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 University
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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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?
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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
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WORDS FAIL TO FULFIL

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KALA BODY WHO ARE YOU?

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WORDS FAIL TO FULFIL

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OF THE OTHER
A FOUND LIFE
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SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
IT CONVERTS
SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
THE SELF SUBMITS ITSELF
TO LANGUAGE
IN LANGUAGE
AND FORM
IT BEARS MORE THAN
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY
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IT REQUIRES NO EVIDENCE
BUT THE EVIDENCE
MY BODY KALA BODY
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ON MY BODY
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HAVE YOU GOT EVIDENCE?

ONLY NOTES THAT DISRUPT
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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
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THE FEELING OF THE TIMES I DON’T WANT TO ACCOUNT FOR

ACCOUNT FOR WHAT?

NO EVIDENCE

ACCOUNT FOR WHAT?
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 x180cm (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 to 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 Edwardo 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 where 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 where 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 dissembling, dissembling, evading or dithering. Dispersing.
They are also regrounding, 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 re-grounding 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
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 (Betterton, 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’ (Anzaldua 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:

Incappable 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 points 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 were 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 *techne* (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**

**TRANSFERENCE**
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
It was the month after the monsoon rains
The day we left
In the dark

In the dark... like thieves on the back of a truck
We left in the dark
BREAD ROTI, BAKAR ROTTI, PAUM UNDO, PAUM

We were ready to leave.
Our bags were packed
We stepped on the gangplank
Between water and land
Between water and land we’d stay
Between water and land…
For the rest of our lives
For the rest of our lives

What lives?

Bodies displaced

Between land and water
There is no going back
Sem retorno.

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

THE KALA PANI
The ship smelt of fresh made coffee
The smell blew gently outside
Outside
I would come to know this smell well

I saw tears in her eyes
Like I’ve never seen before
Flowing like the ocean
Never again
And offering a tight embrace
I nestled in her lap
I promised not
Not to leave
Not to leave
Not to leave her
Never to leave her
Between water and land
I promised to remember her

SHE SAID THEY ALL WALKED PAST HER AS SHE HID BENEATH THE CARDAMOM TREE THEY WALKED PAST SILENTLY HERDED LIKE CATTLE GOING TO THE SLAUGHTER HOUSE SHE SAID SHE COULD SMELL THEM SMELL THEIR FEAR SMELL THEIR ANGUISH WHY DID THEY GO TO NOWHERE SHE SAID WE WILL NEVER KNOW HISTORY WAS NOT WRITTEN THEIR WAY SHE SAID WE WILL ONLY KNOW IN OUR GUT IN OUR SPLEEN IN OUR LIVER ONLY HERE COULD WE KNOW THE DEAF

FOOTSTEPS DRAWN IN BLACK WATER

THE KALA PANI
She turned to me
I knew that look in her eyes
Resolute, full of wisdom
You must go
She said
You must go
This is the last ship…

I never touched her again
Embraced her again
Or saw her again
Or laid my head on her lap again
On her sari
Or smelt her again
Or laid my head on her sari
Her lap
The smoke of fresh chapattis on her clothes…
But the smell of coffee lingers

Sem retorno

SHE SAID THERE WAS NO GOING BACK NO GOING BACK. THEY WERE GONE ONLY A HANDBFUL EVER RETURNED EVER CAME BACK. WHY DID THEY NOT EVER RETURN? SHE SAID WE WILL NEVER KNOW HISTORY WAS NEVER WRITTEN THEIR WAY. NO ONE KNOWS ONLY WE KNOW IN OUR BONES OUR SKIN OUR NAILS. ONLY HERE COULD WE KNOW AND DEEP DOWN IN DEAF

FOOTSTEPS DRAWN IN

THE KALA PANI
Destroying her smell
The smell of drops of rain
On her clothes
The bits of sari
Hems in my hand
No beads
No garnishing or sequins
No embellishment
Just a hem
Cloth on cloth
Turning the outside in

SHE SAID THOSE WHO CAME BACK CAME AS GHOSTS CAME AS SHADOWS
HAUNTING
THE LAND HAUNTING THE MOUNTAINS HAUNTING THE STREETS AND
THE HOUSES THEY CAME LOOKING FOR DEAD MANS SHOES WHY
DID THEY COME LOOKING FOR DEAD MANS SHOES?

I let go of her sari
And walk onto the gangplank
Between water and land
Between water and land
We would stay

Sem retorno

SHE STAYED IN SILENCE

WE NEVER SPOKE AGAIN.
MY STORY
BUTTER MASKA, MAKA LONI, MASKA LONNI, MOSKO

MY HISTORY

During the years we lived in India and Mozambique my mother kept hidden my great grandfather’s diary and other documents, fearing persecution from the Portuguese Fascist government. Some years ago, when we lived in Australia she travelled to India and brought the diary back. She gave it to me, in the hope it ‘would answer some of your questions, you can learn our history and pass it to the children’. Reading the diary unleashed a torrent of feelings from anger to an insurmountable sadness. The diary documents my family ties to Goa and how after Portuguese colonisation the community lands were taken away, as they could not afford to pay the imposed accoes (taxes). Exiled from their homeland my ancestors were dispersed first to other parts of India (known as ‘British’ India as at the time it was under British rule) as well as to Africa, namely Mozambique, South Africa and Mauritius. All my life I grew up in the belief that we were Canecos or Mesticos or Anglo Indian - ‘half-caste,’ a ‘pariah race,’ a people with no community, no place no home.

This is my story, the story of my family’s diaspora; I use the language of diaspora to protect myself from forgetting, assimilating, to resist the erasures of history by locating myself within the crossroads of what is called trans/nationality. I need to make sense of my life of my reality – how what happened did happen, and why? Why did we move from Goa to Pune, travel for weeks on a ship to Mozambique where my father picked up contract work: Why the hardship when his job was terminated because we ‘looked too much like Nehru’s followers’: Why my mother’s despair and humiliation during the years we spent living in suburbs such as Alto Mae and Rua do Aeroporto, the effects of the Cold War in Mozambique and how we came to live in Australia on our way to East Timor. These are not only questions of voluntary or involuntary migrations, displacements, destinations or sojourns, but very much about the structure of a labour diaspora, of exploitation and exile, about dreams for a better future, that are braced by the concept of race and racism, social class and poverty, and very much determined by gender.
But, this is not only my story: within the weaving of our migrations are the threads of thousands of other stories of other families, other women, other diasporas.

**RICE BHAT, CHEVAL BHAT, CHAVAL XIT, TANDUL**

**THE FIRST WAVE OF THE JOURNEY**

Many thousands of people of Indian background have made the journey across the Indian Ocean, The Kala Pani, first as indentured labourers in the nineteenth century and later as free migrants (Carter, 1996) looking for a better life or fulfilling a dream to finally meet their estranged families in many countries of East Africa. Fatima da Silva Gracias argues that immigration from India’s west coast, namely from Goa, has occurred for centuries and that ‘the first recorded wave of Goan migration can be traced back to the sixteenth century – the first century of the Portuguese rule in Goa’ (Gracias, 2000 p.423). She describes this migration as not being consistent and divides it into three main stages:

The early initial migration to the neighbouring kingdoms, migration to British India and Africa, and the postcolonial migration to the gulf, the West (Europe and America), Australia and New Zealand (Gracias, 2000 p.432).

My family has moved or were moved in all three phases. In my great grandfather’s diary he traces back the time of the first invasion of Goa by the Portuguese, the

*Conquistadores*, who named the area *O Estado da India* (The State of India).

Documenting the time that Fatima da Silva Gracias considers the first stage, he wrote;

After Portuguese occupation the three principal “gauncares” (Vatandras) or landowners were three brothers, Santo Gaunco, Zagde Gaunco and Gonexa Gaunco, who were converted to Christianity between 1550 and 1560; besides these, there were probably a few more during Hinduism. In course of time, due to the inroads of the sea and the necessity of a breakwater, the funds were raised by shares (accoes), apparently mortgaging the lands, and as a result in course of time the birthright to the Communidade fields and other lands was lost. This had a derogatory and impoverishing effect on the community, and the Gauncos, once the leaders and men of substance, proud Khastrayas (sic) were relegated to a humble position (Santana, personal diary, n.d. p.2)
He portrays the landscape, the contours of the land, the hills and waterscapes referring to it as Gaunco Vaddo – the place after which we name ourselves. The diary notes focus on the changes that occurred soon after the occupation of Gaunco Vaddo, the demolition of a temple the building of churches, large houses and the development of road schemes. He goes on to describe how the community struggled to pay the accoes imposed by the Conquistadores and their anger and despair when they had to leave. He explains:

…Gaspar Gaunco, as he was popularly known, a stocky man, rebelled against the impoverished condition and cramped limitations of his birth – place. Some of his compatriots in Bardez had migrated to British India for pastures new; he followed the trail struck and betook himself to Bombay (Santana, personal diary, n.d. p.3).

The diary notes briefly trace the difficulties my family endured once they were forced to leave their homeland and how Gaspar Gaunco (my great –great grandfather) started a small business selling Cha - Tea in the Ahmednagar and Dhond train stations. There are details in the diary of the difficulties my great grandmothers endured as young women, but only in passing. Fortunately my mother could fill in some blank periods, recalling the histories her mother shared with her and most importantly remembering how my grandmother resisted stereotypes of being ‘half-caste’ telling her never to forget our heritage- never to forget who you are.

From the early stages of the arrival of the Conquistadores - the Lusitanos the women of Goa were subjected to various forms of oppression including imprisonment, firstly through the fierce arm of the Inquisition – the Church of Goa – who imposed bans on various women’s cultural activities arguing that these were costumes gentilicos (Gracias, 1996) as described in the Ban on Practices at the time of Marriage by the Conselho Geral do Santo Officio; Inquisicao the Goa which declares:

The Fifth Church Council ordered that the father of the bride should not wash the feet of the daughter and son-in-law soon after the wedding ceremony, as it was a practice followed by gentios.

The Christian brides of Salcete followed a Hindu custom of taking with them a piece of jewellery to be worn after the Church wedding. The Episcopal decree of
July 1644 banned such custom. The same decree banned women from wearing nose ring.

A decree issued by the Goa Inquisition dated 14th April, 1736 banned Christian brides from being massaged with turmeric, coconut oil, coconut juice, flour and other things on the eve of marriage as was done by Muslim and Hindu women. Women were banned from singing *vovios* at the time of marriage (Gracias, 1996 Apendix-3).

These rules can today seem meaningless, small compromises of insignificance, but they have greatly contributed to the loss of culture as women were traditionally the keepers of oral histories and cultural practices that were passed down from generation to generation. Most importantly it established a difference between families that were Christian and those of other religions. Families who had converted to Catholicism feared the reprisals from the Church and slowly women came to publicly ‘give up’ some traditions. This had a very negative impact on how women were perceived and although it is argued that the laws enacted in *O Estado da India* afforded Goan women many rights, they were also stigmatised as not being ‘proper Indians’ (as they discontinued some cultural practices including the dress code) labelled ‘Canecas’ or Mesticas, half-caste, more Portuguese than Indian, therefore with no connection or heritage to the land. This was the beginning of a diasporic journey, as women were slowly alienated from their traditional way of life. Displaced in the community they migrated from Goa: some moved to other parts of India; others to various parts of the world wherever Portuguese troops were stationed. As Garcias explains:

Albuquerque complains in one of his letters that the Portuguese men carried women along with them out of Goa. However, there are instances when he sent women for the use of Portuguese men. In a letter dated 1513 Albuquerque informs the Factor of Goa, that he was sending eight women for the use of Portuguese men and that they should be looked after well and paid. He further mentioned that in four months time, these women would be replaced by new ones from Cananor (Gracias, 1996 p.36).

Having lost their place in the culture and their role in the community women began to leave. Most of the women who left were those who were poor or due to social and economic factors had found themselves seeking refuge and shelter in established Catholic Centres for the protection of women, such as the Recoilimento de Maria Magdalena.
ME

I
As Gracias explains:

Historical evidence also reveals that women from Recohlimento de Maria Magdalena were sent in the *naus da Carreira da India* to Brazil, Malaca, Pegu and Colombo as prospective brides for Portuguese soldiers or others who were working there (Gracias, 2000 p.424).

Having been named *Baladeiras* or ‘dancing women’ many remained unmarried and eventually migrated to British India to get away from the community that knew them.

My grandmother, my Nana, used to tell many stories of young women that had vanished when walking in the cardamom fields near Cochin when the ships were in Port and the trickery used by the recruiters to get people on board. She said her mother hid in the bushes and watched how they were led away, those that came back never stayed long, they were like strangers, strangers in their own homeland. They became part of a more insidious diaspora.

**She said those that came back came alone**

**Alone they had to leave**

**Had to leave to nowhere**

**Beyond nowhere**

**Why did they have to leave and leave to nowhere**

**Beyond nowhere**

**She said Shame Shame Shame**

**Shame had taken over their broken bodies**

**Their broken bodies**

**Their legs their arms their feet like a plague**

**She said no one will ever know**

**No history was written their way only we will know in our throats in our breasts in our navels and in the deep water of**

**The Kala Pani**
MILK DUDH DUDH DUHD

THE SECOND WAVE OF THE JOURNEY

By the early nineteenth century some of the family returned to Goa, other members migrated to Natal in South Africa, Mozambique and Mauritius, some eventually returned to India. Others never came back – dispersed we lost contact. Efforts to trace family members has proven unfruitful as many changed surnames. At other times there are no official records.

During this period the exodus from India began to the Gulf, East Africa, including Mauritius and British India as Britain occupies Goa as part of the Anglo – Portuguese Treaty of 1878 (Gracias, 2000). With pressure mounting for the abolition of slavery, a new source of cheap labour was required: Marina Carter argues that ‘Indian indentured labour migration was brought into being to offset the consequences of terminating the slavery trade’ (Carter, 1996 p.19). This was a period colonial ‘mania’ as Marina Carter describes it and what better use for colonised people – for the Coolies – than to undertake the work that the colonisers were not born to do. As Carter elucidates:

The commencement of government-regulated indentured migration to Mauritius, followed by the west Indies, the French colonies, Natal and Fiji, was in fact a rescue package for sugar plantations, but took place at a time when the much larger diaspora was under way of Europeans to America and Australia. The decade from 1840 to 1850 has been described as a ‘period of colonization mania,’ when schemes to relieve distress and unemployment at home and populate the colonies flooded the Colonial Office in Britain and were taken up by Parliament (Carter, 1996 p.19).

This was the start of the many voyages across the ocean, the same ocean that thousands of slaves were transported across. Reading the testimonies of Indian indentured labourers at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Port Luis, Mauritius, some would argue that there are too many similarities with slave labour and one would ask: where does slavery end and indenture begin? Was this a new system or merely a sugar coating of the old?
My family eventually moved to Pune, where I was born and grew up in my grandmother’s house. Every year we travelled to Goa to our grandfather’s house in Siolim during the months between the monsoon rains. Here I spent all my time with the women, learning how to listen to the murmurs, the whispers of the trees, the voices of the birds who nested in the old chico tree and to watch the jackals in the nearby mountains. I remember feeling a special connection to the land; I never questioned it or asked why. And was never told, or given any answers… not that any were needed.

In 1958 we travelled on a ship called the Karanja on the way to Brazil. When we arrived in the Port of Quelimane in Mozambique a recruiter offered my father a job in Inhambane. This was a common practice at the time: hundreds of people would disembark from the ships and wait to meet an employer or an agent, who would offer them some form of employment. There was no exchange of contracts but my father, like many others, accepted. My mother was happy, now she would see her estranged brothers and their families who lived in the capital of Mozambique, Lourenco-Marques - now Maputo.

**ANI SEED, BODDIXEP, BOODIXEP, BADDIXEP**

**THE THIRD WAVE OF THE JOURNEY**

The third phase of migration is discussed as the post – colonial period (Gracias, 2000) as Goa became independent in 1961. During the 1960s an increasing number of people of Goan background began to leave for countries in the Gulf region, fulfilling a demand for cheap domestic labour as well as skilled jobs for those with higher educational status. Many women in my family left as ‘guest workers’ to Kuwait during this period: they had to return home at the end of their contracts and could not obtain residency status in the host country. They are referred to in India as “Kuwaitcars” or “Gulfies” (Gracias, 2000). My cousin Janet, who is a year older than I, married early and had three children. When her husband couldn’t find work, she left for Kuwait as a cleaner. She comes back twice a year to India. She provided for her children, but never saw them grow up. She now has grandchildren and sees them twice a year. She has never come back home.
SHE SAID THOSE WHO CAME BACK CAME AS GHOSTS CAME AS SHADOWS
HAUNTING
THE LAND HAUNTING THE MOUNTAINS HAUNTING THE STREETS AND
THE HOUSES THEY CAME LOOKING FOR DEAD MANS SHOES WHY
DID THEY COME LOOKING FOR DEAD MANS SHOES?

SHE STAYED IN SILENCE

GHEE, GHEE, TUP, GHEE TUP
THE BEGINNING OF OUR VOYAGE

The ships that crossed the ocean from 1950 - 1960 from Goa, India to the port of Maputo, Mozambique were the Karanja and the Kampala. They came up and down: loaded with people like my family, with big dreams for the future and became symbols of our connections to India, their trail representing a metaphorical umbilical cord etched deep in the waters of the ocean, the Kala Pani, keeping us attached to a homeland that was fast becoming more and more blurred in our imaginations.

The dream of a better life did not last long and we soon experienced the hardships of living in a foreign land under the Portuguese fascist government of President Salazar who ruled the multiple colonies with an iron fist from the mainland – oppressing the Indigenous peoples of Africa and enacting a practice of racism that infiltrated all areas of social, economic and political spheres.

In 1961 India, governed by Jawaharlal Nehru, proclaimed the so-called state of Goa Estado da India reclaiming it from the Portuguese, who unleashed a strong media campaign against Indian people living in Mozambique: labelling them as traitors and
HER
targeting those who like my family were never given citizenship or residency status, the
so called stateless, those who were given the name of Apatrida meaning ‘without nation’.
The word Apatrida is untranslatable by any dictionary as it does not reflect the sharpness
of the word in its every day context in Maputo, Mozambique. Here Apatrida was a
senseless word, a preposterous word, a label that almost had the capacity to remove you
from the picture to erase your presence, your existence, no matter how slowly or how
quickly you walked or how slowly or quickly you ran. It didn’t matter.
You couldn’t run away.

Her feet were firmly grounded but I can see her hands trembling against the
side seam of her skirt.
She liked to wear this skirt it was ‘the best one’ she had from the bundle Aunty
Teresa gave her, it flares out at the bottom and has fish bone lines from the
centre
She said we had to look our best for the check-ups with the dreaded secret
police and Dada must wear a tie. I stood beside her and watched as she
started chewing her nails, my mother. She stops to steady Dada’s hand. She
would have never imagined a future like this…
Then I saw her wipe a blood spot onto her best skirt she had chewed too deep.
The man with the loud voice came over with our file.
He asked Dada what was his nationality, Mama replies
The man with the loud voice looks at Dada and repeats the question again.
I start drawing with my eyes on the walls of the police station.
Back on the street she passes him a handkerchief
He removes his glasses and wipes his eyes
The sun is shockingly hot
She would have never imagined a future like this.

As time went by belonging to this place called India was fraught with ambivalence. This
attachment was see - through, transparent, no reason for existing… What was India to
me? Where was India and what was my connection to this five letter word, when I could
barely remember what ‘it’ looked like and my recollections were more based on feelings
about what India felt like-being-in, a space I knew, I was in-place rather than in a
physical space that I could remember.
On one side there was the burning desire to find a safe place to call ‘my country’, a place I could look up on the map put my finger on and say: There it is! But then there was a commonly held belief (by the Portuguese as well as the Indian community) that people from Goa were not ‘proper’ Indians as they were of ‘mixed blood’ and of the wrong religion, a kind of Mesticos or Canecos, which complicated everything again. Naming is never an isolated act. This kind of naming is beyond a festive baptismal ceremony – a pouring on of crystal clear water this type of naming has a violent edge to it that left us powerless. The consequences of the myth of the Canecos of ‘mixed blood’ was that if it erased our past, our history, ultimately it would strip us from our land – we had no claim to the fields of Gaunco Vaddo, the land of our ancestors, the place we took our name from.

Then there was the question of my place of origin – the dreaded question of Where are you from? (Aveling, 2001). Only at that time it was… what is your nationality? I gave out different answers each time I was asked. All of them were true but each told only one part of my story. So I become a watcher observing, taking stock and responding according to the situation. I imagined many communities (Anderson, 1983) I could ‘belong’ to. I dreamed of a homeland so sweet, a land of peace! A place that would envelop me in its midst, where I was not an outsider. A place to end this feeling of being outside a body, of corporeal anonymity.

This tremendous need to locate myself within a ‘nation’, was not a placid detached feeling, not just something that was written on one’s passport, identity card or other documents, something that I had only recourse to when for ‘official’ reasons I would have to produce it to identify myself. No, this was more of a lived experience, a position I could take, a word that I could hear myself saying… I am this…. or …I am that…something that I believed I could be proud of. It was a bodily felt experience, a burning desire to belong somewhere, a feeling that was with me all the time, a feeling that I could ‘be’ here in this place, in this space this land, in a different way.
At the same time I questioned if I would ever belong. There seemed no trail left behind me that would allow me to find my way back: the faint traces of my memories of India were quickly dissipating, fading away, fading into nothing. Almost nothing, as I lived the reality of being an outsider within this community.

If we were not Portuguese, which was very much decided if you were white - by the colour of your skin and we were not Indian ‘proper’ wearing a sari or salva-khamiz, of Hindu Muslim or Ismaili background, then we were in an ambiguous category of the undefined on one side - but on the other side, the fact that we could not name our nation our identity, our belonging meant they could name us. The word *Apatrida* summed it up.

Belonging was a deep felt issue and as I experienced a yearning – *saudades* – for this place called India I also blamed this place called India for my feelings of alien-ness here, for the fact that I could have been someone else had we not left: I could have been someone else somewhere else. I could have been something else in India. I blamed India, for the fact I could not sever my ties and that every time I thought I was almost there, surrendering my past, it was a circular path a kind of spiral leading only one way and I was back where I started again.

As I grew up I perfected my answers to the questions I was asked about my origins, I repeated them so many times that I almost lost sense of my own trajectory, my ‘real’ story and would have to weave my way back. I needed to belong somewhere. In the political climate of the sixties this was difficult. Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, was seen as a traitor, a ‘cut- throat’ someone that could not be trusted and those who ‘looked’ like Nehru’s followers were as bad as he.

But this persecution was not levelled only at a government or institutional level, it was also played out violently on the streets and we endured racism as if it were what we deserved for being Indian, as the media in Mozambique went into a frenzy reporting how Nehru’s government had ‘taken’ Goa from the Portuguese re-enforcing common stereotypes about the nature and culture of ‘Indians’.
The city became a foreign space and as anonymous bodies we would run through the streets – aliens in fear of being discovered. The city was harsh and unforgiving and at times I could not distinguish the foreign-ness of my own body from the alien-ness of its streets.

Run Audrey
Run
Run

Gemma pulls my arm trying to get hold of my fingers

My hand
To grip my fingers so she can pull me around her, after her, to run away
She knows I am a slow runner
I freeze and don’t seem to get the energy in my skinny legs to move, to run
We have just taken a short cut
In the long way to school and turning around the corner we walked into this Street
We know this street
This is a ‘no go zone’ for us, a forbidden street
we know that the people on this street do not like people of colour to come past their houses
We are silent we keep very silent here
I can hear Gemma breathing
I feel her grip on my hand
She tries to push me in front of her
I know she won’t let go of my hand to wipe the sweat
Off her face
our bodies break out in a sweat even though the morning is cold
with no jackets on
only the fine popeline of our uniforms
Silently we run
We try to run soundlessly
my ‘no sole shoes’ slow me down
They flap on the cold pavement
HER STORY
I have learnt to run with them Not to trip and fall
Or to open the soles
anymore
holding them down with my toes

I said this is nineteen sixty
and something The
day they tried to cross that
street Why did they go to
that street to nowhere beyond
nowhere I said they where
on their way to school I say
only we know No History
was written then only in our throats
in our necks in our chests I say
only here could we know the deaf
footsteps drawn on the white
pavements of the City

Then the dreaded scream, the one that rings in my ears

Monhe, Piripiri Monguso

The children in one house start screaming out
Monhe Piri-Piri Monguso Monhe Piri-Piri Monguso
Everyone will know that we are daring to cross their street.
Vai-te embora desta rua monhe
vai-te embora
Vai – te

I freeze
I feel my body paralysed
I look at them but can’t see. I can’t see
I look but can’t see
I’m blinded by their abuse

We are standing in the middle of the street
The abuse keeps coming like the strong rain
That flooded our house and kept us at siege last year
Not like the soft drizzle that dimpled the fine sand around the veranda in the old house
But like the torrent of muddy water that gushed past taking everything
Pushing everything

Monhe Piri Piri Monguso
I said they all stared at them
as they stood alone
in the middle of that street I said they
started to walk silently
herded like cattle going
to the slaughter house I said they could
smell their fear their anguish Why
did they go to that street to nowhere I say they
were going to the grocery store I say only
they know no History
was written their way I say
we will only know in our gut
in our spleen in our liver
only here could we know the deaf footsteps drawn on the white pavements of the City

They have very loud voices
they scream and scream
and scream and scream
The street is ablaze with screaming abuse

I said there was no going back no going back
Why did they not ever
return ever come back
I said they had
no place no place They
where between water and
land between water and
land they stayed Only
they know no History
was written their way no
one knows
only we know in our bones our
skin our nails only here could
we know and deep down in the deaf footsteps on
the white pavements of the City

As in a storm we look for shelter
We are the centre of attention
Everyone has come out of their houses
There are adults staring at us
Many women,
They laugh when Gemma urges me
Run Audrey run
As they unleash their dogs to chase us of ‘their’ street

I feel the dogs breath on my legs
I stretch my legs to take bigger steps
My whole body aches with the exertion
As if ready to snap
Like the branches
Of the orange tree
That died on one side
Wanting for water
I stretch my legs
It goes on forever, it seems like an eternity

Then we turn the corner
But don’t slow down
We are off ‘their’ street
SHE
I
But don’t slow down
Shame floods my body like a river Shame is not soft
It is mixed with my sweat the odour of shame floods us
We try to shake it off
The stench of shame

I said there was no going back
They never returned to that
street to that pavement to those
streets to those
pavements Why did They never
return I said Shame Shame
Shame Shame Shame Shame
I say only we know History
was not written
our way No one knows only
we know in our bones our
skin our nails only here
could we know and
in the deaf footsteps
etched on the pavements
of the White city

RICE BHAT, CHEAVAL BHAT, CHAVAL XIT, TANDUL

BECOMING AN ARTIST

At this point in time I started to draw profusely, I had no paper and there was no money
to go around buying any, so I used every surface I could find. Charcoal was plentiful,
every morning I would inspect the site of my Mum’s coal stove, sieving through the
debris of sand and charred wood I would choose the best pieces of burnt twig-like pieces
that were perfect to draw with. Behind our first house, there was a big rubbish tip of sorts,
the fence was too high to jump over on our side but from around the corner after passing
Senhor Pinto’s shop it was unfenced. You had to be careful, because on the other side
was a main road and the traffic went by so furiously that it would blow fine debris into
your eyes.
Here I found all sorts of bits of wood to use as support surfaces drawing with the shards of charcoal from mum’s stove site. I could chose from hard cardboard boxes to bits of plywood.

*My grandmother was an artist. Between making chapattis and pruning trees she painted flowers mainly roses. I followed her everywhere learning to listen to the murmurs the whispers of the trees, the voices of the many birds that came to nestle in the old chiko tree and to watch the jackals in the nearby hills.*

*I remember…*

The best surfaces I found were on my way to school. As we entered the city the paving was smooth, providing the right support on which to draw. Here I began to build my portfolio, if an ephemeral one. Everyday I’d work towards making the most of the pavement textures using mostly gesture drawing work to cover large areas, maximising the blackness of the charcoal. This was *Plein Air* drawing in a true sense of the word, that extended on weekends to our backyard… my studio was under the mango tree, to the side where there was no chicken poo, on the mud. I had to fight against time, time and the breeze… the afternoon soft wind, which blew gently but still could render and erase my drawing lines etched in the surface of the sand.

These were autobiographical works, here I could shed my skin – I imagined myself living in another place, another house and one that had beautiful table cloths flowing to the floor and manicured gardens with pine hedges. There were no ‘races’ or nationalities, just people, no dirty houses, no rats, no rubbish tips blowing dust in your eyes, no shoes with holes, you could travel barefoot here.

They were sequenced drawings following an animation process. Frame by frame. They told a very different story from my reality. They talked about belonging and peace and not having to justify in front of the whole class why this was my wallet and it was given to me by my grandmother in India and I had not stolen it… They talked about being
THEIR
I
respected and loved, the drawings conceptualised my dreams for a better life and marked out my path for the future, what I aspired to. Above all they kept me planning and thinking and creating and re-imagining myself outside the Eurocentric parameters that engulfed me. Then I met an art teacher who encouraged me to paint and draw, who would put up my works in the classroom and everyone would look at them. On a special school visit we went to the National Gallery and I started dreaming of one day exhibiting here.

At this time my father, disillusioned that he could not find a job, started a small workshop making furniture. We all helped at the workshop. My brothers, even though quite young, would give Dada a hand before school. My Mum would work there all day and my sister and I would help on the weekends. Slowly things were getting a bit better and we moved to a better house in a better suburb.

I began to recycle the furniture off-cuts from the workshop and use the plywood as the supports for my paintings. In a small corner of the back veranda I set up a desk that Dada had made for me and would study here or paint until late, every day. I knew from an early age that I had to work twice as hard as everyone else in the class, because of the colour of my skin. But now my aim was to get to university in Lisbon - Portugal and for that I needed to get a very high year twelve score to be successful in securing a scholarship. And once again the notion of nationality would arise. Without relevant documents I could not apply for entry to University. So my success at school was always marred by this anxiety of not having a nationality. Now India seemed a far-a-way place, there were times that I could almost feel like being there as if Maputo was my home, other times I felt so removed, so alienated that I would draw for days on end in the sand, on the earth and watch as the wind would slowly erase my lines.

Then we would hear that the Kampala or the Karanja had come to shore. We would walk several kilometres to the docks and look at the ship. Just sit there and stare for hours. Just sit and listen to the engine hum, the water pouring out of its side the black water of the Kala Pani and the smell of coffee drifting out… India was so very near it felt so very close but so very far away, an unreachable intangible space. As time went by, slowly we
would walk to the docks even though there was no Karanja or Kampala there. We would just sit on the docks and look at the ocean. We would watch the water come in and out, the smell of freshly roasted cashew nuts…the sounds of the Beatles playing *A hard days night*…drifting away.

And fleetingly then, so fleetingly, just for a moment, there was different feeling inside me. Rather than a geographical space to name, there was a place in my mind a way of being with/in myself. Was this Home? Is this how you feel when you are Home? I started to let my guard down; it was ok to be here. I was at ease here. Was this belonging or diaspora?

Was I expecting too much? Why could I not let go and just feel all right here? Was I expecting too much? It seemed that I was expecting too much: to have ‘papers’ that said my name without saying *Apatrida – Industanica*, either of which would not give me the credentials to pursue the career of my choice. I was expecting too much- thinking that I could go to University to study at a time when graduating from high school, was a big achievement, a sort of milestone for most people.

Our rich relatives in Mozambique following the ritual of the *high society* of the town, would have large *soirées* to celebrate their children’s year twelve graduation and here was I with nothing to my name aspiring to go beyond, to University in Lisbon, Portugal. But there were more battles in my path. My teachers would tell me that they would bring my final marks down as it would not look too good for the school if ‘a coloured girl can be so far ahead of everyone else’. They explained my marks would be a reflection on the educational system and would be a reflection on the majority that is, the white students in the school. It would also encourage other students of colour to study and we could not forget we were at war with India, and anyway I did not have ‘papers’.

*I sat on the back stairs to*
*The workshop that day*
*The stairs of the school*
*My head cradled on my knees*
OUR
HISTORY
That day
I cried in desperation
Desperation desperation
That day desperation
I saw the green tears coming
That day
don my brown face
Desperation is green
Not like envy
But green
Not leaf green
But green
As the knowing in my gut
Like bile
Desperation is like bile
Bile coming out of your body

I said it was nineteen seventy
And something the day
She lied and lied again why
Did she lie and lie again I said
because she had to go
She had to go to draw and
draw and draw and draw I
Said because she was
Nobody nobody between water and land
She was nobody

It was such a hard struggle, such a massive effort to move forward it was like being wedged, but unable to see the force that was binding you down. My final marks were ‘tailored’ down from eighteen out of twenty (18/20) to fourteen out of twenty (14/20), and to apply for a scholarship to study in Lisbon, I needed to have sixteen out of twenty (16/20). I thought hard and decided not to give up. I could not give up, it was not an option. A final mark of 14/20 assured me an exemption of the final examination, but I could pay a fee and take the exams. The exam mark would overrule my year mark; it was risky as there was the chance I could ‘mess up’ in the exams and end up with an even lower mark.
There was dust in my eyes. That day I began to forget to listen to the murmur of the whispers of the trees, the voices of the birds that came to nestle in the old chiko tree…

The benefit of this was that the exams were taken anonymously, so no one would know if I was black or white; you were given a number and the examiners would not know the identity of the students. The exam marks were published on large sheets of paper on the walls of a large conference room with a large dome. They were all hand written with a fountain pen, and published with your number, not your name, to ‘protect’ the identity of any student that had failed. No one would know my marks well after the marks were out and in the meantime I would request a final certificate. I went on in a frenzy trying to sell artworks to raise the fee money. My parents supported me, and I have never been so happy to sit an examination in all my life. I achieved the marks I needed.

In October 1972 I applied for a scholarship, I waited outside the office until it was almost closing time and the lady at the counter had a large queue to attend and lodged my application. I lied about my nationality status, she was too busy to ask me for my identity card to confirm the details on my forms. Three months later I was in Lisbon on a scholarship. I travelled with my identity card that said I was a foreigner. At every stop, every checkpoint I was petrified someone would ask how I, as an alien, was on my way to Lisbon to study with a scholarship. It wasn’t easy but I had proved it was not impossible.

On the 25th of April 1974 the fascist government in Lisbon was deposed by a coup staged by the military forces. It ended several long decades of harsh dictatorship. A year later all African countries under Portuguese colonial rule became free independent nations. This decolonisation process was not staged in a peaceful democratic way and civil wars broke out in some countries such as Angola and Mozambique. Mozambique had become an independent nation and it quickly became the central stage for the Cold War where the ‘superpowers’ supported either Samora Machel’s government or his opponents. Civil unrest plagued the country. Everyone was leaving. The people of Portuguese origin returned to their families in Portugal, some people from Mozambique also left for
Portugal. Others stayed. Others had nowhere to go. I returned to Lisbon to finish my five year degree in Fine Arts.

My family begins another journey seeking a home – this time to East Timor (as it was a Portuguese speaking country). They stopped in Perth, Western Australia and were told that Indonesia had invaded Timor and it was not safe to travel there especially with young children. I completed my degree with distinction; I was the first woman of colour to finish a Fine Arts degree from the University of Lisbon. Another chapter would unfold. Years later I had to leave Lisbon and joined my family in Perth. And yet another chapter would unfurl. I know I am Australian. I belong to a community an imagined community (Anderson, 1983). I have Citizenship. I have a Home. Two Homes.

I said it was nineteen seventy and
Something the day they left
AGAIN AND AGAIN
To find a better place Why did they
Go to nowhere beyond nowhere
Where they knew nobody
Where they would be nobody
Again again
I said they had no choice
AGAIN AND AGAIN
No choice they had no will
They had no will
They had no way
They where between
BETWEEN WATER AND LAND
They had no way
Between water and land

Between water and land
They stayed only we
Know I said
AGAIN AND AGAIN
No history
Was written their way
I said only we
Will know in our hearts
Our minds our memories our
Recollections

I said no history was
Written their way
Only we know
In Our eyes our ears our
Tongues I said
Only we know in
In Our throats our necks
Our gut our spleen our liver
I said only in our bones our skin our
Nails only here in our
Bodies only here would
We know

I said only in our bodies Only here can we know
And in this dark water Of the Kala Pani.
OURS
Mimesis still from a dual channel digital video installation with grinding stones. Erasure Project 2005
...We looked at the rice and she began
to draw the rice ears with her fingers
on the palm of my hands.
FAT LARD, CHORBI, CHORBI, CHORAB

THEORETICAL MEANINGS

I came to theory
I can still picture the day – when I first came across an article written by Gloria Anzaldúa (1990). It was placed at the end of a collection of readings in a Feminist unit reader. Whilst flicking aimlessly a section of Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras caught my eye. It was the fleeting recognition of something written in another language, a language other than English, a different arrangement of letters that caught my eye at first… I read on… this made sense, I could understand this voice… I could hear the writer as if she was talking to me, about me, with my tongue… my vocal cords. I have kept on reading ever since…

In this thesis my general aim is to disrupt discursive representations of the female ‘Indian’ body by articulating my own hybrid cultural identity. This involves unearthing bodily and embodied experiences of diaspora, then subjecting these experiences to reflective analysis, thus admitting the diasporic body into theory. In this chapter I briefly analyse the effects of imperial legacies and the space of the postcolonial, I deconstruct the concept of diaspora in the aftermath of colonialism focussing on experiences of displacement and embodied displacements, exile and multi-placedness and the homing of diaspora – the diasporising of home. At the end of this Chapter I include visual documentation of my installation titled This is not Diaspora which was exhibited in February 2005, at the Moores Building Contemporary Gallery, in Fremantle, Western Australia.

The word diaspora has inspired many responses from around the world: an old word perhaps but one that encapsulates a myriad of almost intangible feelings and situations that have real consequences for thousands of people around the world. In Cartographies of Diaspora Avtar Brah deconstructs the concept of diaspora, starting by looking at the word itself. She explains that:
The word derives from the Greek – *dia*, ‘through,’ and *speiren*, ‘to scatter’. According to Webster’s Dictionary in the United States, diaspora refers to a ‘dispersion from.’ Hence the word embodies a notion of a centre, a locus, a ‘home’ from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes multiple journeys. The dictionary also highlights the word’s association with the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile. Here, then, is an evocation of a diaspora with a particular resonance within European psyche, and is emblematically situated within Western iconography as the diaspora *par excellence* (Brah, 1996 p.181).

Sudesh Mishra takes this deconstruction a step further, by looking at the coinage of the term itself. He argues that:

The singularity of a genre nomination is really independent of the question of root meanings. Emanating from a diverse range of sources and arenas, generic statements frequently confound the whole issue of origins, roots and beginnings. Root meanings do not give birth to a genre; rather, a genre is made up of the dynamic procession of statements (some entering, some exiting) participating at the relational scene of the nomination (Mishra, 2006 p.vi).

Mishra develops his discussion and broadens the breath of the word by arguing that:

Derived from *diasperin*, which is Greek for ‘scattering’ or sowing’ (*speirein*) and originally used to account for the botanical phenomenon of seed dispersal (hence *dia* completely + *speirein* sow), the root meaning of diaspora, similarly, sheds little light on the archive that has emerged around the critical discourse. Diaspora is related to the question of dispersion certainly, but the genre not only exceeds the etymological question but also includes counter-statements or statements that concern matters not strictly connected to the subject of dispersion (Mishra, 2006 p.vi).

In modern times the concept of diaspora has shifted from its initial grounding to be intrinsically connected to the legacy of European colonialism and more specifically to the process of decolonization, understood as the postcolonial period. Khachig Tololyan describes the development of the concept of diaspora. He explains:

…the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community (Tololyan, 1991 p.4).
If the sixteenth century heralds the golden era for the conquistadores, such as the Portuguese and the English, Spanish or Dutch, then the twentieth century is marked by the moments of insurgency/contestation between colonized and colonizer. It is the moment of becoming for the colonized, the subaltern as it ‘is marked by the range of ambivalent cultural moods and formations which accompany periods of transition and translation. It is, in the first place, a celebrated moment of arrival- charged with the rhetoric of independence and the creative euphoria of self-invention’ (Gandhi, 1998 p.5). This period of transition has the feeling of a rupture, the breach of the imperialist project and the creation of a space where the subaltern ‘could speak itself’ (Spivak, 1988 p.285) thus erasing colonial subordination to arrive at a new form of ‘representability’.

Vijay Mishra goes further to discuss this new position that is loaded with a sense of ambiguous agency for those seen to be living in diaspora. He explains that:

Diasporas refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated in their passport. Diasporas are people who would want to explore the meaning of the hyphen, but perhaps not press the hyphen too far for fear that this would lead to massive communal schizophrenia. They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by spectres, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements (Mishra, 2007 p.1).

Diaspora theory had the capability to shine the way for new ways of knowing the subaltern and what better way than to circumvent a word that had already been rooted in the ‘European psyche’. Theorizing the colonial aftermath led to a ‘complex interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities’ that led to much controversy starting from the terminology itself. As Leela Gandhi further explains:

Disagreements arising from usage and methodology are reflected in the semantic quibbling which haunts attempts to name postcolonial terminology. Whereas some critics invoke the hyphenated form ‘post-colonialism’ as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath – on the grounds that the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation. Accordingly it is argued that the unbroken term
‘postcolonialism’ is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences (Gandhi, 1998 p.3).

Looking more closely, it seems that there is no clear-cut chronological ending of colonial occupation, power and influence, not until the colonised/subaltern begins to deconstruct the origins of colonial knowing by fulfilling the raw urge to scrutinise the past to affirm itself, to understand the implications of centuries of subordination and to move to a belief ‘that it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking’ (Lyotard, 1992 p. 90). Finding new ways of living and thinking – of imagining oneself – opens up a space for the articulation of ‘hybridity and double consciousness’ (p.9 ) that on one side ‘refers to processes of loss in previously determined positions’ and on the other side ‘would imply that it is possible to place hybridity at the service of a critique of hegemonic identities a consequence of which might tendentially serve the cause of decolonization, or of resistance against the Eurocentric colonization of the imaginary’ (Moreiras, 1999 p.395). Here lies the thread with which we may weave our way, away from the ruminating sounds of colonialism, here where Alberto Moreiras links his concept of hybridity to the definitions provided by Gyan Prakash:

Post colonialism criticism… seeks to undo the Eurocentrism produced by the institution of the West’s trajectory, its appropriation of the other as History. It does so, however, with an acute realization that postcoloniality is not born and nurtured in a panoptic distance from history. The postcolonial exists as an aftermath, as an after – after being worked over by colonialism. Criticism formed in this process of the enunciation of the discourse of domination occupies a space that is neither inside nor outside the history of western domination but in the tangential relation to it. This is what Homi Bhabha calls an in-between, hybrid position of practice and negotiation, or what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak terms catachresis: reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value-coding (Prakash as cited in Moreiras, 1999 p.395).

How can we reverse this ‘apparatus’ when as Nandy states ‘the West is everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds’ (1983 p.xi). Can this notion of double consciousness as linked to an awareness of the ‘West being everywhere’ be particularly relevant in Homi Bhabha’s space of negotiation as being conscious of one’s subject position, or as Patricia Collins (1991) describes becoming aware of one’s position
you as ‘other’ means you ‘watch’ and observe then play ‘their’ game, but you never forget who you are, your past your history.

The very remembering of the past opens up, in this case, a friction and intersection that involves thinking over the colonial past within the historical present of its aftermath and here in this juncture, emerges a new history of struggle and subversion. As Leela Gandhi, looking at the writings of Gyan Prakash, Mahatma Gandhi and Frantz Fanon, concludes:

It is also necessary, as Gyan Prakash writes, to ‘fully recognise another history of agency and knowledge alive in the dead weight of the colonial past’ (Prakash 1995, p.5). The task of this ‘full recognition’ requires that acts of anti-colonial resistance be treated not only as theorisable but, as Prakash would have it, as fully comprehensive, fully conceptualised ‘theoretical events’ in their own right. Thus, Prakash insists, we might start to ascertain the first elaborations of a postcolonial theory itself in historical figures like Gandhi and Frantz Fanon… (Gandhi 1998, p.18).

This is the site where the concept of Diaspora has an important role to play, a role that may be raw with discontinuities but which is ‘theorisable’ precisely because of its fragmentations, not in the image of the exclusionary colonial histories and not as its binary. Going back to look at the word diaspora itself, it does not signal the presence of ‘the colonial’ in its semantic formation, nor does it call immediate attention to any relationship to colonialism; it is not Eurocentric when you speak it, it does not sound Eurocentric when you hear it, so it can be imagined and theorised and studied and lived as a space of its own.

Along similar lines as to Avtar Brah, Vijay Mishra discusses the difficulties of locating diaspora. He argues that:

The task is not made any easier because diaspora is itself part of some other ‘cover’ field (perhaps postcolonial studies) in a segmentation that is problematic. The placement of diaspora in this larger ‘cover’ field is for many historians of diaspora a recent phenomenon because not too long ago the study of diaspora, and the definition of the term itself, was relatively straight-forward. Both analysis and
definition implied a grand narrative of the history of the Jewish people (Mishra, 2007 p.13).

Mishra takes this point further to broaden the view, by naming the diasporic imaginary. He explains that:

The diasporic imaginary is a term I use to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group that lives in displacement (Mishra, 2007 p.14).

In his article titled *Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*, William Safran (1991) connects the consciousness of diaspora to the ‘mythification of the past’. He describes many diasporas, Palestinian, Indian, Chinese, Corsican and argues that:

The consciousness of diaspora is particularly strong among those Corsicans who have found their social and economic adjustment to mainland conditions difficult; to them *Corsitude* reflects a “mythification of the past”, and to be Corsican is to be part of a “magical-religious world” that cannot be found on the French mainland (Dressler-Holohan 81, 84). And regardless of how often these mainland Corsicans visit their native island, they preserve an idealized image of the Corsican village which, although far from perfect, is a place “where one can take off one’s mask” (Safran, 1991 p.88).

If, as Safran argues, ‘the consciousness of diaspora’ is accentuated when living conditions are difficult, will the urge to search for a homeland, a place of belonging, be attenuated when one is settled in a better economic environment? If this is a fact, then what are the links between diaspora and economic status or social class? Paul Gilroy answers some of these issues, arguing for a double consciousness and that this awareness, comes down to thinking, being and seeing. He says that:

Double consciousness emerges from the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being and seeing. The first is racially particularistic, the second nationalistic in that it derives from the nation state in which the ex-slaves but not yet citizens find themselves, rather than from their aspiration towards a nation state of their own (Gilroy, 1994 p.127).
Safran defines diasporic communities beyond the notion of those who live away from
their homeland. The view presented is that many community groups may be
considered diasporic (Armenian, Turkish, Palestinian among others), but he singles
out the Jewish diaspora as an ‘ideal type’. He claims that there are specific
characteristics common to migrant populations, such as:

Lest the term lose all meaning, I suggest that Connor’s definition be extended and
that the concept of diaspora be applied to expatriate minority communities whose
members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors,
have been dispersed from a specific original “center” to two or more “peripheral”,
or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their
original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they
believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be - fully accepted by their host
society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard
their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they
or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are
appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the
maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and
prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that
homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and
solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship
(Safran, 1991 p.84).

The above argument is presented as a model one may tick to qualify, or not, as living
in diaspora, although Safran does place a significant weight on the individual to
define her/himself. If one ‘believes’ oneself to be marginalised, then one would fit in
to the diasporic category. Further there is much emphasise on the return to a
homeland. How does one identify ‘the homeland’ when there has been an experience
of double migration? It seems, moreover, that an important category is missing – the
impact of race and racism. How do those who look differently experience diaspora?
What is the relevance of skin?

James Clifford, critiques the perspective expressed in Safran’s model and argues that:

Perhaps a hesitation is expressed by the single quotes surrounding “ideal type,” a
sense of danger in constructing a definition, here at the outset of an important
comparative project, that identifies the diasporic phenomena too closely with one
group. Indeed, large segments of Jewish historical experience do not meet the test of Safran’s last three criteria: a strong attachment to and desire for literal return to a well-preserved homeland. Safran himself later notes that the notion of return for Jews is often an eschatological or utopian projection in response to a present dystopia. And there is little room in his definition for the principled ambivalence about physical return and attachment to land which has characterized much Jewish diasporic consciousness, from biblical times on. Jewish anti-Zionist critiques of teleologies of return are also excluded (Clifford, 1994 p.305).

Going back to consider the notion of the ‘ideal type’ of diaspora one may ask: Can there be an ideal type? Is the ideal type also a negation of diasporic phenomena? Which groups fail to qualify? What if there is no desire of return, no homeland per se to go back to, no imagined community to yearn for? Where would you fit if you knew yourself as Apatrida? James Clifford’s point of view is that ‘a different approach would be to specify the discursive field diacritically’ (Clifford, 1994 p.307). Like Gloria Anzaldua in *Borderlands La Frontera* (1999), Clifford states that the focus might shift ‘on diaspora’s borders’. He presents a different approach:

Rather than locating essential features, we might focus on diaspora’s borders, on what it defines itself against. And, we might ask, what articulations of identity are currently being replaced by diaspora claims? It is important to stress that the relational positioning at issue here is not a process of absolute othering, but rather of entangled tension. Diasporas are caught up with and defined against (1) the norms of nation-states and (2) indigenous, and especially autochthonous, claims by “tribal” peoples (Clifford, 1994 p.307).

The two points raised by Clifford are extremely important to consider when deconstructing the meaning of living in diaspora. In regards to the first point Clifford asks, ‘are diaspora cultures consistently antinationalist?’

What about their own national aspirations? Resistance to assimilation can take the form of reclaiming another nation that has been lost, elsewhere in space and time, but powerful as a political formation here and now (Clifford, 1994 p.307).

The relation between diaspora and the nation-state is almost an overarching concern for this research as my primary objective is to look at experiences of displacement and embodied displacement, exile and multi-placedness, the homing of diaspora and the diasporising of home, so this issue will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.
The second point Clifford has raised is the positioning of diasporic people and Indigenous communities: this brings up the notion of land ownership and occupancy, an issue that is relevant to Australia, with our history of colonisation and most recently the struggles of many communities for recognition of Native Title claims.

**TAMARIND, IMLI, AMLI CHINCH, AMTAN**

**EXILE AND MULTI-PLACEDNESS.**

Donald Carter suggests, in *New African Diasporas*, an almost layered, fluid state of being in diaspora, one that moves away from better known notions of displacement and loss, He points out that it is crucial to see African diaspora in many ways:

I would like to suggest that diaspora is not merely a form of transportation – a way of going from here to there – but rather a way of *being* here or there and all the points in between. What I have in mind is what Clifford has referred to as dwelling in travel. Diaspora is a kind of passage, yet a passage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving. Of drifting endless on the betwixt and between of the world’s boundaries (Carter, 2003 p. x).

Carter goes on to argue that trauma and loss are only one side of diasporic identity and that the possibility of *being* opens a way to a new understanding of the lived experiences of displacements – the performative act of becoming empowers one to define oneself in the here and now, not in a static manner, but one that changes constantly to reflect the many stories of exile we must carry with us – the many positions of *being* one must inhabit.

Stuart Hall has written extensively on this subject matter. He argues:

Cultural identity… is a matter of “becoming” as well as “being”. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialist past, they are
subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power (Stuart Hall cited in hooks, 1992 p.5).

Stuart Hall’s argument of “becoming” offers a reading of diaspora that places the agency of becoming in the hands of the dispersed peoples, the minorities and not with the host country. To allow oneself to be ‘subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power’ one needs to reinvent oneself each day – in different ways according to the social environment we live in. Is this possible? Can I see myself developing a consciousness of diaspora that I may use as a shield against essentialist notions of nationalism, of ‘race’ and culture? Does this consciousness emerge from my experiences of racism and discrimination – because of the colour of my skin, how I look and speak? A question that has haunted me is the danger of diaspora ‘flipping over’ and further essentialising the past. Can I speak of my ‘Indian’ origins, without contributing to exotic/mythical images of a country I left behind over forty years ago? When we speak of ‘a consciousness’, are we saying only a few have it? Is this the privileged position?

Jain (2004) claims that theorising ‘Indian’ diaspora can have its pitfalls through the view it may present of India. She discusses the issues from within the homeland – India and argues that:

The diasporic vision can at times be culture blind, distant, prejudicial or partial, or if none of these it may be frozen and static. The vagaries of publishing and readership, of location and presence persist in privileging it – which in turn leads to essentialization, stereotyping, framing of narratives through myths and viewing reality through the lens of exoticity (Jain, 2004 p.79).

Professor Jasbir Jain goes on to say:

The histories of the diaspora act like myriad mirrors which reflect on our own notions of Indianness, Indian history and identity (provided we are prepared for self-reflection), categories without which we are not even in a position to define Indianness (Jain, 2004 p.78).
The author goes on to discuss the role of the ‘diasporic presence’ and its ‘narratives of resistance of interrogation, of protest…’ in compelling postcolonial and postmodern thought. Her conclusion is:

Creativity in order to be significant needs to be about engagement not merely with one’s ‘self’ but also with the ‘other’. It may have its traumas, its anguish and challenges, but finally it is not about enclosures but open spaces, it is about intermingling and interruptions. This is how newness enters the world. Rushdie – I once again refer to him – while commenting upon The Satanic Verses wrote that it is a “love song to our mongrel selves”. This intermingling is one value which can be used to evaluate the diasporic experience. It is a joy of having a double vision and the pain of being split through and through, of carrying a nation on their backs as they work through a different history, distant culture and a fluid memory which characterises the diaspora, its Indianness and its experience (Jain, 2004 p.79).

The experience of living everyday as an outsider, almost as an intruder as well as ‘carrying a nation’ on our backs is an important issue, as it differs from person to person, from family to family, from place to place. Diaspora then needs to be discussed in the plural as there are as many diasporas as dispersed people, each living it from within.

At the end of his article titled Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return, William Safran poses some pertinent questions in regards to these issues. He asks:

Is diaspora consciousness a concomitant of a feeling of otherness, of alienation, or a lack of hospitality on the part of the host society; or, on the contrary, is the lack of hospitality a response by the host society to the exceptionalism that diaspora consciousness signifies? Is the exceptionalism of the diaspora a response to the very nature of the host society – of its culture, its behaviour, and its dominant ideology, including a monistic approach to the definition of membership in the political community? (Safran, 1991 p.95).

Safran goes on to question the emergence of diaspora consciousness:

How long does it take for a diaspora consciousness to develop, and what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for its survival? Does such consciousness
weaken with the passage of decades or centuries, as the relationship with the real homeland is lost, or, conversely, does the homeland focus become more deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of a minority as concrete experience is replaced by myth? (Safran, 1991 p. 94).

Like Safran in the above quotation, many other writers have questioned the memory grid through which diaspora is projected. These questions are many times based on the presumption that there is a ‘real homeland’ – this becomes more complicated when one may feel connected to more than one place – how does the notion of being, relate to the consciousness of belonging to multiple homelands, or no homeland at all? Is it a prerequisite to name a homeland? Jain (2004) poses some very pertinent questions, which are the reverse of the above, in the sense that they are from the perspective of someone who has not left the ‘homeland.’ She asks:

Is India still a ‘homeland’ for the diaspora? Or is it merely the land of their birth, or the birth of their ancestors, and is now merely a memory tucked away in some remote corner of their consciousness? Is the homeland a dislodged and discarded parent or culture to be displayed as and when convenient? What is India to them? And, more significantly, who then is the diaspora? The indentured labourer? (Jain, 2004 p.75).

Jain (2004, p.76) claims that the difficulties in answering these questions, lie in theorising ‘the here and now’ – the theorising of the contemporary lived experience, without the hindsight of time. The point of Jain’s paper is that diaspora must be read in many ways – as ‘it has multiple pasts’ that have affected many people in many ways – defined by their status of indentured labourer, migrant, refugee or professional migrant. She claims that:

Each one of the different categories has a different history, a different sense of tradition, different regional and colonial memories and different political equations. The ‘present’, the ‘here and now’ for them is also not in the singular. The dynamics of social life do not work in that manner. Loneliness, isolation, social ghettoisation are as much a part of the present as success, affluence and recognition. The world of the immigrant is marked by the separation between the public and the private space, the public and the private world. The past is carried over and consecrated. Race, community, origins and language define the social reality. The ‘self’ which comes into being is constituted through the conjunction
of these multiple pasts as they coexist in the present. The markers which define them as the diaspora as such are the festivals, rituals, customs and ‘Sunday Schools’ (Jain, 2004 p.76).

According to Jain, there are ‘diasporas and diasporas’- where conditions of migrancy and movement are dictated by immigration policies of the host countries, government regimes and the connection of racism and diaspora. The author makes reference to the work of Salman Rushdie and argues:

The land of hope to which they migrate often turns out to be a living hell of racial discrimination. Rushdie observes: “A gulf in reality has been created. White and black perceptions of everyday life have moved so far apart as to be incompatible….. We stand on opposite sides of the abyss… while the ground crumbles beneath our feet”.

It is not only homelands which are imaginary but even the land of settlement/adoption. Britain, Rushdie observes in the same essay, is “now two entirely different worlds, and the one you inhabit is determined by the colour of your skin”. This reality is far removed from the dream of equal cross-cultural relationships and transplantation to a new culture (Jain, 2004 p.77).

The perspective presented above, shifts the focus from ‘the homeland’ to the country of ‘adoption’. This makes sense as diaspora is played out and lived and embodied outside a real or imaginary homeland – so that when we discuss diasporic notions of a homeland/belonging we encounter a double discourse, first the definitions of loss as movement away from the homeland or up-rooting, second the notion of re-grounding as settlement/adoption. This movement between up-rooting or leaving and re-grounding elsewhere pre-empts a crossing of borders – the elsewhere is somewhere different, on different ground. One has to take a journey, to travel or be transported to another ground. Borders can be signifiers of crossings and as such may be considered signifiers of diaspora.

Khachig Tololyan (1991 p.6) claims that ‘Diasporas are emblems of transnationalism because they embody the question of borders’, in the Chambers Essential English Dictionary, borders are defined as ‘the edge of anything’ or ‘the boundary of a country’ (1973, p.57). Both of these descriptions allow us to conjure an imaginary line of division
or boundary line where there is some sort of tension, between those who are inside-
within the borderline, and those who are outside.

The outsiders, ‘the others,’ need to cross this border, they are aware of the constraints,
they know this is not the homeland, this is the edge, but keep trying. James Clifford asks
us to think slightly differently. He writes:

Diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population. Systematic border crossings may be part of this interconnection, but multi-locale diaspora cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary. It is worth holding onto the historical and geographical specificity of the two paradigms, while recognizing that the concrete predicaments denoted by the terms border and diaspora bleed into one another (Clifford, 1994 p.304).

Clifford goes on to describe how in recent years, the movement of people to and from the homeland may add another layer of meaning, as they begin to develop a relationship with the homeland that they were once separated from. Different ways of experiencing the crossing will emerge, feelings of diaspora are rubbed in to the act of moving through the border that is supposed to be home, creating the bleeding the seeping of one word into another, one falling into another. Clifford concludes that:

This overlap of border and diaspora experiences in the late-20th-century everyday life suggests the difficulty of maintaining exclusivists paradigms in our attempts to account for transnational identity formations (Clifford, 1994 p. 304).

Commenting on the issue of borders, Rey Chow also points out that it is a complex set of circumstances, if we consider not only the act of crossing but what happens when we stay, how do we belong? She puts forward the following:

The “question of borders” should not be a teleological one. It is not so much about the transient eventually giving away to the permanent as is about an existential condition of which “permanence” itself is an ongoing fabrication. Accordingly, if as William Safran writes, “diasporic consciousness is an intellectualization of [the] existential condition” of dispersal from the homeland, then “diasporic consciousness” is perhaps not so much a historical accident as it is an intellectual reality – the reality of being intellectual (Chow, 1993 p.15).
If permanence is an ongoing fabrication, it is also an intricate part of migrancy and diaspora – to find a permanent space. As homelessness is at the core of being diasporic, permanence may be more of an imaginary space rather than a fabrication, which somehow can imply a forged condition, a white lie. Avtar Brah’s point of view encapsulates the core of this slippage between the ‘journey’ diaspora and ‘permanence’. She argues that:

At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere’. These journeys must be historicised if the concept of diaspora is to serve as a useful heuristic device. The question is not simply about who travels but when, how, and under what circumstances? (Brah, 1996 p. 182).

The notion of ‘putting roots elsewhere’ has a strong visual and emotional impact, it pulls on strings that understands the underbelly issues within the fabric of diasporic conditions, but as Rey Chow goes further to discuss the question of re-grounding, re-settling elsewhere can also bring up the notions of ‘propriety and property’ (1993, p.15). Her analysis of borders is important in order to keep questioning the spatial implications of re-grounding in the field of the ‘host’ country – How can we belong? How is the body positioned within a post-diasporic belonging? What struggles are involved in the process of re-grounding? What are the political-social implications? Are we posing these questions because – as subaltern subjects – we are still haunted by our colonial experience? Why is it so difficult to theorize? Is this, as Rey Chow (1993 p.15) explains, the ‘reality of being intellectual’.
As I look back over the previous pages I have just written, I believe I am not totally there - how I understand myself - my history - my family’s journeys are not fully talked about here. I fight what I see as misgivings as I move away from allowing myself to grieve for the pain and struggle of the past, whilst balancing the fine act between grieving and victimhood.

Attempting to be a detached observer or speaking - in this case writing in a passive voice is a denial that these are my experiences, my life as well as the life’s of hundreds of thousands of people who, like myself, left their homeland, crossed the Kala Pani, only to find themselves exiled within their own bodies – as Coolies. As such there is a bodily need for me to deconstruct the ‘Indian Diaspora’.

In her research of the ‘Indian’ diaspora, Marina Carter has for years called for a more concise study of diasporic experiences of the indentured labourers, who crossed the Indian Ocean, migrating to many countries including - Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji and East Africa. In Coolitude Marina Carter and Khal Torabully argue that there is a need for ‘redefining the Indian Diaspora towards Coolitude’ (2002, p.11). When I first read the word Coolitude on a search on the Web, is was almost as if I had heard it spoken aloud: the wording seemed to encapsulate another side of the diaspora, like flipping a coin only to find out that it has more than two sides. Here diaspora is layered with the notion of Creolization as ‘the process of intermixing and cultural change that produces a Creole society’ (Carter & Torabully, 2002 p.10). In ‘The Coolies’ Odyssey’ Khal Torabully similarly to Stuart Hall describes Creolite as:

An interpretation of creolization that blends diverse sources and is essentially an unfinished process by which human groups blend their histories and imaginaries (Carter & Torabully, 2002 p.10).
This interpretation moves away from essentialist arguments about creolization and ‘race’. It overlaps common notions of hybridity by focussing on culture and history. This is an important point as through colonisation we have consumed representations of the ‘Creole’ embodied as the ‘pariah race,’ the ‘half-caste,’ the ‘canecos’ with no proper connections to place, history and culture.

In many ways, the discussions in this book are not linear, as the authors discuss an issue and then overlays it in sections with quotes from other sources, presented in parallel boxes thus highlighting many perspectives, or using several authors to cut in and make a point.

In *Coolitude* Bill Ashcroft’s concept of diaspora is presented alongside a definition of Creolization; within this format the authors establishes a visual link between both concepts. He describes diaspora as:

> Diaspora, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homeland into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization… the practices of slavery and indenture… resulted in worldwide colonial diasporas. The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures, which both preserve and often extend and develop their originary cultures. Creolized versions of their own practices evolved, modifying (and being modified by) indigenous cultures with which they came into contact… The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, ‘natural’ cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonial discourse…(Ashcroft, B. in Carter & Torabully, 2002 p.10).

The point of view argued here is that creolization is a ‘distinctive culture’ which extends existing cultural norms and practices, one that moves away from essentialist notions of culture and ‘race,’ that is ‘modified ’ within the space of ‘contact’ with other cultures. He claims that ‘many writers have adopted the notion of a “diasporic identity” as a positive affirmation of their hibridity’ (Ashcroft, 1998 p.58).

If the place of contact affects the migrant, indentured labourer or diasporic person, then the way this ‘settlement’ has been played out, is as well, an important issue to take into
consideration. In the case of thousands of people who left India looking for employment and a better life elsewhere, their experience on the land of ‘contact’, their lived experience in the host country – in this case, their whole life was played out through the exploitation of their work, embodied in the representation of the ‘cooly’ as the ‘Indian’ worker/servant – who could not be trusted and whose body was ‘made’ to endure hard labour.

There has never been a name to encapsulate this experience – it has been outside general discussions of diaspora and hybridity until recently, when Khal Torabully coined the concept of Coolitude. As Marina Carter describes:

The dissemination of Indian labour throughout the nineteenth century British Empire has lacked a defining element until now. The concept of coolitude is designed to fill that lacuna, to describe and encapsulate the distinctive characteristics of the streams of indentured migration which have decisively shaped modern nations such as Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji and influenced others like Guadalupe, Martinique, East and South Africa (Carter & Torabully, 2002 p.1).

The word re-members the struggle away from discussions of victimhood, to praise the strength of the people who worked and lived in such harsh conditions contributing to the development of many nations. But it goes further than remembrance: it consumes a word, a name, that for so long has had so many negative connotations. Being named ‘cooly’ or ‘monhe’ (the word for coolie in Portuguese) was one of the harsher penalties one could endure: it broke your skin, layer after layer, time after time and cut your bones; right down, right down to the marrow. Torabully grounds the discussion in regards to The Indian diaspora, by identifying two main points defining ‘coolitude’:

Firstly, the reconstitution of a memory, which veers between an imagination drawn back to the atavistic homeland – Indianness as a set off inalienable values bequeathed by India since the beginning of time – and the constellation of signs spawned by the uneasy interaction of the exiled Indian’s values with the cultures of the host country. Secondly, the contribution of a poetics based on the Indian element and shaped by the fact that the coolie was chronologically the last arrival to contribute to the making of a diversified societies (K. Torabully, in Carter & Torabully, 2002 p.14).
He goes on to argue that an important aspect that has marked the coolie is the crossing of the Indian Ocean – the Kala Pani, the journey in itself becomes a central point. He concludes that:

**Coolitude**

It is impossible to understand the essence of coolitude without charting the coolie’s voyage across the seas. That decisive experience, that coolie odyssey, left an indelible stamp on the imaginary landscape of coolitude (K. Torabully 1996 in Carter & Torabully 2002, p.11).

The poetic texts of Khal Torabully create a new form of representation of the ‘coolie’ and through his work other new ways of defining ourselves can emerge.

**GUAVA, AMRUD, PERU, PER**

**VISUALIZING DIASPORA**

Visualising diaspora is not an easy task. It involves the theorising and conceptualising of a shifting thought that is not seen but felt, experienced but not always embodied, removed but always present. Artists around the world have created images – complete body of works – on these topics using a myriad of mediums, from painting to photography, film to sculpture and multimedia.

In Australia there have been many exhibitions that explored the notion of hybridity in the broader sense of the word and the few that have conceptualised diaspora have achieved recognition at a national and international level. Deborah Hart, editor for Imants Tillers catalogue titled *Imants Tillers: One world many visions* discusses his works in *The Diaspora Series: journey to new beginnings*. She argues that:

The four major paintings in the series collectively represent an epic statement relating to diasporas – to the dislocation of peoples from their original homelands, including within their own lands due to colonisation, and the coming together of disparate cultures that is so much part of the stories and legacies of communities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Hart, 2006 p. 39).
The paintings as shown in illustration 1 are an agglomeration of layered images and text, which upon a closer look are composed of a series of small canvases that sit together in formation to present a larger picture. Like diaspora they present a whole that can shift and be positioned in various ways – which is achieved by moving each canvas element from its original position. This itinerant nature, or the possibility of a itinerant nature of these works, visually embodies a migrant-on-the-move feeling. The parts that can be quickly packed up and unpacked elsewhere. It is transportable.

Illustration 1  *Compilation of images from the Diaspora series 1992 – 96*  
Imants Tillers (Hart, 2006 p.38).
Illustration 2 Diaspora 1992
Imants Tillers
Oilstick, gouache and synthetic polymer paint on 228 canvasboards
Illustration 3 *Diaspora* series 1992-1996
Imants Tillers (Hart, 2006 p. 38).
In the Exhibition catalogue *Imants Tillers: One World Many Visions* several sections of the painting are discussed in detail. They visualise graphically the core feelings about diaspora, its meaning as an embodied sign:

In Diaspora expansive and intimate gestures coincide. For instance, there is a personal reference in the painted number 5 to a card Tiller’s daughter Isidore had made for a cousin. On the other hand, numerals referring to the stations of the Cross that appear in the lower left and upper right are akin to markings on an ancient tabernacle and are like floating symbols over sky and land, the expanse amplified in the spatial configuration of sixty canvasboard panels (Hart, 2006 p.44).

There are various inscriptions and ideas within the *Diaspora series*, some that are painted with a broad brush containing a trail of thick impasto paint and others where the paint is almost a wash exposing the skin of the canvas boards. The painting techniques are as relevant as the text on the canvas; Hart goes on deconstruct some sections of the painting. She elaborates on a particular canvas section:

The ideas evoked by the phrase ‘pierce us and join us together’ has parallels with the physical and metaphorical nature of the *Diaspora series*, of multiple wounds and the search for unity. Travelling across Tiller’s painting is like a stretch through darkness – counting, pacing, alighting, moving up and down – across to the panels of light at the other end; to *The shining cuckoo*, and down to the little figure who seems to have connected with the light, the touch of Tillers’ hand connecting with the tender hand of Blume. This curious, even gently humorous image of finding a sign appears alongside a small McCahon landscape of ‘the pure land’, with a continuous horizon and luminous, pale yellow sky (Hart, 2006 p.44).

The reference to *the horizon* or *a landscape* or *a sky*, linked to questions of diaspora or belonging is a recurring theme found in the works of other Australian artists such as Hossein Valamanesh. In the installation titled *Longing Belonging* we can see an image of the Australian bush where a carpet, which may be commonly classified as ‘Persian,’ lies on the floor burning. This work was part of a group exhibition titled *The Rose Crossing* and in the catalogue, John Clark (1999) elaborates on the engagement of the artists, who
are considered diasporic, with the theme of land, landscape and ultimately the notion of belonging, roots and ‘rootedness’.

Illustration 4 *Longing Belonging*
Hossein Valamanesh, 1997
Colour photograph and carpet, 99 x 99cm, 305 x 215cm
(Wright, 1999 p.53)

Clark argues that:

If the landscape or ‘landscapist’ artists seem to move around the articulation of value through the mute forms of nature, or find in these the hidden face of some urban amorality, the artists who place and re-emplace themselves in Australia from a diasporic position are far more concerned with the embodiment of values *between* and not as social existences or types of representations. They seem to be
aware in different ways of their asymmetrical relation to Australian culture, because they came as migrants from without – or from just inside, as the children of migrants. They lack the symmetricality of the long-settled – or indeed, the English-speaking migrant – which gives them a stronger imaginary ownership of, or ‘rootedness’ in, what is the common Australian culture (Clark, 1999 p.12).

The notion of ‘rootedness’ or belonging has been visualised with immense potency from the time of the first European paintings depicting the landscape in Australia, where the bush was immortalised. Clark goes on to explain further:

The way ‘rootedness’ might be defined has always had important consequences for the privileging of artistic representation for any one audience. I cannot pass this issue by without noting that in parallel, and in ways whose implications for art discourses are as yet by no means clear, ‘rootedness’ has taken a different complexion with the recent re-emergence (after a interlude of some thirty years) of openly ‘White racist’ statements into Australian civic and political life (Clark, 1999 p.12).

Clark refers to an Australian politician who ‘even advised Australians who like ‘Asian culture’ to ‘go and live there’. In the middle of the debate regarding ‘race’ in Australia, many artists entered the discussions by appropriating the genre of landscape painting moving it away from place, and more about ‘here’ or ‘there’. John Clark talks about the landscapes of two artists in The Rose Crossing exhibition, My Le Thi and Tim Johnson. He explains:

My Le Thi heightened banal differences between bodily fragments, such as hair or abstract arrangements made from her own peeled skin, to impugn absurd claims made on behalf of race (Clark, 1999 p.12).

Clark comments in regards to Tim Johnson’s work references the important notion of occupation and possession of the landscape. He argues that:

Johnson’s empathetic cross-cultural location of landscape references enables us now to look back at the landscape work before re-emplacement and ask whether landscape representation by itself is inevitably tied up with the rhetorics of possession that have resurfaced in Australian culture …(Clark, 1999 p.13).
The artworks bring up an important issue of colonial ‘possession’ of land and country which has now become a diasporic landscape. Australian landscape painting, became from the beginning of British colonisation a means to document Britain’s new possession, it was also the new genre of painting that had developed all over Europe. In an exhibition catalogue titled *Ocean to Outback: Australian Landscape painting 1850 – 1950* Ron Radford describes the progress of landscape painting in Australia.

When the British colonised the land which they soon named Australia, at the same time as they were establishing other colonies around the globe, the art of landscape painting was gaining ground in Britain. As the Empire expanded, British art increasingly moved away from figure and portrait painting to paintings of land and sea. Landscapes executed in watercolour became very popular in the first decades of the nineteenth century and Britain became known especially for its watercolour painting. Since watercolour was a portable and convenient medium it was also used to record new lands and species by artists included in voyages of discovery (Radford, 2007 p.11).

Landscape painting in Australia was important for two reasons, firstly as it dominated the genre in Europe, secondly because of the time frame of colonisation. Early works portray landforms, land and Indigenous people. The grandeur of nature is immortalised, then the imagery changes: there are people in the landscape, working on it, taming it, occupying it; the landscape has been adapted to European settlement. These images say ‘we are here now’, landscape becomes the strongest way to take over (D. Dolan, personal communication, May 5, 2008). Professor David Dolan argues that patriotism, land and country are intertwined to create an Australian identity, our identity our sense of place where the Indigenous people ‘are pushed out of the picture as they resisted colonisation’ (D. Dolan, personal communication, May 5, 2008). By the late nineteen century Landscape painting was well established in Australia and the Heidelberg school emerged (Radford, 2007).

Many artists, such as Frederick McCubbin, travelled to Europe and perfected their skills producing an extensive body of works that today are still considered an important part of our heritage.

As Ron Radford states:
A late landscape by McCubbin, *Girl in forest, Mount Macedon* (1913), shows a
small child in a forest clearing, with a basket for wildflowers. It is executed in his
mature style of flickering broken colours applied largely by a palette knife, and
captures the effect of patches of bright spring light within a forest. McCubbin
changed his more conservative nineteenth-century tonal style after his one
momentous visit to Europe in 1907. He saw French Impressionist paintings in
Paris but was even more inspired by the late works of J.M. Turner that he saw in
London (Radford, 2007 p.27).

Many other artists followed, Grace Cossington Smith, Margaret Preston, Russell
Drysdale and Sydney Nolan, to name a few. Their work expanded the genre of landscape
painting, establishing a clear sense of place; a narrative that became almost as potent as
the land itself. This sense of place can be connected with John Clark’s (1999) notion of
‘rootedness’ of belonging, about home and residency of citizenship and country. Loaded
with meaning this has been a contested site within the space of diaspora. In the
introduction of a book titled *Uprootings/Regroundings questions of Home and Migration*,
editors Sarah Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller (2003,
p.2) write that, ‘Much of this research suggests that mobility and migrancy destabilize
identities and communities precisely insofar as they detach identity from place’.

Not always has place, land or landscape been discussed in relation to diaspora. Most
discussions have been centred on ideas of belonging, of ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ where place
is analysed from the movement of people from one point to another, or from one place to
another. In the quotation above, the editors statement about the disconnection of identity
from place through migration opens up an argument regarding how identity may be
‘connected’ to place, once the migration journey is completed. How may ‘place’ be
experienced when you have reached a destination, after being in-transit for along time?
How can I as an artist make sense of place, land and landscape without negotiating
notions of belonging or may I say ideas of dislocation?

Place becomes entrenched with the meaning of diaspora in artist Sliman Mansour’s relief
works using earth, sand and clay as a medium presenting a symbolic exploration of place
and home. Gannit Ankori discusses the works in the following way:
Silman Mansour’s mud relief titled *Hagar* (1996) preserves aspects of the archetypal mother-earth/homeland metaphor while, at the same time, challenging conventional representations that sentimentalize Palestine as an ideal, fertile mother. Parched desert-like earth composes Hagar’s fragmented and cracked visage. Thus, her physical and emotional experiences of thirst and destitution are etched upon her very skin (Ankori, 2003 p.59).

Gannit Ankori goes on to discuss the representation of exile through Silman Mansour’s artworks, the relevance of the medium – the use of earth itself to speak of dislocation seems to underline in multiple ways a sense of disarticulation - what is lost, what has been found in the cracks of the works.

Illustration 5 *Hagar*
Silman Mansour 1996 Mud on Wood, 90cmx60cm Detail.
Photo by Gannit Ankori

Mona Hatoum is an artist who is renowned for her performance pieces, video works and installations. Ankori (2003) describes Hatoum’s work as being ‘marked by a deep sense of dislocation and disorientation.’ Although the artist has received much acclaim from an
international audience and seems ‘settled’ within the world-wide mainstream forum, her recurring themes of exile and dislocation may tell us otherwise, throwing up the slippery nature of diaspora. Ankori discusses Hatoum’s work coining the term ‘Dis-Orientalism’. She puts forward the following:

Hence, this dis-orientation embedded within the art of Mona Hatoum is not merely physical and spatial, but also geographical and cultural. I coin the term ‘Dis-Orientalism’ here, in order to suggest a hybrid concept which merges Edward Said’s term ‘Orientalism’ – expounded in his seminal treatise that critically examines the Western construction of the Orient – with Hatoum’s own visual vocabulary of dislocated positions between East and West, shifting grounds and non-belonging (Ankori, 2003 p.63).

How can we ‘read’ Mona Hatoum’s work on displacement/diaspora when she is now placed within a privileged setting of artists that have access to a world wide audience and can be considered to be part of ‘the mainstream’ in Australian art terms? The ambivalence of the place of displacement has allowed for many different narratives to emerge, it opens up an interval a space that Dean Chan has called in-betweenness, where the need to interrogate and examine ourselves is not only possible but indispensable. Chan’s point is that:

In terms of strategy, then, one could be prompted to ask, for example, about the ways and means by which a third-generation artist like Yang negotiates the reclamation of a sense of Chineseness within Australia. Which aspects or versions of Chineseness are aspired towards; and which are seemingly de-privileged in this particular ‘search for identity’? How does such a third generation Australian-born perspective relate to, or differ from a first-generation perspective (like Lindy Lee), or a so-called ‘migrant’ perspective (like John Young’s, Emil Goh’s, Guan Wei’s and Ah Xian’s? (Chan, 2000 p.150).

This argument seems to ‘make sense’ in a popular culture type of way that has many times been mirrored in the substance of letters to the editor of our local newspapers, but it can also run the danger of essentialising displacement, difference and diaspora by containing its legitimacy for only a few. Chan contextualises the issue of displacement and difference further, by posing the following questions:
Even then, the sheer diversity of differences – say, in terms of class, gender, age, sexuality, geography, and ideological stance – within the latter two groups would need to be further delved into. Is there even, perhaps, a discernible hierarchy of place, belonging and legitimacy between so-called ‘old’ and ‘new’ migrants? Indeed, how may these perspectives be individually and collectively historicised and theorised? (Chan, 2000 p.151).

The notion of ‘non-belonging’ is a recurring feature in many artists work and has been visualised, theorised and discussed as a sort of disconnection of the diasporic individual; the one that has crossed the border, to the surroundings to the new place of home. Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier and Sheller (2003, p.3) state that this is a characteristic of globalisation and relates to ‘the ways in which bodies, families, communities, and nations are together reprocessed within transnational connections’. This may be interpreted as that the very journey of movement from one-place-to-another and the way the settling down happens as well as the past links to past places or domicile, realises the connections to place. They state that:

They reveal the fluidity and diversity of these exchanges, and complicate the unilateral relationship between belonging and location by investigating the ways in which new forms of political and cultural belonging are anchored in multi-local ties and in deterritorialized notions of a person’s rights and responsibilities (Ahmed et al. 2003 p.3).

In many ways the author’s argument flips the coin to reveal many other facets of the concept of belonging as it relates to diaspora. Moving on from preceding arguments that equal diaspora to the common-sense-rootlessness notion that ‘detach identity from place’ or of ‘nomadic identities’, Ahmed et al. problematise place and belonging, stating the following:

While recognizing that the transnational movements of bodies, objects and images have transformed concepts and experiences of home and belonging (defined as locality and community as well as nation), we question the presumptions that rootless mobility is the defining feature of contemporary experience and that it stands against any form of ‘rooted belonging’ (Ahmed et al. 2003 p.2).

If we consider ‘rooted belonging’ as one of the qualities, traits or characteristics even as a possibility of contemporary diasporic experience, then it becomes vital that in any
exploration of visual or textual diaspora, a look at the place of this belonging is incorporated.

Homi Bhabha’s discussions of place and location, that he calls Third Space, present all the forms, mechanism or workings that can be explored visually in the representation of place as space, one that embodies the sense of moving-away from or towards diaspora. His Third Space is a complicated place, the stuff that dreams are made of. Third Space is difficult to pinpoint, yet magical in its conceptual approach to place and yet again, it has the potential of being a tangible, solid, physical setting. By imagining itself within, the Third Space, exercises agency by re-articulating culture, ‘race’ or ethnicity. I quote from Homi Bhabha as he defines this ambivalent space:

It is that Third Space though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew (Bhabha, 1988 p.21).

The Third Space as an unrepresentable space opens up a platform where the body can reject narrow cultural frontiers, where essential notions of ethnicity have value-coded the body, to exercise cultural agency and freedom. It has the possibility to open up a plain where ‘rootless mobility’ that has characterised diaspora may move in the direction of ‘rooted belonging.’ It also opens up the possibility of exploring alternative ways of representing the space of diaspora, the subjects that dwell here and the landscape of ‘rooted belonging’.

Given these various theorisations of diaspora, in the following chapter I look briefly at the power of representation and the body and explore the notion of a Diaspora place starting from my own family’s passage from one place to another, our multiple migrations, a trajectory that has made me consider and think about belonging as the core,
as the centre of my own practice as an artist. I develop a discussion of Third Space and look more closely at locality, land and landscape.

She said those who came back came as ghosts came as shadows haunting the land haunting the mountains haunting the streets and the houses They came looking for dead mans shoes Why did they come looking for dead mans shoes?

I look at the Soil on my feet Black, Red many grains between lands

There is a place It’s not the same I grasp my stick of Charred coal The one I am Used to draw with Between land There is a place Where I am Still not ready to Say goodbye And walk past The gangplank Between land There is a place Soil on my feet Black, Red Many grains Between land

We would stay between lands between lands there is a place We could stay
SHE SAID SHE COUNTED THEM
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
SOMETHING WAS SET IN MOTION
THEN
SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED
THEN
THEY WERE LEAVING
THEN
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
IT WOULD TAKE HER ALL DAY AND
ALL NIGHT ANOTHER
DAY ANOTHER
NIGHT
ANOTHER DAY ALL NIGHT
DAY ANOTHER
NIGHT
SHE SAID SHE COUNTED THEM
NO MORE FINGERS TO COUNT ON

NO MORE FINGERS SHE SAID

NO MORE

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE

THEY CAME LIKE

A PROCESSION SLOWLY

SLOWLY

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE

THEY WENT BY

UNHURRIED THEIR EYES AHEAD

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE

SHE SAID SHE COUNTED THEM

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE

THEIR FOOTSTEPS DRAWN
DRAWN ON THE DRY EARTH
THE MUD

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
SHE SAID THEY ADDED UP

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE

LIKE PAPER CUT-OUTS

SILHOUETTES

SHADOWS IN THE DARK

ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
ONE BY ONE
SHE SAID SHE COUNTED THEM
UNTIL THERE WERE NO MORE
I watch her
Every movement
I watch her
Every gesture
I watch her
I watch her,
Covering every movement, her feet lay resting softly on the floor
Partially covered by the shoes I can see her small toe uncovered exposed the small nail is black it has discoloured in the miles she has walked in no sole shoes. She adjusts the top layer of the shoe to cover her toes this is difficult I know this is difficult as I have done the same time and time again wearing no sole shoes makes it difficult.

I feel the shame flooding over me.
I feel her shame cutting like a knife.
Shame is not soft
Who said you get used to it you don’t you never get used to it only those who have not lived it you are shame you become shame.

My shoes have holes small ones big ones, ones that I think don’t matter others that I believe other eyes can see not mine, but other prying eyes.
The street heat burns the same circles on my body on the soles of my feet, like a trace, a burnt trace, a stamp on my skin on my sole, they burn they ache, they burn like shame they puss.
Shame is not soft
I know where to walk I have learnt how to walk in my no sole shoes. I know which side of the street is coolest, where there is shade, where the melted hot tar will not burn and blister my body, my skin But I can’t run, I can’t feel the wind in my face. I walk slowly in the heat. My skin peels to reveal a new sole that will burn again and harden and peel off again.

SHAME IS NOT SOFT

My toes clasp the sides of the shoe, as I take each steep; I have practised this many times. Who said practice makes perfection? I have tried.

Their eyes haunt me; they stare at my shoes, my soleless shoes, my no sole shoes. What is shame?

Shame is not soft

I recognise my insignificance in that moment I experience my nothingness with no soles on my shoes and shame envelops me as an immense cloak.

Shame is not soft

When I began to unravel the meaning of belonging or post-diasporic belonging, as a natural sequence of events that follow diaspora I found it necessary to briefly define the ‘Indian’ body situated in diaspora, how it has been represented and its position within a post-diasporic belonging. I am aware that some of these discussions may be applicable to women from other countries: the reason for limiting my discussion to India is firstly to focus the discussion on myself, to investigate how I, as an ‘Indian’ woman can challenge the stability of the Caneos Monhe, the Coolie representation. Secondly, I wish to move away from generalizations that have often been used by the dominant culture, as these
‘collapse distinct immigration histories, periods and circumstances and flattens significant differences in relation to citizenship and national identity formation’ (Yamamoto, 1999, p XIII). In this chapter I briefly address general discussions pertaining to ‘the body’ as a bridge to understand the ways it has been represented, classified and talked about, with the aim to observe its position within a post-diasporic space of belonging.

**SELF-REPRESENTATION IS ABOUT YOUR BODY... I AM TALKING ABOUT THE SUBJECT THAT INHABITS THE BODY AND THE BODY THAT IS THE SUBJECT. BY **BODY** **I AM REFERRING TO MY OWN BODY, MY MIND, MY EYES, MY TONGUE, THE MASS OF BIOLOGY THAT IS ME AS WELL - BONES, CARTILAGE, INTESTINES, LUNGS, OVARY, **ALL THE ‘THINGS’ THAT YOU CAN’T SEE, BUT YOU KNOW ARE THERE, THEY ARE YOURS - INSIDE, ENCAPSULATED BY SKIN. THIS IS WHAT WE LEARN TO DRAW IN ‘LIFE DRAWING’ OR ‘FIGURE DRAWING’ CLASSES.**

The concept of representation has been a crucial point argued by various African-American feminists, Third World feminists, feminist post-colonial critics and women of colour when deconstructing certain concepts of difference, ‘race’ ethnicity, diaspora as well as gender (see for example Trinh T. 1989; hooks 1992; Anzaldua 1990; Puwar and Raghuram 2003; Ahmed et al. 2003; Wills 2002). In her book titled Gendering Orientalism, Reina Lewis argues that there has not been enough research that challenges preconceived ideas about gender/’race’ and ethnicity. She says this is the reason why she wrote the book:

In particular, I was concerned to help challenge the historically inscribed inequalities and patterns of discrimination that are today organized around the categories gender, race and ethnicity. Attempts by feminists and others to theorize these terms are still uneven, preliminary and tend to be ahistorical. They often lead to precisely the sort of binary oppositions – especially in debates about good feminists versus bad imperialists – that feminism has consistently disputed. One of the things that motivated me to write this book, therefore, was a nagging sense that things were more complicated than they appeared (Lewis, 1996 p1).

Lewis goes on to propose that beyond the binary we need to consider our experiences. She explains:

Rather than reduce difficult situations to simple oppositions, it is one of the pressing needs of our time to understand the contradictions inherent in the relationship between these differentiating terms and our experience of them (Lewis, 1996 p1).

This is an important aspect of her argument, because I aim not to generalize the notion of gender, ‘race’/ethnicity or culture, but to consider it central to my lived experience as a gendered racialised body/subject.

In a book titled Volatile Bodies Elizabeth Grosz writes a section on Body Traces in which she brings up a strong argument about the relationship between body and mind, ‘race’ and gender, the ideal body and deconstructs some important aspects of the representation of the body.
Grosz claims that:

There are always only specific types of body, concrete in their determination, with a particular sex, race, and physiognomy. Where one body (in the West, the white, youthful, able, male body) takes on the function of model or ideal, the human body, for all other types of body, its domination may be undermined through a defiant affirmation of a multiplicity, a field of differences, of other kinds of bodies and subjectivities. A number of ideal types of body must be posited to ensure the production, projection, and striving for ideal images and body types to which each individual, in his or her distinct way, may aspire. Only when the relation between mind and body is adequately retheorized can we understand the contributions of the body to the production of knowledge systems, regimes of representation, cultural production, and socioeconomic exchange (Grosz, 1994 p.19).

While I understand the argument to challenge the status-quo of the ‘ideal’ body the act of rephrasing difference may also run the risk of transforming it into incommensurable differences, where ‘race’ becomes the measuring stick for dissimilarity or differentiation. However Grosz develops her argument, her point of view is:

Bodies are always irreducibly sexually specific, necessarily interlocked with racial, cultural, and class particularities. This interlocking, though, cannot occur by the way of intersection (the gridlike model presumed by structural analysis, in which the axes of class, race, and sex are conceived as autonomous structures which then require external connections with the other structures) but by the way of mutual constitution (Grosz, 1994 p. 20).

It is important to state openly that perceived differences such as ‘race’ are socially constructed, even though this may be foreshadowed in Grosz discussion, as she points out:

Moreover, if subjectivity cannot be made to conform to the universalist ideals of humanism, if there is no concept of ‘the human’ that includes all subjects without violence, loss, or residue, then the whole cultural life, including the formation and evaluation of knowledges themselves, must be questioned regarding the sexual (and cultural) specificity of their positions. Knowledges, like all other forms of social production, are at least partially effects of the sexualized positioning of their producers and users; knowledges must themselves be acknowledged as sexually determinate, limited, finite (Grosz, 1994 p.20).
In *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses how important it was to the imperial project to produce knowledge that would represent the Orient. Although this process of production and representation took decades, it was extraordinarily successful and today – over five hundred years after the colonization of India by the Portuguese and the English – people like myself are still coming to terms with the way we are ‘known’ and the way we were and are represented. Edward Said argues that:

> My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period (Said, 1978 p.3).

When I first read this book – while I was undertaking my Masters Degree in Education in 1998, I began to understand why the Fascist Government in Portugal had such harsh restrictions on all reading materials. Reading Edward Said’s *Orientalism* was like feeling the sunshine on your forehead and knowing that you could never forget it, never forget that feeling: a chain of events was set in motion within me, which may never come to an end. Said puts forward the following argument:

> Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally representing it or speaking in its behalf. Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself (Said, 1978 p.20).

As books and magazines from Lisbon and London were consumed by Indian audiences, children like me grew up experiencing orientalist texts as the norm, from nursery rhymes, fiction to history art and music. It was ingrained in everything and everywhere. It was the fabric of everyday life and impossible to live without. Said calls it a ‘collection of dreams’.

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He describes it as follows:

Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in addition I have been using the word to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line (Said, 1978 p.73).

This collection of dreams had the potential to emerge with my own collection of dreams, until I could not decipher one from another. As Said argues, Orientalism was not ‘a mere collection of lies’. He concludes that:

Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied – indeed, made truly productive – the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into general culture (Said, 1978 p.6).

The production of the Orient as a discourse involved the representation of the land and its people. It involved Medical studies, Anthropological studies and Literary and Artistic representations. These theories had the desired affect on the colonists who digested the many writings and images, building up knowledge of the Orient. It had as well a devastating affect on the people of the land who began to see themselves and experience themselves and dream themselves as Orientals, as the Other. Living through the Diaspora phenomena did not contain or minimize this process of othering; on the contrary it became more fluid and slippery, always feeding back and maintaining hegemonic discourses about the East.

David Howarth describes Said’s concepts of the ‘Orient’ as discourses in the ‘Foucauldian sense of the term’ and claims that:

More specifically, Orientalist discourse comprise a set of ideas and values stretching back to classical antiquity, and is evident in accounts and representations of ‘the East’ by Western travellers, colonial administrators and
military leaders. This vast archive of statements strongly limits what can be said, thought and done about ‘the Orient’. Not only does Said chart the ‘invention’ of the Orient by European discursive practices, he also shows how this ‘will to knowledge over the Orient’ provided the intellectual and cultural means for the appropriation of the Orient by successive waves of European colonization and imperialism (see also Said 1993). Finally, by stressing the close relationship between Orientalist discourse and colonizing practices, which together constitute ‘a science of imperialism’, he also emphasizes the general complicity of all knowledge and political institutions and practices (Howarth, 2000 p.68).

Whilst Howarth analyses the authority of Said’s argument, he points out some areas that he considers being ambivalent. Howarth’s point of view is:

Said’s deployment of Foucault’s conception of discourse highlights a series of contradictions in the archaeological project. One difficulty concerns the ontological status of Orientalist discourse. Does it comprise a system of texts and statements that represent the Orient, or does it perform the more constructive role of actually bringing into existence the object it describes? Said’s answer is ambivalent (Howarth, 2000 p.68).

My answer to Howarth’s question is that it performs both tasks at times, but also each one independently. Ambivalence is one tool to attempt to make sense of the web of Orientalist discourse.

Each time I read or engage in discussions in regards to ‘the representation’ of the ‘Orient’ unusually enough I have to point out that what is at stake here is not only the representation of a so-called mysterious place/country, the buildings and landscape. We are most importantly referring to a whole community of people, millions of children, women and men whose lives changed when their bodies were marked by this insidious, sinister knowledge. The people, their bodies are central to the discussion of Orientalism. In this way the body becomes a vital site where the process of othering occurs. It may also be the site to question the discourse of Orientalism and its complex web of networks.

In this way the body becomes a vital site where the process of othering occurs. It may also be the site to question the discourse of Orientalism and its complex web of networks. In The Body, Culture and Society Hancock, Hughes, Jagger, Paterson, Russell, Tulle-Winton and Tyler (2000, p.1) have found that in the past two hundred years there has been an emphasis on research that focuses on the body, naming the body as a site of contestation. They argue that:
By the close of the twentieth century the body had become a key site of political, social, cultural and economic intervention in relation, for example, to medicine, disability, work, consumption, old age and ethics. In short, the body has come to be recognized as a contested terrain on which struggles over control and resistance are fought out in contemporary societies (Hancock et al, 2000 p.1).

Many authors such as bell hooks (1992) and Reina Lewis (1996) have argued that representation is deeper than changing imagery, that this is not just a case of substituting ‘bad images’ with ‘good images’, or ‘good histories’ with ‘bad histories,’ or good names with bad names. How can I present alternative imagery of the ‘Indian’ woman? Can I achieve this by representing myself, even if I have only lived in India for a few years as a child and now I am an artist who exhibits, a PhD student with some access to an academic environment, where I can speak and be listened to?

Mohanram (1999) looks at representation and deconstructs different philosophers/authors points of view. She brings up some very important issues as she examines Gayatri Spivak’s critique of Foucault and Deleuze explaining the following:

She suggests that in their desire to give a voice to the masses by being their spokespersons, Foucault and Deleuze refuse to analyse the role of the intellectual as influenced by dominant ideology. According to Spivak, the two philosophers assume the transparency of the role of the intellectual who merely voices the concerns of the subaltern masses by functioning as their proxy, by representing them, but who himself is devoid of any agency. She states that: ‘Two senses of representation are being run together: representation as “speaking for”, as in politics, and representation as “re-presentation”, as in art or philosophy’ (Mohanram, 1999 p.20).

My immediate response is to locate myself in the space of diaspora, but aware of the dangers of generalising my experience or glossing over the fact that I have not lived in India since I was a child and my experience of othering comes from my ‘placement’ within colonial spaces. Radhika Mohanram further elaborates on the concept of representation, she argues that:

Representation in art and philosophy suggests that reality is the underlying presence. Conflating representation as proxy with representation as removed from reality by using the same verb, to represent, she argues, suggests that the person
who speaks for the masses also speaks the truth and speaks within reality. Such a conflation of the two senses of the verb also results in a lack of examination of what is essentially a power relationship between the intellectual and the masses, for the intellectual is also a product of dominant ideology and thus cannot be transparent or devoid of any markers of self-interest (Mohanram, 1999 p.20).

There seems a fine line here when I speak as an ‘Indian’ woman and as move on a day to day basis, I am classified in many ways, ‘brown’, ‘black’, ‘Indian’, migrant and very, very seldom am I considered as an artist, a woman a thinker a writer or Australian.. I have learned to embody these positions and move within them; at times I react to them stating my position, other times its easier to just let things flow. Mohanram, describes this kind of ‘continual recategorization’ and its grounding within ones body. As she so eloquently explains:

In a further twist, after I arrived in New Zealand I was referred to as ‘black’ – which threw me into utter confusion as I had shaped my adult identity as a minority in the US labelled ‘brown’. This continual recategorization – from ‘unmarked’, to ‘brown’ to ‘black’ – goes beyond a classification of ‘race’; these terms contain within them the social, economic and cultural history, as well as the markers of the places of domicile, of the subject. When visiting in India, even when dressed in traditional Indian clothes, the movements of my body, my walk, my body language, mark me as not completely Indian (Mohanram, 1999 p.xii).

On the way to my ‘facial’ - I decided to treat my body with much care - I was listening to the radio, the guest reporter was speaking of his experiences ‘doing a job’ on a new Samba trend in the Favelas in Brazil. The documentary was meant to shed light on young artists lives in the Favelas... words like ‘they get used to it’ and ... ‘they didn’t seem to notice the surrounding environment’ ... ’They were at home here’... were used to describe the body language of the young artist, as if
they did not feel in their bodies the constraints of living in poverty, because their bodies were ‘used to it’. Rather than shedding light, the report served to romanticize their lives, the abject poverty in the Favelas, so all the listeners could go on and enjoy a new take on Samba ...

As hooks (1992) explains, ‘the issue is one of standpoint’ and that we must move beyond discussions of ‘our’ good images versus ‘their’ bad images, to look within ourselves and to critically analyse old narratives. She argues:

For those of us who dare to desire differently, who seek to look away from the conventional ways of seeing blackness and ourselves, the issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the status quo. It is also about transforming the image, creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad (hooks 1992, p.4).

In Black Looks, Race and Representation, bell hooks argues that in the aftermath of colonialism, ‘theorising black experience is a difficult task’ because little progress has been made to challenge, reverse and ‘decolonize our minds’ as we are every day bombarded by images that ‘reinforce and reinscribe white supremacy’ (1992 p.2). She argues that:

Those images may be constructed by white people who have not divested of racism, or by people of colour/black people who may see the world through the lens of white supremacy – internalised racism (hooks, 1992 p.1).

Decolonising one’s mind within diaspora, when colonialism is set in a past, would seem a relatively simple job, so why does it seem such a monumental task? When I pause to deliberate on this issue, I am flooded by recent images and texts – some quite confronting
others more veiled – that still hold negative or not-so-positive images of Indianness and Indian women. Said argues that this type of stereotyping has continued in modern times:

Television, the films, and all the media’s resources have forced information into more and more standardized moulds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of “the mysterious Orient” (Said, 1978 p.26).

In the last few years there has been an increased or a revival of interest in India and the Indian Ocean, as countries such as Britain and Portugal celebrate 500 years of colonial rule and their first voyages across the Indian Ocean. Even though the period of colonisation has ended, there have been several proceedings celebrating these events. Major events, exhibitions and publications have followed, but these have focused on the point of view of the colonizers as settlers and their endeavours, their hardships and victories in building their ‘Empire’. On the few occasions when the people of the land are mentioned it is to showcase their Otherness as the backdrop to which the colonizers are portrayed.

These portrayals are also gendered and women are represented as bodies ‘whose feet do not touch the earth’ (Khaf, 1999 p.3). There is no mention of the contributions women have made to the social, economic and political arena, their resistance to colonial and patriarchal dominance, their hard labour as indentured workers around the world or their role as the transmitters of culture.

In Australia there has also been a growing interest in the Indian Ocean as our geographical location requires a dialogue of sorts with our neighbouring countries, but we have not represented ourselves as a part of Asia, but of the ‘Western’ world and have in fact, continued to represent ‘Asian’ bodies as the Other. One has only to open a newspaper or switch on the television to encounter a range of images that form distinct narratives representing ‘Indianness’ or more specifically, representing the Indian woman as either the ‘uncivilized native’ or as the embodiment of victimization. These narratives remain unchallenged and have become ‘a part of conventional wisdom in the Western
world’, allowing for the continued silencing of the subaltern (Spivak, 1987), despite the emergence of a strong postcolonial voice of resistance. As Mohja Kahf explains:

A corporate advertiser can appeal to this received image in producing advertising copy precisely because the narrative operates at almost all levels of culture, from high to low. Not only can a television cartoon program churn out a *Heathcliff the Cat* – level, children’s version of the stereotype, but a university professor or an article in a major metropolitan newspaper can refer to the basic elements of this narrative without finding it necessary to substantiate them (Kahf 1999, p.1).

There is a deafening silence regarding the representation of women of Indian background in Australia, so giving voice to women of colour and transforming the image into what Stuart Hall has called ‘a matter of becoming’ (Hall in hooks 1992, p.5) is far from an easy task as there are no frameworks, no visible role models, no cutting edge imagery in books and galleries that challenge the status quo to encouraging new ways of seeing.

In order to find new ways of seeing ourselves it is important to deconstruct what ‘race and representation’ means, what is ‘the image’ we are talking about and how this representation, these images serve to produce knowledge about people that are in the ‘not’ side of the equation of being ‘white or not’. On further reflection, does this mean going over an ‘old’ issue of ‘race’ and racism, over and over again without breaking new ground? How do I recreate new images, moving forward?

This has been a painful struggle for the colonised/subaltern as we have not only learnt to know ourselves as different, inferior, as the other, but have lived in ourselves, in our bodies, and experienced ourselves, our bodies as Other. As Stuart Hall explains, this is a long process of change, of reinventing ourselves as well as experiencing ourselves in different ways, because:

Not only, in Said’s “orientalist” sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as “Other”…It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to the “knowledge”, not only as a matter of
imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective confrontation to the norm (in hooks, 1992 p.3).

bell hooks further states that this is a political struggle in the aftermath of colonisation and that it is:

...a struggle to define ourselves in and beyond the act of resistance to domination, we are always in the process of both remembering the past even as we create new ways to imagine and make the future (hooks, 1992 p.5).

It is clear that hooks is discussing a time after colonization, a time that may be diaspora time, a time that goes on ‘beyond’ the time of ‘domination’ when in fact we may be free to imagine ourselves and our future.

In Gendering Orientalism, Reina Lewis explains the balance needed to move away from a model that has many times been subjective, to a new paradigm. She puts forward the following:

Unless we can find a way to acknowledge the myriad and convoluted balance of subjective and social payments instituted by imperialism, to talk of the possibility of opposition without requiring proof of absolute purity or absolute oppression and without resorting to blaming and silencing, we will not be able effectively to shift the discursive paradigms that structure our existence. It is also to this debate that I hope this book has contributed (Lewis, 1996 p.240).

Lewis discusses the representation as othering of certain groups of people takes place through many artistic and literary texts, arguing that there is a need to move beyond discussions of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ by examining the complexity of the issues. She explains:

I wanted to be able to think beyond simple binary analyses of culpability and innocence towards an understanding of how we are variously interpellated into the types of complex positionings that can lead to racism in the name of feminism, or homophobia in the name of Black nationalism or anti-intellectualism in the name of class. The very anxiety associated with using such a universalistic ‘we’ is a sign, not of tyranny of so-called Political Correctness, but of the efficacy of those postcolonial structural differences that make it almost impossible for anyone to articulate the realities of their experience without simultaneously
grappling for the words to describe the forms of othering that it produces (Lewis, 1996 p.240).

If caution is required then it is important that we take this on board and that we are not compelled to take the easy way out, by simply stating that its a difficult issue, but in fact take the challenge to ensure that whilst we express our own truth about our own reality, we do not fall into the good old binary mistake of playing one reality against another. This is not an easy task, but what are the alternatives?

**SPOON, CHEMachea, CHEMachea, Kuler**

**Naming My Body**

For many decades the body has been the site of much discussion and research, from a Feminist and Post-colonial point of view, to the Arts and Literature. Researchers articulate that the body has been present in most major areas of inquiry and that this is due to university courses and programs which have recently contributed to the ‘presence of the body in social, moral and political life, have had a profound impact on sociology and social theory’ (Hancock et al., 2000 p.1). There have been many ways to deconstruct the concept of body and to name it. Elizabeth Grosz uses the term Corporeality and explains it as follows:

*Corporeality* (also *Bodies*) Conventionally conceived within the history of philosophy as the polar opposite of mind, corporeality, or the body, is associated with a series of negative terms within pairs of binary opposites. Where the mind is traditionally correlated with reason, subject, consciousness, interiority, activity and masculinity, the body is implicitly associated with the opposites of these terms, passion, object, non-conscious, exteriority, passivity and femininity (Grosz, 1989 p. xiv).

Grosz argues that within patriarchal constructions, the body is distanced from the mind and subjectivity and is seen ‘outside of history, culture and socio-political life’. She positions her discussions within a feminist standpoint, explaining that:
French feminists, among them Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous, however, wish to reclaim a notion of the body which refuses traditional binary oppositions and places it firmly within a socio-historical context. Following psychoanalytic precepts, they see the structure of subjectivity as an effect of the ways in which the subject represents and understands its own body (Grosz, 1989 p.xv).

Elizabeth Grosz’ argument focuses on the power of the subject to represent and know its own body, self-representation as well as naming is crucial in the context of this thesis – how do we as women ‘see’ and know our bodies? In an article titled Violent Visions and Speechless Days: Corporeality and the Politics of Image, Julie Matthews claims that:

Because we are aware that the body and the image have effects and stand for all that we can say and think about them, we are not content with the idea that they are merely superficial or external surfaces that can straightforwardly be read for signs and inscriptions. We readily acknowledge that the body and the image can be chartered by history, culture and biology; by ideology, discourse and language; by pre-given structures and symbols of representation such as racialisation and sexualisation; and by our experience of these (Matthews, 2000 p.26).

In Portuguese the word for body is *corpo*, it encapsulates a sense of the medical and biological notions of the body, but underlining there are gendered considerations, as well as ‘race’ depictions. Like the word body, *corpo* becomes unlatched to any feeling of the personal, as if we can be somehow removed from our bodies, as if the body, the *corpo* is a separate entity, not one with the mind that is describing it.

Is my body then just a symbol of me? I immediately answer in the negative. Is it an effect of racism that has made me so aware of my body that when I say body or *corpo* I mean the object, the subject: body and mind. Elizabeth Grosz phrases this notion of body and mind eloquently:

Where mind is the provenance of philosophy and psychology, the body is regarded as the object of biological and medical investigation. Mind is understood as distinctively human, the motor of progress and the cause and measure of human achievement. By contrast, the body is assumed to be brute, animalistic, inert, outside of history, culture and socio-political life. While it may be the bearer
or medium of mind or subjectivity, it is also an obstacle to or invention into the pure operations of the mind (Grosz, 1989 p.xiv).

This is what I know of my body: all the details, perfections and imperfections, the grazes on my knees from that fateful basketball game in the late 1960s, the roundness of my tummy from carrying my three children, the black circles around my eyes…my Grandfather’s nose, my stubborn chin…the layers and layers of dark skin. Then there is the other side; the one that classifies me by gender and culture. Here I have had little say in the matter; there is a whole history written out there about me, and those who look like me…naming me as either ‘white or not’ naming my body as a woman, as an Indian woman, both words loaded with meaning that I cannot divest from. Jamaica Kincaid eloquently describes this process of naming in a chapter that she titles, ‘To name is to possess’. She proposes that:

If one does not know the names, one’s knowledge of things is useless’. This is attributed to Isidorus, and I do not know if this is the Greek Isidorus or the other Isidorus, the Archbishop of Seville; but why not put it another way: To have knowledge of things one must first give them a name. This, in any case seems to me to have been Christopher Columbus’s principle, for he named and he named; he named places, he named people, he named things. This world he saw before him had a blankness to it, the blankness of the newly made, the newly born. It had no before. I could say it had no history, but I would have to begin again, I would have to ask the question again: What is history? (Kincaid, 2000 p.115).

So our bodies were named in a bid to erase the culture and history so others could possess: creating a new history around us, around our visual image, around our bodies our legs hands and feet, as if a mask was created to cover our faces barely allowing us a breath, deeming us ‘natives,’ un-cultured, uncivilized collies, canecos, monhe. This form of negative naming had also the effect of condensing our own sense of Indianess, in an inwards movement as it was the only constant, stable and nurturing impression we had of ourselves. Indianness in its numberless forms was always interpreted as Indianness and we held on to what we saw that was left of it.

Ien Ang questions the connection between the naming of Peranakan communities and their sense of ethnicity or Chineseness; she poses some pertinent questions in regards to
the categorizing and naming of groups of people for political reasons and presents the following point of view:

Why is it that these early Chinese traders and merchants still maintained their sense of difference from the locals? This is something that the history books do not tell me. Tineke Jansen, speaking about the early colonial period, has this to say: The ‘Chineseness’ of the earlier [Peranakan] settlers could survive through the creation of a separate ethnic community, whereby especially the registration of the Chinese names functioned to peg down what was left of [their] cultural ‘Chineseness’. Jansen indicates that before the Dutch arrived, the term Peranakan already circulated on Java to refer to people with a Chinese father who were culturally Javanese, but that the term’s explicitly racial association with ‘Chineseness’ was articulated only by the Dutch rulers. Does this suggest that before European colonialism, the Peranakan did not identify themselves in essentialist ethnic or racial terms? (Ang, 1994 p.6).

Ang presents a strong argument in relation to the grounding of essentialist discourses in the process of colonization. She concludes:

If this is so, then we can concur with Dipesh Chakrabarty’s forceful argument that ‘ethnicity’ as an objectivist, absolutist means of categorizing people is a modern concept, introduced by the Europeans into the colonized world as an instrument of control and governmentality. But this question still remains: what is the relation between external, political pressures and internal or ‘spontaneous’ forms of tribal identification? (Ang, 1994 p.6).

There will be as many different answers to Ang’s questions as subjects who have experienced this form of essentialising. My own experience is that the ‘external’ form of ethnic naming created in my family an underground sense of connection to all things Goan. We never discussed the issue or the verbal abuse we were exposed to, but within our house, within the sanctuary of our home we celebrated in small ways that we had another way of seeing ourselves. Then there were times where we succumbed to the names and it was a colossal task to find our way out of the stupor of colonial thinking. How do I now theorise these issues as they are so close to my bones? My reaction has been at times a physical one felt deep down in my belly and I have to remind myself that this is a project that once finished will be on paper and not buried, locked in my chest. Jamaica Kincaid asks similar questions and writes so eloquently about the opening and healing of old wounds by positioning it within an historical context. She asks:
What to call the thing that happened to me and all who look like me? Should I call it history? If so, what should history mean to someone like me? Should it be an idea, should it be an open wound with each breath I take in and expel healing and opening the wound again and again, over and over, and is this healing and opening a moment that began in 1492 and has yet to come to an end? Is it a collection of facts, all true and precise details, what should I do, how should I feel, where should I place myself? (Kincaid, 2000 p.114).

Possession is not soft, naming is not soft, it has a thorny edge not soft and English sounding like Audrey. Why was I called Audrey, my Indian body called Audrey my arms and legs and head and neck - all Audrey. My body Audrey.

Grosz speaks of this event through another voice. Referring to the French feminists she explains that:

Following psychoanalytic precepts, they see the structure of subjectivity as an effect of the ways in which the subject represents and understands its own body. One implication of this view which is undeveloped by Freud himself is the claim that the specificities of the body (its sex in particular) make a difference to the subjectivity of the subject. Masculinity is the effect of representing the body as phallic; and femininity is an effect of the representation of the body as castrated. For Irigaray, not only is subjectivity structured with reference to the (symbolic) meaning of the body, but the body itself is the product and effect of symbolic inscriptions which produce it as a particular, socially appropriate type of body (Grosz, 1989 p.xv).

I hear Grosz’s argument and although it speaks of the gendered subject the notion of the ‘effect of symbolic inscription ‘is particularly important to me as a woman of colour, not only from Grosz’s point of view of the ‘symbolic’ but as well as from a language standpoint, a tongue standpoint, a speaking standpoint.

Here I need to ask: Why was I not given another name? My father named me, my grandmother baptized me, she thought that with English names we could pass as
‘Anglo-Indians’ and have a better future in India. It went all wrong and we left India. I was stuck with the name. Then it began to grow on me, just because I knew why she gave it to me... my body began to feel like an Audrey. The might call me Caneca, Monhe Piripiri Monguso, but I was also Audrey. I liked my name because it is not what people expect me to be. The name attached to my body, displaces the stereotypes in regards to what my body should be named. It is an issue of representation. I am comfortable with this.

In 1973 the government in Lisbon said I had to change my name to Andreia...or something else they said, but not Audrey ...you-can’t-have-a-foreign-name-under-Portuguese law!’. White Portuguese people could keep their French or Spanish names, but we had to prove our alliance to the nation by adopting Portuguese names. It was almost a kind of ritual by leaving the names we were given in our country of birth we were being expunged of any cultural traits that we may still be harbouring inside.
So I became *Andreia*, it didn't feel right all over again, but as they said ...now-you-have-a-proper-name...you are now a new person...

The name had a sort of nice ring to it, but my ears had to get used to being called *Andreia*, not Audrey. It sounded very different to Audrey and took some time to become familiar with. Audrey had a soft ring to it: with *Andreia* you need to roll the r’s to pronounce the r’s roughly, loudly rolling your tongue deep.

The government named me. My birth certificate says they ‘fixed’ my name as Andreia in 1973. Apparently I was born with the ‘wrong’ name twenty years earlier.

Twenty years that I lived as Audrey seemed to be erased by legislation that did not accept the sovereignty of my culture or birth place, deeming me *Apatrida* – without nation, changing my name seemed to them the logical thing to do. I was now a new body with a brand new name, I could start all over again washing off any vestiges, any remnants, any residue of my past. What then can I say are the ‘effect of symbolic inscriptions’ here?

Elizabeth Grosz explains how the body is inscribed:

Dominant systems of discourse and representation are active ingredients of this social inscription of the sexed body, producing it as phallic (in the case of men) and as castrated (in the case of women). The body is thus the site of intersection of psychical projections; and of social inscriptions. Understood in this way, it can no longer be considered pre-or acultural. Common feminist objections to theories utilizing notions of the body – the charges of essentialism, naturalism and
biologism – are not appropriate in this case (see also Morphology) (Grosz, 1989 p. xv).

Re-reading Grosz’s statement above, a parallel can be established between the act of naming by ‘dominant systems of discourse’, and ‘the social inscription’ of the body that is seen to have something missing; the castrated body may be interpreted as the body without a phallus as well as the body that is on the not side of being ‘white-or-not’. So when I describe myself as a woman of colour or as an Indian woman or as a woman full stop, the specificity of gender comes to play. Under a section titled Defining Gender Kathleen Canning begins to share light on the concept of gender. She argues that:

Gender is a category of social analysis that denotes the relational character of sexual difference. When this term first gained currency among historians of women in the early 1980s, it mainly signified the social or cultural relation between the sexes. As gender became an increasingly important and visible site of scholarly research and debate across the disciplines, its meaning widened to include the symbolic system or signifier of relations of power in which men and women are positioned differently (Canning, 2006 p.4).

Canning goes on explicitly to deconstruct the use of the word gender, its origins and its implications, stating that:

The embrace of the concept of gender as a culturally formed set of social relations, distinct from sex, signalled the departure of feminist social scientists from the unchanging and universal notions of biological differences. The word “gender”, however, does not exist in some languages, while in others its meaning diverges significantly from the English usages. The German term Geschlecht, for example, encompasses both sex and gender and thus blurs the core distinctions of the English term. In French the term sexe or sexuel are more commonly used than genre, which can refer to either grammatical or literary genre or serve as a classifying category in natural history. The use of the analytical tool, gender, does not per se connote a primacy of gender relative to other forms of inequality, such as race, class, or ethnicity; rather, scholarship of the last decade has amply illustrated the mutual relationships between gender and other categories of difference (Canning, 2006 p5).

Kathleen Canning brings up the connection between gender and other categories that have been used to identify the body, such as ‘race’ and ethnicity. These other so-called
categories are intrinsically linked to culture, place and country, belonging, home, language, as well as migrancy and Diaspora.

These categories have been discussed as identity as something deep down in the bowels of the body, in the self and to question, not only Kant’s notion of self or Derrida’s notion of individuality and place, but to ask like Minh-Ha ‘When, where, how am I (so and so)’ (Minh-Ha, 1992 p.157). Moreover can we also connect to bell hooks issue of identity that moves us ‘in and beyond the act of resistance to domination’ (hooks 1992, p5) into what Stuart Hall has called ‘a matter of becoming’ (Hall in hooks 1992, p5).

The notion of identity is a complex but empowering concept which has been discussed thoroughly, since the decolonization of many countries in Africa and Asia, by various authors such as Homi Bhabha (1988), Gayatri Spivak (1987), Mandy Thomas (1998) and Ien Ang (1996), who have also called attention to the fluid in-translation aspect of identity, what Stuart Hall has called a process, a struggle to name ourselves, our bodies something that is constantly renewing, changing shape and transgressing from one place to another. He says:

Far from being grounded in a mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (Hall in hooks 1992, p5).

Conceiving Indianness as a social construct fed by Orientalist representations dating back to the time of the conquistadores, opens up a new space of what has been called ‘the view from Diaspora’ (Ang, 1998). Ang explains that conceiving Chineseness (or in my case Indianess) as a discursive construct enables a disruption of the stability and certainty of the Indian Body, however, it does not negate its operative power as cultural principle in the social construction of identities as Indian. She so eloquently explains:

In other words, the point is not to dispute the fact that Chineseness exist (which in any case would be futile assertion in a world, where more than a billion people would to all intents and purposes, identify themselves as Chinese in one way or
another, either voluntarily or by force), but to investigate how this category operates in practice, in different historical, geographical, political and cultural contexts (Ang, 1998 p.53).

In the same way, Stuart Hall argues that although it has been accepted in some areas of academia, that 'race' is not a valid biologic category, this does not undermine its social implications and effectuality. By understanding the constructed nature of categories such as Indian, there is a shift from the categories themselves:

The focus on theoretical attention from the categories ‘in themselves’ as repositories of cultural [meaning] to the process of cultural classification itself (Hall, 1999 p.7)

To move towards a ‘recovery’ of the past and find the many positions I may inhabit and speak from, I find myself returning to the traditions of my grandmothers, as women’s standpoint, their movements, gestures and ways of doing such things as gathering grains and vegetables, storing and ripening fruit, planting, picking and grinding spices, within the interweaving of knowledge of the environment with cultural traditions, the oral traditions of passing on histories through remembrance objects, their activism in locating themselves and their children, within spaces were they could articulate what Darlene Hine has called ‘a culture of dissemblance’ (Hine, 1989).

However, even this simple notion of ‘return’ is fraught with ambiguity and my own interpretation of culture is layered, referencing back to my own historical trajectory. I was born into a so-called Indian family in Poona, India, where some members of my family were of Spanish and Portuguese descent. I have found being ‘like Nehru’s follower’ or not being ‘Indian’ enough a profoundly hesitant, ambivalent experience, burdened with feelings of denunciation and estrangement. Devleena Ghosh has theorized these experiences in a study on the Indo-Fijian community in Sydney. As she writes:

…I decided to ask those people I interviewed the rather essentialising question: what is Indian about you? What emerged was contested terrain; a confused renarrating of memory, experience and identity that was played out in the interstices of Australianness, Fijianness and Indianness, meshing, adapting and
recreating these concepts. ‘Indianness’, especially, was the ground on which ideas about identity and home were negotiated and reshaped (Gosh, 2000 p.76).

Culture and tradition are complex paradigms where women have at times been located in discursive spaces where tradition becomes the prison house to justify oppression. Hine’s notion of ‘dissemblance’ moves forward multiple self-defined standpoints, in which women define whose tradition is being talked – about, why and how. Moreover, tradition and culture are at times explored and used for multiple purposes by artists such as photographer William Yang. This engagement opens up a new forum for discussion of how the ‘traditional’ and the contemporary are visually represented by artists within the diaspora. Dean Chan has studied this issue and claims that the risks of essentialising persist. As he explains:

By returning Yang’s works to their imagined original source, the complexities of the relationship between tradition and contemporaneity, particularly as the relationship relates to the creative production of diasporic subjects, seem to have been rather simplistically elided. That is to say, I am thinking of the reductive juxtaposition of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘contemporary’ as conflicting tensions ossified in static opposition, instead of treating both terms as complex processes involving cultural exchange, transfer, evolution and reconfiguration (Chan, 2000 p.146).

When interrogating the representation of South Asian Muslim women, Fauzia Ahmad (2003) argues that in many instances, the concept of agency has been discussed as a binary of the traditional versus modern, where… ‘agency can only be exercised once the subject has consciously dissented from the familial and cultural group’ (Ahmad, 2003 p.58 ). This could present implications for those women who see tradition as coming into ‘being’, a consciousness that defines their own standpoint. Dean Chan sums up the dangers of following a path ‘tradition’ that hides the roots of essentialism, however he also looks at the positive, empowering notion of tradition/essentialism and concludes that:

On recapitulating my argument, I contend that current interpretive pitfalls stem from the fact that narratives on Asian-Australian art have yet to move very far from the loaded discourse of race, and the arena of ontological absolute truth
claims. Having said this, the sense of empowerment afforded by essentialised reference cannot be altogether discounted. I have in mind Gayatri Spivak’s (1984-85) argument for a sense of strategic essentialism, and its usefulness in liberatory identifications, both personal and collective. While much of my own previous critical polemic might suggest a particular stance against essentialism, I wish to clarify that it is rather the sense of a taken-for-granted (as opposed to strategic) deployment of essentialism which I find problematic (Chan, 2000 p.150).

This notion of Strategic essentialism offers a way forward for women who choose the balance of traditional and modern standpoints, as it may be the way to wind down the binary that, as Ahmad argues leaves many woman ‘without validation’. Women who choose both traditional and modern traces may find themselves without a space from which to speak. She argues that ‘we’ as South Asian women still remain… ‘in progress’ as a thesis, and are still arguing against ‘generational accounts, or against geographically specific locations that claim representational license’ (Ahmad, 2003 p.60).

Julie Matthews (2000) claims that:

Theories of hibridity, third space, diaspora and identity offer alternative ways of conceptualising and theorizing difference. However, studies of difference, whether undertaken through new conceptual lenses or older ones, such as those of pluralism and multiculturalism, remain firmly focused on ‘difference’… (Matthews, 2000 p.25).

Moving away from ‘difference’, the overlapping of tradition culture and agency can be articulated within the theoretical framework of Third Space (Bhabha 1988) and through the notion of Signifying Space (Kristeva 1979), not only to re-construct and re-code stereotypical imagery of the body, but to ground a women’s centred history acknowledging identity ‘as a production is never complete’ (Hall 1990), and that accepting the many differences of Indianness open up junctures within feminist and post-colonial theory. However there is a need to unfurl the junctures, the creases, and the folds of my identity, to broaden out my sense of what it is to be Indian, here in this place where I live, moving away from essentialising categories and to come to the point where I can perceive myself not in disparity to anything or anyone else.
Radhika Mohanram explains the importance of discussing the body, racial identity and place as landscape. She argues that:

It is a critical commonplace to suggest that in a postmodern, transnational theory-world, notions such as a ‘pure’ national or racial identity are anachronistic or outmoded concepts, since a postmodern understanding of identity is based on a comprehension of nation and race as arbitrary or as a political construct. Yet subjects have a close relationship with the landscape that surrounds them, a relationship which shapes their bodies and perceptions, forms their knowledge and informs their sense of aesthetics (Mohanram, 1999 p.xii).

Mohanram goes on to argue the role of place in the development of identity and the categorisation of the body, as she elaborates:

Not only does a sense of place participate in the construction of a perception of physical identity, it is also central to the formation of racial identity. The category of the ‘black body’ can come into being only when the body is perceived as being out of place, either from its natural environment or its national boundaries. A black body in apartheid South Africa or in Uganda would not be understood as black in quite the same way as it would be in Western countries (Mohanram, 1999 p.xii).

In similar ways artist Audrey Yue claims that the discussion of representation and identity must be contextualized to place, to locality and to ‘home’. She explains that:

The notion of ethnicity must move beyond the boundaries of the familiar…[to incorporate] a representational politics of location (that is, the contingent displacement and reterritorialisation of what is ‘home’) (Yue, 1993 p.19).

If locality is of importance, then it is fundamental to position myself within the context of Australia – of Western Australia which is my home. Here I am both Indian and Australian ‘in-progress’ or according to Jacqueline Lo, I may position myself within the un-fixity of the hyphen. Lo claims that:

Hybridity and hyphenation offer an alternative organizing category for a new politics of representation which is informed by an awareness of diaspora and its contradictory, ambivalent and generative potential (Lo, 2000 p.156).

The hyphen has the potential to open up a space of possibility; it offers a leeway between one word and the other. Within the ‘dash’ itself, the line itself that separates and visually
categorizes the hyphen lies the opening for a different kind of meaning and an ‘in two minds’ type of interpretation itself. Lo goes on to link the space of the hyphen to Third Space and she argues that:

Elsewhere, I have located Asian-Australian identity within Bhabha’s model of third space – the focus on the hyphenated space between categories draws attention to a fluid identity continuously and agonistically reconfigured in relation to the changing political environment (Lo, 1998 p. 60).

This opening allows for me to be, speaking from multiple locations; as Lo goes on to further explain:

The focus on indeterminacy – with all its attendant uncertainties, conflicts, contestation and convergences – highlights the discursive (and hence political) basis of Asian-Australianess, of being both Asian and Australian, unsettles dominant expectations of the unproblematic homology between cultural, racial and national identity (Lo, 2000 p.156).

It is within this unfurling of the hyphen that the Third Space emerges at the interfaces of identity, in what Gloria Anzaldua (1990) has called ‘making faces’ as a means to explore the multifaceted inner faces of our identity.

**ASHES, RAK, RAK GABAR, GOBOR**

**BELONGING SPACE AND THIRD SPACE**

As I begin to write this section on place and belonging, I realise I have traveled a great distance since I began this project. Not simply in space not merely in time but in other ways in my thinking and my dreaming. I have traveled back to Goa for the first time in fifty years – since I left as a child and for the last year have worked closely with an Aboriginal community in the Pilbara in the North of Western Australia. I feel grounded here. We have
worked with a group of women for several months and feel at home here, not an outsider.

They know my story and I know theirs.

I see something in their eyes that I discern, not fully - but distinguish something that I have seen in my mother’s eyes, countless times. Most of the women are artists, many are the Elders in this community and every time we return they embrace me tenderly... every time they see us leave they ask when we will come, come back...come back again.

I look at the hills and yearning floods my body like a tight ache in my belly – it must be the scent of the hills and I remember.

I remember my grandmother who was an artist. Between making chapattis and pruning trees she painted flowers, mainly roses. I followed her everywhere learning how to listen to the murmurs the whispers of the trees, the voices of the many birds that came to nestle in the old chiko tree and to watch the jackals in the nearby hills.

I remember.

Belonging and Home are almost cliché words that when attached to diaspora may tend to imply a sort of victim-out-of-place interpretation. This is not my intention as I aspire to, I seek an empowering space; just an ordinary – no fuss place. But this has been an awkward task as I try to deal with the many social and political aspects of belonging in Australia.
Having lost his job in Inhambane, we travelled with Dada back to the city. But there was no work here, at least not for ‘Indians’.

We stayed with Mama’s relatives, but this was a short time thing, that was clear.

I came to history fairly early in my life when my mother, my sisters and my aunt Marmee were confronted by a enraged landlord who refused to rent us a house because … ‘I know all about you’ he shouted, ‘you look too much like Nehru’s followers’.

I will start from the beginning from the very word *home*, where many interpretations come in to play. Bob Hodge examines the many translations of the word *home* and its root meanings. He explains that:

To illustrate, I will examine the development of English vocabulary from its Indo-European origins. ‘Home’, derives ultimately from *kei*, an Indo-European root (from a nomadic or pre-urban people living at least 10,000 years ago). *Kei* means to lay down, to stay, to be at rest. The classical Greek *kome*, a town or village, from the same root, emerged at a time when the Greeks had settled in a specific territory. ‘Home’ in English is opposed to ‘house’. ‘House’ comes from a root meaning ‘covering’ (‘hide’ comes from the same root). This broad distinction in root meanings, use of space versus cover or shelter, is still preserved in the opposition between the English words ‘home’ and ‘house’ (Hodge, 1997 p.48).

In Portuguese the word for home is *casa*: it is a mixture of home and house, the place you live in, not just the architectural structure of a building. The word *casa* speaks about belonging to a place. In the nineteen sixties in Mozambique the notion of *casa* was also intricately associated with the suburb you lived in, and although there wasn’t any rule –
like the apartheid rulings of South Africa to legislate and enforce a separation of people and homes – here in Mozambique it was as insidious but more concealed.

_I entered History experiencing what I will call the Inversion state – the act of inverting the state of being inverted, changing of order and time, changing the way one knows oneself, decomposing the natural arrangements of words. Was he talking to me? How did he know all about us? Why did he think we were Nehru’s followers? And Who Was Nehru Anyway?_

The ones that did not ‘belong’ lived in casas in certain suburbs in the outskirts of the city. Belonging was also not an innocent concept: it was deeply entrenched within the structures of nationalism, of casa in the city or on the outskirts - complicating the long term settlement of people who came to live and work in the country.

_Mum kept silent. Marmee said it was because we are on ‘the dark side’! Dark side! Dark side of whom? Dark side of the landlord? No! She answered in exasperation – He has no colour!! No colour? How could Mama, Marmee my two sisters and myself ‘have’ colour and he could get away without a speckle? ‘He is white, he has no colour, he is white!’ She repeated. This interruption threw my life into disorder. I could recognize the discomposure in my mother and aunt’s bodies, the tension of their shoulders, heavy, their backs slightly arched. I could sense their shame as if it was palpable, physical, and tangible laid out in front of my eyes. This was reflected in the perturbation in my own chest._
There was dust in my eyes. That day I began to forget to listen to the
murmurs the whispers of the trees…

Home and Casa became essential ingredients for belonging, peace and order in my life
through my childhood, we never achieved that until much latter.

At school I learned that people like me had never achieved anything much or
that their achievements were part of ancient history with no continuity in
modern times. In contrast the Portuguese were the most knowledgeable; they
conquered India civilized and modernized the world; they had discovered the
way to India, otherwise we may have never been found!

Finding a casa became a colossal task as we were driven out to the outskirts of the
suburbs. The process of looking, of seeking for a place to belong is an important aspect of
Diaspora and belonging.

At this time India, under the government of Jawaharlal Nehru had reclaimed
Goa from the Portuguese. This was portrayed through the media as the most
abhorrent form of betrayal. How dare India take back the land the
Portuguese had colonized for so long? How could the Goans not recognize the
benefits of Portuguese Governance? The Indian population were seen as
‘snares in the grass’, a treacherous people, a ‘race’ you could not trust.

The act of looking is dissimilar to seeing or glancing. To proceed to look for something
and in this case to look for casa embodies a carrying-on a keeping-on, a continuous act
for a prolonged period of time. Incessantly we were compelled to walk and walk to seek,
to search for a place not only to live but a space to belong. Identifying this drive, to be in
a precise place this infinite urge to belong, is halfway to understanding this burning need to belong.

I will call this never ending seeking, this quest for a place, and this search for a space Casaness. More precisely Casaness becomes the gap between belonging and un-belonging. It may be perceived as no-woman’s place, no-man’s place, a locale misty in its nature, a place of translation and a difficult uneasy space. Need keeps you moving on, as there is no other way to go.

*That night after dinner I stayed for the adult after dinner talk, the talking that goes on when everyone has finished eating and the adults discussed serious business.*

Ien Ang argues that the need for the diasporic subject to create and be a part of an imagined community is essential for a peaceful completion of the migration journey. She explains that:

> It is the myth of the (lost or idealized) homeland, the object of both collective memory and desire and attachment, which is constitutive to diasporas, and which ultimately confines and constrains the nomadism of the diasporic subject (Ang, 1994 p. 5).

In Ang’s argument it is evident that the loss of a ‘homeland’ is an important aspect of diaspora and that this is deep rooted in many migrant communities. In similar ways Edward Said talks about the connection between exile and belonging. He claims that:

> Essential association with exile, nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages. Indeed, the interplay between nationalism and exile is like Hegel’s dialectic of servant and master, opposites informing and constituting each other. All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement (Said, 1990 p.359).
Is it the search for a homeland in the broader sense that thrusts us forward into a space of seeking or is it about finding a more intimate space to fit in?

**That evening I felt grown up, worried that we could not find a home. I stayed under the table…**

Marmee commented that another family down the road had found a house and were moving. I felt confused. Did they look like Nehru’s followers, maybe they had found a nice landlord, maybe we could go and see him?

Searching for a space is timeless as *Casaness* is enduring, it is not achieved quickly and there are no short cuts, at least visible ones.

**No! Marmee said, raising her voice and bending down to look at me under the table… those people had good colour! I came out and sat with them at the table, elbows grounded hands holding my head up.**

**Mama kept silent.**

In the gap, the cracks forbid you to look out and looking in, the sight of the lost homeland looms stretching over you. Gupta and Ferguson remind us that the ‘homeland’ can also be a powerful representation, an emblem within diaspora. As they describe:

> ‘Homeland’ in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced people [ and while] ‘deterritorialisation’ has destabilized the fixity of ‘ourselves’ and ‘others’ it has not thereby created subjects who are free-floating nomads (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992 p.19).

I began to imagine a house, a home, a *casa* in a space, any space with no particular address, but an imagined space, a sort of make believe space. It was more about being at
home than an architectural place. Biddy Martin and Talpade Mohanty Chandra argue that the difference of ‘being’ at home or ‘not’ being at home. They explain that:

‘Being home’ refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; ‘not being home’ is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of difference even within oneself (Martin & Chandra 1986 p.196).

For the next few years we walked and knocked on many doors. These became embedded in meaning, white walls as borders that could be opened or closed… and to knock is not only to make a rattling or clanking noise, but also to seek admittance or to enter with permission or even to give a sudden stroke. I remember… I walked around these borders groping at the white walls through a false light, as if someone had put my eyes out. At times almost snow-blinded, having to look another way.

The act of searching for place or locale where I could feel at home and be at home is important to consider as an in-translation gap, a slit, a fissure. The ambivalence of this space may be translated into Hommi Bhabha’s Third Space (1988), a space where I could be empowered as it gives me a discursive standpoint, a position from which I may belong. He describes this space as:

It is that Third Space though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew. (Bhabha, 1988 p.21).

The Third Space opens up a platform where I can reject narrow cultural frontiers where essential notions of ethnicity are challenged, to exercise cultural agency and freedom. By appropriating, translating, re-historicizing and re-reading ethnicity and culture, the body decenters the Power / Knowledge dyad (Foucault, 1976) that since the Enlightenment has
served the discourses within patriarchy and imperialism, giving dominant groups the right to govern, subjugate and control on the basis of 'race', ethnicity and gender.

**Because in schools and colleges and universities everyone had read the same books that the landlord had, the exuberant recounts of the conquerors, full of prose that sung their victorious deeds, their grandiose history their tales of 1498. This kept us silent. A deafening silence.**

The act of seeking and finding a space, is also an act of insurgency and freedom, we never gave up, we could never give up, it was never an option. The Third Space opens up a locality where borderlines are indistinguishable and white walls have become undone. Sarat Majaraj describes this ‘new’ space as the ‘scene of translations’, where the body can move:

… beyond absolutist notions of difference and identity, beyond the reversible stances of ‘self and Other’ in which the Eurocentric gaze fashions itself as the Other, as the intoxicating exotic as in the heady stuff of a SMIRNOFF ad – in the 1990s we have come to see the international space as the meeting ground for a multiplicity of tongues visual grammars and styles. These do not so much translate into one another as translate to produce difference (Majaraj, 1994 p.4).

**Is silence a pause, can there be a physical space of silence, a tempo?**

**Every night Mama would sit in front of a small altar, which had a Mary holding the baby Jesus.**

**In Silence.**

**She would solemnly light a simple oil lamp with a string wick inside.**

**In Silence.**

**Marmee would join her, sitting next to her.**
In Silence.

In an article titled *On Not Speaking Chinese*, Ien Ang points out that the positions people can sustain within diaspora are also connected to their sense of estrangement from the host society. She claims that:

I am not saying here that the politics of diaspora is intrinsically oppressive, on the contrary. It is clear that many members of ethnic minorities derive a sense of joy and dignity, as well as a sense of (vicarious) belonging from their identification with a ‘homeland’ which is elsewhere. But it should also be noted that this very identification with an imagined ‘where you’re from’ is often a sign of, and a surrender to, a condition of actual marginalization in the place ‘where you’re at’ (Ang, 1994p.15).

**In difficult times this would be the only light in the house. A guiding light which filled the house with a warm glow, bringing to life our shadows as we stood around the altar.**

In Silence.

This site of translations or scene of translations can provide the hybrid body with the location from which it may come to terms with its disjointed position in the Australian social space, its sense of out-of-placeness so characteristic of diasporic conditions and to move through the ambivalent space of enunciation (Hall, 1990).

The space of enunciation may become a ‘space’ of translations explored as the visual space of diaspora, to open up a new ‘social spatiality’ (Soja, 1996) – the real and imagined world of hybrid bodies. Through the re-creation of a new social space, not only
spatiality may be re-created, but also the diasporic body that inhabits this space, thus allowing for new ways of re-representing diasporas, where stereotypical imagery is interrupted and re-coded.

The shadows were soft, still filled with universal music, nebulae of melodies, overflowing with soft music – you could measure the timbre of our bodies, still in silence. At times the flame danced with the movement, the flow of our breath. Our shadows would tremble, as an adagio; a movement... then silence... then movement then harmonize again.

In Silence.

In Beyond “Culture” Gupta and Ferguson discuss links between space and identity and argue that the sociopolitical space where settlement occurs is an important aspect to consider. They argue that:

The ability of people to confound the established spatial orders, either through physical movement or through their own conceptual and political acts of re-imagination, means that space and place can never be ‘given,’ and that the process of their sociopolitical construction must always be considered (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992 p.17).

They would sit quietly and add another photo of our family to the altar, my grandmother, her mother and her sisters. They would pray, this was a sequenced ritual loaded with meaning, after the prayers Mama would
touch each photo, and then pause. Seconds were missed, and then she would move to the next image and slowly touch her lips, over and over again.

Edward Soja has argued that bodies are ‘spatial beings’ that can actively define their own spatiality within Thirdspace. He argues that the Thirdspace is a recombination and extension of the First and Second Spaces:

I have chosen to call this new awareness Thirdspace and to initiate its evolving definition by describing it as a product of a ‘thirding’ of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning. Simultaneously real and imagined and more (both and also…), the exploration of Thirdspace can be described and inscribed in journeys to “real-and-imagined” (or perhaps “realandimagined”?) places (Soja, 1996 p.11).

Personally, I find the notion of Soja’s spatiality, of sites that are real or imagined, empowering. Similar to Bhabha’s Third Space, which I also interpret as an imagined space - even a space that is made of dreams and imaginings, there is a thread here from which I may be able to weave my way back from colonisation. However it is of the mind, of the senses and to reach this space maybe a mindset. It could also be an act of recovery, insurgency and transformation.

This act of insurgency and transformation was a recalling of our memories, our history. With each pause, deranging, mis-arranging and dis-laying the histories of the landlords. Shuffling, muddling and throwing into disorder their grandiose histories, breaking the ranks of the white wall.
In Silence.

Through visual imagery, the Third Space can be uncovered as an imaginary location, a utopic site, a ‘site with no place’, in what Foucault (1986) has discussed as utopias. He argues that:

Utopias are sites with no place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present Society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces (Foucault, 1986 p.265).

With her silence, she would begin to erase the thousands of libraries all over the world. Because through this act of silence I came to history. Through this act of translation and remembrance I came to history because I learnt that my once upon a time, did not begin with you V. da Gama in 1498. Because from Mama’s mother side and my from Dada’s fathers side I come from a country called Gaunco Vaddo that lies close to Siolim, bordered between the lines of Marna and Oxel Hills. This is the place I learned to remember to listen to the whispers, the murmurs of the trees, the voices of the many birds that came to nestle
in the old chiko tree and to watch the jackals in the nearby hills

And I am this History.

The in-translation nature of Third Space can allow for a new reading of home: it can encompass the search, the seeking of place of someplace, of homeplace and the erasure of borders. I rely on Edward Said once again to speak of this position. Said says:

We take home and language for granted: they become nature and their underlying assumptions recede into dogma and orthodoxy. The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience (Said, 2001 p.15).

WE LIVE IN THIS DIRT
WE LIVE ON THIS BORDER
OF OILY BLACK SAND
NO LINE HERE
THERE IS NO
LINE IN THE OILY DIRT

But they say there is a border
Dividing my
Body
From their city

WE LIVE IN THIS DIRT. WE LIVE ON THIS BORDER OF OILY BLACK SAND
In the Third Space language and history have to be realigned and open to many utterances of many kinds in many ways. Bakhtin speaks of the hybrid that performs this task. He explains:

What we are calling a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical [syntactic] and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages,’ two semantic and axiological belief systems (Bakhtin, 1981 p.304).

It sticks to my skin like
Wet icing sugar
Not soft
Covering my body
Not soft
Another black layer of
Dirt
Not soft
Reminding me
Not soft
Not to forget I live
Here

Not soft
Here

WE LIVE ON THIS BORDER THERE IS NO LINE
IN THE OILY DIRT

WE LIVE ON THIS BORDER THERE IS NO LINE
IN THE OILY DIRT
Moreover, he explains the complexity of the hybrid utterance and says:

We repeat there is no formal – compositional and syntactic – boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a single sentence (Bakhtin, 1981 p.305).

BUT THEY SAY THERE IS A BORDER
THEY SAY THERE IS A BORDER
DIVIDING MY
BODY
FROM THEIR CITY
WE LIVE ON THIS BORDER THERE IS NO LINE
IN THE OILY DIRT

BUT THEY SAY THERE IS A BORDER.

Our fence divides the proper
City from the rest. Someone said this is
The Guts of the city, it feels like the guts
But not of the city
Just guts
And rats

The smell of rats
Guts

WE LIVE ON THIS BORDER. THERE IS NO LINE
IN THE OILY DIRT.

WE LIVE IN THIS DIRT. WE LIVE ON THIS
BORDER OF OILY BLACK SAND
NO LINE HERE THERE IS NO
LINE IN THE OILY DIRT

Discussing the transparent space, the see-through space of language, Bakhtin’s point of view is that:

…even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction – and consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents (Bakhtin, 18981 p.305).

In silence.

I place this altar in remembrance to my grandmother, who was an artist, who made chapattis and pruned trees, who knew how to listen to the murmurs the whispers of the trees and to the many birds that came to nestle in the old chiko tree.

In Silence. I place Mary holding the baby Jesus.

In Silence. I place my great grandmother.

In Silence. I place my grandmother.

In Silence. I place Marmee.

In Silence. I place Aunty Babsy.

In Silence I place the murmurs the whispers of the trees.

In Silence. I place the voices of the birds who come to nestle in the old chiko tree.

In Silence.
They moved all
The mountains from
One place to
Another
Edifice behind
Edifice
Mud fell to the earth

Wincing
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure/s Project, 2005
Mud on Mud

Recoiling
They reached Out Inside our Mouths Grabbing
Wrenching
They took
Our tongues
Out

No one cried
Out

Whimpering
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure's Project, 2005
Salt fell to the earth
Salt over Mud

We were all there
Without tongues

Lacking
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure/s Project, 2005
No one cried
Out
Silencing
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure/s Project, 2005
They blemished
Tarnished
Marked our
Land
Inside

We were all there
No tongues

Weeping
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure’s Project, 2005
They turned their backs
Covered our eyes

Remembering
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure/s Project, 2005
One by one
We
Stood up
Rising
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure/s Project, 2005
Climbing
With
A fist full
Of mud in
Our
Hands
Building

Our tongues
Growing
The Last Judgement (charcoal drawings on gallery walls and a motorised lantern) Erasure's Project, 2005
In language

Not

Forgetting
They gathered, and
gathered and
gathered every
grain of rice, only
the rice ears
stayed...
There Is No Blessing In This Work
ON PLACE, INDIA PLACE

I CAN ONLY REMEMBER THE IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS OF THE PLACES WE HAVE LIVED IN. A CHILD DOES NOT WANDER OFF TO FAR AWAY. STAY CLOSE, SHE WOULD SAY AND I KNEW SHE WAS CLOSE AT HAND, FROM THE SMELL OF CARAMELIZED ONIONS ON HER CLOTHES, ON HER LAP, WHERE I LAID MY HEAD.

I AM GOING BACK TO INDIA.
ARE YOU GOING HOME, THEY ASK.
WHERE IS HOME. MANY PLACES.
HOMELESSNESS.
IT IS NOT SUCH A BAD THING; YOU MAY FIND SOLACE INSIDE, OR IN MANY PLACES, OR EVEN A PURPOSE FOR BEING HOMELESS.
A PURPOSE.

How does it feel to be able to say this is my country

Although I know now where I was born, where the women I am linked to in blood are from, still I am on the periphery, on the fringes. What is India to me? A myth I have carried all these years, shielding me away from discrimination and shame. I could cope better with their racism because I told myself - this is not your country, in your country this would not happen.

What would she have said to all I write and think. Did she not tell us who we were to protect us. Or did she not tell us so we would fell inferior.
Did she believe we were inferior.
Questions more than statements haunt me.
Questions more than history haunt me.

ON RESTITUTION

TO RESTORE THE PAST
WHERE DO I START
NO RESTORATION
NO PAST

I have no way
To find restoration
Restoration
I HAVE NO WAY
TO FIND

I HAVE NO MAP
NO EASY-TO-DO GUIDE
TO FIND MY WAY
To find my way
To find my way
BACK FROM COLONIZATION.
NO EASY-TO-DO GUIDE
TO FIND MY WAY

BACK
ON SPLIT END PLACE

HOW IS IT TO
WALK ON THE LAND THAT
IS YOURS AND FEEL LIKE
AN OUTSIDER
WAITING FOR A GUIDE TO
SHOW YOU AROUND
LIKE A TOURIST
NO
LIKE A FOREIGNER
SOMEONE FROM THE OUTSIDE
BUT I AM AN INSIDER
OR AM I
NO

HOW IS IT TO
WALK ON THE LAND THAT
IS YOURS AND FEEL LIKE
AN OUTSIDER
FRINGE DWELLER ON THE SIDE
NOT ON THE BACK
NOT IN THE FRONT
NOT EVEN IN THE MIDDLE
NO BUT ON THE SIDE
NOT ON THE MARGIN
NO AT THE SIDE
LIMBO
AT THE SIDE
LIMBO
HOW IS IT TO
WALK ON THE LAND THAT
IS YOURS AND FEEL LIKE
AN OUTSIDER
There Is No Blessing In This Work
ON FORGETTING VERY WELL

What a day we had around Bandra and Juhu. We walked through roads that are mostly uneven, up and down sand in your feet; we walked for a distance the sound of tooting traffic in our ears, no rush, no agro, just a flow of traffic. I see people of many ages that seem to thrive with pride; an assurance of who they are – not Monhe no way.

There is a pride a self assertion that is contagious here, how long will it last after we go home?

The gigantic billboards around the city of Mumbai, ground the message in large letters ‘I Believe in Me’ a slogan that is common all over the place and grounded in frequent Television advertising, or ‘Women of Spirit’ and the leading one - ‘India poised our Time is Now’. The transference of these writings, or sayings or letters go beyond political rhetoric, to embody in a people a sense of pride jerking out hundreds of years of orientalist oratory. How I yearn for this feeling, I will not want to leave this sentiment behind, this outlook this emotion I have been looking for, and I remember what Jeje used to say – don’t forget you are proud Gauncars, but somehow the Portuguese history eroded that feeling in me. And somehow I began forgetting very well.
How can I recover, how can I re-present.

Here in India I distinguish in the young people’s eyes the feeling I had inside me as a child…

I walked this land with an assurance, with a conviction that I knew who I was. Now I understand a bit better what I lost. I have been back here for twenty-four hours, twenty-four hours and I have started to unfasten and unhook the tight grip, the weaving of their stereotypical history. Twenty-four-hours of severance from their images and I can breathe in my culture, my soul culture. I have forgotten so very well.

I had forgotten how it was not to have to use my ‘excuse me’ tongue not having to make allowances for their ignorance, no explaining to do. No teaching them how to ‘read’ me or to pronounce my name, even if it is an English name Audrey Mary Philomena, I have none of that negotiating to do. I know where I am heading, for the time being, but I tread softly. If I am Indian – not because of the colour of my skin, or my feelings to this country-land, then it’s more about the sameness of people, of not having to justify myself relentlessly as to why I am here. I must try to cling on to this, to not to fail to remember it again.

The question of belief always enters critical writing and perhaps never more urgently than when one’s subject resists vision and may not be “really there” at all. Like the fantasy of erotic desire which frames love, the distortions of forgetting which infect memories, and the blind spots laced through the visual field, (a believable image is the product of a negotiation with an unverifiable real). As a representation of the real the image is always, partially, phantasmatic. In doubting the authenticity of the image, one questions as well the veracity of she who makes and describes it. To doubt the subject seized by the eye is to doubt the subjectivity of the seeing “I” (Phelan, 1993 p.1).

**THIS IS THE OTHER SIDE OF DIASPORA, NO IT IS THE OTHER SIDE OF OPPRESSION OR BOTH. NOT REMEMBERING IS ANOTHER ASPECT OF BOTH, BUT ALSO IT OBSCURES THE FACT THAT AT SOME STAGE**
WE STOPPED TELLING OUR OWN STORIES, WE STOPPED REAFFIRMING OUR CULTURE, WE STOPPED SINGING AND DANCING AND SHOUTING AND EVEN CRYING. WE STOPPED MOURNING WHAT WE LOST. WE LET THEM TELL THEIR STORIES, WE DANCED AND SANG THEIR SONGS, WE STUDIED THEM, WE KNEW THEM BY HEART FORWARDS AND BACKWARDS AND EVEN IF THEY STOOD US ON OUR HEADS WE RECITED THEM LIKE PARROTS. MOST IMPORTANTLY WE LIVED THEIR STORIES AND WE NEVER FORGOT THEM.

ON NOT KNOWING

We have just visited an exhibition in the New Delhi National Gallery of artist B. Mukherjee, brilliant drawings. Why in western countries, when we study international artists, do we not study, see and learn about artists such as him?

As I continue to read from my diary, and write from my diary Spivak’s words come to mind:

In the broadest possible sense, most critical theory in my part of the academic establishment (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, the last Barthes) sees the text as that area of the discourse of the human sciences – in the United States called the humanities – in which the problem of the discourse of the human sciences is made available. Whereas in other kinds of discourses there is a move toward the final truth of a situation, literature, even within this argument, displays that the truth of a human situation is the itinerary of not being able to find it. In the general discourse of the humanities, there is a sort of search for solutions, whereas in literary discourses there is a playing out of the problem as the solution, if you like (Spivak, 1987. p. 77).
There Is No Blessing In This Work
ON RE-TURNING TO THE PLACE WHERE YOU WERE BORN

Where am I
Who am I
I stand here
My country

Like having a door
Opening
Having a door open
You are here
Frightened to enter
You are here
Not even frightened
Just numb inside, all over
And do not enter

It’s like being
In a queue
That goes nowhere
That neither moves
Or goes nowhere
Nothing happens

But this is your place
What place

I am nowhere and
Here
I will allow myself to
Be nowhere and
Here
To not be
Here
And present I am
Here
Not like a ghost
But like a line on the road
I am
Here

Once this was
Home
I am here
Once this was my
Universe
I am here
Now I am back in
This place
Need to find
A name to say
This place
A name to
Grab this
Feeling that
No one
Has called anything
It’s a black space
And a white space
No one has called
Anything

Sloping away
Back to nowhere

IT DOES NOT
FEEL LIKE HOME
EVEN IF EVERYONE LOOKS
LIKE ME
IT FEELS FAMILIAR IN
SOME WAYS
BUT NOT HOME BUT
THEN AGAIN
WHAT IS FEELING LIKE
HOME

ON REMEMBERING NOT SO VERY WELL

We arrived at the hotel in a taxi and went through a pair of old gates where two men were keeping guard. The taxi drives unevenly through the rocky entrance path that had surely seen to many monsoon rains run past. We stop and park at this large circular entrance with yellow painted flower beds built with round shaped rocks that are painted as pretend relief pineapples. The flower beds are scattered with palm like plants that are not doing so well, by
‘our’ standards, or they just look as if they are not doing so well mainly because they are covered with a fine coating of reddish dust, blown by the thousands of vehicles that rush past this main road. The symphony of tooting honks is slightly muffled now in this garden and the heat envelops me with a touch an embrace that is partly eminent from my own body, returning for the first time in fifty odd years to the locale where I was born. My eyes feel heavy with a weight I have carried for much too long. There are no tears.

We gather around the pineapples, I stroke them as if they are some kind of pet. I just want to touch this place, anything that is India, even if they are fake rock pineapples. I want to touch this whole country with my hand with the palm of my hand.

We wander to the reception area. I recognize a flower growing on a small plant with small leaf, a small leaf plant with a cerise flower with a small yellow centre.

In that single moment I knew I had come back. Where did I see this plant before. Why did I notice this plant now. I can remember it on the ground, near my feet as a child, a small plant weaving its way around, finding its roots, finding the best most comfortable place, not unlike us. I remember picking its petals in a game said not in English, but similar to the one that goes she-loves-me… she-loves-me-not.

Everything goes slowly like I remember… everything slowly passing by, I thought it was because I was a child and in no rush, no rush to go anywhere.

**ON SMELLING LIKE MY PLACE HOME**

We have come back at the end of the monsoon, it is dry, humid and hot but everything is greener now and things have grown around. The garden areas where we are staying are leafy and green, tendered by groups of people who endeavour to sweep and sweep and sweep all day. In the heat of the day, they lie on the floor of the pavements, on their sides and rest.
We walked up from Golf Links Colony to Khan Markets. We peered into the houses, all white with guards outside, gates locked. We passed a house that smelled like mine, it had a beautiful large *abobora* creeper, a pumpkin creeper growing all on one side of the fence. The fence itself was rendered in white, solid no see through, then the top opened with forged iron. The creeper grew over it. I tried to unearth the hidden memory of this creeper, why do I know it, I have wandered many times a midst-through a creeper like this, but I can’t remember plainly clearly where. I know the ‘heart’ shaped leaves larger, much larger than the palms of my hands and the delicate flower, yellow, then the soft tentacles reaching out rolled up over anything it could find, holding, holding on to everything it could possibly find but still growing almost wildly passionately.

I remember undoing their hold and entwining it over my fingers. Then putting them back again.

*It must have been a green place it must have been when I was playing as a child. It must have been somewhere, during, after the monsoon – but where and why. Memories are not good enough, not those to identify the plant species or leaf or flower, but the place space it created in my mind, a sweet smell a green smell of place. That I cannot name.*

At another time we will pass here again, maybe tomorrow maybe something about this smell, something will come back to me then. How can I know something about the fragrance of this plant so well but still cannot remember why or where.
There Is No Blessing In This Work
ON BEING A POET

I STARTED LISTENING TO A DISCUSSION ON THE RADIO NATIONAL ON WRITERS, PEOPLE WHO WRITE FICTION AND MOST IMPORTANTLY PEOPLE WHO WRITE POETRY. I THOUGHT I AM NOT A POET NOT LIKE THAT. BUT I WRITE KIND-OF-POEMS.

ON WALKING THROUGH THIS GARDEN

Gardens presuppose beauty and nature, in whatever way we want to interpret it… nature or beauty. Here in Vadodora the word garden takes on a different connotation and beauty may be explored or seen through the ruins and decay surrounding us everywhere. I recall living in a similar space, not as vile as this garden but degraded enough. Renovations that have gone terribly wrong, buildings that have gone terribly wrong… gardens that have gone terribly wrong, between the throngs of people that almost litter every single space this is a dishonoured existence in a dishonoured, desecrated sullied garden.

I still have to come to terms with the peering of people from everywhere, people watch your every move from the top of houses, from basements, to falling roofs and undergrounds, offices and flats that spill out onto the verges.

Verges, like gardens take on a different association, they are the subtext of this miserable space. There are no verges, in the sense that we know the term – as the space between the home and the street or the space /border between the private and the public. Here the verges enclose the make-shift structures of things of sorts, dwellings of the underprivileged, the places where the poor inhabit, mixed with
litter, litter and cows, old motorbikes, tuc-tucs, rubbish, rubbish; goats more rubbish pools of stagnant water, dogs and more rubbish.

The floods have come late, the locals say the rain should have gone by now. It has been abundant this year leaving a testimony of murky smelly pools of water on the side of the roads. The tuc-tuc we are travelling in rattles on; we are inebriated by the strong smell of petrol it produces every times the driver raves it up. We go down and up various holes, spraying more foggy water to the sides adding another layer of dirt to the verge that already resembles the ebbing of a river bed. They say it will most certainly rain tomorrow. As we move past I look at the people who live on the verge and think how they will live through another day of rain.

I have to remind myself that this is the monsoon rain, the winds that blew the Conquistadores back from turning around the Cape of Good Hope, from turning the corner near Cape Town. I have worshiped this wind; I have always believed this wind had kept India safe…
I’m not so sure now that I can see what happens here when the wind and rain come pouring down.

There is no sweet smell of rain water on the beaten earth like I remembered; snuggling in Nana’s lap on the front verandah, there is only the muffled cavernous smell of rot, rotten debris that overtakes the petrol smell coming from hundreds of moving tuc-tucs. The question pops in my mind – would I have noticed this had we always lived here? Would the sight of poor children churn the insides of my belly if I always lived here? Would the sight of diseased stricken animals churn the insides of my belly? And the women? I feel my insides sinking in fast. How did this get to this state and how can we accept this.

The garden of beauty is too far-away a concept … too far-a-way. The sublime does not exist here, it would be an atrocity to discuss the meaning of place, home, sublime in a landscape paved with misery and sorrow. No words can describe this reality. No pencil or
As the tuc-tuc moves around the city I kept peering out of the side. In the middle of the dust I noticed an overabundance of ornate sofas being delivered on this verge. These are not any sofas. The traffic stops and I have the time to look at them, strange ornate pieces carved from dark teak like wood, their cushions in brown velvet like material with gold embossing kind of embroidery which is additionally feathered with a gold braiding around the arms and legs. There are one seater standing on the verge and the delivery man is struggling with the double ones. A group of cows come up to them, sniff at them then keep wandering on, there are many of them.

The tuc-tuc runs past the bend and I keep peering, there are several seats on the other side, the man walks over and plumps up the cushions. I know I have also learnt to ‘peer’ very well.

Around the gilded sofas the city goes on in its anarchy of moving in all directions and staying the same, locked in time and decay.

Dust is around everywhere, slightly settled by the monsoon rains we witnessed yesterday. The city traffic is frantic everyone is going home wherever that is. I keep on writing, for now it seems the only thing to do.

Back at the hotel I keep on reading, making sense of Spivak’s book titled In Other Worlds:

The problem of human discourse is generally seen as articulating itself in the play of, in terms of, three shifting “concepts”: language, world, and consciousness. We know no world that is not organized as a language, we operate with no other consciousness but one structured as a language – languages that we cannot
There Is No Blessing In This Work
possess, for we are operated by those languages as well. The category of language, then embraces the categories of world and consciousness even as it is determined by them (Spivak, 1987 p.78).

ON BEING THIS OR THAT

It’s Aunty Babsy’s birthday today and she would normally be coming back to Australia at this time of the year. She used to like coming to India during the rains and would let pass the Australian winter. She used to say she could never ever cope with living in Europe, her bones could feel the cold. Once she left India she could never be happy elsewhere. She ended up moving along all the time. Even from house to house. She was never settled in India anymore and would grumble and curse the place when she was there, then feel homesick when she couldn’t get back. She was never settled in Australia and would grumble and curse the place, except when she was in India and would ring back homesick.

At times I avoided speaking of India as she would get quite melancholic, other times we would chat for hours talking about our family from Nana’s side. We disagreed on one issue – she would state that we were Anglo Indian and I would argue that I was Goan as I had three grandparents that were Goan and two dating back to tribal Gauncar Vaddo. Jeje, her farther had taught me that and to be proud of it. I know better now, not to argue. I know now that I am Anglo Indian in Aunty Babsy’s sense of the word and Goan in Jeje’s sense of the word and again Goan in all sense of the word. What matters now is what I make of it. I am here now and whatever I am, whoever I am the reality of poverty of this place now is more urgent and compelling then any of my issues.

How can I write about Diaspora from a place like this. It’s a hand to mouth thing, a visceral thing and I become misplaced.

The airplane is choc-a-block and we all are spread out. I sit next to two women who are from Goa but work in New Delhi and are making the trip
home for Christmas. It seems everyone has a family member who went elsewhere to work and never came back. They sometimes wonder how life may be for them and hope it’s a better one. Having stayed they know their roots, they tell me that I look like a Goan but when I started to speak they were a bit confused and couldn’t place me anywhere.

I told them I had many tongues.

They wanted to know everything I was writing about, voicing how important it was to them who had never left to hear my story. As we departed we embraced in the plane as if we were long lost family. Somehow it was the most important thing, to embrace another Goan woman who had always being here, and me a Goan woman who had always left, coming back for the first time in fifty odd years. We cried and we both seemed to know why.

There is no map no easy route to find our way back from colonisation.

ON NOT STAYING

Coming down the corridor from the elevator I look out of the window, expecting to have a peep at the two doves that have been hanging around the window sill. Our room is on the sixth floor and the city spreads out around. The haze has come back – it only left yesterday and the sun was shinning and we had a glimpse of a bluish sky.

This could be any city in the Middle East or so called ‘third world.’ It looks like what I imagine Afghanistan to look like – white derelict buildings, houses in a state of rubble, no gardens. I spot an odd pot plant on a concrete terrace, its not looking too good, clothes hanging in the heat and haze from single lines cris -crossing the
structures of windows, doors and terraces. Makes you wonder what they smell like when they are dry and how they are maintained in their crisp white colour that would be the envy of any Napisan advertising.

The buildings seem to collapse in disarray; some of them have never been finished to start with. The streets defy the central notion of a road _per se_, as the holes have become larger than the paved areas. Decay in decay.

The hotel is packed with people from all over the world; the majority have come on business as engineers and researchers attached to multi national companies exploring the boom the city is experiencing. We meet every day in the lush dining room. I asked them where was this economic boom and why did it seems not to filter down to the people? The waiters smile at me, hovering closer to listen to the discussion. Some of the patrons at the hotel have little idea of what the city looks like, shielded in their cars with tinted windows, they are driven up and down from factories and exploration sites. They fulfil their duties and in six months or a year are off again back home. They pay their dues, they say. They know about the poverty, but that was up to the Indian government.

This is the country I should call home, a country that has not managed its roads and kept its heritage buildings, and a country that has unanswered the children’s cries and has further restricted its women. This is a country of men. This cruel world of exploitation, I disown you and move away at the same time that I announce I have laid down roots here.

A SUDDEN MOVEMENT BELOW ATTRACTIONS MY ATTENTION. I AM STILL STANDING AT THE WINDOW SILL ON THE SIXTH FLOOR OF OUR HOTEL. IT IS A SOFT SWINGING MOTION OF A WOMAN IN A SWINGING CHAIR. SHE ROCKS HERSELF GENTLY AND EXERCISES HER ARMS IN WAVERING YOGA TYPE POSITIONS. THE
There Is No Blessing In This Work
GATE OPENS AND A MAN COMES IN, THEY SEEM TO BE IN CONVERSATION WHILE SHE CONTINUES TO PROCEED WITH HER EXERCISES, IN THIS DUSTY, HOT AND HAZY ATMOSPHERE. HER POISE AND PEACEFUL POSTURE SEEMS A NEGATION OF THE DEGRADED SURROUNDINGS AND THE BUSTLE OF TRAFFIC THAT FLOWS BY.

I HAVE ASKED BEFORE – WHAT WOULD MY LIFE HAVE BEEN LIKE IF WE HAD NEVER LEFT INDIA. I CRINGE TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION; I WOULDN'T WANT TO KNOW I CAN'T IMAGINE THE ANSWER. THIS IS TOO CONFRONTING NOW, TO EVEN CONSIDER THIS POSSIBILITY – I SEE A COUNTRY THAT NEGLECTS ITS CHILDREN, ITS WOMEN, THE WEAK, THE BUILDINGS, ITS ENVIRONMENT. EXPLOITATION IS RIFE AND PEOPLE JUST MAKE DO. DADA WAS RIGHT, WE COULDN'T STAY.

ON LEAVING AGAIN

We were ready to leave
Our bags were packed
We stepped on the gangplank
Between water and land
Between water and land we'd stay
Between water and land
For the rest of our lives
For the rest of our lives

What lives?
Bodies displaced.

Between land and water
There is no going back
Sem retorno.

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

THE KALA PANI

The ship smelt of fresh made coffee
The smell blew gently outside
Outside
I would come to know this smell well

I saw tears in her eyes
Like I’ve never seen before
Flowing like the ocean
Never again
And offering a tight embrace
I nestled in her lap
I promised not
Not to leave
Not to leave
Not to leave her
Never to leave her
Between water and land
I promised to remember her
She said they all walked past her as she hid beneath the Cardamom Tree. They walked past silently, herded like cattle going to the slaughterhouse. She said she could smell them; smell their fear, smell their anguish. Why did they go to nowhere? She said we will never know. History was not written their way, she said we will only know in our gut, in our spleen, in our liver. Only here could we know the deaf.

Footsteps drawn in black water.

The Kala Pani

She turned to me,
I knew that look in her eyes
Resolute, full of wisdom
You must go
She said
You must go
This is the last ship...

I never touched her again
Embraced her again
Or saw her again
Or laid my head on her lap again
On her sari
Or smelt her again
Or laid my head on her sari
Her lap
The smoke of fresh chapattis on her clothes...
But the smell of coffee lingers.

Sem retorno.

She said there was no going back, no going back. They were gone, only a handful ever returned. Ever came back. Why did they not ever return? She said we will never know. History...
There Is No Blessing In This Work
WAS NEVER WRITTEN THEIR WAY NO ONE KNOWS ONLY WE KNOW IN OUR BONES OUR SKIN OUR NAILS ONLY HERE COULD WE KNOW AND DEEP DOWN IN DEAF

FOOTSTEPS DRAWN IN THE KALA PANI

Destroying her smell
Destroying her smell
The smell of drops of rain
On her clothes
The bits of sari
Hems in my hand
No beads
No garnishing or sequins
No embellishment
Just a hem
Cloth on cloth
Turning the outside in

SHE SAID THOSE WHO CAME BACK CAME AS GHOSTS CAME AS SHADOWS HAUNTING THE LAND HAUNTING THE MOUNTAINS HAUNTING THE STREETS AND THE HOUSES THEY CAME LOOKING FOR DEAD MANS SHOES WHY DID THEY COME LOOKING FOR DEAD MANS SHOES?

I let go of her sari
And walk onto the gangplank
Between water and land
Between water and land
We would stay
Sem retorno.

SHE STAYED IN SILENCE

WE NEVER SPOKE AGAIN
ON BEING AT HOME IN THIS PLACE HERE

As I read the words of Aileen Moreton-Robinson, on diaspora and home she reminds us of the connection of re-grounding in Australia and the effects of migration.

The utility of postcolonialism lies in its ability to reveal the operations of counter-hegemonic discourses as produced by the dispersed, or diasporic, subject. However, for many it does so through a metaphor of migrancy that privileges the possitionalities, multiplicities and specificities of migration. In doing so it can say very little about the effects, or the possitionalities, multiplicities and specificities of Indigenous subjects (Moreton-Robinson, 2003 p.28).

Moreton-Robinson explains further:

Social constructions of home, place and belonging depend not just on ethnicity and ties to an imagined homeland. They are conditional upon a legal and social status as well as upon the economic and political relations in the new country and its imperial legacy (Moreton-Robinson, 2003 p.29).

I walk slowly here, here the ground is complicated by the tears that have been shed here, and words fail. This will be a lifetime project – to tread softly to tread gently. I don’t know what it is to live on one’s land and be disposed of it. Somehow I feel I am at a crossroads and need to find a way.

ON LOOKING FOR DEAD MAN SHOES

SHE SAID SHE STAYED OUTSIDE
SHE DIDN’T KNOW WHY
SHE HAD TO LOOK FROM THE OUTSIDE
SHE DIDN’T KNOW WHY

SHE FOUND THAT HER HOME
Was elsewhere
India here and there
She found that in
Her bones
She knew that
This had been home
Not for long
It was nineteen hundred and
Fifty something
The day they
Left
She didn’t know why

Why did they leave
She said they will
Never know
Dreams dreams dreams dreams

She said she stayed
Outside
She didn’t know why
Looking for dead man shoes
She didn’t know why
She had
To look
From the outside

The chiko tree stood
Inside the gate
Standing leaning
Like a symbol of

Hope
There Is No Blessing In This Work
A flourishing life
That was present
Here
Much ahead of
The time that
She
Was born here
She saw the roots

Growing

Through the
Thick soil

NOBODY KNOWS
WHY
SHE IS AN OUTSIDER
HERE
IN THE LAND
OF HER
BIRTH
SHE IS AN

OUTSIDER LOOKING IN

A grunt came out of
Her body
A loud rumble Primordial
Unhuman
A sound
That
Had been
Imprisoned
Within her
For half a
century

She didn’t know why

Her body shook
From
Inside
Like in a convulsion
From inside
Her core moved
The skin on her body
Fighting struggling
To contain the
Jerky wave of
Turmoil movements
Fighting to maintain
Calmness
Fighting back the
Screaming from
Inside
Unhuman sounds
Coming from
Her body
Visceral sounds
Flooding

Her body
Tears drop from her eyes flowing in pain they were not black indigo like the kala pani they were full of rage and pain she just kept walking away on and on. She kept on thinking Why did we have to leave why did we have to go to somewhere nowhere elsewhere.

NOBODY KNOWS

SHE KNOWS
There
Is
No
Blessing
In
This
Work
References


