (Berger, 2004, 2005). One is able to see the relationship between human beings and nature as the important concepts regarding the human

condition are explored in the performance of rituals, such as ceremonies which are performed in hope of receiving rain, ceremonies to show appreciation for the harvest or to mark changes in the cycle of the moon (Ciro, *et al*, 2011).

Some people go as far as to suggest that all theatre evolved from rituals (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). The term 'Drama' comes from the Greek word meaning 'action' and is said to encompasses any form of creative expression (Jennings, 1974; Ciro, *et al*, 2011). It may be of use to consider the origins of formal theatre-going activities in Greece (although it is a common misconception that all drama originated from Greece, as there is evidence which suggests that plays existed in ancient Egypt) (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). One could say that Greek drama originated through the communal performances presented at festivals honouring the Greek god of wine and fertility, named Dionysus- where the winning playwright would often win a goat, bull or crown of ivy (Hatlen, 1975; Ciro, *et al*, 2011). It is evident that one can identify the ancient origins of the seemingly strong relationship between theatre and nature.

Furthermore, if one reviews the history of Greek theatre and the culture from which it is derived, it is likely that one will come across the term's 'polis' and 'oikos'. 'Polis' can be used to refer to the city or state which is the domain of the men of Ancient Greece; while 'Oikos' is often used to refer to the realm of the domesticated home which is the domain of the women of Ancient Greece (Nagle, 2006). If one considers the definition of theatre, namely a kind of drama which is presented to a live audience (Ciro, *et al*, 2011), then it is possible to suggest that theatre fell under the 'Polis', as the live audience would congregate at a formal amphitheatre rather than somebody's home.

Continuing the discussion on the concepts of 'Polis' and 'Oikos', it is useful to consider the word 'eco' from the term 'ecopsychology', as Fisher (2013) explains that this preface is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos', or 'home' as previously mentioned. The term 'home' is said to refer to more than merely a physical building, but can be extended to include a 'dwelling', or a place of belonging (Mest, 2008).

When one considers South African theatre in current times, it is necessary to note that traditional elements of ritual, dance and storytelling (which were often seen as inferior during the time of Apartheid) are infused into the 'mainstream' theatre in order to create hybridised versions thereof (Ciro, *et al*, 2011). This infusion of various cultural practices (many of which include a relationship with nature) into the realm of theatre prove to be possibly beneficial for the practice of a holistic, South African approach to drama therapy.

Questioning the term "ecopsychology"

One of the principles which I was able to draw from ecopsychology is that there is some level of interconnection between all life-forms. This interconnected relationship can be seen in Colombec's four laws of ecology, namely: 1. Everything goes somewhere 2. All things are connected 3. There is no such thing as a free lunch 4. Nature bats last (cited in Barlow, 2008)

The inter-relationships between human beings and non-human plant and animal life as well as the possible tensions existing between them were alluded to by Marlize Swanepoel, who explained that we need to believe that Mother Earth is a good mother, even when 'she throws fire' at us- one might even suggest that she is throwing fire at us for a reason. Paula Kingwill elaborates further on this point of destruction occurring in nature when she states that:

> *"Humans are actually changing the way that the environment operates because of our impact on it. It is the first time that a single species has done that. And, uhm, that is quite interesting for me: we are nature, yet we are violating some very fundamental rules of self-sustaining nature."*

Kingwill highlights the irony of the relationship between humans and nature. She suggests that humans and the earth are involved in an inseparable bond and that we can have an impact on the earth, while we too are affected by the earth, as outlined by Russell (2009). She maintains that one should not think of nature as only being 'nice' and 'kind', but that it can be harsh as well. This theme of experiencing the different aspects of nature: the destruction and the rebirth, is what led me to conduct this research (See the rationale). Even though destruction may be a part of the narrative between human beings and the earth, the re-envisioning of psychology is possible because there is a sympathetic connection existing between humans and the earth- which can be considered a nurturing presence throughout the years (Metzner, 1999).

Ecopsychology can be described as "radical", insofar as it encourages people to consider their relationship to the "more-than-human-world" (Metzner, 1999:4). I would argue that this 'radicalness' exists in a humanistic approach to humankind and nature.

> *"Humanistic psychology has long been concerned with the question of "the good life" - not in the sense of a simply materialistic rich life, but in the original Greek humanist sense of what it may mean to live with authenticity the full possibilities of being*

human. As human beings, we are capable of grasping and realizing our being as a manifestation of being-as-a-whole. (Aanstoos, 1998:3)"

Marlize Swanepoel highlights what I would regard as an example *of what it may mean to live with authenticity- the full possibilities of being human* (and includes an authentic openness to Mother Earth as well). She presented me with a practical example from her life which can possibly serve as a demonstration of the point about the relationship between the Mother, Child, and Mother Nature. She recalled visiting the beach with her daughter one day. On this specific occasion, there were little boys playing and they threw a plastic bag into the ocean. She asked them to retrieve the bag, upon which her daughter explained to them about turtles eating the bag, thinking it might be lettuce. The young boys were amazed by this information. They were uninformed, but once the little girl made them aware of the consequences of their actions, they spent the rest of the afternoon hauling plastic out of the ocean and being really proud of this. Swanepoel suggests that this anecdote demonstrates the power of connection as opposed to the futility of judgement.

The four research participants brought to my attention the fact that one does not necessarily need to know the term 'ecopsychology' to be practicing its principles. I would argue that the four drama therapists that I interviewed all glean from (and in) nature in some manner. Furthermore, I noticed the parallels between therapy and nature through my engagement with the four participants. This research study has the ability to bring awareness to the principle of ecopsychology, demonstrating that there are theoretical underpinnings supporting the everyday practice of drama therapists who work with, and in nature, in some way.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter six
enables me to pick up sticks
while contemplating what it is that I discovered.
I then mention the limitations, recommendations and refer to the overall answers I uncovered.

6.1 Discussion on Findings

As previously mentioned, this research study did not only enable me to make new discoveries about the research topic, the discoveries that I made extend beyond research as they impact on my practice as a future drama therapist practicing in South Africa and influence how I live in relation to other people and the more-than-human world. I am grateful for the personal journey that emerged through my conversations with the four drama therapists. I believe that Faith Busika, Paula Kingwill, Marlize Swanepoel, and Lindy Kremer have catalysed growth in my personal and professional life through their engagements with me. I am not the same person that I was at the beginning of this research journey, and so the concept of transformation (discussed in the rationale) emerges again.

Faith Busika reminded me that one does not need to intellectualise therapy or have it be a rational, verbal activity, she maintains that utilising *Intsomi* and telling a story about a spider building his web can ignite thoughts about perseverance in a client's life, perhaps holding a stone could provide a sense of groundedness, or maybe the child who plays with red sand and imagines that the grains of sand could double as 'red pantyhose' will grow up to continue nurturing that creativity in the vocation of a South African drama therapist.

Paula Kingwill stimulated me into contemplating on fear: sometimes one can be afraid of the unknown (just like one might be afraid of walking in the wilderness amongst snakes and bugs), but it is possible to learn to co-exist (and even thrive) with that which we once feared. Furthermore, our lives can be seen to resemble various seasons (and remember, there are four of them). She stated that '*to try and eliminate what is uncomfortable is a really bad mistake';* after all, if we only experienced summer, everything would perish. One could say that it is because we experience hardships that we appreciate our blessings.

Marlize Swanepoel inspired me to 'always look for something beautiful'- because this can be a resource for the client (and the therapist). When one deals with 'dark' matter, one is still able to do so in the light- outdoors (where one is able to breathe, even if it means that

shivering might occur). She is a mother who ignited within me a deep gratitude for Mother Earth, while she also led me to consider the role of the child, and how powerful the voice of the child is (when society does not mute it).

Lindy Kremer left an impression on me (and perhaps on her client). All because of the parallels between taking ownership of one's grief and caring for a plant she demonstrated how one is able to create moments in a 'large, outdoor therapy room' where the client can experience a sense of peace, presence, and revelation in the space. The client was left with a tangible reminder of Kremer, of his deceased father, of his bereavement journey and a reminder of what the earth (in collaboration with him as the gardener) can produce.

Considering the conversations that I had with the four interviewees about the unique connection between nature, drama therapy and the South African context combined with the argument made regarding nature as a resource for the client, the therapist and the drama, I propose a quadrant for the South African eco-drama therapist. I believe that this quadrant illustrates the interwoven relationships which exist between the client and the therapist who explore drama therapy in natural spaces and with stories, themes, or objects from the natural world. The four interviewees have demonstrated the strength of the axes on this quadrant through the sharing of their experiences as drama therapists practicing in South Africa.

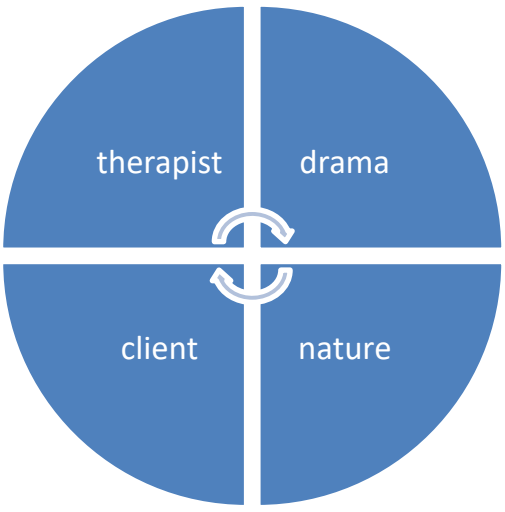


Figure 1: The proposed quadrant of the South African eco-drama therapist

The proposed quadrant of the South African eco-drama therapist provides me with a visual guide to continue approaching drama therapy with an integrative, humanistic approach to drama therapy that values indigenous knowledge systems. One could suggest that the therapist and client engage in a process of moving between the quadrants or transitioning. Turner and Schechner speak in great depth about transitional phases in ritual, making use of the term "liminal" which is derived from the Latin word for threshold (Turner, 1982; Schechner, 1994). There is thus a constant possibility of moving through "liminality" or participating in processes of "becoming".

When I consider my own developing approach to drama therapy, I am reminded of the willingness to journey with my prospective clients on a constant road to 'humaning'. From my perspective, 'humaning' encompasses a shared human experience. I find it challenging to fathom how the client and the therapist can experience such an authentic connection if power dynamics are at play. In the early 1900s, one of my ancestors took his share of the family inheritance, left the family home in Halstead in the country of Essex, England and boarded a ship en route to South Africa. I recognize the privilege which comes with being a white descendent from Europe in Africa. This acknowledgement carries with it a large amount of shame, guilt and pain. One of the ways in which I was able to deal with the uncomfortable feelings of recognizing my privilege is through the knowledge that I am always held by a nurturing mother named Mother Nature.

I reiterate my personal transformative experience which was catalysed by Volkas' (2014) *Healing the Wounds of History* approach to drama therapy and how that process created an awareness in me about the ways in which I enter therapeutic settings without reinforcing power inequalities which existed in the past. Rogers suggests that the role of the client-centred therapist is to have no role (Corey, 2013).

Similarly, Emunah (2009) explains that the drama therapist does not have a fixed role in The Integrative Five-Phase Model, but rather accesses the internal nurturing parent while adopting various roles such as director and co-player. It is therefore necessary to be able to channel the 'good enough mother' while being able to interact like a sibling. It is thus possible to conclude that the agents involved in a drama therapy process includes the therapist, the client, and the drama- but perhaps if there were an additional element present; namely nature, then the power dynamics would be distributed even more. By incorporating nature into therapeutic practice, the 'space' of traditional therapy is changed (Berger, 2006). The relationship

between therapist and client shifts in its power locus and becomes more democratic. Nature is regarded as an active co-therapist and thus a non-aggressive, soothing approach to therapy is made possible. In a country which is said to be saturated with psychosocial trauma, it is beneficial to note that trauma is a not a disorder, but a reaction to a kind of wound (Burstow, 2003). If that wound is inflicted by human beings, then perhaps a non-intimidating connection with Mother Nature is a very appropriate start.

In addition to the possible beneficial merging of ecopsychology and drama therapy for the sake of mitigating power dynamics, one could consider the 'circles of healing'. Other therapies are often based on the objective to heal the alienation between person and person, person and family, person, and society (Jordan, 2013). Ecopsychology has the potential to heal the more fundamental rupture existing between human beings and the more-than-human world (Roszak, 1992). In drama therapy the client can be a witness to him or herself and/or the group. The presence of audience is important because additional group members who are able to provide a sense of support, different perspectives and participation assist the client in his or her drama therapeutic process (Jones,1996). If the group is considered to be a microcosm of society (Corey, 2013) and the processes of witnessing and interaction are encompassed in drama therapy, then a drama therapy approach infused with elements of ecopsychology can affect multiple healing circles. Like the rings on a tree trunk, the healing can be perceived as taking place in various circles; including: interpersonal, intrapsychic and environmental.

In the abstract, I addressed my relationship with my mother. The topic of maternal nurturance came to the fore during my interviews with the four research participants as well. This reference to maternal attachment is significant when considering Motsei's (2004) suggestion that one's relationship with one's mother can have an impact on the health of Mother Earth. Furthermore, reverting back to the 'good enough mother', it is said that mothering can be influenced by the environment of the mother (Grant & Harari, 2011; Louw & Louw, 2014). Whether one considers the 'good enough mother', 'the good enough therapist' or Mother Earth; it is evident that these three concepts are interrelated to an extent. This conscious decision to find points of integration between the abovementioned three concepts is influenced by certain binaries which restricted me in my childhood, with particular refernce to the nature-culture divide.

6.2 Conclusion: *Returning to Mother Earth; the 'good enough' mother*

One could say that human beings are forever journeying. Becoming, growing, 'humaning' in the lifelong process of life-in-the-making with the self, others, and the earth. Through the articulation of my approach to drama therapy, mentioning the theorists that have inspired me and exploring a 'greener' perspective of psychology, I am suggesting that perhaps, it is possible to plant the seed of an eco-drama therapy in South Africa. What I am proposing is for the drama therapist to channel not only the internal nurturing parent like Emunah suggests but to channel both the 'good enough mother' and 'Mother Earth'. I have come to realise that mothers possess great strength, but perhaps two mothers are stronger than one.

One must not forget the power of the child. This research study is birthed from the existing movements of decolonising education. The decolonisation movements stimulate me (as a young, South African academic) to consider a uniquely intricate approach to drama therapy in which the foundations of drama therapy and aspects of South African indigenous knowledge systems are integrated. This study acknowledges the literature that has already been documented on the prevalence of nature in the east, the west and in the African context, as well as the intersections between ritual, drama, and nature.

This research study identifies a gap in the body of South African knowledge which centres around the uses of nature in drama therapy practice. The gap in knowledge is addressed through the proposal of recognising a quadrant consisting of drama, therapist, client, and nature rather than the conventional triad of client, drama, and therapist. The findings suggest that there is great value in consciously integrating nature into a South African drama therapy practice, as the concept of nature and principles of ecopsychology contribute to the content, structure and practice of drama therapy in South Africa in a unique way that responds to the need to address psycho-social trauma that is present in the lives of many South Africans. This profound and unique response to psycho-social trauma in South Africa, serves the function of heeding the call to develop refined drama therapy approaches to dealing with trauma while honouring the indigenous knowledge systems that many South Africans have been embodying in their daily lives.

This qualitative research study focuses on telling the story about the uses of nature in drama therapy from the perspective of the South African drama therapist. As the time and scope of my research was limited, some additional consideration which emerged during the research process could not be fully addressed and encompassed. The recommendations for future

research would therefore include; the use- and influence of animals in Drama Therapy, such as equestrian animals and therapy dogs (as they can also be included in a definition of ‘nature’ or ‘natural elements’). Furthermore, the use of drama therapy with groups, such as families, communities and organisations, specifically in- and with nature, as the identified approach emanating from this research could also be beneficial for entire ‘systems’ and is not limited to the challenges faced by individuals. It would be advisable to consider the viewpoints of the clients who are exposed to drama therapy and nature simultaneously, in order to compare and contrast the experiences of the client and the therapist. It appears that the interplay between education, activism, awareness and therapy as it pertains to nature is a necessary consideration, with particular reference to issues regarding the impeding global climate crisis. In this particular study however, the return to ‘Indigenous’ can be thought of as a modern sense of urgency which serves as a reminder and a call for us all to consider the principles of ecopsychology.

In concluding, nature is everywhere: in one’s immediate environment, in the paper that this research study is printed on and in the air that we breathe. It is in us and - it is in poetry.

Begin summer and the sea
a cracked-open quince
the sky like a child's
balloon
far above the water
Under the umbrellas
like stripy sugar sticks
ants of people
and the gay laugh of the bay
has teeth of gold

Child with the yellow bucket
and the forgotten pigtail
your mouth surely is a little bell
tiny tongue for a clapper
You play in the sun all day
like a ukulele.

-Ingrid Jonker

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Forms

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheets