

**AFTER THE LAST SHIP: A POST COLONIAL
RECONSTRUCTION OF DIASPORA**

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch
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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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THE ABSTRACT

MILK, DUDH, DUDH, DUDH

After the last ship embodies the critical incident that illustrates my own history as well as the connection to the history of other women, who like myself made the journey across the Kala Pani – the Indian Ocean and lived as migrants in other lands. In this project I aim to bring greater understanding of how subjectivities are shaped through embodied experiences of diaspora and the diasporising of home (Brah, 1996). I have explored my own passage from India to Mozambique and finally to Australia, to illustrate in a testimonial way how diaspora can be lived, embodied and experienced in the flesh. This has been achieved through a body of artworks that have been exhibited in galleries in Perth, Western Australia, exploring the medium of drawing as well as the compilation of poems and the writing of this thesis.

In this project I bear witness to the oppressive policies of the fascist government in Portugal and the effects of displacement and exile. I bear witness to how identity and culture can serve as a vehicle of empowerment, how experiences of belonging can germinate and take root, post diaspora.

This project is about shedding light, making sense of the act of diaspora and the journey that is diaspora. It is also about representation, about me as a *body*, as a racialised and gendered *body* living this journey, this trajectory. My diasporic space is pulled apart or deconstructed within a feminist, post colonial framework with the aim that this scrutiny will shed light on how I come to visualise myself inhabiting Hommi Bhabha's Third Space (1988) a space of movement and enunciation.

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PREFACE

KALA, KALA
BODY
MOVING TAKEN

ACROSS THE
OCEAN
BLACK OCEAN

WHO ARE YOU?
BLACK WATER
BLACK BODY
AWAITING EXILE
NOT KNOWING
SKIN

KALA BODY WHO ARE YOU?

KALA, KALA BODY
MOVING TAKEN

ACROSS THE OCEAN
BLACK OCEAN

WHO ARE YOU?
BLACK WATER BLACK BODY
AWAITING EXILE NOT KNOWING SKIN

KALA BODIES MOVED ACROSS
WHO ARE YOU?
KALA PANI DEEP
HOW DEEP CAN YOU GO?
DIGGING TO THE DEPTHS OF YOUR BEING
OF A BEING THAT IS STILL ALIVE BUT SPEAKS OF THE PAST
AS THE DEAD
DEAD BODY
AS IF I HAVE THREE LIVES ONE THAT IS DEAD
(RAISING GHOSTS)
AND THE OTHERS
BARELY LIVING
(IN-DIASPORA)

FIRST LIFE LIES IN
THE SOUNDS
OF THE FOOTSTEPS OF

MY MEMORY
THE TEMPORARY FRAGMENTS
THE REMNANTS OF WHAT WAS
ONCE A FEELING AT THE TIME
HOW CAN YOU WRITE POETRY?
LYRICS POEMS
ABOUT SOMETHING
YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR

INCOMPLETNESS
WORDS FAIL TO FULFIL

THE SECOND LIFE
LIES IN INCOMPLETENESS
IN SEARCH OF A PARADIGM
MEMORY POSSESSES
POSTHUMOUS
OVER THE DEAD BODY

KALA BODY WHO ARE YOU?

MIMICRY
WORDS FAIL TO FULFIL

THE THIRD LIES IN MIMICRY
IT TELLS OF ONE LIFE INSTEAD
OF THE OTHER
A FOUND LIFE
IT TRANSFORMS
SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
IT CONVERTS
SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

THE SELF SUBMITS ITSELF
TO LANGUAGE
IN LANGUAGE
AND FORM
IT BEARS MORE THAN
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
IT RUNS AGAINST
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
IT TRANSCENDS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

IT REQUIRES NO EVIDENCE
BUT THE EVIDENCE
MY BODY KALA BODY
IT IS THE EVIDENCE

EVIDENCE
WORDS FAIL TO FULFIL

HAVE YOU GOT EVIDENCE?
ON MY BODY
KALA BODY

HAVE YOU GOT EVIDENCE?

ONLY NOTES THAT DISRUPT
THE ORDER
THE ORDER
OF THE NARRATIVE THE STORY
PLACING INTERRUPTIONS
BY A DIFFERENT WAY
OF REMEMBERING
A DIFFERENT WAY OF BEING IN THE WORLD

HAVE YOU GOT EVIDENCE?

WITH NO LINK TO THE REST
TO THE REST OF HISTORY THE TEXT
ONLY MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS
THE FEELING OF THE TIME I DON'T
WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR

ONLY MIXING MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS
THE FEELING OF THE TIMES I DON'T WANT TO
ACCOUNT FOR EVIDENCE
TO THE REST OF HISTORY THE TEXT
ONLY MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS
THE FEELING OF THE TIME I DON'T WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR

ONLY MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS
THE FEELING OF THE TIMES I DON'T WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR
ACCOUNT FOR

TO THE REST OF HISTORY THE TEXT
ONLY MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS
THE FEELING OF THE TIME I DON'T WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR
EVIDENCE

ONLY MIXING MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS
THE FEELING OF THE TIMES I DON'T WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR
ACCOUNT FOR ACCOUNT FOR

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ONLY MIXING MIXING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOUNDS

THE FEELING OF THE TIMES I DON'T WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR

ACCOUNT FOR WHAT?

NO EVIDENCE

ACCOUNT FOR WHAT?

VINEGAR, SIRKA, SIRKA, SIRKO

A few years have gone by since I began to create this thesis but the subject matter has been a lifelong project for me, an ongoing project. If I could have known as a child that one day I would be standing here writing, speaking, drawing ... and drawing about our life, the journey here would have been, oh so much easier.

This project is about shedding light, making sense of the act of diaspora and the journey that is diaspora. It is also about representation, about me as a *body*, as a racialised and gendered *body* living this journey, this trajectory. My diasporic space is pulled apart or deconstructed within a feminist, post colonial framework with the aim that this scrutiny will shed light on how I come to visualise myself inhabiting Hommi Bhabha's Third Space (1988).

I have started with the title *After the Last Ship* as it marks that fatal day when my family left Goa India, in search of a better future. In Chapter One I tell my story opening with a poem that gives its name to this thesis *After the last ship*, and mark out the places we lived in as well as some of my experiences growing up in a *foreign* land. I have used items in the glossary section of my grandmother's cookery book as headings and subheadings in each chapter. **ICE, BARAF, BARAF, BAROF** - they are translations in English, Hindi, Marathi and Konkani – my tribal language. The reason for including something that may be considered mundane or even non academic, such as a heading in a cookery book as a central formatting element of this thesis, is to adorn these pages with the sounds that these words perform.

As a child I was taught to read in more than one language and used this cookery book as practice. As I read out a word, the name of a fruit, a vegetable or an ingredient in a recipe, there was my grandmother's voice teaching me the correct pronunciation, performing the words, shifting from one language to another. It was music to my ears. Sometimes she would laugh as I made up words that had elements of all four languages,

but was none of them. Even if the reader misreads the words, as I have done, there is a certain aesthetic in the misreading or mispronunciation. But it's more than that, the misconstruction of words leads to a kind of fallacy, or even delusion. Something that runs within the veins of how I have consciously embodied the experience of diaspora. As such these elements have become the spine for my formatting.

For the past years twenty years I have kept several diaries: I have a *Bus Diary* where I write my journeys and the people I come upon, going on the number 99 and 98 Bus: I have a *Private Diary* where I write my inmost concerns regarding various aspects of my many uprootings and resettlements and I have an *Art Diary* where I record my approach to exhibitions I visit, the politics of the Gallery and the dynamics of other patrons, the way they act and perform within gallery spaces. At various times I have also compiled my views whenever I have travelled, specially my recollections of growing up in Mozambique or my visits to India. They are not travel journals, but more a kind of response, a reply to the landscape I find myself within. Sometimes they are an expression of the strong sense of sadness or more an expression of grief, loss and bereavement I have experienced. Other times they are an expression of what I saw within the chaos that surrounded me.

I have included sections of my diaries within this thesis; I have the urge to return to them over and over again. The scripting and recording of these diaries were conceived as an unsigned process, no one had ever read them or seen them or even known that I was creating them.

I wrote them so I could make sense of myself to myself. It affords me a break in the process of remembering, almost as if, when I look inside, this inward gaze brings up and names a vulnerable area, previously unnamed and unmarked but one that does not lie dormant inside, it creates noise inside me; loud noises and riots. The mere gesture of the writing of these diaries created a balanced silence, an even – handed breathing space, if only for a few moments. Now as I examine my diaries and include them in this body of

writing, I have named them. I mark them and scrape and scuff them and by doing so I extended the stillness, the tranquillity inside me.

I have endeavoured to structure this thesis in parallel with the creation of my visual work. Drawing and writing are similar acts – just as I have theorised a concept in writing I have explored it through drawing using Judith Dinham’s (1995) notion of drawing as ‘ideation’.

Documentation of the artworks I have created for this project is included within the body of this thesis. These have been exhibited in mainstream galleries in Perth, Western Australia. The artworks are not an ‘illustration’ of the theories discussed in the thesis, but are more an exploration of the things, the intangible feelings like the sound of breathing that come from speaking the word *Diaspora* itself, or the sound of a grinding stone, or the memory of the ache in my calves, in my legs as I walked in and out of the city, day after day. These things fall out of the hem of theory and sometimes, to me, outside the edge of language. So, I have drawn them.

The exhibitions were presented as a series; the first was titled *Erasures* and staged at The Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle, Western Australia in February 2005. The second exhibition Titled *After the Last Ship* took place at the main gallery of The Western Australia Maritime Museum in Fremantle, in July 2005 to coincide with the *Middle Passages* international conference at the Museum. The third exhibition was staged in August 2005, titled *The Fold* at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art in Perth, Western Australia.

All the chapters are interwoven with word narratives presented as poems. I have no prior knowledge of the semantic structure of poems. I have written these pieces at various times; when remembering some detail in my childhood or my past I was somehow compelled to structure the spoken word in this way. I consider the poems to be a kind of linguistic hybrid in Bakhtin’s sense:

A hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles... two semantic and axiological belief systems (Bakhtin, 1981 p.304).

In Chapter One I begin with a brief description of my journey. This chapter is autobiographical in nature and I have striven to document this journey with factual historical information. In this chapter I have also referred to my great-grandfather's diary, which is an important document that sheds light upon my family's history and links to the land of Gaunco Vaddo in Goa, India.

In parallel to the writing of Chapter One I created a stop-motion animation that explores the hands, the poses of arms of women engaged in work. The notion of self representation, selfhood and identity has always been a contested site, where my own perception and self definition colluded with the portrayals of 'Indian' looking people in historical narratives and the popular media. For years I have had to deal with images that portray 'Indian' women as creatures whose feet never touched the earth (Kahf, 1999 p.3).

The animation, which is titled *Mimesis I*, was exhibited in my first exhibition *Erasures* at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle. It aims to bring forward a different view, a view that I hold of the women in my family engaged in all kinds of activities from teaching to labour jobs, from working in factories to being the holders of culture and history. These were women whose feet not only touched the earth, but were enclosed and covered by it. Women who worked from dawn to dusk. I watched them hold their children in their arms, I watched their hands carry out odd jobs, I watched them carry-out immense responsibilities, I watched every gesture of their hands as they performed at cultural events, I watched every movement of their hands when they talked to each other, I watched their hands when they stood up in a classroom to deliver a lesson, I watched and I watched.

As a child I was confronted by history that portrayed 'Indian' people in a derogatory, offensive way. I desperately needed alternative images, images with which I was

familiar, images and knowledge that balanced the world for me. So I began to draw the women in my family, women as subjects in their own right.

Mimesis I brings forward the act of looking intently, of staring and gazing. It is also about remembering my history. This artwork, as an animation is a collection of observations through drawing where I have created hundreds of drawings using my own hands as the model for this work. Stills from *Mimesis I* are presented in Chapter One.

A natural progression from the animation was to create whole body portraits continuing the hand movements, but where the feet were firmly grounded. I have worked from a mirror for these portraits – which are three and a half times my own height, measuring 450 x 180cm (height x width). The works were conceived in sections – charcoal on hand made paper, this untitled body of works was presented at the exhibition at The Gallery of The Maritime Museum in Fremantle. Documentation of these works is placed within Chapter One interlaced through with the writing of my history and a few stills from the animation *Mimesis I*.

Chapter Two grounds my work theoretically; it has been one of the most enjoyable tasks I have undertaken for this project. Here I have deconstructed the notion of Diaspora by reading and collating many authors' views on the subject; this is done visually and through text. With this exploration of Diaspora I created an installation titled *This is not Diaspora*, it contains six large scale charcoal drawings of my monumental feet walking and a landscape of seven hundred and forty five elephants.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Surrealism, as a movement, opened up a space where scale and size manipulated to create dreamlike, strange and bizarre landscapes. In the works of Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte ordinary objects exuding their size are placed within a landscape in a subversive way; at other times they are compressed and distorted to challenge our perceptions of the landscape and to disrupt the ordinary (Lloyd, 1993). In *This is not Diaspora* I have used scale to encourage a renewed reading of diaspora that goes beyond the common-sense view that it is about people who have

migrated to another country by choice. Here I reflect back on my own experience of never quite fitting in – either being too big or too small to sit comfortably within most social locations. Documentation of this artwork is placed at the end of Chapter Two.

Chapter Three looks at the ‘body’ theorized and situated as diasporic; it is also about coming home, wherever that may be. Here I discuss Homi Bhabha’s third space and Eduardo Soja’s Thirdspace and turn to the Australian landscape in a bid to find ‘my’ Heterotopia, the beginning of my re-grounding.

At this point in time I created an installation titled *The Last Judgement* based on Michelangelo’s fresco on the altar of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City, Rome. This installation was one of the works of the *Erasures* exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle. *The Last Judgement* had two components: a drawing component, where large scale sections of Michelangelo’s fresco were drawn in charcoal onto the walls of the gallery; a light component, where light projected from a large ‘lantern’ that rotated slowly from the ceiling in the centre of the gallery, projecting hundreds of elephants drawn in saffron colour light.

This work has its origins deep down in the roots of my history. My great grandfather’s diary makes reference to a series of temples that were demolished in Gaunco Vaddo in Goa, India around 1561 to make way for the building of catholic churches, during the first hundred years of Portuguese colonisation and occupation of Goa. As a PhD student I visited Goa and was taken by family members who still live in the area, to the site where the churches were built. It was on top of the hill, my country, Gaunco Vaddo you could see for miles below. I was flooded by memories and stories that my grandfather told me about this site. I was confronted by a multifaceted ruin of almost beautiful proportions. The remnants of walls were double skin. Layer upon layer.

They explained how the temple that first stood there was demolished by the colonisers, who later built a church on the same spot. The church fell to the ground. It was built again. It fell again. The church was built for the third time, moved to the side of the

original site. It still stands today – at the side of a mass of ruins, where you can see the original temple floor with carved inscriptions and portions of altars and walls of subsequent churches. The ruins present themselves like a scar on the earth, the land, the country from which I get my name.

During the early stages of my research I began to look at the architecture and decoration of churches of the Renaissance period. As an undergraduate in fine arts in Lisbon, I had studied Michelangelo's works in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, mainly *The Last Judgment* painted almost as a backdrop for the chapel altar. A closer look at the timelines when these works were created, revealed it coincided with the same period that the temples around Goa were demolished.

This was the departure point for the creation of my installation titled *The Last Judgement* at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle. The charcoal drawings I inscribed on the walls of the gallery take inspiration from the imagery of Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment* but are fused with representations of deities and inscriptions that I have found around Goa.

The drawings on the walls were washed down on the last day of the exhibition and white - washed with lime. The Gallery walls had to be preserved in the same condition as prior to the exhibition. Since then I have visited the gallery on many occasions and each time I seem to see a soft shadow of my drawing gleaming through the white wash of heritage lime. Documentation of this installation is placed at the end of Chapter Three.

Finally, Chapter Four is my conclusion; here I trace my journey back to India almost fifty years to the days after we left. As I began to write this last section I read through numerous pages of numerous diaries I have carried around with me for many years.

There is nothing I can write as a 'conclusion' here, there are still many other journeys and places, and memories to deal with. I am at a kind of crossing that seems not to move from here to there. It feels like this is a passage space, a moving locale, a space of early stages and split ends and many middle, midway, transitional ... many halfway places.

Neither here nor there.

I am back to the beginning looking for a place.

Looking for a split-end-place a halfway place.

As I worked my way through this last Chapter, I began to move back to my first drawings of hands, but now extending to the arms creating a series of works that traced the motion of arms and hands gathering, gathering, collecting and assembling.

Pulling together. Folding over.

They are also disassembling, disassembling, evading or dithering. Dispersing.

They are also regrouping, returning, returning.

These drawings are the raw material, the stills of the stop motion animation titled *The Fold*, exhibited at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth. Documentation of these works is (like in Chapter One) interlaced with the writing of this final Chapter.

My diary notes seem inadequate to mirror the depth of feelings this kind of re-turning regrouping can unleash. They seemed somewhat disjointed, with no proper 'conclusion' taking place. Then this is about diaspora, and the ground seems to slip under my feet every time I get too comfortable. I know that this is another start, another beginning of yet another project. It feels as if, what I have to say may take more than one lifetime of speaking and writing and drawing, so working through a methodology was a sensible way to start, because the methodology provided me with the conceptual tools to frame this journey; to frame the speaking and writing and drawing.

NUTMEG JAIFAL JAIFAL JAIFAL

In recent years there has been an explosion of autobiographical writing and the deconstruction of ethnography that moves away from the traditional anthropological stand of observing the 'other' to 'interpretive epistemologies grounded in the lived experiences of previously excluded groups in the global, postmodern world' (Denzin

1997, p.53). Whilst this explosion in writing has served to open up the field of autobiography, there has been very little emphasis on how the body as a site where autobiography is experienced and 'lived' is marked by issues of 'race' and racism, gender and poverty.

In the visual arts, autobiography has been used as the visual exploration of 'the personal', as 'conceptual autobiography', as resistance not only to patriarchal systems but also to critically deconstruct representations of the female body, as a 'fetishized, algorized, commodified site' (Kelly 1996, p1). Most importantly, African-American artists Howardena Pindell and Faith Ringgold have used auto-ethnography as a vehicle to discuss 'discrimination and sexism, colonialism and post-colonialism' (Patton 1998, p.239). This focus on life experience and the exploration of auto-ethnography as a methodology within artistic practice focusing on the body has been used by various artists such as Parmar (1990) Paula Modersohn Becker and Kathe Kollowitz (Betterson, 1996; Radycki, 1993).

In this project I explore the critical incident that illustrates my own history, as well as the connection to the history of other women, who like me have made the journey across the Kala Pani and lived in Diaspora in other lands, in other host countries. I aim to bring greater understanding of how subjectivities are shaped through embodied experiences of diaspora and the diasporising of home (Brah, 1996); how experiences of belonging can be understood through definitions of uprootings and regroundings (Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier & Sheller, 2003); and how does rupture, exile and displacement take place interwoven within a homing desire, that is marked by processes of inclusion or exclusion, about 'roots and routes' (Gilroy, 1993). To achieve my research aims I have used a methodology that is grounded in the notion of Standpoint Epistemologies (Denzin, 1997) where ethnography as the entablature of anthropology is opened up allowing not only for the study, research and writing of the life experiences of women who have previously been silenced, but for the emergence of these women as subjects and researchers in their own right.

Denzin (1997) argues that Standpoint Epistemologies is 'Ethnography's sixth moment' and that there are four moments in standpoint texts. I have used these moments as a framework to develop this body of work.

First Moment

[] ... the starting point is experience – the experience of women, persons of color, postcolonial writers, gay and lesbians, and persons who have been excluded from the dominant discourses in the human disciplines (Denzin 1997, p.55).

In this first moment I have documented my experience by writing of and drawing focal periods in our lives, events that I will call these '*acontecimentos*'. The word *acontecimentos* can be translated as episode, or incident, an occurrence of sorts or an event. The translation to English seems to somehow soften the edge of the word in Portuguese. These *acontecimentos* are also the 'Blank Spots' (Anzaldúa 1990, p. xx) or events in mainstream history, the things people never speak about, such as how 'race' and racism was played out in Mozambique under Portuguese colonial rule; how power was played out on the streets, at school and in government institutions; how poverty was embodied and impacted on the lives of people in Mozambique.

In this first moment I use my own experience to ground autobiographical narratives by first digging deep into the inner faces of my histories searching to uncover the memories, the knowledge, the stories I didn't want to remember. This is like digging up a grave, shovel after shovel, then sifting through the first draft to make sense of these histories by linking seemingly obvious lines, images or writings in 'blanked-out' areas. This process is heuristic in its nature, where every step of the research involved a return to the beginning and at times language and writing seemed inadequate to explain the '*acontecimento*' in itself. In *Diaspora Criticism*, Sudesh Mishra talks about the role of language when recounting an event. He describes the following:

Language fails because there is, paradoxically, too much language. A state of commotion prevails within the system of signs. In the face of utmost horror, to risk an analogy, nothing may be said because there is too much to say. The din of

possibilities at the scene of pure happening – pure because the event may not be extracted, will not *eventuate* – renders impossible the singularity of the event and, by extension, the act of attesting to its occurrence (Mishra, 2006 p.2).

I have kept the above quote in mind and used it as a methodological tool when scripting or drawing out particular sections of my autobiographical narratives, to balance what is written or represented graphically and what is not represented. Mishra elaborates further on the writing of ‘an event’, arguing that:

Incapable of being witnessed, it withholds its name. It is a species of glossolalia, a saturnalia of tongues, where neither the speaker nor the receiver has any purchase or sense. The witnessed event or the event *proper* is already a nomination, a statement, though of a rudimentary sort, and holds within it the seeds of other statements, opinions, predicates (Mishra, 2006 p.2).

To choose what should be included and what would be left out was a major task for me, at the same time balancing this written thesis and its connection to the exhibition work. In the midst of sorting through a pile of photocopied readings I had undertaken in the early stages of this project, I came across a short journal article – a few pages stapled together, titled *Tracing bodylines: the body in feminist poststructural research* where the author, Margaret Somerville, describes her search for a methodology to formulate theory, from the point of view of the lived experience, the lived body. She concludes the following:

In the light of the identified need to bring the lived body into a discursive relation with contemporary theoretical formulations of the body, then, certain methodological gestures have been suggested within the context of contemporary body theories. These are: naïve accounts of experience, using the body (at the scene of work) as a strategy, and unearthing bodily and embodied experiences in memory and diary (Somerville, 2004 p.50).

I have used Margaret Somerville’s methodological gestures by including naïve accounts of my experience of diaspora – my diary notes, interwoven within other theoretical discussions.

In every chapter I have commenced with either a section of writing or a poem from my diary, in order to position them prominently. The poems are connected more to performance, not merely because I interpret the nature of poems as something that should not simply be read, but maybe whispered or shouted out. Visually the arrangement of poems calls upon a certain movement, a certain stacking up of language, of tongues or words to one side of the page, making the eyes go after the words differently – going down the page quickly as there are not so many words on the one page. This is a gesture of remembrance; Salman Rushdie calls this ‘looking back’ to define our place and even a country. The point of view he expresses is that:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost... We will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind (Rushdie, 1991 p.10).

I have kept these words in mind right through this thesis and they were significant when grounding Chapter four – my last chapter, which as Rushdie so eloquently talks about, I am still haunted by my sense of loss. In *Making Face Making Soul*, *Haciendo Caras*, Gloria Anzaldua looks deeply at this act of looking, remembering and writing about our life experiences. She argues that:

These pieces are not only *about* survival strategies, they *are* survival strategies – maps, blueprints, guidebooks that we need to exchange in order to feel sane, in order to make sense of our lives (Anzaldua, 1990 p.xviii).

Anzaldua goes on to discuss the reasons for her writing to consider the readership for her book, arguing that:

Besides being a testimonial of survival, I wanted a book which would teach ourselves and whites to read in nonwhite narrative traditions – traditions which, in the very act of writing, we try to recoup and to invent. In addition to the task of writing, or perhaps included in the task of writing, we’ve had to create a

readership and teach it how to “read” our work. Like many of the women in this anthology, I am acutely conscious of the politics of address (Anzaldúa, 1990 p.xvii).

The notion of who will read my writing, and how best to communicate ‘my story’ has always been a methodological concern for me, finding a structure such as these four moments in Norman Denzin’s (1997) standpoint texts was important to deal with the ‘politics of address’.

Second Moment

A nonessentializing stance toward the categories that classify people is taken (Denzin 1997, p.56).

In *When the Moon Waxes Red*, Trinh T. Minh - Ha talks about the pitfalls of researching one’s own culture and the danger of indulging in differences that demark master territories. She argues that:

Difference is not otherness. And while otherness has its laws and interdictions, difference always implies the interdependency of these two – sided feminist gestures: that of affirming “I am like you” while pointing insistently to the difference; and that of reminding “I am different” while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at (Trinh T. 1991, p152 original italics).

Difference may be essentialising if seen as ‘I am not like you’ or ‘You are not like me’ or as Trinh Minh-Ha argues, may well be the point of unsettling difference and otherness.

Margaret Somerville discusses the notion of essentialising from a feminist point of view and in regards to the body. She describes how, within her writing, her body as ‘the lived body’ that is present in the theoretical gestures and methodological tools she uses, and by placing the body at the centre of the writing she avoids the dangers of essentialising:

In this I am refusing the strictures of essentialism, while still recognizing that (my) body, and (my) words are constructed within the discourses that I am trying to disrupt. My strategy is to centre the body, my body, at the scene of writing (Somerville, 2004 p.52).

This writing ‘from’ the body or the body as centre is an empowering mechanism for conceptualizing alternative ways of writing or visually representing experiences of diaspora. I have striven to make it quite explicit that I am discussing my journey, my experience and not generalizing this embodied experience to all Indian or Goan women. As such the research methodology for this project is firmly grounded in the following:

The research methods were fundamentally phenomenological, including all of the above-mentioned strategies – naïve accounts of embodied experience, using the body as strategy, and unearthing bodily and embodied experiences in memory and diary – with the addition of ethnographic interview transcripts and informal conversations. The body in the research is, however, always in a dialectic relationship with feminist poststructural theories of the body. The addition of reflections on the body-at-the-scene-of-writing adds another distinctly poststructural dimension to the work (Somerville, 2004 p.55).

Further to the poststructural aspect of this thesis and exhibition there was also a need to address the concerns to which difference and otherness contribute. Nirmal Puwar discusses the way difference is constructed especially in regards to the female subaltern in academic writing. She points out that:

The body of the subaltern female – in the image of the hybrid metropolitan youth who dons saris and trainers, the *sati* on the funeral pyre of her husband, the sweatshop worker in the East End of London, the domestic cleaners in the homes, offices and airports of global cities and the ‘dextrous’ fingers on electronic circuits in free trade zones – is the text upon which a whole array of academic fantasies and anxieties are written (Puwar, 2003 p.22).

Puwar alerts us to the dangers of further essentialising in projects such as this one – where I am conceptualizing moments of a life journey – and argues that on many occasions, academic writings end up relegating the female subaltern to the status of either victim or heroine. She puts forward the following:

Looking at the long routes of academic wisdom alone, in relation to the figure of the South Asian woman it is possible to map at least four melodramatic moments, all of which bear traces of each other. A great many of these conceptualizations and compositions sway between the extremes of victimhood and heroinehood, pity and celebration, even though they are located in competing and diverse theoretical orientations (Puwar, 2003 p.22).

As I begin to map out the journey that is this thesis, I keep in mind Puwar's concerns as she describes her position within her own writing:

Mapping is no doubt always as an act of power; it determines what is visible and how it is visible. The voyeurism available to a panoramic view of the world can easily delight in the position of being a superior onlooker, situated on the outside of what one is looking at. The mapping in this chapter is not conducted from a lofty position that pokes fun at the dealings of those who are the subjects of this observation (academics). The view from which my observations are offered has its own positionality. Specific histories lie behind the cartography I chart. Located within the structures that I have the power to map, I am both the object and subject (Puwar, 2003 p.22).

Being both subject and object brings up a slippery place, a locale that needs a framework – I have explored Homi Bhabha's (1988) Third Space, and Edward Soja's Thirdspace (1996) to open up the possibilities of alternative spaces from which I may speak. Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) has called this site the Borderlands, the place between borders, a space where a 'culture of dissemblance' (Collins 1990) can unravel and as the researcher I may become the Insider as well as the Outsider or the Object and Subject in this project.

Third Moment

The discourse often begins from the painful autobiographical experience of the writer (Denzin, 1997, p.57).

This moment brings up similar issues as the first in regards to the voicing of autobiographical narratives. This revisiting can shed light in areas that in the 'painful' first moment did not become resolved. Positioned within a poststructural framework, discussed above and writing/drawing from the body, in this moment I began scripting the most 'painful' points of my autobiography into poems, using an imposing strong font, such as Arial Black or CHARLESWORTH, BOLD which also has an almost classical feature to it, giving the poems a visually prominent place within the overall thesis text.

For the last five years, I have intermittently kept a diary, as a record of the memories I have held most dear to me, or the memories I have found most difficult to comprehend I have also included pages of these diaries: they are woven through this thesis transcribed in a *Script MT Bold* font. The writing of diary narratives and poems that in some way articulate, or re-tell, an event is an important aspect of this thesis: it is not only a direct line of writing from the body, but most importantly is about something that is uttered from the body as a whole, not only from the mouth.

The events, as Mishra (2006) has called these experiences, run through the body and memory as a live wire but have as well another profound side to them when they involve the re-telling of histories or as he describes it the 'bearing witness to the testimony of other witnesses' which he elaborates, coining the word *Diaspoetics*. He explains it as follows:

The meta-critical activity of talking about this site, of engendering the genre as a secondary critical witness bearing witness to the testimony of other witnesses, other critics, who actually engender the event (diaspora) and themselves as its subjects (diasporists) through a diversity of statements, I would like to without any further delay call *diaspoetics*. *Diaspoetics* is the meta-critical art, the *techne*, of witnessing the witness of the event called diaspora criticism. Its method is a bringing forth (*techne*) and holding up to scrutiny all statements and exemplars, whether arborescent (rooted) or rhizomorphic (routed), that end up vouching for it. Its mode of operation is that of an intervention, the interposition of a non-witnessing witness or, rather, of a witness who attests to the act of bearing witness, but its behaviour is incontestably that of a supplement (Mishra, 2006 p.14).

I have used *diaspoetics* as an instrument, a methodology for re-telling the testimonies of my grandmother and mother, transcribing and weaving their statements into poems using CHARLESWORTH BOLD font and making void any punctuation, so that the reader may actually find it difficult to read in one breath, emulating in some way my difficulty, the complicatedness of talking about some of these occurrences. Further, the description of body organs, within the poems as a site where the testimonies are felt and lived and

embodied is a *diaspoetics* approach to ground the typescript, the marks, the lettering, the fiber of the text to an embodied experience. The following passage illustrates this point:

SHE SAID IT WAS NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SOMETHING THE DAY THEY
ALL LEFT
TO FIND A BETTER PLACE WHY DID THEY GO TO NOWHERE BEYOND
NOWHERE SHE SAID WE WILL NEVER KNOW NO HISTORY
WAS WRITTEN THEN ONLY IN OUR THROATS IN OUR NECKS IN OUR
CHESTS SHE SAID ONLY HERE COULD WE KNOW THE DEAF
FOOTSTEPS DRAWN ON THE BLACK WATER

OF THE KALA PANI

In this moment I also created a stop motion animation film titled *Mimesis* in recognition of the months, the days, the hours I spent watching my grandmother, my mother, my aunties at work. The technique of having to create twenty five drawings for each second of film, somehow seemed appropriate to conjure an image of the arduous work in which women in my family were involved. The frame-by-frame technique itself is closely related to the content of the works.

Stop motion animation films have become a contemporary art form for many artists in the area of multi-media and drawing. Jon Krasner (2004) explains the historical background to stop motion films and the methodology of frame by frame animation:

In the early 1880's, British photographer Eadward Muybridge pioneered a body of experiments in motion photography that analyzed the movement of live subjects. His research demonstrated that a maximum of 10 to 12 images depicting incremental movement can give a convincing illusion of motion when viewed in sequence. This spawned the birth of classical frame-by-frame animation for film, a method that continues to be employed by artists and motion graphic designers today (Krasner, 2004 p.158).

Drawing thus becomes a central methodological tool and when produced with a medium like charcoal can allow for a smooth transition to frame-by-frame animation. As Krasner explains:

If you have ever made or used a flip-book, then you have experienced frame-by-frame animation. Each sheet in a pad of paper contains an individual, unique drawing. The illusion of continuous motion is produced when these images are displayed one after the other by flipping the pages quickly. The frames there are per second (or for a given moment), the smoother and more believable the motion will be when they are played back in sequence (Krasner, 2004 p.160).

William Kentridge is a world-renowned artist, who has in recent years brought animation to the forefront of artistic practice, moving away from its association with cartoons. Kentridge's drawings in charcoal depict with certain realism the characters in his films that gain expression through frame-by-frame animation. His methodology is simple and effective where the graphic qualities of the drawings are the main tools to create works that are charged with feelings and emotions. As Philippe Moins explains:

Each of these drawings is like a storyboard sketch, often filmed with no camera moves. Kentridge modifies his composition little by little between each frame shot by erasing certain parts and re-drawing them. The charcoal technique, ephemeral and volatile, lends itself to this treatment, particularly in that faint traces remain of the imagery that has been erased. The result on screen gives a rather fragile image, all in nuances, quite in the manner of a man obsessed by the idea of traces, of reminiscences (Moins, 1998 p.3).

The ability to obtain deep black colour in contrast to the erasure qualities of charcoal makes this combination the right tool, a *techné* (Mishra, 2006) grounded within a diaspoetics intervention. Moreover, this expression has been used as a methodology in the past and grounded within the genre of drawing. As Moins explains:

Unconcerned with traditional animation techniques, not even filming with a true animation stand, William Kentridge is a perfect autodidact of animation, a fact that reinforces the fragile, precarious side of his creations. It also permits him to reinvent, with all sincerity, techniques discovered by the first animators at the beginning of this century. In this sense, animation is only a process of unveiling the act of drawing, and can become a part of a greater whole (Moins, 1998 p.3).

The bleeding of this works back into the same methodology and medium I have used since a child, drawing on the streets was an important aspect in the creation of these works.

Fourth Moment

From the autobiographical arises a desire (as discussed previously) to recover a self that has been subjugated by the dominant structures of racism, sexism, and colonialism in everyday life (Denzin, 1997 p58).

Artist and academic Rasheed Areen (1999) called for a 'return' to community for artists living in the diaspora. He argued that the post-modern world offered the right setting for this to occur. The notion of 'return' is a central question within the diaspora as the very fibre of diaspora is not only linked to a homeland that has become estranged, but to the recovery of a self that was also estranged through the experience of oppression and subjugation.

This idea of return can open up an opportunity for a new kind of regrounding or may allow for a questioning of how things 'came to be'. Why did we experience ourselves in certain ways? How was our notion of culture broken down and replaced by orientalist concepts? How did it last for centuries? Here Said's Orientalism is a tool for deconstructing the process of colonization as an oppressive enterprise, as we can only move on when we have answered the questions that Said so eloquently poses:

The kind of political questions raised by Orientalism, then, are as follows: What other sorts of intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly, and cultural energies went into the making of an imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one? How did philosophy, lexicography, history, biology, political and economic theory, novel-writing, and lyric poetry come to the service of Orientalism? What is the meaning of originality, of continuity, of individuality, in this context? How does Orientalism transit or reproduce itself from one epoch to another? In fine, how can we treat the cultural, historical phenomenon of Orientalism as a kind of *willed human work* - not of mere unconditioned ratiocination - in all its historical complexity, detail, and worth without at the same time losing sight of the alliance between cultural work, political tendencies, the state, and the specific realities of domination? (Said, 1978 p.15).

This has been a difficult task and when I think I am almost there this complex web of Orientalism seems to suck me in back to its centre. So I look for ways to visualise this

return, not to recover the essentialist past but to inscribe, re-inscribe the memories the events in my life that connect me back to my maternal line, my mother, my grandmother.

Moreover, this 'looking back' may also be connected to a 'looking forward' if linked to a performative act. Somerville talks about a different notion of performance within her text. She describes the following:

I explore a range of methodological and theoretical gestures to bring the lived body into discursive relation with contemporary feminist body theory. I focus on the body-in-place and the writing is framed by the idea of performance, and the liminal or in-between. The journals are divided into six performances which explore (my) body in place in a women's peace camp, in the Australian desert, in a rural Indigenous community, in an individual Aboriginal woman's place, in a beach community involved in conservation and in the inside space of home (Somerville, 2004 p.52).

I have explored Somerville's feminist theory of the body by incorporating movement within my artwork, movement as performance within the space of the Gallery. This theoretical gesture was the main methodological tool in the conceptualization of my *Erasures* exhibition, which explored visually Norman Denzin's (2003, p.4) notion of performance ethnography through the progression of *Mimesis* to *Poiesis*, to *Kinesis*.

Denzin argues that performance is an important moment in qualitative inquiry, a moment that recalls the standpoint of other authors such as bell hooks and W.E.B. Du Bois. He deconstructs the concept of performance ethnography, arguing that:

...this way of doing ethnography imagines and explores the multiple ways in which we can understand performance, including as imitation, or *mimesis*; as construction, or *poiesis*; and as motion or movement, or *kinesis* (Conquergood 1998:31). The ethnographer moves from a view of performance as imitation, or dramaturgical staging (Goffman 1959), to an emphasis on performance as liminality and construction (Turner 1986a), then to a view of performance as struggle, as intervention, as breaking and remaking, as kinesis, as a sociopolitical act (Conquergood 1998:32). Viewed as struggles and interventions, performances and performance events become transgressive achievements, political accomplishments that break through sedimented meanings and normative traditions (Denzin, 2003 p.4).

In the above quote the author describes the progression between each moment. I have used this sequence of *Mimesis* to *Poiesis* to *Kinesis* in the three installations for the *Erasures* exhibition in the following way:

In my stop-motion animation titled *Mimesis I*, I have created an animation that performs or replicates the movement of hands of women, carrying out various tasks. I have investigated the work practices and histories of the women in my family and documented these experiences through drawings. These gestures construct narratives that maybe interpreted in many ways, as work practices or body movements and gestures. In this way digital animation becomes an ethnographical tool through which the stories are enacted or performed, a way of bringing culture and embodied experience together.

I position this work within Norman Denzin's *mimesis*.

The installation titled *This is not Diaspora* falls within the liminal moment of *poiesis*, where we move from the narration of the first moment, to an awareness of something that cannot be experienced or felt.

I have created these works with the 'understanding that the dividing line between performativity (doing) and performance (done) has disappeared' (Denzin 2003, p.4).

I followed this movement or progression as a framework to develop the visual installations as an act, not only of resistance, but most importantly one of intervention.

Denzin's third moment or *Kinesis* is the moment of breaking and remaking, of bringing new views and new histories to surface. This has been achieved in my installations titled *This is not Diaspora* where multiple layers of meaning and drawing overlap to create a kind of backdrop where a lantern rotates three hundred and sixty degree on its axis and the light interrupts the reading of the drawing on the walls whilst creating an ephemeral illustration of elephants over it.

We are walking through the mountains

TRANSCERENCE

She holds my hand tightly and signals me to listen to the whispers the murmurs of the trees, the voices of the birds that came to nest in the old Chico tree and to watch the jackals.

NEARNESS

I follow her everywhere observing as she works all day from dawn to dusk hanging on to every single word she utters every single sigh every gesture every single nod and shrug, every single whisper. Her smell...

We are walking through the mountains

She holds my hand tightly and signals me to listen to the whispers the murmurs of the trees

NEARNESS

Transference

I have followed her everywhere

I have followed her everywhere

I have followed her everywhere

