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The screen as a site of division and encounter

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At the University of Northampton

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Acknowledgments

When I received a bursary to start my research in 2007, I was a little overwhelmed and yet thrilled by the topic -“Screen as a site of interdisciplinary research”. As the Committee explained to me, it was a broad topic and I would need to shape it and give personal meaning to it through my artistic practice. Perhaps this was not the only reason why everything seemed so daunting at that point. On the same day that I received the email about my bursary, I did a pregnancy test, which turned out to be positive. I sat with the blue line strip next to the computer screen, desperately rereading the email and trying to compose my emotions. I silently comforted myself that it must be destiny or some higher power that both of these wonderful things had come together. Finally, I burst into tears, from happiness and unbearable anxiety. This split feeling stayed with me throughout my research years and caused the turbulence that shaped my work as it is now. My working method reflects this split, the relationship between my practice, the theory and my reflective writing. All of this is shaped and influenced by the constant tension between polarities that make me researcher and artist, woman and mother, foreigner and nomad.

That is the exact reason why my first and biggest thank you goes to my beautiful daughters Angelina and Marina, who were really patient and understanding when I was distracted with my practical work and writing. You are my inspiration!

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Prelude or How to read this thesis

Before entering this thesis, I would like to offer advice on how to navigate the different terrains and voices that are interwoven throughout this work. Working on practice-based research for a period of four years demands handling of materials, which are different in their nature, but are also so interconnected that they twist themselves around the body of the researcher, lingering in every aspect of life. I never managed to put my research aside for my family and my professional life. This has been both a blessing and an incredible burden. The resulting shape of this research therefore stems from these complicated relationships, and bares a strong resemblance to this real life assemblage. I have created navigational signs in order to make the pathways clearer and the connections visible. It is a landscape interwoven with personal stories, letters, diary entries, theoretical ideas, and practical explorations. However, most of all, it is a constant process, a material in flux.

I dwelt for a long time on the most appropriate form in which to present this process. Should I create a DVD, an interactive PDF file, a map, an exhibition, a performance?¹ My choice became evident as the research approached its end and when I hit the limitations of the current guidance of how a PhD thesis can be submitted in the current academia (although I am grateful to the IT and Library Research staff who were extremely helpful and supportive of the different formats that I suggested). This research was created about the screen, for the screen and on the screen; therefore maintaining a strong screen presence was a logical response. Moreover, the form was ever shifting, requiring a format that would also shift, that was not permanent, but constantly changing, almost alive. In an ideal situation, this thesis will be submitted as an

¹ It is important to note that in contrast to other academic disciplines the creative PhD allows for the submission of practice that might include works of art, design, reflective documentation and audio-video material amongst other artifacts. The term practice-based (or practice-led) has evolved from this specific approach. This practice is usually submitted with supporting written documentation varying in length that acts as a contextual framework. Most recently Katz (Katz in Andrews et al 2012: 391) refers to website thesis submission as an “innovative hypermedia” work and states that in comparison with other forms of electronic submission they are the most different. But there are few issues that are still questioning this format, particularly in relation to the longevity of a website submission and its potentially unstable dissemination within the geography of the Internet.

EPUB file². This wasn't possible, so in order to navigate smoothly between the visual material and the text, you will be pointed to the appropriate links in the text that will take you to the specific section of the visual material that is conceptually discussed. Furthermore, you will be able to go back and forth between the text and the images/videos at your own pace. Unfortunately, the academic criteria for thesis submission are still limited to much older formats, like CD or DVD, accompanying the written printed, bound element. Consequently, the web page accompanying this format was the most advanced and appropriate format on the list.

Hence, I created a web page that accompanies the writing in front of you and you will be directed to it by clear signing throughout the written element. When you read the bound thesis, navigating the written element through a map of signs will require a constant shift between the electronic screen and the written page. However, if you are interested to follow chronologically the development of my research, you can access my blog screenassite.wordpress.com (I am establishing few links between the web and the blog myself, to make this connection more obvious). The blog was used to share ideas with my supervisors and also as a diary, to document the progress of my practical work. While blogs tend to be heavily text-oriented, this research blog also includes images (still and moving) and links to other blogs, webpages and media-related content. For Geert Lovink, blogging is neither a project nor a proposal but an *a priori* condition of existence (Lovink in Cooley 2007:105). The blog created for this research was exactly that, crucial element of my process, where thoughts and ideas were shared and embodied into precise concepts (more about the concept and the use of blog as constitutive element of my research can be found on p.67).

These different pages and domains (the web and the blog) hold my work in a space that accepts failure and could disappear at any given point.³

² **EPUB** (short for **electronic publication**) is a free and open e-book standard by the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF). Files have the extension *.epub*.

³ According to Mark Nunes failures, glitches, mistakes, and misfires that appear in new media context, suggest a creative potential outside of purpose: a potential we might call a "poetics of noise" (2011:13.)

The web site <http://screenassite.prosite.com/> integrates different media forms – including video, photography, writing, and drawing – in a linked multi-directional format in which montage and juxtaposition play a fundamental role in the construction of sense making. It is my hope that this form foregrounds the presence of the viewer/reader/user in the construction of meanings and resonances, and in the notion of apprehension as a form of knowledge.

The web page is divided into eight sections that correspond to different sections in the written thesis. These are the names of the sections and you can navigate them in no particular order:

1. Walking
2. Shadows
3. Reflections
4. Gaps
5. Lines
6. Valid until...
7. Hotel Makedonija
8. Stitch.

Each section represents a different stage in my practical exploration, from early exploration of different media tools, topics and screen technologies (Walking and Shadows) to structured work that follows the process, but is also concisely assembled to deliver a message to the audience (Valid until and Stitch). Each section of the web page has a visual marker that is emulated in the written text. This will prompt you to visually explore the material that is theoretically and reflectively presented in the text.

I thought this was an appropriate place to briefly mention that there are multiple layers of writing styles and voices in both the written text and the web page. First of all, there is the academic voice that is analytical and critical and pays attention to detail. You can further encounter the autobiographical voice, that is present in my diary entries and the letters addressed to my daughters. Finally, the reflective voice, that is interwoven throughout the text in order to make sense and balance between the previous two distinct and distant styles. The reader can recognise this layer because it is written in italic.

Glossary

MSD – Mobile Screening Devices

PaR – Practice as research

NSK – Neue Slowenische Kunst, Slovenia based artistic collective

ANT – Actor Network Theory

The screen as a site of division and encounter

Abstract

This study is a practice-based exploration of the screen as a border site, where the concepts of division and encounter are performatively examined. My research strategy is shaped by applying autoethnographic performance strategies to the mediated space of the screen. Media materials (photos, videos and blog entries) are created with mobile media devices used in performative situations, offering a theoretical framework originating in practice.

The main argument is that the screen is an assemblage site, where the notions of division and encounter can be artistically explored. Furthermore, the screen is explored as an object, as a metaphor and as an idea. By linking the Latour notion of “assemblage” with Colley’s exploration of the personal use of mobile screens (“autobiometry”), and Ettinger’s notion of “borderspace” as site of artistic encounter, the practices presented in this thesis are located in a field that blurs the boundary between the personal and art; autobiography and autoethnography; technology and identity. In so doing, this thesis expands on previous explorations such as “boundary event” (*Trinh T. Minh-ha* 1999); “soft mastery” (Turkle 1995); and “screen-reliant art” (Moldoch 2010;).

In the performative media materials created for this thesis, the screen is explored through a “processual approach” (Bacon, 2006). This enabled me to examine the nature of interaction with the screen through embodied reflexive practice. This approach firmly places the work in the experiential or performative realm.

Key practices that are discussed in this thesis include among others, an earth body performative project by Ana Mendieta (Cuba/USA) entitled *Siluetas* series (1973-1980), a live art work by Tanja Ostojic (Serbia/Germany) called *Looking for a husband with EU passport* (2000-2005) and my own performative media pieces, *Valid until...* (2010) and *The place where we were last together* (2011).

The screen, the page, the window

“Aesthetic and politics go together. The tendency to separate and divide is always looming large. What seems intolerable to the world of consumerism is the product whose workings retain an awareness of the conditions of its own birth.”

Trinh T.Minh-ha (2005:206)

The work presented in this thesis is interdisciplinary in nature, placing itself between knowledge traditions that have historically worked in parallel. This thesis is a practice-based exploration and follows an academic practice-as-research methodology, which uses creative processes as research methods. My practice-as-research methodology is shaped by applying autoethnographic performance strategies (Bacon 2010, Heddon and Howells 2011) to the mediated space of the screen. Artistic outcomes and the media materials (photos and videos) are created and documented with mobile media devices used in performative situations, thus offering a theoretical framework originating in practice.

The aim of my practice has been to capture the reflection of a moment, to see the reflection on the screen and to articulate how it has affected my practice. The focus of my practice has been the exploration of the screen as a border site, where the notions of division and encounter can be artistically assembled.

Through my practice, I have explored the screen as border site not only as the researcher but also as a woman in this borderland space. I refer to it as the ‘border’ since that is how I experience this transitional process through my body. It constitutes a border as a division, a line, a marking point, a space for articulating the difference between. The intention was to explore in depth the borders that I have to cross continually in my everyday life and how they are articulated through mobile screening devices. In this process I was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways can the screen be a site for exploration, performance and reflection on questions concerning divisions, borders and identity?

2. In what ways can the screen be used as a site to explore, perform and reflect on questions concerning encounter, motherhood and identity?
3. How to critically analyse the screen both as an object and a metaphor?

Autoethnographic performative media and writing have been used as methods in the exploration of these questions, to enhance this challenge and create the screen as a site for reflection which is interrelational, multiple, and always under construction. According to Freeman, in a research context, autoethnography implies experiential knowledge, containing not only the period of the study in question but also the interweaving of past and present knowledge (2010:182). The use of autoethnographic strategies enabled me to present an individual perspective, and to make connections to a more collective understanding. There were three major stages in my practical exploration in which the question of border was explored on screen.

1. *Microprojects on walking and waiting* (2009) was a performative media piece where the relationship between the body, the dividing identities (foreigner and mOther) and the mobile phone screen, were performed and documented. The focus was wide, and this was an exploration of the research territory.
2. *Valid until...* (2010) was an online mobile media piece, focused on the relationship between my foreignness, the physical borders that I have to cross and the screen that becomes a divider, a physical line in the space that has to be crossed. The notions of division, the line and the screen as object were performatively explored with mobile phone devices.
3. *The place where we were last together* (2011), a media installation focused on the relationship between my role as mother, the internal cultural borders that I have to cross everyday and the screens (curtains and windows) that provide encounter between the different cultures. The notions of encounter and the screen as a metaphor were performatively explored.

In my practice as research, I have combined Latour's concept of the body as an assemblage (2004), Bacon's (2006) processual approach and Colley's (2005) autobiometry. They enabled me to create process-oriented work that redefines

the approach to the screen, from the purely visual object, into performance praxis, which requires constant reflection and self-exploration from the artist. In my field review, I expand on the range of practices considered by previous literature on the screen. Further, I raise issues in relation to the connections of subjectivity (autoethnography), border, the screen and the performativity. The ability to articulate this in layers of writing styles throughout this thesis was a conscious and difficult decision. The border-space may be experienced and imagined in many different ways, so that means that the personal narrative of the border crossing can be considered as a key moment in the construction of the meanings in this study. The border-place is a threshold in my life and the levels of narration of this experience bring into evidence my self-reflexivity, and forms of belonging, both achieved and imagined.

Theoretically, this research project dwells in liminal spaces, in different fields. One of these is feminist media studies (Trinh Minh-Ha 1987, Cooley 2008, Parks 2009, Mondloch 2010,), which has predominantly developed in resistance to the progress in mainstream media. A further field is radical performance studies (Conquergood 1985, 1991, 2002, Heddon et al. 2009), which focuses on body-based disciplines mainly operating outside of academia and originating from experimental body art performance and autobiographical performance. This liminal theoretical landscape, explored through the screen, provided a starting point for comparison of the varied practical approaches in the studies of media and performance. This research is first and foremost an intimate exploration of my internal landscape and as such reveals a deep political commitment to early feminist values (Hanisch 1970, Wilding 1973, Pollock 2004). Though deeply involved in the personal landscape, my practical exploration goes beyond investigation into one's solely private life. My work is not divorced from any collective effort or public act and goes on to name this personal focus as political. On this note, this study contributes towards the narrow field of feminist performance research concerned with the politics of the screen and its performative and somatic values.

Diary entry, Day 4

Chicago, winter 2003. At a friend's baby shower party. It is the first winter day, snow and wind, it is absolutely freezing outside. Standing next to a woman that I just met, waiting for our guest of honour to come. I hardly know anyone at this party, moreover it is my first experience of a baby shower. She tries to understand where Macedonia is, I try to explain what I am doing here. And there she is, gutted by the snow, in a long greyish, old coat probably borrowed from her husband, Her hair is soaking wet, and her face is pale from the cold. She enters shivering with a hesitant smile, her belly popping the buttons of the coat.

A man from the far end of the room, apparently half drunk and out of place in this whole "embrace the feminine" situation yells at her.

"Oh, there she is! Ann with that bump you look like an Eastern European woman. Like a female version of Tom Hanks in that movie...What was the name..."

And bursts out in loud laughter.

She smiles back at him, puzzled by the comment, and then her gaze is frozen on my face. Her lips move in a whisper:

"Sorry".

I just wave my hand...

The woman next to me asks:

" So Macedonia was in Eastern Europe? "

I nod with my head, starring at my shadow, thinking to myself:

"Can you tell that I am Eastern European? "

1.1 . Research strategy

My approach to the topic "Screen as a site" is quite intimate, draws heavily on personal exploration and is process orientated. I never intended to create a product at the end of the research and was inspired by the early feminist strategies of transforming the personal into the political through analytical discussion and small actions. Or as Hanisch puts it: "It is at this point a political

action to tell it like it is, to say what I really believe about my life instead of what I've always been told to say" (1970). While the intended audiences are Practice-as-Research scholars, this work will also be of interest to researchers who are exploring the screen in relation to body/dance practices, social scientists and those interested in the social underpinning of human-computer interaction.

Bellow you will find three key aspects of my research strategy. My research strategy is based on an overarching process of practice-based research through art. It has explanatory value within the feminist performance and media studies community in the context of challenging the notion of the screen. Having created a series of intimate, screen-reliant performances over a period of four years, an autoethnographic processual strategy was selected to analyse and build upon this work. This approach enables autobiographical writing and a rich variety of somatic techniques to be explored, documented and assessed during the creative process of artistic exploration. Analysis of various artists work paired with the autoethnographic process, allowed for a development of cumulative, comparative knowledge and development of a rich theoretical framework.

Below you will find just an overview of what theoretical aspects have influenced my decisions. However, further down in later chapters, you will find more reflective and theoretical discussions on the chosen methods and how I have adapted them to my own means.

1.1.1. Practice as research

Practice-as-research (PaR) originating in the United Kingdom, can be traced back as far as the 1960s, as part of a wider international trend to recognise methods of creative enquiry that would be as valid as established scholarly research methodologies. This trend is committed to activity (rather than structure), process (rather than product), action (rather than representation) and reflexivity (rather than self-consciousness). Practice as research in a performance context, is thought of as "research through performance practice, to determine how that practice may be developing new insights into or knowledge about the forms, genres, uses, etc. of performance" (Kershaw in

Piccini, 2003:193). According to Kershaw's most recent writing " PaR indicates the uses of practical creative processes as research methods (and methodologies) in their own right, usually not exclusively in, or in association with, universities and other HE institutions" (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011:64). The status of PaR is continuously challenged by assumptions surrounding the relative status of text-based knowledge-production and other types of knowledge-production (e.g. sensory, embodied knowledge) and continuing assumptions in the specific disciplines about the relationships between text-based and other types of knowledge production (Piccini, 2003:195). Despite these contradictions, there is one common element that brings the PaR quality to the surface: project methods, no matter how different and varied they are, "make specific sense of very common properties [] its methods always involve the dislocation of knowledge itself" (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011:84).

In this thesis, I am using a practice as research methodology that relies on Latour's concept of body as assemblage (2004) and this helps to shape a solid, consistent, autoethnographic research methodology.

In my process I have deliberately focused on mobile screen devices as a tool and I will be addressing mobile smart phones specifically as a device that integrates mobility and visual expression. The mobile phones are used as tools for documenting the performative autoethnographic exploration. In a research context, autoethnography implies experiential knowledge, containing not only the period of the study in question, but the interweaving of past and present knowledge. The use of this methodology was the right choice for my research since it goes beyond the simple narrative of one's experience and places the personal exploration in a wider social and historical context. However, I am aware that within the PaR field, especially within performance studies, the term autoethnographic remains contested. Whilst there is a forceful argument for giving autoethnography critical credence in this field, the absence of objective voice is sometimes used as a criticism. Although according to De Marinis, a methodology based on autoethnography is ultimately equally a guarantee of the truth of experience than any other:

The document...is the result, above all, of an assemblage, whether conscious or unconscious, of the history, the time and the society which have produced it, and also of the ensuing periods through which it has

continued to be used, even if perhaps in silence...in the end, there is no documentary truth. Every document is a lie.

(De Marinis in Freeman, 2010:183)

1.1.2. Field review (contextual analysis)

This thesis looks at practitioners who use the screen as a site for division and possible encounter. It expands on the existing feminist knowledge, interventions and strategies that use the personal as political, and explores the niche of work that uses the screen both as a means of expression, and a metaphor for the unspoken. For the elaboration of the notion of the screen as a site of division and encounter, twelve art practitioners were studied. All the works studied were performed between 1976 and 2010, and were selected from a longer list of practitioners that meet at least one, if not all of the following three criteria:

- Use the screen as a site to explore and reflect on questions concerning divisions, borders and identity.
- Use the screen as a site to explore and reflect on questions concerning encounter, motherhood and identity.
- Use the screen both as an object and a metaphor.

The contextual analysis was addressing both formal and iconographic elements in the chosen practice - starting from the subject matter through the relationship between image and form. I concentrated on specific medium and form of performance art that emphasises process over product. I was also interested in various compositional elements and unifying principles that different artists' use in their work that make the subject matter stand out.

1.1.3. Performative reflective writing – auto-ethnographic strategy

The autoethnographic, performative writing employed in the thesis is about the gendered politics of my experiences of simultaneously becoming a mother, researcher and foreigner. My “twin” relationship of simultaneously birthing research outcomes and a baby has given me new insight into the gendered

politics that surround not just the performance of my mothering, but also my whole experience in performing the role of a researcher. I experiment with the tropes of (her)story in the writing of this encounter to highlight the intertextuality of the discourse that surrounds my journey. Although I am clearly the protagonist, I guide the reader to determine the presence or absence of an antagonist, and to discover whether the central character prevails over her fears and doubts. Feminism is part of my everyday life performance, the lens through which I view both my own and others' actions.

With this in mind, I share some of the moments that shattered my perceptions of who I was and who I am, as a new mother, researcher and foreigner. In this case, according to Russell, autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point when the understanding prevails that the artist's personal history is implicated in larger social formations and historical processes. As argued further by Russell: "Identity is no longer a transcendental or essential self that is revealed, but a 'staging of subjectivity' – a representation of the self as a performance. The subject 'in history' is rendered destabilised and incoherent, a site of discursive pressures and articulations" (1999:276). These intimate stories were generated through somatic exploration of the complex web of relations between creative practice-led research and the bodily-felt and experienced implications of social and cultural locations (Bacon 2010:63). The reflective, performative writing that the reader will encounter through the theoretical discourse of this thesis, extends my understanding about how I know/feel/sense/intuit what I want to create and who the 'I' is that does this knowing/feeling/sensing/intuiting. In addition, it links clearly to the feminist practices of writing or as Cixous underlines in her remarkable essay "*The Laugh of Medusa*":

I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies -for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Women must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement.

(1976:875)

1.2 Key terms / words

In this section I will introduce the three key terms that are used in this thesis and how I am positioning my research in the present knowledge about their interrelationship. I will reflect on the theoretical framework surrounding the use of screen, border and personal as political concepts in my practical exploration. I believe that before I proceed with this, I need to explain the socio-political context that shaped the current format of this thesis and influenced most of my choices over the past four years.

This thesis was conducted and the creative exploration developed during a time of immense crises (2008-2012). Politically, over the past four years, the Western world has experienced a double dip recession, the return of the conservatives in almost every developed country, rigid immigration policies, the rapid expansion of nationalistic rhetoric and the reintroduction of patriarchal family values. I could not remain ignorant of the fact that the developed world is tightening its belt by blatantly dedicating my research to high profile artistic work, which is granted funding simply because it supposedly expands the values of the democratic world through technology. I could not ignore the work of an increasing number of artists who openly criticise the use of screen technology for control and the reinforcement of conservative values. It seemed quite escapist to remain involved purely with work that deals with cutting edge screen based technology and I could not fully support my involvement in that. Perhaps then this is the place to say that this thesis is not about the interactive properties of screen-based technology, nor does it look at the screen as a site for interaction, augmentation or virtualization. Furthermore, this is not a study of software or hardware and I am not interested in the commercial properties of the screen-based technology itself, or in how it is used in the USA or Japan.

I myself come from a country that has undergone an enormous transition in the last 20 years: politically, socially and economically.⁴ I could not persuade myself

⁴ Macedonia officially celebrates 8 September 1991 as Independence day, with regard to the referendum endorsing independence from Yugoslavia, albeit legalising participation in a future union of the former states of Yugoslavia. Robert Badinter as the head of the Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on the former Yugoslavia recommended EC recognition

to stay silent, coming as I have from a background of political turmoil and ambiguous international involvement; from a country always on the fringes of Europe. Or as Marina Grznic sums it up:

For European viewer, spectator and observer, the oriental, no matter how layered and powerful, is always connected to exoticism, surprise, and perplexity. Just as Eastern Europeans are seen as a brotherhood community of sex and killing, Asians and Africans are often seen through stereotypes of kinship, small paternal communities and situations of voiceless. We, Eastern Europeans, no matter how near or far from the East, are perceived through a vast array of misinterpretations regarding the blood, sex, and oppression. Why not force the viewer to enter the seraglio-not cinema verite, but the cinema boudoir.

(Grznic, 2001:197)

As described, this is a common problem in Eastern Europe but it is not isolated to just this region and remains outside geo-political categorisation. Furthermore, by reflecting on this problem summarised by Grznic, I am steering away my research from nostalgic exploration of Eastern European identity. Instead, the performative practice element of this research employs Svetlana Boym's distinction between reflective and restorative nostalgias, elaborated in her analysis of post-communist urban cultures: "If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym in Heddon et al, 2009:11). Reflective nostalgia positions the individual on a flexible historical trajectory and it constantly challenges the elusive destination called "home". Autoethnographic performative media and writing have been used in this research to enhance this

in January 1992. Macedonia became a member state of the United Nations on April 8, 1993, eighteen months after its independence from Yugoslavia. It is referred to within the UN as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", pending a resolution of the long-running dispute with Greece about the country's name. Macedonia remained at peace through the Yugoslav wars of the early 1990s. However, it was seriously destabilised by the Kosovo War in 1999, when an estimated 360,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo took refuge in the country. Although they departed shortly after the war, soon after, Albanian radicals on both sides of the border took up arms in pursuit of autonomy or independence for the Albanian-populated areas of Macedonia. A civil war was fought between government and ethnic Albanian insurgents, mostly in the north and west of the country, between March and June 2001. The war ended with the intervention of a NATO ceasefire monitoring force. Under the terms of the Ohrid Agreement, the government agreed to devolve greater political power and cultural recognition to the Albanian minority. The Albanian side agreed to abandon separatist demands and to fully recognise all Macedonian institutions. In addition, according to this accord, the NLA were to disarm and hand over their weapons to a NATO force.

challenge and create the screen as a site for reflection, which is interrelational, multiple, and always under construction.

1.2.1. An approach to the screen as site

Since the very beginning, the main focus in this research has been on the screen as a potent visual object. The practical research focused on the layers that the screen offers as an immaterial object. The screen is an object that is constantly present and rendered invisible at the same time. In the beginning of my research, I was convinced that I would look at the interactive qualities of the screen, but as my research progressed, the gaps in knowledge about how and by whom the screen is used in performance art and fine art contexts became quite evident. Research into how the screen has been shaped and reshaped, used and misused by contemporary women artists in the field, is almost non-existent. In addition, how the screen is used as a site for reflective practice remains a question as yet unanswered. Even though high profile screen-based technology projects have drawn major attention and funding (for example: *Skinput*⁵; *Processing*⁶), the screen itself has remained an untapped resource in terms of how it reflects who we are at any given moment.

The screen in this research is elaborated on both as a site of division and a site of possible encounter. Furthermore, it is explored as an object, as a metaphor and as an idea. The main argument is that the screen is an assemblage site, where the notions of division and encounter can be artistically explored.

In the digital culture, the geophysical space on a screen is reduced almost to zero; the landscape closes in on the viewer's body. This is a phenomenon that has happened over time as a result of technology. Video and mobile media

⁵ *Skinput* is a technology that appropriates the human body for acoustic transmission, allowing the skin to be used as an input surface. This approach provides an always available, naturally portable, and on-body finger input system.

⁶ *Processing* is an open source programming language and environment for people who want to create images, animations, and interactions. Initially developed to serve as a software sketchbook and to teach the fundamentals of computer programming within a visual context, *Processing* has also evolved into a tool for generating finished professional work.

technology invite immobility while at the same time promoting mobility. Space is experienced as a temporal activity. I have tried to reverse this trajectory and have used the Massey definition of space as “the dimension of multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (2005:24). The screen is used as a layering site through which one can enter the unexpected depths of even the most mundane places experienced by me as a practitioner. The screen is used to enter the places as a living palimpsest. Or as Biggs argues:

We enter in one of two ways: either by living in a place as an inhabitant or by moving through it as an attentive traveller. Either process involves us in engaging with multiple temporal and spatial dimensions, in understanding both human and natural activity. Our entry is finally achieved only through the marriage of many kinds of knowledge and experience.

(2004: unpaginated)

However, the feminist media scholars’ challenge the dominant view on how the screen can be viewed (Turkle 2007; Balsamo 2011). Following this, I look at screens in a more subjective, evocative way. I am concerned with the term ‘screen’ and with the different layers that come from its etymology⁷. Is the screen sheltering or reveling? Turkle writes in “*What Makes An Object Evocative?*” (2007: 307), that screen can be used as bricolage, a style of working in which one manipulates a closed set of materials to develop new thoughts. Or assemblage, as Latour puts it, is how the screen becomes defined through the way it is connected to material practices, human and non-human, thus articulating its potentiality. In my practice, I look beyond the screen as an object of digital media, and explore the non-linear female approach to screens or “soft mastery” as defined by Turkle (2005) (as opposed to the “hard mastery” of linear, abstract thinking and computer programming). Turkle evocatively questions:

Why is it so hard to turn away from the screen? The windows on my

⁷ The word *screen* – as in *the screen-based media* and its plural form *screens, the screens of the digital media* – has become a crucial word in the cultural, social, technological and economic landscape of communication. The word has a long history in English, In Skeat’s *Etymological Dictionary* (1963[1879–82]), *screen* is given two definitions and three broad meanings: ‘that which shelters from observation, a partition’; and also ‘a coarse riddle or sieve’. The comma in the first definition seems to make light of the distinction between *sheltering from observation* and *providing a partition*.

computer desktop offer me layers of materials to which I have simultaneous access. []There is something else that keeps me at the screen. I feel pressure from a machine that seems itself to be perfect and leaves no one and no other thing but me to blame.

(2005:29)

On the other hand, for Grosz the technology is that which ensures and continually refines the ongoing negotiations between bodies and things, the deepening investment of the one, the body, in the other, the thing. The thing for Grosz goes by many names. Indeed in her opinion the very label, “the thing,” is only a recent incarnation of a series of terms which have an illustrious philosophical history: the object, matter, substance, the world, noumena, reality, appearance, and so on. While things produce and are what is produced by the activities of life, things themselves are the object and project not only of the living but also of the technological. The technology should be oriented not so much to knowing and mediating, as to experience and the rich indeterminacy of duration (Grosz 2001:182). Instead of merely understanding the thing and the technologies it induces through intellect, perhaps an acquaintance with things through intuition can be developed by employing the artist’s body as a screen.

1.2.2. An approach to the border as encounter

Women artists and theorists have explored the borderspace and how it is constructed through the body on many occasions with the use of technology (Fusco 1987; Ostojic 2000-2005; Mendieta 1973-1980; Landau 2000). The practical exploration has focused on what it means to be a woman and researcher in this borderland space. I refer to it as the ‘border’ since that is how I experience this transitional process through my body. It constitutes a border as a division, a line, a marking point, a space for articulating the difference between and dismissal of unconditional belonging. I explore in depth the borders that I have to cross continually in my everyday life and how they are articulated through mobile screening devices.

For Ettinger, the borderspace is not a boundary, a limit, an edge, a division. It is, instead, a space shared between different subjects who, while they can

never know each other, can, nonetheless, affect each other and share, each in different ways, a single event. Ettinger's borderspace relates closely to what Anzaldua describes as "borderland". She states:

The actual physical borderland that I am dealing with [] is the US/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.

(Anzaldua, 1987: Preface)

She is eloquent in her analysis of the psychological, the sexual and the spiritual borderland and I would add that technological borderlands could also be included. Particularly the screen as a border territory because as Anzaldua continues: "living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien' element. It is living in the shadows, living being constantly divided" (1987:19).

The process of marking, of dividing has in fact formed my identity. I come from a country that is divided. As long as I can remember, people around me have spoken about divisions, splits and marks lingering from the process of discontinuity. I come from a country that has a divided name. And perhaps that accounts for my body always feeling fragmentary, trapped in liminal spaces. Naturally I question the form that a border takes, trying to challenge its accessibility, permeability and potential as a contact and communication zone. This comes from my experience of an actual border as the boundary line between two states; one which has a concrete location and a set of geographic attributes. In reality, however, it is a far more complex and nebulous entity, traversed on both sides, with a constant leakage of hostile bodies, never able to sustain the separations and protect the inhabitants in the way that its huge political mobilization set out to do (Rogoff, 2000:136). For Braidotti, being nomadic, homeless, an exile, a refugee, an itinerant migrant, an illegal immigrant, is not a metaphor. There are highly specific geo-political and historical locations; it is history tattooed on the human body. One may be

empowered or beautified by it, but most people are not; some just die of it (Braidotti, 2002:3). In contrast, for Anzaldua:

borders are set up to define places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.

(Anzaldua, 1987:3)

This goes hand in hand with what Trinh Minh-Ha describes as “boundary events” when she talks about her work process. For Trinh Minh-Ha, boundaries signal endings and beginnings at the same time; “there where one stops to exit is also there where one stops to enter anew” (2005:207). Boundary events are situated at the edge of many doubles, where thinking is acting on both sides. What comes out also comes in, what reaches great depths also travels great distances.

In addition to this, Francis Alys contemplates the poetic/political. Alys writes that it is in fact important to spread stories and to generate situations that can provoke (through their experience) a sudden unexpected distancing from the immediate situation, questioning assumptions about the way things are, and opening up a different vision of the situation, as if from the inside. He adds:

I think the artist can intervene by provoking a situation in which you suddenly step out of everyday life and start looking at things again from a different perspective-even if it is just for an instant. That may be the artist’s privilege, and that’s where his field of intervention differs from that of a NGO or a local journalist. Society allows (and maybe expects) the artist, unlike the journalist, the scientist, the scholar or the activist, to issue a statement without any demonstration: this is what we call poetic license.

(Alys, 2010:39)

Thus taking a firm position on the relationship between the “personal” and the “political” becomes imperative.

1.2.3. An approach to personal as political

It was 1980 and I was only two, but it is amazing how clearly I remember the death of Josip Broz Tito. It is a patchy series of emotional events, engraved in my memory, reinforced by constant repetition by my parents. It is 4 May 1980

and we are having an early lunch in my grandparents' house. I recall the sirens, the sudden silence in the room, and the hot tears on my grandmother's face, pressed against my cheeks. Then the laughter that filled the room after I tried to produce tears and copy the rest of my family. It is a fond memory, but also, for me marks the beginning of the end. It marks the transition from a tranquil society arranged to make everyone happy, to insecurity, sadness and the constant presence of death in the air. This cherished personal moment of honest laughter overlaps with a political turning point and somehow in my life these two things have never gone their separate ways. I was an innocent child and unaware of the historical political context which was unfolding. Today, we look towards the Balkans and we witness the sad results, a politics ignorant of its own psychology, its mirror, its shadow, a politics blind to the Other, deaf to dissent, desensitised to fear, grief, and loss.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this research is first and foremost an intimate exploration of my internal landscape and as such reveals a deep political commitment to early feminist values. Though deeply involved in the personal landscape, my practical exploration is not just autobiographical. Moreover, this choice is reflected in the autoethnographic methodology. I do not only write about remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of my life. I rather retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity.

My work is not divorced from any collective effort or public act and simply goes on to name this personal focus as political. Instead, as Martha Rosler suggests, the intention is to bring the consciousness of a larger collective struggle to bear on questions of personal life in the sense of regarding the two spheres as both dialectically opposed and unitary. One has to remain sensitive to the different situations and people within society with respect to taking control of their private lives (Rosler in Robinson, 2001:95). Recently, Nina Power has openly questioned, in "*One dimensional woman*", the use of the term feminism and

how we have done little to address the real questions of emancipation in the last decade. And that is:

that personal is no longer just political, it's economic through and through [] The blurring of work, social, personal and physical life is almost total. If feminism is to have a future, it has to recognize the new ways in which life and existence are colonized by new forms of domination that go far beyond objectification as it used to be understood.

(2009:26)

Today, this blurring most often happens on the screen. I cannot force a coherence that I have not experienced, and I have written this thesis with unfixed feminist models of art always in the back of my mind. As Trinh Minh-ha points out, it is not so much whether we are feminist as how we are feminist. With this in mind it would have been foolish for me to categorize myself in a fixed way. The politics of shifting identities remains open to modification and yet allows one to act (Trinh Minh-ha, 2005:207).

1.3 Chapter outline

Underlying the thesis structure is the process from inception to realisation to evaluation and interpretation. It is important to emphasise that the enactment of the artistic process is the foundation for the formalisation and embodiment of the theoretical framework. The process in general is a balance between the reflective writing, practice as research and theoretical framework.

In the second chapter, *The screen as a bordering site*, I establish the discourse of study and introduce the reader to the specificities of the format of the writing. I elaborate on the notion of the screen in detail. By drawing on research done both on etymology and genealogy of the term, I establish the screen as both an evocative object and a metaphor. I then continue into a discussion about the screen as a site of division, by writing about the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *borderSpace* and Ana Mendieta's *Silueta* series. Both of these works deal with the physicality of the border and the screen, but are very limited in terms of how they test the levels of liminality. That is why I continue by elaborating on the work of Coco Fusco and Tanja Ostojic, who use

autobiographical strategies to enter this volatile border space and change their/our perspective through converting the screen space into a personal endeavour.

In Chapter 3, *Borders with/in screen*, I reflect on my practical exploration, and the first part of my practice as research projects “*Microprojects of walking and waiting*” and “*Valid until*”. Both of these projects look at mobile screens and how they articulate the feeling of separation, liminality and foreignness. I will talk about visible borders, use real anecdotes from everyday life and use visual material which quite vividly reworks the notions of lines, customs, visas, and borders. Furthermore, I will try to establish the link between the screen as a site of division and the screen as a site of encounter, by introducing the theme of motherhood. I discuss my decision to create screen work with the use of a mobile phone and how doing so shaped the process and the eventual outcome. In Chapter 4, *Encountering the screen*, I make the bridge between the notion of the screen as an object and the notion of the screen as a metaphor, by referring to Ettinger’s theory of the screen as borderscape. I will continue to analyse the work of Ana Mendieta and establish links between the *Silueta* series, the Mother Goddess figure, and the nature/culture dichotomy that arises from this artistic exploration. This continues into analysis of Ettinger’s *Eurydice* series, which explores her philosophical concept of the screen. The contradictions that dwell in this concept, the screen as division and encounter will be challenged further by applying this notion to the work of Sigalit Landau. The line that emerges from the actual shape of the screen as a divide, will be discussed through the work of Francis Alys and Helena Almeida.

In Chapter 5, *Inside the screen, outside the home*, I will return to the challenges of creating practice in such a dense conceptual theoretical context and will talk about the last practical part of my PhD “*The last place where we were together*”. I will talk about my maternal experience of encounter and how it transfers to the screen, and about the strategies that I adopted as an artist to negotiate this slippery territory. I will reflect briefly on the mother concept as an intimate bordering territory by exploring the work of Susan Hiller and Pipilotti Rist.

In the Conclusion, I establish my position regarding the screen as a site of division and encounter. This chapter invites further exploration of this dynamic

and underlines the limitations of the practice as research methodologies and documentation. It is also an invitation for involvement in an open-ended process that tests the boundaries of what the screen can be and what it represents in the Western culture.

2.

The screen as a bordering site

Joe Mulroy: Why do you think he'll leave?

*Frank Dixon: Because he slipped through and fell in a crack. Nobody likes staying in a crack because they're nothing. Nobody likes to be stuck in a crack (excerpt from **The Terminal -2004, 3**)*.

Borders have traditionally been seen as lines of division (Bade 1987, Ong 1999, Corrin 1992, Rogoff 2000), as the final line of resistance between a mythical 'us' and an equally mythical 'them'; either a method of containment or a final barrier leading to ultimate liberation and freedom. The borders that we cross when travelling, are powered and controlled by screens, so the question of access to the screen can be imposed to demonstrate how the imbalance of power in the material world carries over into the domain of the screen. As mentioned in the introduction, my practical research explores the production of borders through screens, examining how they engage bodies and spatial scales.

2.1 Placing the research

The first part of this chapter, named Placing the research, presents the theoretical framework used to approach screen as a bordering site.

2.1.1. Living in a terminal

There are instances in contemporary literature and visual culture, for example Tania Bruguera's Immigrant Movement International (2012), Paradise Now (2006), No Man's Land (2001), The Terminal (2004), where the border is represented as a zone of order, and where the crossing is over-romanticised. The last example (The Terminal), most probably inspired by recent histories of 'ethnic cleansing' in the former Yugoslavia, focuses on the highly visible

structure of a fortified border patrolled by guards, screens and surveillance technologies, simultaneously overlaid with intimate moments and the ungraspable situations that make us human.

Despite their seemingly confounding specificities, it was my aim to carry out autoethnographic research using mobile digital screen media between these borders in order to enable new terms of artistic and political engagement. By bringing plurality of perspectives into dialogue around the themes of the body, mobile technology and space, I intended to reinvigorate critical analysis of the border in all of its (im)materialities and locations. However, before I elaborate on my process in detail in chapter 3, I would like to introduce the theoretical framework around the autoethnographic exploration of the screen as a bordering site. Later in this chapter, I will position my practice in the wilder field of artistic practice that explores the concept of borders through screen-reliant media. By discussing various artists that deal with this topic, I reveal what lies behind the making of performance art with digital media, particularly when crossing extremely volatile geographic and cultural borders.

I do not have many close relatives who have emigrated or lived in different countries during their lifetime. My entire family has always been happy where it was, proud of their origins and struggling with the demanding cultural and political conditions of the Balkan region. However, that struggle was constantly emphasised by my grandmother's story about her father, the only one who left the country to go to Chicago in the USA. At that time, the beginning of the 20th century, it was an arduous journey, and one you would undertake if you wanted to disappear. Apparently he came back and stayed in Macedonia, though the conditions of his return were always puzzling and nobody wanted to discuss them. In secret my grandmother told us that if the Balkan wars had not been so cruel and if he had been less stubborn, all of us would probably be in the USA. When I received my scholarship to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I went to see my grandmother. Having suffered a couple of strokes one after the other, she was quite senile. When the news of my scholarship was shared at the table with our family, her eyes opened wide and for a moment she seemed to be quite her old self. She almost yelled in joy "I knew it, I knew that it

would be you!” She then took me by the hand and said that it was my job to fulfil the dreams of my great-grandfather. She showed me a box of old photographs and a passport – memories that had not been shared with anyone before. The box was now mine, I deserved it. There were many reasons why Todor, my great-grandfather was a silent man and never talked about his life in the USA. He was extremely liberal with his daughters, who were educated to the highest level at a time when females were only allowed to attend the first two grades. He was fluent in Italian and English in a country that was on the wrong side of the Cold War wall (he passed the English on to my grandmother and mother in secret). And every day he silently questioned his decision to return.

It was a painful gift, a Pandora’s box in a way, a gateway to someone’s life story: so well kept. Even now it puzzles me that these mediated memories, an aged screen into a lost life, are such a strong burden for me. I am still struggling to understand why my grandmother thought that it was my job to fulfil his dreams and why until the day she died (just a couple of months after I left for the USA) the only things she remembered clearly were my name and my location. What was the process that linked all of us to this painful story of migration, borders and invisible liminality?

My research is part of my body, thus inevitably carrying its history. It is a very specific history, of a body that has been trapped in liminal spaces for a very long period (both in a geographical/historical sense, but also in a metaphorical and metonymical sense); a body that has been captured in “a world of multiple crises and continuous fragmentations” (Pena in Lacy, 1995:103). The link between my body, theory and the tools that I use has become the most significant element of my exploration of borders. I cannot possibly outline my arguments without offering snippets of my personal experience, both through reflective writing and the autoethnographic use of mobile digital media. It was challenging to write this thesis while at the same time integrating my life and tribulations as an artist, running the risk of “confessing” what no one needs or wants to know.

Many artists are burdened by this conflicting “confessional” mode/position.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is quite wary of using the term “autobiographical” stating: “I hate diaries and autobiographies. I have always found the “confessional” tone a bit foreign. The spectacle of my own pain and (anti)heroism is strictly reserved for my beloved ones”. He still underlines the importance of sharing the process of creation, by continuing: “...I only write or make art about myself when I am completely sure that the biographical paradigm intersects with larger social and cultural issues” (2000:7). This becomes an important principle that surrounds and informs both the content of his writings and his performance work. Mock describes personal writing as an embodied practice that performs its own theory (Heddon et al, 2009:14). Indeed, as Heddon has noted, many performers who activate the power of the autobiographical mode “simultaneously place the referent into a situation of instability prompting us to question the status of what we see” (2004:229). She maintains “that the challenge for all autobiographical performance is to harness the dialogic potential afforded by the medium, using it in the service of difference rather than sameness” (2004:238). Such critical autobiographical practice crosses the radical research practice, advocated by Dwight Conquergood, who evoked Michel de Certeau's aphorism ‘what the map cuts up, the story cuts across’ (Certeau, 1984:129) to explain how radical performance research should take account of ‘local context’ and transnational narratives while travelling between two types of knowledge: official abstract ‘maps’ and personal embodied ‘stories’. In doing so, he draws attention to the importance of the movement between different locations and histories (Conquergood, 2002:418). Susan Hiller’s relation to the autobiographical expands on the previous. She says: “My ‘self’ is a site for thoughts, feelings, sensations, not an impermeable, corporeal boundary. I AM NOT A CONTAINER... Identity is collaboration. The self is multiple” (1996:xiii). Hiller’s thoughts and art live where we all do – between the everyday and the spiritual, microcosm and macrocosm, ordinary and extraordinary.

My quest in this chapter is for practices that use different autobiographical language to oppose and expand that of the dominant patriarchal culture, a language that will be generous enough to include the desires of the ‘outsiders’- the culturally disenfranchised groups, and especially women. Inspired by the

practices outlined in this chapter, I have chosen to weave myself and my own experience into this thesis from time to time because lived experience is central to my writing and to my approach to the subject of the screen. I am aware that I have been attracted to the subject of the screen by its absence or rather by the absence of value attached to it in contemporary culture and the art world. Before I proceed with further exploration of the screen as a bordering site, I need to outline my position on the screen as a subject of art practice. Below I offer threads of discourse and study on the subject of the screen and the contribution of contemporary artists to its recognition.

2.1.2. The screen as a site of/for reflection

Before I go into detail about specific artists' work in the Field review, I wanted to discuss how ubiquitous mobile digital technology allows numerous opportunities to reflect on our lives on screen: on a thin surface that glows and offers a pathway to the deepest aspects of our identity. It can serve as a window, but also as a mirror of what we have become. In any attempt to describe our world on screen, the thing being reflected is after all ourselves mediated. Life is, more often than not, the arrangement of pixels spread across screens. Screens themselves are part of the contemporary urban landscape and while most theoretical discourse centres around what is on them, screens themselves have their own mythology, history, and peculiar metaphysics. Paul Elliman thoughtfully suggests:

The irony is the name—screen—as if it were there to protect us. It is an irony embedded in a double meaning: to PROTECT, on one hand, and OBSCURE on the other. (Obscuring as a kind of protection?) Does it reveal or conceal?

(Elliman, 1998:1)

To be obscure is to be faintly perceptible so as to lack clear definition, to be hidden, out of sight, not readily noticed or seen, inconspicuous, far from centers of human population (Parks, 2009:101). However screens are everywhere around us and when they function as a transparent window, they become invisible as an object. When a screen is opaque its materiality or physicality surfaces. This paradox of non-functionality that correlates to visibility and

'thingness' is particularly intriguing in the case of the screen. Unlike the window, the operation of the screen necessitates opaqueness for virtual transparency: it requires the surface to reflect the images on the screen (Verhoeff, 2010:214). The screen has been a relatively obscure object of media studies, but it is not alone. Many objects—from the videocassette case to the antenna tree—that are overlooked in media studies could be used to expand the field in productive ways. As Hastie explains,

...An emphasis on objects and material forms in relation to representational and time-based media might enable a delineation of the social and economic circuits of exchange in which we — and visual culture, in its various forms — participate.

(Hastie in Parks, 2009:101)

The screen is an extremely ambivalent material object, functioning simultaneously as a material surface and as an immaterial or conceptual threshold to imagery or other information. Although the screen is a notoriously slippery and ambivalent object, one that seems to outrun its shadow of materiality at every turn, its (especially recent⁸) physical form shapes both its immediate space and its relation with the subject handling it. Kate Mondloch uses the term 'screen-reliant' art as opposed to the term 'screen-based' art to signal that the screen is a performative category (2010:xii). This signals a distinct shift in emphasis. The artist in Mondloch's opinion considers every aspect of the screen, not just as an object, but also as how it can serve as a subject. When creating the work, the artist considers what physical, conceptual and political points can be made with the use of the screen. Having this in mind, almost anything - glass, architecture, three-dimensional objects and so on-can function as a screen and thus as a connective interface to another (virtual or more often, real) space. I would like to propose that the body could also serve as a metaphorical screen. In certain artistic practices analysed below (Ana Mendieta and Guillermo Gómez-Peña), we certainly have a removal of the border between the screen and the body, the viewer and the screen due to the nature of the pervasive Mobile Screening Devices and their integration with our body. The body can be disseminated, reassembled and integrated through the

⁸ Mobile screen devices are pushing materiality towards invisibility

screen. The body offers a return to the process, something that is lost through digitisation, in the scientific push towards analysis and decomposition. Digitalisation translates, retranscribes, and circumscribes the fluidity of living by breaking down the analog or the continuous process into elements, packages, or units represented by binary code, and then recomposing them through addition: analysis then synthesis.

To summarise, how the screen is approached in my study, is not only as an obscure object that handles content, but also as a site of reflection and discussion. The artwork that is discussed below in this chapter is screen reliant and uses the screen to make political points. Even more, some of the artists mentioned further in this thesis (Ana Mendieta and Sigalit Landau) use their body as a metaphorical screen for political discussion of migration, war and division. Though this approach is not simply based on the interaction between the body and the screen. Moreover it is about what is reflected through and on the screen.

2.1.3. Reflective screens

There are many interdisciplinary research examples that address the relationship between the body and the screen. In the promotional speech for iPad that was launched on the 27 January 2010, Steve Jobs emphasized the following experience as a defining element of the new device: "It's the best browsing experience that you have ever had, you can see a whole web page right in front of you and you can manipulate it with your fingers. [] Holding the Internet in your hands" (2010:unpaginated). The iPad is just the tip of the iceberg, the most recent project by Carnegie Mellon is called Skinput⁹, the primary goal of which is to provide a readily available mobile input system – that is, an input system that does not require a user to carry or pick up a mobile device at all as it will be integrated into the body.

⁹ Chris Harrison, Desney Tan and Dan Morris. (2010) Skinput: Appropriating the Body as an Input Surface. In *Proceedings of the 28th Annual SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (Atlanta, Georgia, April 10 - 15, 2010). CHI '10. ACM, New York, NY.

However before complete body-screen integration inevitably happens, there are two important questions that are raised by a multitude of art projects:

- Who is reflected on the screen?
- How the artist is handling the screen as an object in/around a contested border space?

These questions shape my analysis of artists in this thesis. While trying to negotiate their position as foreigners in a border state, most of the artists analyzed in this chapter, reflect the complexities of this state on the screen. In addition, the process of how they integrate the screen as an indicative object in their art is elusive. These projects unintentionally reflect on Vivian Sobchack questions about what happens when our expressive technologies also become perceptive technologies. She continues her quest by asking how by expressing and extending us (with technologies) in ways we never thought possible we radically transform not merely our comprehension of the world but also our apprehension of ourselves? (Sobchack in Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, 1994:135). Elaine Scarry adds to this argument: “we make things so that they will in turn remake us, revising the interior of embodied consciousness” (Scarry in Bener and Druckrey, 1994:97). As early as the beginning of nineties, both of these feminist media scholars pointed towards the technological crisis of the flesh within the dominant digital screen culture. There is a tendency towards reconfiguration of the body through disembodiment or as Sobchack puts it: “to digitize and download our consciousness into the neural nets and memory and onto the screens of a solely electronic existence” (Sobchack in Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, 1994:142). She adds that such insubstantial electronic presence can easily ignore AIDS, homelessness, war and difference outside the image and the datascape. It can ignore its own history, which is my main concern in the next section, where I give a quick overview of the history and genealogy of the screen.

2.1.4. Into the screen

It is important to offer an overview of the general approach to the screen in order to introduce the feminist media approach that challenges the dominant

view (Turkle 2007; Balsamo 2011). Writing about the history of the screen is not really the task of this study and my research is not concerned with the exact genealogy of the object-screen.

Most of the research on screen history has been conducted from a predominantly male perspective. The genealogy and existence of the screen is connected to the history of technology and attempts to look beyond the rectangular interactive shape are few and far between. Both in a media and art context, the screen becomes a pervading object where things are tested, extended and reshaped. The screen itself is viewed as something that can be made thinner, more accessible, mobile and transparent. But, outside of the laboratory walls, where the screen is embedded in daily life, all these breathtaking experiments become meaningless. Some media scholars have attempted to trace the genealogy of the screen from the radar and the war industry (Gere, 2006) and some have talked about the augmented spaces spiraling through/out of screens (Manovich, 2006).

I look at screens in a more subjective, evocative way. I am concerned with the term 'screen' and with the different layers that come from its etymology¹⁰. Is the screen sheltering or reveling? Turkle writes in "*What Makes An Object Evocative?*" (2007: 307), that screen can be used as bricolage, a style of working in which one manipulates a closed set of materials to develop new thoughts. Or assemblage, as Latour puts it, is how the screen becomes defined through the way it is connected to material practices, human and non-human, thus articulating its potentiality. As part of my second chapter, I will use the work of Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Ana Mendieta and Tanja Ostojić, amongst others, to apply these concepts in practice. I will look beyond the screen as an object of digital media, and will try to explore the non-linear female approach to screens.

¹⁰ The word *screen* – as in *the screen-based media* and its plural form *screens*, *the screens of the digital media* – has become a crucial word in the cultural, social, technological and economic landscape of communication. The word has a long history in English, In Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* (1963[1879–82]), *screen* is given two definitions and three broad meanings: 'that which shelters from observation, a partition'; and also 'a coarse riddle or sieve'. The comma in the first definition seems to make light of the distinction between *sheltering from observation* and *providing a partition*.

In order to overcome this in my practical exploration, I will use the technological imagination¹¹ (Balsamo, 2011:31), a mindset and a creative practice that uses what is at hand to create something else.

For most of my life I blindly believed in the West¹², as one whose generation was mercilessly robbed of its past, and left without a future. The only way out was the West. The sweet seduction of capitalism, a perfume that we were not allowed to smell for a very long time. I believed that it was our fault (many people in the region still believe this) that our access to the West was severely restricted. We lived through brutal wars in our region, our economic and social conditions dreadful until finally, our culture became a strange hybrid of the East and the West; trapped in between. I was particularly fascinated by screens on Western TV, screens on Western streets, screens in Western art, all of which promoted happiness, liberation and democracy. The power of technology was also immensely captivating. Especially seductive was the way women were represented on the screen, as different yet equal. I thought that if I had access to all of that, my life would change dramatically

Diary entry, Day 129

It is March 24, 1999. Sitting in the living room of my friend's flat, five or six of us. Watching CNN, drinking cheap red wine with Coke, called "bambus". It is early

¹¹ According to Balsamo Technology is not an epiphenomenon of contemporary culture, but rather is deeply intertwined with the conditions of human existence across the globe. When developing new technologies, culture needs to be taken into consideration at even a more basic level: as the foundation upon which the technological imagination is formed in the first place. Balsamo defines the technological imagination as a character of mind and creative practice of those who use, analyze, design and develop technologies. It is a quality of mind that grasps the doubled-nature of technology: as determining and determined, as both autonomous of and subservient to human goals. This is the quality of mind that enables people to think with technology, to transform what is known into what is possible, and to evaluate the consequences of such creation from multiple perspectives.

¹² I use West as it is widely used in my native language. West is a hybrid between an actual location and desire. It represents progress and also something that we will never be part of. Usually it refers to Western Europe and USA, although it includes satellite countries with predominately Anglo-Saxon inhabitants, like Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is used with in different connotations, for example: "You think Western" – you are thinking progressively or more often, your thoughts don't fit the everyday reality. "What is new in the West"-used when you are expecting a good news from someone etc.)

evening, already drunk, my friend offers me weed, CNN and Faith no More in the background. We start laughing. It gets dark in the room, people are gazing at the screen, I walk to the window, it's early spring and it smells of blossoms. I can hear distant voices in the air.

It started.

Are you serious?

No, look, the planes just departed.

I can hear the noise, the planes, the sound of engines in the air. I feel bitterness, fear, and anxiety. The air smells like fire. The sound of the engines is repetitive and annoying.

They burned the USA Embassy, look, look...

Is that going to change anything?

Those stupid idealists.

We see the planes on the screen, data and numbers circling below. The glow fills the room. We hear them in the air. I think of my aunty, I hope she is safe.

Another go?

The smell of weed makes me sick. I vomit in the toilet, while the engines fill the bathroom with a shattering noise. I need to sleep.

And it did change. As soon as I gained access to it, the screen became a divide, a border, an invisible trap, an object that has the power to impose, change and transform. I am not a techno-utopist, I am completely aware of all the benefits that screen technology (especially MSD) has brought to everyday life. I do not oppose the idea of progress, I merely question how we articulate this challenge politically and artistically?

I am certainly not the first to ask who gains and who loses by ignoring the political realities in which these technologies develop. There are many ways in which the question of access to the screen wonderland has been imposed to demonstrate how the imbalance of power in the material world carries over into the domain of the screen. Crary in his "*Suspensions of Perception*" (1999) argues that screen-based spectatorship is understood as a disciplinary process that regulates viewers' minds and bodies in specific ways geared toward docile productivity. But he also acknowledges that 'capitalism can never fully

rationalize the exchange between the body and the screen, a circuit he compellingly identifies as ‘the site of a latent but potentially volatile disequilibrium’ (Crary 1999:293). Moreover, with the expanding MSD culture focused on various gadgets and gizmos¹³, exploring the screen requires a significant amount of time and attention. Bruce Sterling describes the cognitive conundrum of living in these “gizmo” times:

It may dawn on you that you are surrounded by a manufactured environment. You may further come to understand that you are not living in a centrally planned society, where class distinctions and rationing declare who has access to the hardware. Instead, you are living in a gaudy, market-driven society whose material culture is highly unstable and radically contingent. You’re surrounded by gadgets. Who can tell you how to think about gadgets, what to say about them-what they mean, how that feels?

(Sterling, 2005:29)

In the section below I would like to discuss a number of practitioners who use technology to answer Sterling’s daunting question about control and access to the screen as a bordering territory.

2.2 Field review, part 1.

In this second part of this chapter, or the Field review, part 1, I will describe the scope of the practices that are using the screen to discuss borders and divisions. In the Field review, part 2, I will focus on practitioners that are using the screen to discuss internal borders and the possibilities for maternal encounters. The artist that I am analyzing in the field review are using their body in relation to the screen, and are utilizing feminist performance strategies as part of their process. Furthermore, their visual language is reflexive on the political precondition of their piece. I was interested in how this characteristic of their work are influencing and extending my own practice.

2.2.1. Guillermo Gómez-Peña and the screen as a border

Guillermo Gómez-Peña tackles these questions by commenting on the disjointed state between body and technology and how technological space can

¹³ “Gizmo” is a term used by Bruce Sterling to describe an explicitly designed object-form that manifests the fecundity of digital information.

become a closely monitored border space.

In the mid 90s, when the art world went high-tech overnight, the debates about the human body and its relation to new technologies dramatically polarized the experimental arts community and particularly the performance art milieu. There were those in the “machine art” movement who advocated the total disappearance of the body and its replacement with digital or robotic mechanisms; others believed that the body, although archaic and “obsolete,” could still remain central to the art event if physically and perceptually enhanced with technical prostheses. The artists of “Apocalypse Culture” responded viscerally to these proposals by adopting a radical Luddite stance, attempting to reclaim the *body primitive* as a site for pleasure, penance and pain, and to “return” to a fantastical and imaginary neotribal paganism, very much in the tradition of US anarchist “drop out” culture. *None of these options were viable, however, for Chicano/Latino performance artists and other politicized artists of color interested in new technologies.*

(Gómez-Peña, 2000:38, italics added)

What attracts me to Gómez-Peña’s work is that while well aware of the dominant trend in technology and the emancipatory potential that it brings for many (Third world) artists, he also questions the position that he (as a Chicano, Mexican artist) occupies through the screen. To explore this further, Gomez-Peña has to chronicle the innumerable border crossings that constitute the raw matter of his art, the pulsating flesh of his performance actions and poetical/theoretical writings. These elements, so central to the life and experience of an artist, paradoxically remain untouched by performance critics and historians. The conflicts and challenges that shape Gomez-Peña’s work increase exponentially when one considers the historical and cultural context of his work: the militarisation of the US/Mexico border, the savage globalisation of the Western economy and culture, and the resurgence of neo-nationalisms, parochial moralities and spiritual fundamentalisms. It is also important to remember that Chicano and Mexican artists travelling around the world, especially the much-touted “First World,” have a radically different experience, for example, from German or Australian artists travelling in Latin America. Their experience as “Third World” nomads in the ever-shrinking “First World” is marked by political violence and cultural misunderstandings. Perpetually viewed through the mythical projections of the dominant culture, they face endless confrontations if they attempt to correct misreadings of their identities.

He starts one of his most compelling pieces *BORDERscape 2000* by placing emphasis on the emotions and imperfections that are usually invisible or rendered obsolete on the screen:

welcome to *BORDERscape 2000*, part three of a performance trilogy. Allow me to introduce to you the very first prototype: a beta version of an imperfect Mexican. This cyborg still has a sentimental mind and a political consciousness. He failed the test for robotic migrant workers, and still longs for his homeland. Eventually when we manage to get the Mexican bugs out of him, we will create a Chicano, the vato uber alles, the next step on the evolutionary scale.

(Gómez-Peña, 2000:23)

Gómez-Peña, in this piece, addresses the unexamined ethnocentrism permeating the discussions around art and digital technology. The master narrative that he describes was coined either in the utopian language of Western democratic values or as a bizarre form of New Age corporate jargon. The unquestioned *lingua franca* was of course English, “the official language of science, information and international communications” (2000:25). On the other hand, the theoretical vocabulary about the digital was depoliticised (postcolonial theory and the border paradigm were conveniently overlooked). If Chicanos, Mexicans and other “people of color” did not participate in the net, it was presumed to be solely due to lack of interest, not money or access. He vividly reflects on the ongoing work created by the majority of artists working with new technologies and underlines how perplexed he is by the fact that when referring to “the screen” or “the net,” they speak of a politically neutral, raceless, genderless, classless and allegedly egalitarian “territory” that could provide everyone with unlimited opportunities for participation, interaction and belonging. The digital art world assumed an unquestionable “center” and created an impermeable digital border. Those condemned to live “on the other side” include all techno-illiterate artists, mostly women, Chicanos, Afro-Americans and other minorities, along with the populations of so-called “Third World” countries. Given the nature of this hegemonic cartography, those of us living on the other side of the digital border are once again forced to assume the unpleasant but necessary roles of web-backs, cyber-aliens, techno-pirates, and virtual *coyotes* (smugglers) as Gómez-Peña suggests. In his first draft of the

Manifesto: Remapping Cyberspace he writes:

In the past years, many theoreticians of color, feminists and activist artists have finally succeeded in crossing the digital border without documents. Luckily, this recent diasporic migration has made the debates more complex and interesting.[...] “We” are no longer trying to persuade anyone that we are worthy of insiders, or insiders/outsideers. For the moment, what “we” (newly arrived cyber immigrants) desire is to:

- re-map the hegemonic cartography of cyberspace [...]
- develop a multicentric, theoretical understanding of the cultural, political, and aesthetic potential of new technologies
- exchange different sorts of information—mythopoetic, activist, performative, imagistic
- hopefully accomplish all this with humor, inventiveness and intelligence.

(Gómez-Peña, 2000:259)

I would add to his argument that this debate did not include female artists, and especially female artists that come from a less privileged background. This becomes even more pertinent with the digital multiplicity and the expansion of screen technology in the last ten years. Although Gómez-Peña integrates female characters in his work, their roles are usually quite stereotypical and fetishised - mother, prostitute, saints and illusions of male fantasy such as Santa Frida de Detroit and La Neo-primitiva (as their names depict). And although it shows some humour, it still perpetuates the stereotypes imposed on the female body as the Other when bordered with digital technology. Gómez-Peña is not addressing this gap in this work, and this is where I position myself really strongly.

Diary entry, Day 98

M is calling me from Düsseldorf. He is thrilled; he has just got a new phone with GPS. It is early 2006, and GPS as a consistent part of mobile phones is just coming out. We are getting ready to drive to Croatia, to the small island of Mljet (an isolated refugee in the Adriatic) for our summer holiday. A bit worried that we have to cross Kosovo, but M reassures me that with our GPS we can go to the end of the world and back. He is back in Skopje, we are packing. We go on a local ride to try our GPS. The screen is almost blank, there are satellites, but there is no data that our road, our city, our country exists. We are in the middle

of a buzzing city, and our screen is as empty as a lonely field. Our land, our motherland, our apartment, our life does not exist, is not recognised by the technology, is not translated into the data. It is a blank field on the world map, a place that would rather disappear.

2.2.2. Ana Mendieta and the tracing of borders

The gap that occurs in Gómez-Peña's work motivates me to continue my search of female artists who are working in a similar challenging context. I especially concentrate on female artists who are creating screen-reliant work. There are many female artists who are working in this contested territory (Biemann 1999, Landau 2000, etc), but just few put their body on the line, and use the screen as a site to discuss this bordering territory. I start by tracing their work, by discussing the work of the body and media art pioneer Ana Mendieta.

In her experimentation with analogue technology, the artist Ana Mendieta questions both the use of technology and the screen in relation to the body and visibility. Issues around the resistance and challenge of borders (both physical and metaphorical) arise in her work. Mendieta explores the use of the screen as a border site of transformation and body assemblage.

It was against the backdrop of civil rights struggles, the women's liberation movement, and the increasing antagonism between the First and the Third World that Ana Mendieta formed political views of her native country and the country in which she was a naturalized citizen.¹⁴ Angered by her experience in the United States and critical of its economic policies, which seem to establish gross disparities between classes, she considered herself a member of the Third World. Mendieta's work seems to predict Trinh Minh-ha's often-quoted claim that there is "a Third World in the First World and vice versa" (1987:23). Mendieta's process was created through a framework of feminism, Third World cultural politics and First World avant-garde art practices of the late 1970s and 1980s. The relation of these elements to the great traditions and to her own

¹⁴ Mendieta was born in Havana, Cuba. At age 12, in order to escape Fidel Castro's regime, Ana and her sister Raquelin were sent to the United States by their parents. Through Operation Peter Pan, a collaborative program run by the U.S. Government and the Catholic Charities, Mendieta and her sister were moved through several institutions and foster homes in Iowa.

work went through a series of sharp dislocations which were brought to an abrupt halt with her violent death in 1985 at the age of thirty-six. Mendieta's work in the last decade of her life had been closely bound to the earth. Ana Mendieta's "*Siluetas*" series, created in locations throughout Iowa and upstate New York, Mexico and Cuba between 1973 and 1981, all centre on the female form, specifically her own body. Her silhouette was used in a range of site-specific interventions in which she worked through tracing the silhouette of her body. Using materials to hand in nature, including crevasses in the landscape, stone, soil, wood, flowers, fire, smoke and water, Mendieta's recurring body was always evanescent, vulnerable to the ravages of the elements and time. Yet the insistent repetition of her silhouette as moments on the earth, in the sea and in the air (and their mediation/documentation in colour photographs, 35mm slides and super8 films) suggests an appeal to a female presence that however elusive, could not be disallowed. The works were made predominantly outdoors and remain there except for their photographic and film representations, thus negating the cultural boundaries in which works of art are produced and displayed in studios, galleries and museums.

When we look at the photograph that documents Mendieta's first *Siluetas*, executed in the Zapotec tomb in Oaxaca, Mexico in 1973, we witness her strategic representation of the earth. Pointed downward, the camera captures Mendieta's vulnerable naked body lying covered in long stems and tiny white flowers at the bottom of a rocky tomb. She is surrounded by stones and dirt. Although this piece engages a familiar set of binaries: essence/inessence, nature/culture, primitive/civilized, it is also removed from the viewer and only accessible through technology. Peggy Phelan argues that there is real power in remaining unseen politically. She underlines the strategic potential of performance as, in her terms, "representation without reproduction" (1993:146). She argues for a kind of performance that, by its very nature, privileges disappearance, and accepts blindness. Following Phelan, Mendieta's performativity is a powerful lens through which to see the Other as unseen, to imagine a place "outside" the strictly defined identity categories (1993:104).

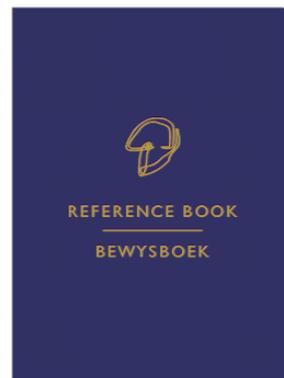
Moreover, the location of the work is Mexico, a threshold between the First and the Third Worlds. One might think of it as the borderland that separates North from South, body from shadow, home from travel. Gloria Anzaldúa explains the significance of this position when she writes that “the U.S. – Mexican border es *una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture”(1989:3). As Anzaldúa continues: “Alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, the woman of colour does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can’t respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits” (1989:20). One might say that Mendieta magnifies los intersticios so that they are no longer dangerous cracks into which she is in danger of plunging but vast psychological landscapes that we are invited to explore. Mendieta and her life outside borders demonstrates Bhabha’s contention that “the boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the Western nation may imperceptibly turn in to a contentious internal liminality that provides a place from which to speak both of them and us, the minority, the exilic, the marginal, and the emergent.” (1994:300) Adapted to Mendieta’s experience, this means that it is the very strengths and fixity of national borders, the fact that they are heavily policed militarily and politically that make her an exile, and it is her exile that, ironically, disrupts those borders. By producing her as an exile, the borders reveal their own fragility as psychological constructions. The contentiousness of these borders gives Mendieta a platform from which to speak. Through her work, she both claims a space, which meaning is inflicted by nation, and escapes that space by creating a profound sense of absence. She posits woman, earth, primitive and nation as home and then travels from it, leaving behind a meaningful schism.

This work differs both from earth works and from pure body art by combining the two and by playing on the tension between performance art and the continuous slow deterioration of the piece in nature. In my opinion Mendieta is not a producer of borders or an artist who had been set outside the border, but she is an actual border herself, demarcating and embodying the actual lines of difference. However, this proves challenging, since once we establish

something as a border, it follows that we have to identify the entities on both sides and the relations between them. In reality, this is a far more complex issue, traversed on both sides, a constant leakage of hostile bodies, never able to sustain the separations and protect the “right side”.

2.2.3. Performing the crossing – Coco Fusco, NSK and Tanja Ostojić

Coco Fusco is taking on the previously described challenge, both in her art and her writing. Furthermore, she openly questions extensively the fascination with digital technology in the art sphere and writes about the handful of artists and theorists that asked how the electronic domain reflects the goals of a new corporate controlled, ultra-privatized and guarded society.



RIGHTS OF PASSAGE A Site-Specific Performance Installation
Coco Fusco; The Johannesburg Biennale; October 11, 1997 © Coco Fusco

“Rights of passage” was conceived as a site-specific performance about race, space and power in the post-apartheid era. It is about the difficulties that post-apartheid, postcolonial and even post-segregationist societies face in negotiating the daily realities of interracial interaction in real time and space. It is about how the vestiges of dismantled legal systems are unconsciously reproduced and made manifest in sublimated forms. The *“Rights of passage”* passbooks serve as evidence of payment for entry to The Johannesburg Biennale in 1997, an artist's "multiple", and a document of the performance. The "passbook" is a souvenir, a reminder of a critical moment in history of demarcation of space in South Africa, of our ambivalent attraction to and

repulsion from that past, and of its commodification. In a broader, more international sense, the piece is a comment on contemporary cultural tourism, and the new status of "peripherally" situated biennials as marketplaces for all sorts of exotica. Even the most horrifying historical circumstances (apartheid) can function as a point of attraction, and ultimately, a lure for global capital investment. Dressed as South African police officers, Fusco and her assistant were registering visitors during the first day of the biennale. The audience member was photographed and received a passbook which they had to carry and have stamped upon entry to each biennale exhibit. The visitors were interviewed in order to obtain vital statistics: name, nationality, ethnicity etc. When all of this had finished, their entry was verified by two black South African assistants, who were extremely loud and pushy in order to add a note of authenticity. Fusco recalls the opening night, when more than 700 people passed through their "station":

I recall looking up at the sea of humanity before me and thinking that I could finally imagine the conditions in which multitude of people in transit could be reduced, in the eyes of a surveyor, to matter. Whether the scene involves immigrants, refugee, slaves or prisoners, the dynamic that unfolds leads quite easily to horrendously dehumanizing misidentification.

(Fusco, 2001:110)

Coco Fusco was inspired by a poem that she was given by her drama coach (leader of acting workshops for children in Soweto – one of the worst slums in south Africa), during her visit to Johannesburg in 1997. It is a Zulu poem about the experience of carrying a passbook (ID which was compulsory at that time for native people, for police verification, but also for claiming benefits and paying taxes) and I will only quote a short passage:

*Take a visit to Johannesburg;
You will see big crowds
Of people imprisoned for Special Pass.
Forward...onward...to Marshal Square!
"Produce your Special Pass!"
It was a sad sight to see our people like that,
Caught for Special Pass.*

(Fusco, 2001:106)

Though her performance focuses on South African history, the idea of a

document that accentuates the difference of a particular racial or ethnic group from the rest of the population and that automatically designates its carrier as alien or unwanted, sometimes even in his/her native country, is not at all unfamiliar.

In 1990, the new political, ideological and economic reorganization of Europe (the fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany, the decline of the Eastern bloc and the birth of new national entities) and especially, the political events that took place in Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s did not leave unaffected the work of the artists' collective '*Neue Slowenische Kunst*' (NSK in the further text). When the Republic of Slovenia declared independence in 1991, NSK simultaneously declared their transformation into a 'State'. The artistic concept of the *NSK Drzava v casu* ('*NSK State in Time*') comments on real political developments in ex-Yugoslavia in a specific way: through an artistic counter-sketch NSK tries to offer a glimpse of an alternative to the political fixations on territories, ethnic groups and borders that has gained strength since the beginning of the 90s (not only in ex-Yugoslavia, but certainly there in its most extreme form). NSK reinvented itself, changing from an organization into a state, a utopian virtual state without concrete territory. Members of NSK groups became the first citizens of the NSK state, citizenship being made available in the form of a passport available to all people around the world. Anybody could become an NSK Passport holder and acquire the status of an NSK citizen. The NSK state denied the categories of (limited) territory; the principle of national borders, and advocated a law of transnationality. Vital statistics of the bearer are logged in the NSK citizenship register. The passport is numbered and non transferable; its validity is limited and renewable. By signing the adjoining statement the bearer pledged to participate on a best-effort basis to support the integrity of the NSK state. The NSK passport was a document of a subversive nature and unique value. The holder was supposed to fill in data and collect stamps and signatures at NSK events and similar campaigns. In this sense, the applicability of the passport was unlimited and subject to the responsibility of its holder.

When discussing the NSK and the band Laibach¹⁵, Slavoj Žižek underlines the problem of mimicking the regimes of power, by stressing the importance of over-identification:

This uneasy feeling is fed on the assumption that ironic distance is automatically a subversive attitude. What if, on the contrary, the dominant attitude of the contemporary 'postideological' universe is precisely the cynical distance toward public values? What if this distance, far from posing any threat to the system, designates the supreme form of conformism, since the normal function of the system requires cynical distance? In this sense the strategy of Laibach appears in a new light: it 'frustrates' the system (the ruling ideology) precisely insofar as it is not its ironic imitation, but over-identification with it - by bringing to light the obscene superego underside of the system, over-identification suspends its efficiency.

(Žižek, 1993:unpaginated)

Both the Fusco and NSK interventions pose important questions regarding the universal applicability of digital technology emancipatory rhetoric and power games. They work with oppositions, and they often try to impose solutions, by exposing the extremes. Both projects try to reverse a very specific experience through their own history¹⁶ by creating a process of over-identification. And this is exactly how they link and have influenced my practical exploration.

However, the attempt to offer a valid experience for the audience who will probably never have to encounter such events in their life is both positive and enlightens, but offers a narrow perspective on something that is a brutal reality for many. It is an art intervention, which tries to channel solutions to conditions that are increasingly normalised through the pervasiveness of the technology. Just a decade after these projects, conditions of travel have changed, even for those who come from privileged Western backgrounds. The rapid expansion of borders and control mechanisms is changing the experience of travelling and migrating. The border authorities require high levels of self-management in the global always-on, always-linked world. Self-management refers not only to structuring one's life, but also to negotiating the immense flows of information that circulate about our body into the border/state archives. I question exactly

¹⁵ Laibach represents the music wing of the NSK art collective, of which it was a founding member in 1984. The name "Laibach" is the German name for Slovenia's capital city, Ljubljana.

¹⁶ Both Fusco and NSK carry a specific body, come from a specific background and have experienced the borders as brutal, artificially built spaces

this in my process-the possibility for solutions and the potential of the body and personal experience to resist these mechanisms. Since: "You need the crossing of bodies for the border to become real, otherwise you just have this discursive construction. There is nothing natural about the border; it's a highly constructed place that gets reproduced through the crossing of people, because without the crossing there is no border, right? It's just an imaginary line, a river or it's just a wall..." (Jottar in Biemann, 2001:1) The crossing is a process that never ends. The crossing and the creation of borders became a theme that many artists from the Balkan region integrated into their work. Even when crossing violent state borders, the body still cares about the imbalance and the notion of being different, challenged, objectified. This is an especially complex issue in contemporary art, particularly the representation of the female body in such a condensed situation. There is the underlying danger of objectification whenever the female body is exposed to the gaze of the viewer. In this case the over-identification can be used more productively as a tool to retain a certain distance from the mimed regime and as claimed by Žižek, to frustrate that same regime of power. This is the method that Tanja Ostojić uses in her inter-medial project "*Looking for a Husband with EU Passport*" to discuss the crossing as an autobiographical act.



Tanja Ostojić, "Looking for a husband with EU passport" Photo: Borut Krajnc Capital & Gender, January 2001, Skopje, Macedonia © Tanja Ostojić

The first phase of the project "*Looking for a Husband with EU Passport*" consisted of a simple Internet advert with an image of the artist's shaved body that was followed by the distribution of leaflets and posters in a shopping mall in Skopje, for the project "*Capital and Gender*" in 2001. The next step was a website that enabled correspondence between the artist and her 'suitors'. The project gradually moved from the realm of 'imaginary' to the realm of the 'real' when the artist met and married one of the 'virtual' suitors (the German artist Clemens Golf who deliberately delved into the 'art-marriage' adventure). The final stage of this long-term art and life commitment started in the realm of the complex intertwining of conditions: the artist started facing the German state authorities in order to acquire the long-awaited Schengen visa and started going through seemingly endless procedures for long-term residency. After three years of 'fictive' marriage, the couple separated and filed for a 'real' divorce. Obviously, it is very difficult to make the borderline between the 'fictive' and the 'real' in this context, the body and the social freedom offered in exchange for a passport. The main objective of Ostojčić's work is over-identification with the established regimes of power and representation through which the objectification of the female body usually takes place. Her body becomes the medium that she uses in order to stress the necessity to question these issues.

In a way, the body carries the process of crossing, the gender figure becomes the articulator of the border; that fragile line marking the edge of the national body. It is from here, on this body, according to national(ist) discourse, that all disease, illegality, contamination, and poverty come. This is the most vulnerable, penetrable site, the place where anxieties tend to concentrate. But Ostojčić quite vividly carries in her work the autobiographical impulse, never acknowledging that her body has become completely translated into information and technologized in order to be legalised. She is a piece of information, a glitch in the border system and she has to carry on this invisible label into her life and work as well. When we cross the border, our body is demonstrated and performed, exposed and hidden.

Living between two worlds can be demanding. Like an illness, you can't escape from it. It is so deep in your body. It covers every border that protects you from outside. You can articulate yourself on the screen, but deep inside you know that the screen never articulates, it only imposes form.

Delivery at gate.

There are two gates. One in. One out. And me in between.

A: "We miss you so much". Her eyes get tearful.

I can't deliver the news.

B: "Maybe we will stay."

A: "Stay where?"

B: "I am not quite sure...."

I am thinking of my great grandfather. How do you deliver a loss?

2.3 Between crossings – bodies on the line

Maike Bleeker discusses this ruptured condition in the context of historical anatomic theatre, where the body is demonstrated and performed at the same time. Anatomy involves the cutting and studying of bodies, therefore through demonstration "performs constative acts that produce knowledge by means of a public demonstration of 'how it is' with the body" (Bleeker 2008:15). This is what Mieke Bal (1996) has termed a 'gesture of exposing' that involves the authority of a person who knows, who points to bodies and is able to 'construct' the body 'as it is'. In a similar manner, Mol and Law discuss the measuring procedure, where the body interacts with the machine:

Hands are active in measuring hypoglycaemia but they do not act alone. They interact with machinery. The success of this interaction depends on the extent to which hands and machines are adapted and adaptable to one another. Some things can be done, if only a body is prepared and trained to do them – others falter when a machine is not properly adjusted to the body it must serve. [] The actively measuring body merges with its measurement machines. What about the body that feels?

(Mol and Law, 2001:10)

I find this last question quite significant. I believe that it should be extended to the context of what happens after the crossing (if the crossing is possible at all). What about the body that feels and how is that transcribed into digital data on the screen? My body is active in producing and providing data, but my active body is not isolated. Instead the boundaries are leaky. An active body incorporates bits and pieces of the world around it, while its action may be shifted out of the body, excorporated onto the screen. The body becomes a set of tensions.

Similar to medical sites (hospitals, surgeries etc.), border sites (border controls, detention camps etc.) radically expose the body and create extreme conditions of separation between feeling and action. This heightened stasis of separation became a provocation for my research. By continuing the above established tactics of unrevealing and talking about the (in)visible borders, in the next chapter, I am not only interested in how our body is being perceived as different, but how through technology our body encounters the screen as division in our everyday life.

3.

Borders with/in screen

“ I believe that art can function as a critique of existing culture and as a locus where futures not otherwise possible can begin to shape themselves.” (Hiller, 1996:xiii)

In this chapter, I am analyzing the first part of the practical element created for this thesis. In 2010 I embraced the opportunity to undertake the autoethnographic practice as research project “Valid until...”. This practical exploration was preceded with six weeks intensive self-documentation with a mobile phone called “Microprojects in proximity of waiting and walking” (2009). In this part of my practice I explore the production of borders, examining how they engage bodies and spatial scales. Despite their seemingly confounding specificities, it was my intention to carry out research using mobile digital media between these borders in order to enable new terms of artistic and political engagement. By bringing plurality of perspectives into dialogue around the themes of body, mobile technology and space, I hope to reinvigorate critical analysis of the border in all of its (im)materialities and locations. I want to reveal what lies behind the making of performance art with digital media, particularly when crossing extremely volatile geographic and cultural borders.

The first part of this chapter is establishing the theoretical framework that informed my practice. I will talk in detail about Latour’s concept of the body as (2004) an assemblage and then will connect it to the Bacon’s (2006) processual approach and my approach to practice as research. I will finish this section by making links between autobiometry (Cooley, 2005) and autotopography (Heddon, 2008) and how they merge in the autoethnographic methodology.

The second part of this chapter is discussing the process and the typological element emerging out of this practical exploration. The aim of this part is to outline how theoretical and practical are brought together in my process. Finally, I will link this concepts to my own practice as research work and explain how my process extendeds this discourse.

3.1 Assemblage as a processual approach – from theory to practice

This section provides detail about assemblage as a key method in my research. First of all, I introduce the theoretical concept behind assemblage. Then I look at a study that uses assemblage as method. And finally I discuss how I apply assemblage as a method to my practice and research.

3.1.1. Theoretical overview of assemblage as method

Bruno Latour in his pivotal essay "*How to Talk about the Body*" defines the body as the actor that "leaves a dynamic trajectory by which we learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of" (2004: 206). The body, for Latour, is an assemblage through the way it is connected to material practices, human and non-human, which articulates its potentiality. Latour developed a subtype of grounded theory called Actor Network Theory (ANT) that is based on ethnographic methods focusing on meanings defined by the actors themselves. In my methodology I emphasize the process of assembling my body through continuous reflective writing and autobiographical use of the mobile phone.

According to Latour, the body (human/actor) when it establishes a relationship with technology (non-human/actant) becomes "an interface that is more and more describable as it learns to be affected by more and more elements" (2004:206). The term 'assemblage' in this case is a reference to the assembled connections that produce and enact what entities, such as the body, are taken to be. Although assemblages are well-formed connections that might have semi-permanence, the connections are always subject to modification, alteration and recomposition and are thus temporary in nature. One of the most important aspects of assemblages is that they are performative: they are an association and concatenation of a range of heterogeneous elements that produce what we take entities to be. It is the relational connections that articulate what the body is capable of, what it can do, and what it might become. The body is reformulated as a body that always extends and is

augmented by its conjoining with other objects, human and non-human.

However, before I explain my process, I would like to briefly talk about how assemblage was used as a method by discussing the work of Anmarie Mol and John Law (they explore how people with diabetes are handling the hypoglycaemias that sometimes happen to them, and how they negotiate between measuring glyucose levels and their own body signals). Mol and Law's exploration of assemblage as a method is prompted by the basic binary that the living body is both an object and a subject. The body is an object of technological knowledge. When it is observed with the naked eye and through microscopes, CCTV cameras, life streams and other visual machinery the body is an object. It is an object when it is measured in a variety of ways, from taking a pulse, to determining its speed while walking a certain route with a smart phone. And the body-object may be sensed as well, touched by your medical practitioner or searched on the border crossing. The living body is a subject, too. It is us: for it is as embodied that we are human beings. Thus the body is the fleshy condition for, or, more specifically the fleshy situatedness of our modes of living. In being a living body we experience pain, hunger or pain as well as satisfaction, ecstasy or pleasure. And while the object-body is exposed and publicly displayed, the subject-body is private and beyond language.

This given is the starting point of Mol's exploration, that we have a public body-object and are a private subject-body. We all have and are a body. There is, however, a way out of this binary. According to Mol and Law (2004), as part of our daily practices, we also do (our) bodies. In practice we enact them. The body we have is the one known by pathologists after our death, while the body we are is the one we know ourselves by being self-aware. What then about the body we do? Mol and Law, in their ethnographic study of how hypoglycaemia is handled by people with diabetes, attended to the way we do our bodies. By attempting to leave the common knowledge that we have and are our bodies, they talk about the body that is not a bound whole, but whose boundaries leak. As they argue, "bits and pieces of the outside get incorporated within the active body; while the centre of some bodily activities is beyond the skin" (2004:1).¹⁷

¹⁷ In order to explore this Mol and Law were executing Action network theory ethnographic study based on the idea of assemblage put out there in the reality. They were discussing

This body is not a well defined whole; it is not closed off, but has semi-permeable boundaries. Or as Mol and Law conclude: “You do not have, you are not, a body-that-hangs-together, naturally, all by itself. Keeping yourself whole is one the tasks of life. It is not given but must be achieved, both beneath the skin and beyond, in practice” (2004:15).

3.1.2. Concept applied in my practice

In my process this approach was used to access my own body, as an assemblage and to explore in depth numerous aspects that define my relationship with the MSDs that were used. My process based practice “*Microprojects in proximity of waiting and walking*” and “*Valid until...*” explores how MSDs are experienced by the female practitioner and how the female body is assembled on screen. The question that I try to answer in response to above discussed premises is what can be discovered and discussed about assembling of our body through screen technology as part of the artistic process? The body we have is an assemblage of forces, or flows, intentions and emotions that solidify in space, and strengthen in time, within or between what we call object/subject body or an “individual” self. This intensive and dynamic entity does not coincide with the deep inventory of what constitutes us from inside, nor is it merely the unfolding of genetic data and information of the body as an object. It is rather a quantity of forces that are stable enough to sustain and to undergo constant, though, non-destructive, fluxes of transformation.¹⁸ This transformation is what I consider to be essential for the artistic process, as it becomes a link between reason and the imagination, theory and practice, an instrument of production of the new. But, how do we justify practice as

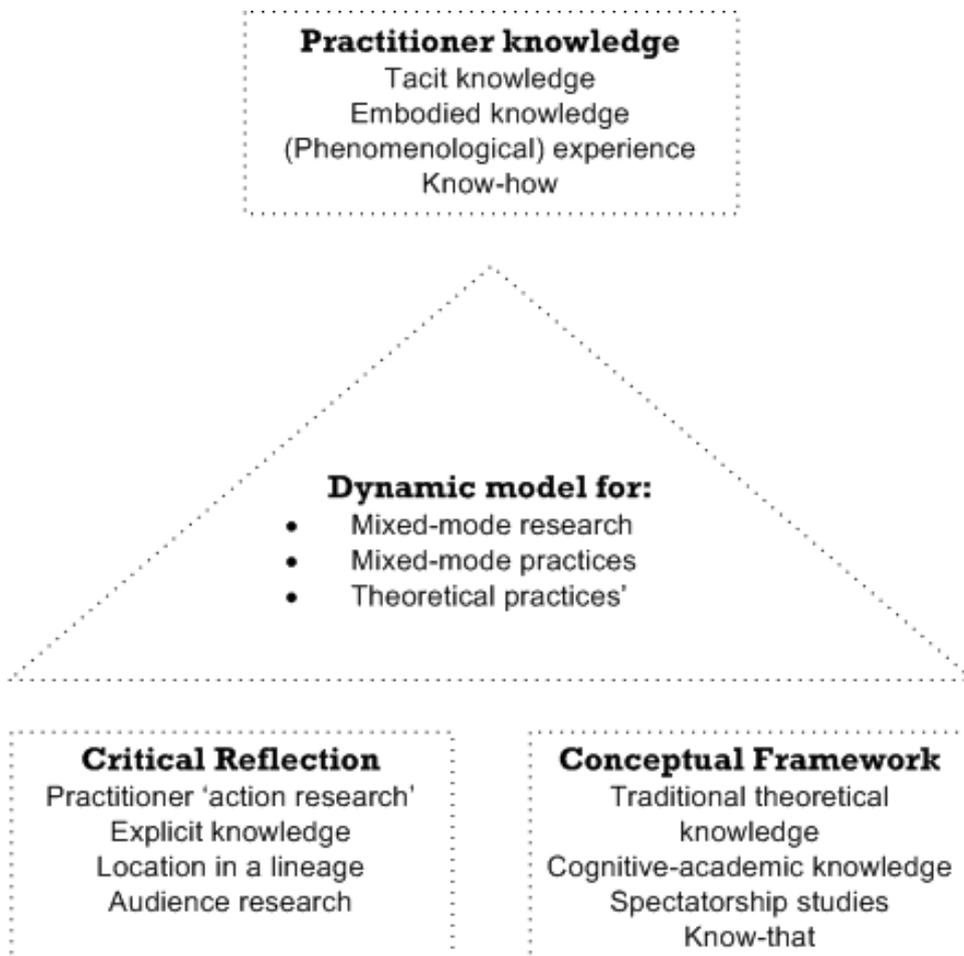
hypoglycaemia taken from a continuing study of living with diabetes in their essay: Embodied Action, Enacted Bodies. The Example of Hypoglycaemia. They are interested in how someones body is doing hypoglycaemia.

¹⁸ When Braidotti (1996) defines the post-human body she suggests that it is more appropriate to speak of our body in terms of embodiment, that is to say of multiple bodies or sets of embodied positions. Embodiment means that we are situated subjects, capable of performing sets of (inter)actions which are-discontinuous in space and time. Embodied subjectivity is thus a paradox that rests simultaneously on the historical decline of mind/body distinctions and the proliferation of discourses about the body.

research as an assemblage process (process of constant transformation and change)?

3.2 Assembling the practice – PaR approach

When discussing the integration of the artistic process in the PaR environment, Robert Nelson suggests a model of triangulation, which on many levels is useful for an art practitioner. If I try to simplify and visualize my process, I can easily fit my practice into this model. My research is constantly shifting between my practice (performative acts), reflection (autobiographical writing) and theory. Nelson established the method of triage in practice led research as shown below on the scheme:



Robin Nelson, (2009) Model of triangulation of data-sets, In: Practice-as-Research in performance and screen. p.127 ©Robin Nelson

He had developed this model based on the idea of triangulation of data-sets from the social sciences and sought to apply it in an arts and media practice-as-research context. Nelson, to a certain extent, tries to imply that due to the fact that this model is strongly associated with the hard social-science notion of different data-sets seeking to affirm one fixed and knowable reality, it is not entirely appropriate for practice-as-research. For this reason he introduces the dynamic model for process, cross-referencing different sources of testimony, data, and evidence in a multi-vocal approach to a dialogic process. The outcome for Nelson sits in the centre of the triangle (Nelson in Allegue et al, 2009:127).

However, Nelson does not explore exactly what establishes the process, and how this dynamic model that is in constant transformation is articulated into practice as research. I argue that exactly this point of constant transformation, of doing, of being in process is the most important aspect of practice as research (especially my process). I base my argument on the fact that this process is a matter of pursuing a way of being with and through one's practice, practice which is deeply committed to thinking about the interconnectedness of life and life processes¹⁹ and the result that is the artwork in its becoming.

This is what Bacon calls a processual approach (2006), rather than a product oriented one. This approach (method) according to Bacon enables the researcher to think of themselves as an ethnographer (2006:138). This approach had made me contemplate on how I tell my story (or being self-reflexive, this work belongs to evocative autoethnography tradition, which connects the autobiographical impulse with the ethnographic impulse). It involves reflexive awareness about the process between the artist's body and the screen technologies that are used. What is the process of sharing a (her)story²⁰, rather than the product of packing the (her)story for presenting? Ellis adds to this discussion and says: "How I tell my current story depends on

¹⁹ Be they biological – the motherhood theme in my work (Chapter 4, p.105) or the socio-cultural-border theme (Chapter 3, p. 76) in my work.

²⁰ Herstory- history from a female point of view or as it relates to women

[from changing the initial *his* in HISTORY to *her*, as if HISTORY were derived from *his* + *story* rather than from Latin *historia*] Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003

how I've told my story before, and the responses each version received" (Ellis in Tierney and Lincoln, 1997:119). This emphasizes the nature of the process, where things are following a spiral, rather than a linear path. Bacon describes this tendency in her further writing about her own process:

Perhaps a word I am searching for is *process*, an artistic process imaged in both inner and outer realities. It is not the product created but the process of creation that enlivens. Immerse myself in the imaginal and to do that I must allow imagination, welcome, accept and cultivate it but not necessarily *attempt* shape and form, simply *notice* and be *present*.

(Bacon, 2010:unpaginated)

The processual approach relates closely to the idea of assemblage. These approaches look into how to coincide with all things living and non-living- and are not based merely on a simple coexistence with things. This relates as well to what Grosz calls 'an empirical attunement', which she describes as a mode of 'intimate knowing' (Grosz 2001:179). Empirical attunement as an intimate 'knowing' as knowing in being: it is ecological. It is an intra-relational knowing, wherein the knower is an effect of the relation of knowledge, rather than its precondition (as in rational-empirical knowing). It is a knowing in its becoming, in its being lived. Similarly to this, artistic practice becomes something that evolves in sympathetic relation, i.e. with an attunement to the process of that practice (Cooley, 2008: 267).

The reason why I choose to talk about these approaches (Bacon 2006; Grosz 2012; Cooley 2008) is that they involve reflexive awareness about the process between the artist's body and the screen technologies that were used. However, they also involve awareness of a variety of pasts (personal and socio-cultural) that inform our living and creating with these technologies.

3.3 Evocative autoethnography

In Chapter 2, I was outlining what shapes the autobiographical approach of different artists that are discussed in this thesis. I am continuing this analysis by placing an emphasis on what shapes my approach to autobiographical writing

and autoethnographic creative processes.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section Reflection, under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/623923/gallery/reflection>

Here I want to make a clear distinction on my approach to autoethnography. My work belongs to an evocative autoethnography tradition, which connects the autobiographical impulse with the ethnographic impulse. The ethnographic impulse has been characterized by 'the gaze outward', as Neuman (1996) says, 'at worlds beyond [our] own, as a means of marking the social coordinates of a self'. The autobiographical impulse 'gazes inward for a story of self, but ultimately retrieves vantage points for interpreting culture' (Neuman, 1996:173).

Evocative autoethnography fluently moves back and forth, first looking inward, then outward, then backward, and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994:417), until the distinctions between the individual and social are blurred beyond recognition and the past, present, and future become continuous (Crites, 1971:294). The inner workings of the self must be investigated in reciprocal relationship with the other: concrete action, dialogue, emotion, and thinking are featured, but they are represented within relationships and institutions, very much impacted by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, thought, and language. According to Ellis, a story's 'validity': "can be judged by whether it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is authentic and lifelike, believable and possible; the story's generalizability can be judged by whether it speaks to readers about their experience" (Ellis in Tierney and Lincoln, 1997:133).

When Ellis introduced the term evocative autoethnography her goal was to extend ethnography to include the heart, the autobiographical, and the artistic text. She claims that the autoethnography should be self-absorbed.

...if you are not absorbed with the topic of your research, how can you write well about it? Of course, a person writing autoethnography also needs to be absorbed with the world she inhabits and the processes she finds herself a part of, which also work their way into one's identity.

(Ellis in Tierney and Lincoln, 1997:123)

However, in addition to telling about experiences, while I was using autoethnographic approach a need occurred to analyse these experiences. As Mitch Allen says, an autoethnographer must:

...look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story—and that's nice—but people do that on Oprah [a U.S.-based television program] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as 'my story,' then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV?

(Allen in Ellis and Bochner, 2006:433)

Since I am dedicated to autoethnographic methodology, I do not only write about remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of my life. I rather retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity.

At the end of this section it is important to mention that autoethnography as a genre is still considered by some to be a controversial approach to qualitative research (Duncan, 2004; Holt, 2003), Duncan writes:

If the value of autoethnography is to be understood more clearly by the wider research community, those engaged in this emerging art need to assist their readers in judging its worth. To include in the research report adequate justification for the choice of this method and demonstration of how appropriate evaluation criteria might be applied are two ways in which researchers can help reviewers appreciate what autoethnography has to offer.

(Duncan, 2004:29)

3.3.1. Autoethnography between autotopography and autobiometry

Revisiting the past in order to analyze the present moment is a constitutive element of autoethnographic artistic practice. That is why the autoethnographic and the political are interconnected. Although the use of autobiography and autoethnography in literature and art pre-dates the second-wave feminist

movement, it was in the early 1970s that the political potential of selfexplorative performance and art practice was harnessed to its full potential. Due to the nature of my study, I will not go into a historical overview, however I wanted to acknowledge the significance of the link between feminist art practice and autobiography, in developing methodologies for embracing and discussing the difference that is made with the use of technology.

The translation of personal material into feminist live performance was inarguably tied to consciousness-raising activities, which focused analysis specifically on women's experience (under the banner of 'the personal is political' Hanisch, 1970; 2006). If the subject of the 'everyday' was not normally the matter of politics, neither was it the typical matter of contemporary art or performance. Therefore the entry of the explicitly personal into the aesthetic would have been considered a political gesture in the 1970s. Consciousness-raising generated self-consciousness on the part of the women that allowed an articulation of specifically female (everyday) experiences in art. I would like to underline as most influential and important for my study, the experience of women artists on the West Coast of the USA during the late 1960s and early 1970s²¹, that provides indisputable evidence of the way in which consciousness-raising fed into feminist art making, and in particular the placing of the personal within the work. As Faith Wilding states:

...by fortuitous accident, it seemed, we had stumbled on a way of working: using consciousness-raising to elicit content [...] to reveal our hidden histories.

(Wilding in Broude and Garrard, 1994:34)

In relation to this, my artistic practice is dedicated to the process and insists on autoethnography as a genre and its malleability and rearticulation in the face of the new technologies. In particular, I am interested in the recontextualization of

²¹ In the fall of 1971, the relocated Feminist Art Program started at California Institute of the Arts with 25 students. Since the school was still under construction, the Program met in the private residencies of the students to plan its first project, Womanhouse, which had been conceived by Paula Harper, an art historian who had joined the Program's staff. In planning a large beginning project, the Program faculty hoped to accomplish several things: first, to lead students confront their problem as women while grappling with the demands of a project rather than undergoing initial extended consciousness-raising; second, to give students the chance to learn many skills and work collaboratively; and last but most importantly, to force the students to begin pushing their role limitations as women and to test themselves as artists. As it turned out, all of these hopes were realized, and Womanhouse has become an example to feminist art practitioners.

autoethnographic practice in relation to MSD technologies and more sophisticated metadata encoding applications (exp. Web blogs, Google maps).

In the last essay of *The Subject of Documentary*, Renov makes the important point that the adjective —autobiographical is appropriate to certain 1990s Internet practices (2004:203). He considers the personal webpage to be one such example. Not unexpectedly, the personal webpage, in being a variation of the autobiographical form, speaks to and modifies the autobiographical practices introduced in performance, film and video. And just as performance, film and video transformed autobiography as literary forms, Renov asserts that the personal webpage and its platform, the Internet, —have radically altered the culture of the autobiography. In particular, he notes that both speed and accessibility (to potentially everything) circumscribe the mechanisms of autobiographical expression in its electronic webpage form.

And yet, in light of more recent trends in Web 2.0, the personal webpage has become a rather anachronistic example of the ways in which the autobiographical mode is triggered and channelled. Perhaps the most well known feature of Web 2.0 is blogging. Derived from the word —weblog, coined by John Barger in 1997, blogging refers to a form of online personal journaling, in which entries accrue in reverse chronological order. Blogs provide commentary and personal opinion on a range of topics, from news events, to politics, to hobbies and interests, to more personal matters regarding family, friends and personal dilemmas. While blogs tend to be heavily text-oriented, many also include images (still and moving) and links to other blogs, webpages and media-related content. Blogging fits within a cultural-historical context characterized by an emerging trend in compiling and analyzing—that is, tracking.²² For Geert Lovink, blogging is neither a project nor a proposal but an *a priori* condition of existence (Lovink in Cooley, 2007:105). Put another way:

²² Tracking is the analysis of visitor behaviour on a website. Analysis of an individual visitor's behaviour may be used to provide that visitor with options or content that relates to their implied preferences; either during a visit or in the future. Use of tracking technologies can be controversial when applied in the context of a private individual; and to varying degrees is subject to legislation such as the EU's eCommerce Directive and the UK's Data Protection Act

blogging is not something one does, it is how one becomes. It is in this way that we can refer to the autoethnographic impulse in blogging as being more than metaphorical, but rather processual.

With the introduction of handheld mobile-imaging devices, specifically camera phones, this becomes even more the case, insofar as the result of the device (potentially) always being in hand is a seeming compulsion for continuous imaging. In this case, mobile-imaging is less a matter of a particular story of the self to be told or presented and more a matter of the very act or process of telling. Given that mobile-imaging devices, such as camera phones, are (potentially) always in hand, self-documentation coincides with or is articulated through what Mizuko Ito describes as an awareness of the person as an organism in process (Ito in Porter, 1997:93). People who engage in mobile-imaging are mobilized and propelled by further (and compulsory) imaging, imaging that transpires as a form of urge which arises instantaneously. In other words, mobile-imaging is a matter of immediacy and spontaneity; it happens on-the-go. As such, mobile-imaging documents are records of piqued attention or intensity of experience.

3.3.2. Autoethnographic practice in the context of mobile-imaging

So out of this discussion, I am trying to conclude what becomes of autoethnographic practice in the context of mobile-imaging? When do intensities—that is, ebbs and flows of attention, peaks and troughs of interest or attraction—become the mode of expression driving self-record? In order to answer this, in my practice I am dwelling between two key concepts introduced by Cooley (2006) and Heddon (2008), that bring together the body, the place and the mobile devices, in an autoethnographic process.

Deirdre Heddon in thinking about performances (and artistic practices) that fold or unfold autobiography and place, particularly outdoors places, conceptualised them as being autotopographic. Topos comes from the Greek word for place, while graphein means to scratch, to draw, to write; topography then signifies the writing of place. Autotopography intends to foreground the subjectivity involved

in plotting place; autotopography is writing place through self (and simultaneously writing self through place). Autotopography, like autobiography, is a creative act of seeing, interpretation and invention, all of which depend on where you are standing, when and for what purpose. With its stress on the auto, perspective is foregrounded in a way that distinguishes it from dominant (contemporary and Western) forms of mapping. This sort of mapping also allows you to 'write' the unknown or unrecognised route (similarly to the earliest feminist performance practice for raising awareness of counter-histories) (Heddon, 2008:91).

Heidi Cooley in a similar direction to Heddon, proposes the term —autobiometry and its derivative, —autobiometrical. Auto again foregrounds the perspective of speaking from a less privileged place. Though, more importantly, she introduces a shift from *-graphy* to *-metry*, wherein a writing (broadly speaking) becomes reconstituted as a measuring of one's life, as the morphemes, *auto* (self), *bios* (life) and *-metry* (measure) imply. Autobiometry, designates a mode of self-recording or catalogue; or more specifically, an account of one's life: mobile-imaging as an autobiometrical accounting of (and accounting for) the self in its living. Certainly, as a form of self-documentation, it speaks to more conventional autobiographical practices—although it is not to be confused with these. Moreover, it emphasizes the metrical tendency proper to an ongoing registering of sequences, series, and patterns. Cooley with autobiometry extends Rose's definition of 'calculable person' as a person —whose individuality is no longer private, unique, and beyond knowledge, but can be known, mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted, and managed by means of his/her commitment to processes of self-understanding and self-improvement—both of which can be aligned with the confessional nature attributable to autobiographical practice (Rose, 1996:88). Such processes involve producing the human being as information. However, producing the human being as information is not a process of abstraction, which is typically the argument (as in the case of medical screens) but of stabilization (a distinct but subtle difference). Essentially, the calculable person is the condition of possibility for the calculability of the social sphere, and this is even more the case in the context of the proliferation of mobile-imaging artistic process,

particularly since such images are not static and do not exist in isolation. In this context, blogs are modes of giving life to autobiometrical accounts, which, through proliferating mobile phone images, express the autobiographical intensities of living. In the next section, I will discuss how this two distinct concepts, shape my own process and how I came to use assemblage in conjunction with the PaR methodology.

3.3.3. Assembling the autoethnographic processual practice in the Practice as Research context

By bringing together the assemblage, processual practice as research and autoethnography, I developed an unique methodology to analyse my practical work and to articulate the creative voices that shape my research. In this section I will underline how I used assemblage to articulate diverse approaches. In addition, I will discuss my approach to Practice as Research and the process that shaped the final thesis.

This practice as research thesis relies on analysis of the creative process. Through the process I found the voice and meaning of this thesis. This focus on the process was conceived early on in the research, when I participated in an experiential movement group lead by Prof Jane Bacon. According to Bacon, in this group we allow time and space for somatic exploration of the complex web of relations between creative practice-led research, personal story and the bodily-felt and experienced implications of social and cultural location (2010).

After one of the session, I wrote the following reflection:

My family are very liberal, but my country is very patriarchal and more and more I keep finding that the voice of the culture is in my body, it is in my head even though I don't want it to be. I want to make my work but I think I must begin to find a way to work with this voice that I didn't really realize I had and don't want.

(Marchevska, 2009)

Later I link this to an entry, on my research blog, that is discussin Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's 1993 exhibition 'Matrix – Borderlines' and her attendant psychoanalytic writing, about the concept of borderlining.

This is what Bracha describes as borderlining, and it is in her view, a psychic landscape, the very site in which the present emerges, from the scattered and animated remains of continuing, though not continuous, trauma.

(Marchevska, 2009:online)

My inner process in this thesis is as important as the critical analysis of the key concepts. If the researcher's self is more than a filter through which influence and invention coalesce into practice, what then might it mean to show oneself through practice? To make oneself both performatively and analytically visible, to offer oneself up in order to be read as 'subject'?

According to Freeman, the complexities of reading one's own practice are there for any of us who make study of our own working processes (2010:157).

Freeman questions:

The key question then is not what type of work is one reflecting upon so much as how accurate can one's act of self-reflection ever be?

(2010:157)

When reflecting on my process both as Authentic movement practitioner and as my Director of studies, Prof Jane Bacon writes the following:

Elena told me she was struggling with something she was unsure about. In tutorials we focus on the work she is making, the books she is reading but she does not speak easily about her creative processes or practice-led methodology. An image arrives, it is of someone, perhaps Elena, shadow boxing. I do not tell her about my image yet.

Often in the experiential group she discovers movements that are like Lichtenberg Ettinger's 'borderlining', like a fault line, a sense of being separated from parts of herself but also, now, there is space where those parts might be joined.

(Bacon, 2010:69)

This struggle was evident in my reflective writing as well.

In couple of sessions, over three months, I have a movement that is reoccurring. My body is exploring this pattern and always ends up with the same feeling, like being locked. Even the witness is picking up on that feeling of incapability to move. It seems like my body is being split in two.

(Marchevska, 2009:online)

I used this feeling, the physical reality of the pain, to link the theory to my

process and to my practice. I wrote reflective entries and expanded my process by incorporating my journal and my private letter collection to my daughters, in my thesis. I was ready to ask myself: How do I tell my story? Connecting personal and scholarly details, my autoethnographic voice takes readers through my experience of writing autoethnographic text, examines the creative process and the cultural context, shows how I moved from writing about screen as object of patriarchal research to writing evocative accounts of how screen is used a metaphor.

3.3.4. Performative walks as an assemblage

In the next section ('The process') I will describe chronologically and in detail, how specific tools and processes were used to bridge the theory, practice and reflection. The aim of the next section is to outline the different technologies employed for documentation during and after the performative walks I made in Northampton, and how the properties of the specific technologies that I use brought about particular readings of the sensory and cognitive experiences of my walking in Northampton.

I started my first exploration with an aim to generate a series of temporary performative acts (interventions and actions) in different sites across Northampton (and later Skopje, my hometown) where the performers' motion, as well as the motion of the space would be recorded, reprocessed and real-time rendered/performed on the screen. The steps one takes- the act of walking and waiting in an open space are surely altered by mobile phones and other portable devices. I explore mobile device usage as quite literally a mode of embodiment, a way of 'doing a body' (Mol and Law, 2004).

I became especially interested throughout the process in how mobile imaging with a camera phone is informed by an autobiographical impulse and, thereby, belongs to a long tradition of first-person forms of documentation. In addition to this, I chose to document my practice on a blog, since electronic media forms (e.g., the personal webpage's and blogs) have been and continue to be sites of autobiographical practice as well.

The introduction of handheld mobile imaging devices, specifically camera phones, has required a reconsideration of the autobiographical impulse and its role in society. As suggested by Colley, “mobile imaging practices function as an extension but also (substantial) revision of the impetus to speak the self” (2005:1). I use mobile media to map my body directly onto the Northampton landscape. In my work, the body, according to the processual approach, is not taken for granted as a fixed entity but is instead seen as having a plasticity or malleability which means that it can take different forms and shapes at different times, and so also have a geography.

3.4 The process

I named my first practical exploration, *Microprojects on walking and waiting* and it consisted of walks across the Northampton Racecourse lasting 10-30 minutes. Also, I executed two consecutive performances: Performance 1-Waiting and Performance 2-Walking.

I used a processual method to assemble different aspects of my body. I recorded my movement track every day, mapping the track that I walked most often during one week. I recorded that particular walk with a mobile phone camera, recording the track with Gmaps, reprocessing the data and creating documentation and reflection of the walk.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section **Walking**, under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/457165/gallery/walking>

3.4.1. Walking

During my first year in Northampton and the UK, I walked in the town in order to view it more closely. I was looking to acquaint myself with the cultural sprawl via

a corporeal practice that allowed me to experience the foreign space in a more intimate way. The geographic terrain of Northampton felt “foreign” to me because its shape and scope were unfamiliar and navigating or getting a sense of either posed a challenge beyond what I had expected. My need to walk in Northampton arose not only in order to map out the town. It was a physical and neurological need to get out of my own feeling as a foreigner, best understood by this journal entry from my walking research, when I first arrived,

Driving past the Racecourse, on a rainy Monday. The town shape is melting on the wet windshield. I feel like disappearing and seeing another place, a better one, warmer, more responsive, not so intimidating and foreign. A place where I will fit in as well, where my language and presence will be acknowledged. Maybe if I walk long enough, my traces will not be erased. Maybe if I wait long enough, my body will become visible.

(Marchevska, 2009)

Influenced by what artist and theorist Guy Debord (1956) called the *derive*²³ or “drift,” the later walks were without loose intention and attempted to tune in to my instinctual desires to determine direction (both physical and emotional). It was during these walks that various technologies became important for my artistic practice and the performance that I would create in response to walking in Northampton. The walks and their documentation were the raw material for the creative process that followed, which led to the previously mentioned two experimental performance works.

The three phases of my processual approach were: “experience,” “discovery,”

²³ One of the basic situationist practices is the *dérive*, a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.

But the *dérive* includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities. In this latter regard, ecological science, despite the narrow social space to which it limits itself, provides psychogeography with abundant data.

and “performance.” The first covers my initial experience of walking in a town that I barely knew, as well as how video and writing were used to document it and later became material for the performance. Second, the shaping and actual discovery of the content of the piece took place on the screen and employed digitally projected versions of the moving images, and the body. Third, public performance brought this work in front of an audience (mainly supervisors and colleagues) and made visible the role of recording technologies as mediating layers of meaning. In practice, these phases were not isolated chronologically as they overlapped, dissolved into and influenced one another.

An example of how the phases experience and discovery overlap is the blog entry titled *Туку така под облака* and the image attached to it. The name of this entry is an archaic phrase in Macedonian, my native language, which can be translated loosely in: “We are here, under the clouds”. Metaphorically, this archaic phrase refers to human connections with nature and landscape, and implies that the only way a human being can be into its body is when they are outside, just standing between the clouds and the earth.

I walk across an empty field alone and as a woman; the mobile phone as a tool on this journey. I encounter the challenges that come with this solitary act executed on the male dominated geography and history of the Racecourse as a site. The Racecourse has a long tradition of being the major open space in Northampton for both regular formal sports and for major events. This open space of just over 118 acres, and notably one of the largest landmarks in the town, received its present name when it became a venue for horse racing. Races had been held on the site unofficially since 1632. Races were not the only spectator event held on the site. From 1715 until 1818, the site was used for public executions. From 1914 until 1915 the area was converted into an army camp of stables and tents. During the Second World War the Racecourse once again became an army camp until 1946 with huts, roads and barracks. In 1953 when the camp was demolished the Racecourse was once again brought back to become a green area with tree planting and re-landscaping. This open space still carries its violent male history, being declared as dangerous terrain

to cross at night and people being constantly attacked on its premises. There have been a couple of rape cases reported in the last couple of years, which brings down the value of the neighborhoods around the Racecourse, and immigrants mainly inhabit them. My family is one of them.

3.4.2. Performing

The performance phase was executed in two parts and shaped significantly the practical outcome of this research. Below I briefly describe the performative work and then reflect on how it connects with my research aims.

In Performance 1 *Waiting*, I performed the waiting with the tools and objects around me. I am alone in a black cube performance space with projection of my walks behind me. My computer and my mobile phone are on a table next to me. On my left is my daughter's pushchair. I am waiting. I change my position. I wait again. Change my position. I am waiting again. I finish waiting, leave the room, the projection continues, the tools left behind me, the space is empty.

Few members of audience...among them my friend and her two year old daughter, who was at same age as my daughter at that time. She runs around me while I stand still, and heads straight to the door...Her mother follows, they both disappear outside. I finish, and open up for questions. The first question: "Was that your child? " ...

And quite a logical question. The audience can see her in the video, her pushchair is in the space...

No, my child is not with me, although my body aches for her. She is in every video that I make; she is with me on every walk that I take; she is still attached to me. She just stopped breastfeeding few weeks ago.

Though, not with me when I perform.

We talk about structure, composition, decisions...The first question still resonates with me. How much do we bring in the space through performance? The real performance, if I am honest, remains hidden. Do I need to perform in front of an audience or I should remain loyal to my own hidden practice, on the performance happening between the phone, the screen and me.

In Performance 2 *Walking*, I performed the distance and the walking in a white cube space while my image was streamed in the next door room. There was also a small screen with my walking video next to the big projection of my streamed performance. Large and small screen. I walk the same route every 5 minutes. I finish with a close up of my face. The choreographed action of a walk, a body in transition. Absence and presence. Mediated versus life. Wall as a border.

After this performance, I felt like I betrayed my practice and unfocused my research. I lost track of the questions, by stylizing my body. I tried to perform for an audience, to create something that will communicate a process. But, actually what happened was that the process was lost and framed and crashed under stylized movement and the aim to show knowledge. I tend to forget that the process of learning is not linear but spiral, as educationalist Jerome Bruener argued, "knowing is a process not a product" and it is always intuitive and exploratory (Bruener in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011:13). Body in research and body in practice should not be different. So, how do you show your body in process, in a research environment? Do you present it or represented it? Mediate or remediate? What method do I need to use to encounter my body in the research, to collect evidence and information, and to gain deeper understanding of performance? And what kind of performance do I really want to discuss? As Richard Schechner has noted, in the twenty-first century it is increasingly difficult to make clear distinctions between the bounded events understood to be performance, by context, convention, usage and tradition, and human experience and its by-products that we are able to understand and analyse 'as' performance (2002:49). I look yet again in the Parker-Starbuck and Mock's table, of methodological approaches used to analyse, understand or emphasis 'body' as subject of study (Parker-Starbuck and Mock in Kersaw and al., 2011:214). Yes, I am theorizing my body, by investigating my own lived experience and I am archiving my body by identifying evidence of corporeal experience from the past in documented form. I am definitely using first-person methodologies (hence this writing) and doing physical exploration of everyday activities with reflexive bodily awareness. And above all I share research

through the body by autoethnographic storytelling that is addressing absent bodies. Used singly or in combination, the above methods provide strategies for negotiating tensions between bodies in theory/practice.

I ticked all the boxes, but still feel that performing in front of the audience felt false in this research. Going against my own intuition, and personal boundaries. Parts were eventually performed elsewhere²⁴, but the actual performing body remains in the screen archive and the stories. Body-centered performance research is certainly not limited to creative practice or traditional “bodies in movement on stage”. Different researchers arrive at their subjects of study from a variety of routes: personal interest relating to family, childhood, illness etc. (Parker-Starbuck and Mock in Kersaw and al., 2011:215). The decision to omit the live performance element was difficult, though it put me at ease and allowed me to approach the process in greater depth.

3.5 Valid until...

This initial exploration led to a more in-depth research on the theme of borders and lines. *Valid until...* consisted of a series of autobiographical writing, performative photographs and videos taken during a period of 140 days. The period was symbolic, equal to one hundred and forty questions that I had to answer about myself and my family in the visa application. This is a challenge that repeatedly occurs in my life. Coming from South East Europe (the ex-Yugoslavia region), my validity and legal status is constantly re-evaluated and subject to the scrutiny of the Western European authorities.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section Valid until... , under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/457158/gallery/valid-until>

²⁴ Although not focus of this study, parts of this research found way in my collaboration with Charlotte Nichol and in our two performances “Dia” (2011, Circuit, Demonfort university, Leicester) and “ DIA II- The tale of two stories” (2012, Somatics and technology conference, University of Chichester)

The period of one hundred and forty days was a period of confirming the validity of my legal status in United Kingdom. I was mapping the physical and invisible borders through walking the digital lines of my everyday life, as points of creative assemblage, rather than points of division.

In the web section *Valid until...* consisting of photographs and a video, the phases experience, discovery and performance overlap again. There is another layer to this section, consistent of blog entries (titled: *No traces...; Privileged; Post-medium;* etc.) that are an autobiographical reflection on the performative situation that is captured and then theoretically justified.

The act of making the photographs and the videos is processual. The mobile phone camera is set. I am standing with the camera in hand or it is attached to my body or to an object that I carry – in a singular, unchanging position. Since the mobile phone in my hand is part of my process, this presupposes a continuous merging, or becoming-one between my body and the MSD. The experience is one that is dynamic and always happening. With regard to MSDs with imaging capabilities, this correspondence between holding the mobile phone device and seeing defines artist's relation to the screen (whether it be the LCD screen of a digital camera or camcorder, or that of a smart mobile phone). In this instance, for me, as a practitioner, my vision is not a practice of seeing through a window, but looking at the screen. And this shift from windowed seeing to screen seeing reconfigures my relationship to that which is seen. Whereas a window distances viewers from what they are looking at, the screen draws me toward the images that are displayed on the screen (not beyond it). That which is being viewed (and recorded) no longer exists separate from me. The space, formerly located on the other side of the frame, converges or fuses with the screen, its physicality becoming the physicality of the screen. In looking at the screen, I engage the screen and, subsequently, enter into a relationship with the screen. This relationship is a process and unfolding; it does not involve containment but contingency. It allows me to erase the border between me, as a practitioner and the screen as a tool.

As mentioned above, I frame initially and the camera records or takes multiple photographs of where I am walking. Walking and waiting are ephemeral acts

and interventions into the physical world with the intention of learning not about the otherness of the inanimate MSD in my hand, but about its sameness – that all forms of matter are one and that the living human body therefore can respond to them all, must respond to them all. I do not stop recording until I finish my determinate route. The long take emerges as a process of discovery, enabled by the duration of the frame. A long take is an uninterrupted shot in a film/video which lasts much longer than the conventional editing pace either of the film/video itself or of films/videos in general, usually lasting several minutes. It can be used for dramatic and narrative effect if done properly, and in moving shots traditionally is accomplished through the use of a dolly or Steadicam.

In my opinion, the long take is a way to move closer to the possibility of uncovering the essence and significance of things, a gesture towards clarity. The time in-between the beginning and end of the take extends an opportunity for greater awareness of the topic at hand. Within the time of the frame, everyday things become visible and one is offered a moment to linger on a question rather than pursue a particular answer. In the editing process, there is always a tendency to cut, to reduce the duration. I resist this. I try to put two takes in parallel or to assemble many photographs together, in order to reflect on the moment of experience and discovery. My tendency towards the long take is autoethnographic. My inclination towards the long take derives in part from being drawn to everyday things that often go unnoticed. The long take enables what is neglected to become the center of attention. The border becomes a process rather than an act.

Diary entry, Day 43

I remember the first time my parents took me to visit a mosque. There are beautiful Ottoman mosques in my city and as Christians, we hardly ever visit them. My parents love mosques, and Ottoman architecture. My father bought me ice cream from the Old Bazaar. We ate it while crossing the Open market and looking at spices, fresh fruit and vegetables, chickens and eggs, underwear and linens. He talks constantly about the shapes, and corners and angels and colors...I hardly hear anything, but I enjoy the security of his velvety voice. And

then we entered the mosque yard, it was flooded with roses – white, purple, yellow, red...We took our shoes off and entered. My father leaves us at the door. I am puzzled. My mom pulls my hand. I look at the walls, abstract shapes in blue and orange, it's so silent. We sit in the left corner, behind the wooden screen. Through the holes, I stare at the bare feet of kneeling men. It feels like home, but so foreign. It smells different. I look through the screen, it is like a different country, outland...And then from the corner of my eye I see my father, amongst all those silhouettes that go up and down in a repetitive movement. Still and with a flickering smile on his face. Perhaps we are home after all.

3.6 What this process brings

While in Chapter 2, I positioned my study in a wider field, in this Chapter the theory that shaped my process was discussed and the actual process of how the practical element was developed. I want to acknowledge once more that the limitations of this process-oriented approach are all too familiar. It is an unpredictable context and there are too many open-ended parameters. Although I tried to shape to some extent my practice, by applying score or rules²⁵, the results are not precisely shaped, structured performances or videos, rather opposite. There is a gap between the written and creative practice and a constant pull between how to write about your practice and how you do your body on screen. Bacon discusses this gap:

Often there is still the danger of falling into bodily cliché as choreographer, movement therapist or performance researcher. Or perhaps the danger is in writing or speaking the 'body' rather than the 'experience'. In language the body quickly becomes gesture, a metaphor, a personification of personhood.

(Bacon in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011:229)

Diary entry Day 134

²⁵ Six weeks of walking on a set landscape or 140 days of creative thinking about 140 difficult questions

During a Critic week, every semester at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the tutors and students come together and discuss work in progress. It is an amazing event and opportunity to develop work in a friendly environment. Each student is assigned to a panel and spends a day looking at and discussing other student's work. It was the first Critic week in Chicago for me. It was 2005, a severe winter, with heavy snow. I was on a panel to see the work of a fellow student that I scarcely knew from our Performance studies course. He seems a lovely guy, always with a smile and soft expression.

We enter a dim, black studio, and sit on the chairs that are positioned in a barely lit area. Black out. The video starts, big title, War games. Unsteady handheld camera of someone running through the woods. You can hear shots, and heavy panting of the person running, he leaves the camera on the ground, pointing upwards, I recognize my fellow student in a complete military outfit, heavily armed. He enters the stage in the same outfit and merges with the video. The video continues, young men, with guns, chasing each other, and shooting constantly at each other. He starts reading a text in front of the video, his farewell letter before he joins the army and goes to Afghanistan. Nationalistic patriotic phrases are mixed with personal stories of his life in the South and the culture of hatred and rightness. The tears just start rolling down my cheeks, hot tears of regret, madness and sadness. My voice is lost, no sobs, no words. Just tears.

This young man plays war; I have seen this young man before. I remember all my friends (including my husband) who spent years hiding or living in other households and countries to escape the reality of these "war games". I remember all my friends who were entangled in the reality of these "war games". And I remember all the young men, who came from far away, to charm my girlfriends with their cool approach to this "war games" and to offer them a better life in the West. And here I am in front of this bizarre construct, a young man in front of me, completely unaware of the realities of his war games.

I didn't notice when the lights went on and when this performance of bizarreness finished, but I clearly remember the worried face of my tutor and

her hand wiping my tears. I left the room without saying anything. Nobody found the courage to come after me, they all knew where I come from. I heard one of the male tutors say quietly: "Oh she comes from ex-Yugoslavia, she is just a bit emotional about this topic." I still regret that I didn't confront them. I still regret that I didn't tell my story. Not that it would have changed anything.

Within two weeks, the young man left and joined the Army. I wonder if he is still making the same war game videos.

Encountering the screen

“You can check out any time you like,
But you can never leave!”
(Hotel California, Eagles, 1976)

In this Chapter, I will try to address the gap between the written and creative practice, or rather try to find the point of encounter where this gap can be embraced. I will go in depth about my process and about what was brought to the surface both in terms of personal material and artistic acquiring. In this section I am shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal borders and talk about the experience of motherhood as a challenging borderspace territory.

4.1 Extending the research scope or How the body became a border

The Eagles won the 1977 Grammy Award for Record of the Year for "*Hotel California*". The lyrics describe the title establishment as a luxury resort where "you can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave" (1976). On the surface, it tells the tale of a weary traveller who becomes trapped in a nightmarish luxury hotel that at first appears inviting and tempting. Don Henley called it interpretation of the high life in Los Angeles and later reiterated that it was basically a song about the dark underbelly of the American dream and about excess in America. In 1994, Igor Dzambazov, one of the most talented Macedonian actors and songwriters, made a cover of the song which he named "*Hotel Makedonija*". It was written to capture the traumatic period of transition that the country was going through and to uncover the passive anger that was smouldering in the youth. Funnily enough, the last verse was true as at that time virtually no one was able to leave the country. What connects me with this song is far more personal and beyond the first impression of rock and roll stars being trapped in a make believe world or a clever songwriter who captures a bewildered moment.



Angelina in front of Hotel Makedonija. Photo by: Elena Marchevska

This is my daughter on the steps in front of Hotel Makedonija. She requested that I take a picture of her in front of the red neon sign of the hotel in a small lakeside town, where we stayed this summer for a couple of days. When I saw how pleased she was with the images, I asked her why she asked me to take a photo of her just there. Then she explained quite simply in her broken Macedonian..."Because mommy, Macedonia is a really nice hotel". I agreed with her and said that I really like the lobby and the food. She looked at me puzzled and tried to explain..."No, no you don't get me mommy, Macedonia is a nice hotel, it is always warm, the food is nice, granny is always happy, grandpa

buys me whatever I like, the ice-cream is delicious and I can stay up later in the night. Macedonia is a hotel, right?” And then I realised what she was talking about...For her, our country of origin is a hotel, a transitional space, and you can check out any time you like and leave as if everything stops and awaits your return. But, I can never leave.

Indeed this is a unique experience, shaded with maternal ambivalence, guilt, and cultural difference. Many female artists (Ostojčić 2005; Biemann 1999; Mock, Way and Roberts 2006), theorists (Ettinger 2006; 2011, Rogoff 2000) and activists (El-Haddad aka Gaza mom, 2008) grapple with these invisible borders that they have to cross everyday. Borders can be built from outside, they can be physical and tangible, difficult to cross, but passable. While I concentrated on the borders as division in the previous text, in this chapter I intend to talk about the internal borders, dotted on the skin, pressed as fresh lines on my body. I will talk about the experience of motherhood as a highly political state, where the body is split and carries not only the child into this world, but also the cultural responsibility and intergenerational take on the borders that youngsters have to cross. As Tyler alludes, “theoretical and creative work on the maternal is central to the future of radical feminist politics [], thinking with, and from, the maternal generates alternatives to neoliberal discourses of reflexive individualism which have stultified political resistance to global capitalism“ (2008:5).

As an artist, I draw on the long tradition of vigorous feminist self insertion, where the body is refigured and it moves from the periphery to the center of analysis (Grosz 1994:ix). Where the story of the body and its specific history becomes a focal point that moves and changes perspectives. Arundathi Roy refers to this in her speech “Come September”:

Writers imagine that they cull stories from the world. I'm beginning to believe that vanity makes them think so. That it's actually the other way around. Stories cull writers from the world. Stories reveal themselves to us. The public narrative, the private narrative - they colonize us. They commission us. They insist on being told.

(Roy, 2004:unpaginated)

Five months pregnant. Entering the UK to enroll for my studies. Received a valid visa. Have to go through Entry clearance. I feel really tired, it was a long flight and my body has slowed down. I am waiting in the line, it seems forever, a dizzy feeling in my head, the plane was late, I have to catch a bus, its almost midnight, I am going to this town for the first time in my life and ...I am not alone.

Good evening.

Good evening.

(for a few more minutes, she disappears without explanation through a door behind the post, nausea)

Do you have all the support documents?

Of course.

(I am handing over a folder filled with documents, some of them quite personal, like a complete bank statement for the last three months. She reads them slowly and talks into her chin)

Who is pregnant?

I am pregnant.

(She seems rather surprised, confused and in panic)

You know you are not allowed to give birth in this country.

(I am not quite sure about the legal legitimacy of her statement, but I go with it).

I am aware; I have a return ticket for next week. Here it is.

(She is still uneasy, she leaves the post one more time. She comes back in 15 minutes, I am freezing, hungry and really exhausted)

OK, all your documents are valid. But, you have to go through a medical examination.

(My body is alert)

Can you please tell me what does that means?

Well, usually it's a thorough examination, can include gynaecological check, X-Ray...

But, I am pregnant.

Well, the doctor will know.

(She leads me towards a back room, I am considering what I shall do, my brain

is slow)

Oh, they are closed, they work only till 10 pm. Well, next time then.

(She leaves, I am standing in front of the closed office, speechless. Was all of this necessary?)

We live in a world driven by intense national, racial, religious and ethnic divisions which have generated new kinds of wars and new kinds of violence: what Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero names *horrorism*: systematic and planned violence against the vulnerable (Cavarero, 2011:29). Ettinger suggests that the true horrors of the atrocities committed against defenceless others, violate what is the gift of feminine sexual difference to humanity – the maternal subjectivity (2011:240).

It is possible to track a latent aversion and absence of the maternal across a full range of scholarly disciplines and representational fields, art not excluded. I want to highlight at this point, the direction of this chapter dictated by the willingness to engage in mothers' subjective experiences of mothering whilst bearing in mind the context in which such subjectivities emerge. I use the autobiographical exploration of motherhood, through analogue and digital screens, to examine again the ever-occurring borders that I have to cross constantly. Arendell suggests in this direction:

We need more attention to the lives of particular mothers – to mothers' own voices – and to the lives and voices of diverse groups of mothers [...]. We need work that connects mothers' personal beliefs and choices with their social situations.

(Arendell 2000:1201)

Feminist knowledge is an inter-active and self-reflexive process that relies on networks of exchanges. Feminist art, feminist thinking and feminist scholarly reconsideration of women's and mother's material life experiences are in a promising state of reformulation (Honey, Kaplan, Bassin 1994; Tyler 2011; Liss 2009; Baraitser, 2008; Carver 2005;). Feminists today no longer need to restrict themselves to divisive debates that create an either/or dichotomy between feminist and mother. Indeed, if the mother is no longer placed in opposition to feminism, a redefined field of possibilities opens up in cultural theory, art history, art practice and the lived material experiences of women. It would allow

for a rethinking of the representation of motherhood as more than a sign of codified femininity or a muted allegory.

The next two chapters embrace the relationship between the material realities of lived feminist motherhood and the stunning ways in which artist-mothers negotiate and translate their experiences into rich and complex bodies of work on screen. Liss suggests that through feminist conceptions of interdependence, intersubjectivity, and the maternal self, the artist is capable of conceiving new social artistic projects that think (m)otherwise (2009:xix). This relates to philosopher Sara Ruddick's foundational ideas on the concept of maternal thinking, specifically as she wondered, "what maternal concepts might introduce into political and philosophical discussions" (Ruddick in Honey, Bassin, and Kaplan, 1994: 30). In the sections below, different approaches to this discussion will be reconsidered. Starting with how Ana Mendieta reconstructs the Goddess Mother nature-culture bordering dichotomy, to Bracha Ettinger's matrixal borderline concept, finishing with reflection on my own work on lines.

4.2 Field review, part 2

In this section Field review- part 2, I will extend the first part of the Field review and will analyse, compare and elaborate on the work of Ana Mendieta, Bracha Ettinger, Sigalut Landau, Francis Alys, Helena Almeida and Gaza mom (Laila El-Haddad). The strength of the work chosen for this section is its simplicity: this artist's are story-tellers, and their stories although political, have a fabular quality that makes you want to tell other people about them. It is this political outlook, charting and communicating the constant interchange between past and present, the personal and the political, which guided my choice of practitioners.

4.2.1. Split body – Ana Mendieta in-between two cultures

In this section, I am returning to Ana Mendieta and her series '*Siluetas*'. However, I am concentrating on how she is building her own body as a

bordering territory and explores the encounter of different cultures through her images.

Ortner, in her seminal text "*Is female to male as nature is to culture?*" (1972) considers the split function or as she calls it intermediacy position of the woman, between culture and nature. Woman's closeness to nature is determined by a few factors, like woman's physiology (more involved with 'species' life), woman's association with the domestic context and woman's psyche, adapted to the mothering functions moulded through her socialization role. This intermediacy has two implications for women's positioning according to Ortner: intermediate as a 'middle status' on a hierarchy of being from culture to nature and intermediate as 'mediating' i.e performing some sort of synthesizing or converting function between nature and culture (seen by Ortner as two radically different processes in the world). Finally the woman's intermediate position has implications of greater symbolic ambiguity, defined not only by her location between nature and culture, but through the fact of marginality per se in relation to the 'centers' of culture (Ortner in Robinson, 2001:29)²⁶.

These points are quite relevant to an understanding of cultural symbolism and imagery concerning women. Intermediacy serves as a split, almost as an invisible border drawn to divide the body and its roles and functions. This is quite evident in the work of Ana Mendieta, especially in the later parts of her "*Siluetas*" series, where she deepens the exploration of her origin, through raw body based experiments in nature. As I analysed in Chapter 2, Mendieta is not a producer of borders or an artist who had been set outside the border, but she is an actual border itself, demarcating and embodying the actual lines of difference. Mendieta goes beyond the nature/culture dichotomy and transforms the intermediacy position. Her metaphorical quest for homeland emerged as the defining inspiration for her art. The artist's insatiable search for origins led to a

²⁶ This discussion is still pertinent today, after almost 50 years. Nina Power, in "One Dimensional woman" returns to this dichotomy and analyse it after years of split between various standpoints concerning the constructions of gender: cultural constructions (nurture), poststructuralist constructions or deconstructions (discourse) or essentialist constructions (nature). Power analyses: "I think there's a very real sense in which woman are supposed to say 'chocolate' whenever someone asks them what they want. It irresistibly symbolizes any or all of the following: ontological girlishness, a naughty virginity that gets its kicks only from a widely-available mucky cloying substitute, a kind of pecuniary decadence" (2009:37).

deep fascination with history, and she explored the history of Mexico (as her adopted home country) and her own Caribbean/Hispanic Cuban culture. She immersed herself in the history of conquest and migration, returning through her work to the earth in a metaphoric ritual of birth, death and renewal. She explored goddess iconography and the presence of Ixchell, the Mayan patron of childbirth and weaving, is explicitly vivid in her work. She uses this symbolism to visually explore the intermediacy and represent the split between the body and nature. She uses the mother metaphor on few levels. As she says: "I decided that for the images to have magic qualities I had to work directly with nature. I had to go to the source of life, to mother earth" (Mendieta in Blocker, 1999:45). To say precisely what the earth meant to Mendieta is a complex matter. For Mendieta the earth is a womb, both sexual and maternal, the fundamental source of life, a homeland, a prehistoric origin, nation, nature, a landscape, a link to ancestry, a burial site, and a sentient being (Blocker, 1999:46). Central to her use of the earth are also the metaphoric associations that she draws between it and the female body.

Diary entry, Day 126

It's snowing again and I can't see my traces. My body becomes aware of the border. It has to be verified and recognized as a valid set of data and information. How much data is stored in my body?

My look is categorized according to Fitzpatrick Scale (1975) in category II, very light, or "Celtic" (ha!). Often burns, rarely tans. Tends to have freckles. Red, brown, or **blond** hair. **Blue**, brown, green or gray eyes. Yet again, my body feels so different when crossing the border.

Try to disappear and blend.

I am not so different just because I don't have the right passport.

I am just a number, set of data, assemblage of information.

My body just happens to be there.

And it was such a beautiful day, my eyes and the sky blending together.

Her use of earth was criticized as essentialist and “generic” or engaged with the fact that woman is “traditionally” understood as nature. Mira Schor narrows this down: “In Mendieta’s work there are many deeply moving and rivetingly memorable images, but, ultimately, the constant repetition of an unquestioned, generic Great Mother is deeply, and now, poignantly problematic” (1997:67). I remain unconvinced by this critique, because it narrows down a field that will yet be examined further in later artwork by Mendieta’s contemporaries - women and earth. And also, it does not address a few important issues such as: to what traditions are we referring when criticizing? Is there really a lack of conflict in the imagery or does this conflict operate on a deeper level? Mendieta herself was not a mother, and due to her early death, the work was never altered through this experience. But, clearly she vividly experiences the link between the maternal and the Earth by being confronted with the tangible borders between two countries (Cuba and USA), and with her own constant crisscrossing between them. Her Silueta series shows that the earth is never simply an enormous prehistoric womb as assumed by Schor. Indeed, it is always the subject of national, political and patriarchal claims.

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mendieta develops the Silueta series further in order to shift her work away from all the association and assumptions attached to it. Its basic shape was no longer based on that of her body: the figure was now generalized as the earth works took on more bulbous and vulvular forms reminiscent of the ancient goddesses of many cultures. The media screen that she places over these anthropomorphic shapes, brings even closer her longing and experience of loss and nostalgia. The women-island with protruded naval area, made from packed mud, is bifurcated and travels constantly between associations and boundaries imposed by politics. Liminal in its existence, it tests real life. As Mendieta did herself, this island figure travels between cultures, discusses political struggles and challenges all the theories that attempt to frame female/feminist art. The personal becomes political, and escapes all the attempts to be simplified into generic Mother Earth associations. Or as Hanisch sums up “a theory is just a bunch of words-sometimes interesting to think about, but just words, nevertheless-until it is tested in real life” (2006:unpaginated). Mendieta is not shy to put the feminist struggle to a

test and expose vividly all the misconceptions that stem from racial and national differences. It seems that the choice of her materials and media are born out of this intention as well. Mendieta's work explores the nature of identity and exile and the media in which her works are executed have a significant role in their meaning.

What connects this last stage of Mendieta's work, to my research is the offering that she makes for an encounter. The media that she uses reveals the relation between the space of loss in which Mendieta's work exists, the space of exile in which she exists, and the border we occupy. This advances my idea that the border while it is definitely a breach, it is not empty, that, while it is damaging, it bears meaning.

Letter to my daughter, Number 56

You wake up one morning and out of the blue, just as you opened your eyes, and leaned your warm body on my hip, ask in English, " Mommy, what happens after we die?" My brain tries to work fast; I try to stop myself from saying anything too simple or anything stupid and scary. Nobody prepares you for this sort of question. You are patient and your eyes are wide-awake, concentrating. I stagger in English, "Well..." and then decide that I can't explain death in a foreign language. And then I start slowly with the story of the cat that we lost recently, and the heaven, and the Earth. It seems quite comforting for you and you agree with most of it. And when I finally think that we are finished, you ask "So are we going to return back to Macedonia after we die, since we were born there." I close my eyes, I feel a desperate need to cry. How do I answer this? "Yes, you can go back if you want." Is the only thing that I can come up with. "Yes, I want, since you and daddy and everyone else will be there. I will only miss Marina, since she was born here, but maybe she can choose to come with us as well". As simple as that, I smile and nod my head, watching you jumping on the bed in joy. As simple as that.

4.2.2. Waiting in line – Bracha Ettinger and the borderlinking

In the next section, I further examine the concept of the border as a site for encounter. I introduce Bracha Ettinger's artistic work that concentrates on the co-inhabited Israeli/Palestinian landscape haunted by intertwining catastrophes. In addition, I contemplate her philosophical and reflective writing about borders, bodies and screens. Her writing and concepts informed my last creative screen exploration of motherhood as a bordering state.

Ettinger's layered paintings depict what she names the matrixial gaze or “visual negotiation of the transgenerational transmission of trauma” (Ettinger, 2009:unpaginated). Art for her becomes a means of transporting traumatic remnants to opened futures. Ettinger's Matrix concerns the subjective world. Being born is preceded by a long encounter between more than one – the gestation stage. Ettinger acknowledges the matrixial dimension of subjectivity, which in her opinion stems from the specificity of feminine sexual difference. She suggests that this notion will make us acknowledge that the violence done to any other human being is at the same time a threat to our own humanity because our humanness was from the beginning shared. We are all born of women.

Ettinger suggests that the true horrors of the atrocities committed against defenceless others, wherever it occurs, is not only that their precious lives have been violently destroyed, grieving families, destabilizing communities, erasing cultures. Acts of violence against others violate what is the gift of feminine sexual difference to humanity: a foundational sense that in becoming me, I became human always with another; to whose trauma and pleasure I may be creatively connected. She suggests a radically new possibility: art as compassion, art as an encounter.

Through a careful reading of Bracha Ettinger's theoretical writings (Ettinger 2001, 2006;), Pollock explores the maternal-feminine as a structuring dimension of the human capacity for compassion and ethical relations. In Pollock's opinion, Ettinger moves us towards the idea that the maternal is fundamental to our psycho-somatic life (2010:835).

In her essay '*Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma*' (2000) Ettinger suggests

that the place of art is the transport-station of trauma. A transport-station that, more than a place, is rather a space that allows for instance occurrence and encounter that will become the realization of what she names borderlinking and borderspacing in a matrixial trans-subjective space by way of experiencing with an object or process of creation. The transport is expected in this station, and it is possible, but the transport-station does not promise that passage of remnants of trauma will actually take place in it. The passage is expected but uncertain. She continues further:

Beauty that I find in contemporary art-works that interest me, whose source is the trauma and to which it also returns and appeals, is not the beauty as 'private' or as that upon which a consensus of taste can be reached, but is a kind of encounter that perhaps we are trying to avoid much more than aspiring to arrive at...

(Ettinger 2000:91)

Ettinger develops her aesthetic in conjunction to the ethic of how we relate to others. She therefore introduces the matrixial gaze, where the aesthetic-witnessing concept emerges as the most important element. Laila El-Haddad in her article "*I complain, therefore I am*" (2008) anecdotally discusses the importance of the aesthetic witnessing concept while humorously analysing how our existence is established or rather challenged through a simple encounter with screen technology. The screen suddenly becomes not just an object, but also a division between what we think we are and what we are perceived to be. She starts rather philosophically : "I'm fairly certain I exist", writes Laila El-Haddad on her blog Gaza Mom, "Descartes tells me so, and before him, Ibn Sina. And when my son drags me out of bed to play with him in the pre-dawn hours, I really know I do. " (2008, online source, *unpaginated*) Though while booking a flight with BA, she is confronted with the fact that she can not proceed due to the fact that the programme/the code of the online service does not recognise her existence as a citizen of Palestine. Suddenly the flashing screen of the fancy carrier website becomes a reiteration of a trauma and an ongoing conflict, which involves human bodies, destinies and actual lives. The screen becomes an extension of the political violence, a split, one more line to wait in front of. The end of this short article is poignant and returns us to the question of how desperately we need a reverse perspective and a philosophy of

encounter when we discuss the borders. El-Haddad wraps it up: "Could it be, []that there is no definite answer because we aren't considered definite people?" (2008, online source: *unpaginated*)

Diary entry, Day 74

It is late autumn, 2001 and we are on a train from Vienna to Budapest. My best friend, our colleague, and me, all of us just turned 20, coming back after 3 weeks successfully touring our performance in Germany. Still half drunk with glory and pride, we were part of an international project and our first trip in Europe was an astounding success. We also have a 6 month Schengen visa in our passports, received after 6 weeks waiting and archiving documents in front of the German embassy in Skopje. We couldn't guess in our dream what will happen to us in few minutes, on the border with Hungary-a new member of EU and a proud guardian of its gates.

I am dozing on the train window enjoying the flat landscape, my friend sings a German lullaby, and the other one sleeps on the opposite seat. A neat Austrian lady reads the Da Vinci code, and a cheerful Hungarian chap nibbles on his sandwich. The train is slowing down and I can see the border officers entering the train. A tall, slim female officer enters our coach and checks the passports. She approaches our seats and I notice a shadow on her face, her eyes fixed on our passports. She pulls the document out of my hand and furiously mumbles something in Hungarian, while going quickly through the pages. Another officer approaches, he is from the Austrian side and they have a quick conversation in German. He tries to raise a point, while she is just waving her hand in disapproval. The train stops, she calls another officer and he grabs our luggage, I start to realise that there is something seriously wrong. She yells in Hungarian and pulls my jacket, my friends pulled by the other officer. They throw our luggage out of the train and drag us out. I can see the faces of the passengers dotted on the windows, I can hear a comment in Serbian : "Maybe you should mark us all with yellow stars, that will make your job easier". I try to find the person who said that, I am desperate to understand what is going on. There is a bunch of Roma's pulled out of the other carriage, they shuffle us all together in a line. The female officer speaks quickly and points with her hand towards the

barracks on the left, we all march silently, I can see the traces of the train departing, I am still not sure what is going on, hot tears on my cheeks. We are locked in a small room, all seven of us, no chairs or tables, empty, grey room. We sit on the floor, no passports, no luggage, no food, no water, persona non grata. We can't even talk, we are out of our minds.

And finally, after 3 hours, an officer enters the room and reads out loud our names. He escorts us to the other room, and explains in fluid English that there has been a mistake and that he is really sorry that we missed our train, but there will be another one in a few hours. My friend finds courage to ask, why we were pulled out of the train. The officer, with a really cold voice, tries to "explain": "A mistake, a mistake, no go your way."

And we go indeed, with a bitter feeling in our stomach. We are nothing more than objects, misplaced by mistake.

The *Eurydice* series (2001) becomes for Ettinger a site for the visual and painterly exploration of retrospect and memory, difference and futurity. Eurydice - a mythic, feminine figure suspended between two deaths, always at risk from the deadliness of a returning gaze. For this series, Ettinger adapted the process of photocopying to her own ends. The found image is firstly reworked by being passed through the photocopy machine. Ettinger interrupts the machine, however, before its new simulacrum of its source-image can be sealed. All she gets from the machine, therefore, is a scattering of black dust that is like a ghost of an image. In its new materiality, what was once a photograph is now but a fragile trace of a past with which we can never fully reconnect. To evoke this liminal space, Ettinger uses found documents from public and family archives of photographs, texts by Freud and Lacan, drawings by Freud's analysands, which she passed repeatedly through a photocopy machine, layering a single, heavily textured paper with several images from diverse historical sources so that traces of many histories mingled across time and space on this newly created co-inhabited ground that she calls borderspace.

But what struck me particularly is the purposeful repetition of one of the images in her abstract work created with photocopying. Over twenty years Ettinger has returned to one of the photographs of the frieze of women from Mizocz that

appears in archival and documentary films. Ettinger is drawn to the centre of this frieze of women approaching execution. She pauses at a tall woman whose face is obscured as she is looking ahead and hence away, refusing to connect with our gaze. Ettinger notes a mother gently curving her hand around the head of the baby she is cradling in her arms. Ettinger calls our attention to other mothers with their children in their arms, meditating on the probable maternal pain at their own powerlessness to protect their children from this terrible premature death. Ettinger responds above all to the woman who turns from the dismal procession to challenge the gaze of whoever was watching: the perpetrator photographing her in 1943, and to appeal to those of us looking now.

In her notebooks, reflecting on her prolonged contemplation of this tall woman with her averted face, Ettinger wrote:

I want her to look at me! That woman, her back turned to me. The image haunts me. It's my aunt, I say, no, my aunt's the other one, with the baby. The baby! It could be mine. What are they looking at? What do they see? I want them to turn toward me. Once, just once. I want to see their faces. The hidden face and the veiled face are two moments calling to each other: moments of catastrophe.

(Ettinger in Pollock, 1996: 284)

One important thing that links my practice to Ettinger's process is that her use of the image is not documentary. She is not perpetuating the pain through reworking the gaze. On the contrary, similar to Mendieta, you would not even recognize the reference if you were not studying it thoroughly.

The viewer, enters the art space, shaped by intimacy and personal trauma through a screen as mediator and division. Both Mendieta and Ettinger, recreate material traces of specific cultural history and this appears to function more as one end of a piece of string, stretching between two points, between then and now, opening the space not only between past and present, but also between past and future. Even the title of their work bares significant challenges. Mendieta's *Siluetas* is on one hand this mythical Goddess Mother figure etched in the Earth, though on the other, serves as a transsubjective political challenge that goes beyond the nature-culture dichotomy. Similarly, Ettinger names her series *Eurydice*, after the dead wife of the mythic poet

Orpheus whom he tried to resurrect, but killed by looking back. Ettinger's *Eurydices* are suspended between two deaths: the inhuman death in 1943 and the death imposed by reducing their humanity to an image through the photographic recording of their dying.

So how can we talk about Stabat Mater without reducing it to the phallic nature-culture binary? How can we meet Eurydice, but not with Orpheus's deadly retrospect? Maybe there is a subtle answer in Ettinger's reflective writing:

Multiple registers of the matrix start up their besidness. A limit-recognition of the matrix resides in the lines with a beauty-pain, an image which does not want to turn toward me. This woman has more to look at than the watchers of painting...but what she looks at is inhuman. Stabat Mater Matrix suggests a blind spot. We are going over there for the gaze-his-ours...and it's not there, there is Nothing. I don't understand a thing. There is Nothing to understand. Nothing is there to understand.

(2000:111)

Substantially and materially altered, dissolved and rescued in mud or black photocopy, the works of Mendiata and Ettinger, evoke forgetfulness as much as loyalty to a memory.

4.2.3. The screen as a division, the screen as an encounter-Landau's wire

Ettinger is particularly keen to define her work as a screen. Bracha suggests that in artworking "something" happens from which the artwork emerges. The artist is also a site interwoven with the world, others, her own and her unknown others. The artwork is thus to be understood not as the vehicle for a pre-created message. It is instead a screen on which this event—personal (from the inside) or historical (from the outside), from past and present—is projected and unconsciously shaped. Towards this screen the viewer inclines without knowing the event that has made the work emerge. The art work is thus understood as an event; it is also a (potential) encounter. The encounter may not happen for every viewer. No one can predict the outcome of the encounter. But the invitation is there to make one's own borders fragile enough to register the being, and pain of the other.

This screen is itself a created borderspace; an aesthetically encountered space

that is connected to the spaces of subjectivity. If we return again to the definition of border space, we will be reminded that a *borderspace* is not a boundary, a limit, an edge, a division. It is not a site of fusion or confusion. It is space shared between minimally differentiated partial subjects who, while they can never know each other, can, nonetheless, affect each other and share, each in different ways, a single event. This approach goes beyond the established border, which has to be crossed physically. In this case, the border is an encounter that stretches far beyond the actual demarcation in the ground. Anzaludia also suggests that the borderlands are loaded with meaning. While borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them, a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. Anzaludia's borderland is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants: the women, the mothers, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato; in short, those who cross over, pass over or go through the confines of the "normal" (defined as white, male supremacy).

This is exactly what Sigalit Landau explores in her piece "*Barbed Hula*" from 2000. A female body stands naked against a shoreline. Head back, face out of sight, attention is drawn to her torso, as she spins a hoop around her waist. But within seconds, we realize that the hoop is made out of barbed wire. We watch as the spikes pierce the skin, creating red pools of blood. The bodies own borders damaged and rendered raw. The body is the artist's own and the act was a private performance for only the camera and coincidental passers-by, enacted at sunrise on a beach in South Israel. Performed against the Israeli shoreline, on a beach between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, the artistic act performed for the camera was located on the distinctive edge of the physical territory that encloses one of the most enduring conflicts of our time. Describing her work as a "senso-political act", suggestive of her emphasis on an embodied response, Landau provokes a visceral encounter. Through the mediation of video, Landau's body is separated by the border of the screen. The screen functions to both unite and divide, introducing another site of instability. Rather than simply confusing the border or attempting to transgress its limiting hold, Landau's performing body here exposes a necessary tension central to the

boderline itself.

Letter to my daughter Number 76

I am 11, writing my homework in the corner of your grandparent's living room. The TV is on my left hand side, disturbing images perpetuated on the reportage about Kraina in Croatia. I can catch glimpses of people in lines, burning villages, muddy soldiers. And then a shattering image captures my whole body. They are entering a half burned house, everything is on the floor and then there is this cradle, beautiful wooden cradle, untouched in the midst of this mess. Empty. I murmur to myself: I will never have children, never, ever.

4.2.4. Lines, dots, borderlines – Alys and Almeida drawing lines with body

Lucy Lippard adds to the previous discussion, “the boundaries being tested today by dialogue are not just ‘racial’ and national. They are also those of gender and class, of value and belief systems, of religion and politics. The borderlands are porous, restless, often incoherent territory, virtual minefields of unknown for both practitioners and theoreticians” (1990:283) She suggests that only one's own lived experience, respectfully related to that of the others, remains the best foundation for social vision, of which art is a significant part.

For a long time, I had a somewhat involuntary resistance to seeing the work of Francis Alys. Previously aware of his background (born, raised and educated in Belgium and then ex pat in Mexico), I was very aware that his work may be part of the “cultural tourism”, when a privileged artist from the West, decides to work with a less privileged world and colleagues. Yet, this makes little sense in the work and practice of Alys, because not only did he continue to maintain a base in Mexico city, but he began to reflect critically on the idea of “unimpeded international movement of the kind heralded by those trumpeting the dawn of globalization” (Godfrey in Alys, 2010:21).

This means that his works neither appear as unconnected and opportunistic reactions to quickly visited, quickly left-behind places, nor as imported projects that could take place anywhere the artist happened to be. One project that particularly caught my attention is “*Green line*” (2007), mainly because it uses

the screen to offer different layers. In addition, the artist's body inhabits such a radical, convergent space, where the possibilities for encounter are numerous. For this project Alys walked through the city of Jerusalem for two days trailing a line of green paint behind him. The starting point of this project is the green line drawn by Moshe Dayan on a map at the ceasefire of the 1948 conflict between Israel and Jordan. The artist is completely aware of the political weight of this decision, an act of violence that separated communities, by only dotting with blue pencil a line that actually was translated later to the ground. The green line constituted Israel's eastern border until after 1967, when during another conflict, the occupied territory stretched up to the River Jordan. But the green line is still loaded with opposite meanings in the current dense political conditions in Israel. Alys action can be interpreted in various ways. First of all, it can be seen as a visual reminder of the 1948 line and the act of division associated with it. Another approach would be to see it in the context of the changing physical and conceptual status of the border. In the video it is obvious that Alys is not trying to draw a straight line, but follows the historic route and wanders away from checkpoints and obstacles. As such, the action could also be understood as "mimicking the randomness (and inherent violence) of all borderlines and acts of mapping. [] ...we might emphasise the impermanence of Alys's line, which will disappear as people walk over it. " (Godfrey in Alys, 2010:24).

What I found most compelling about his work is in the actual installation, where the subtitle of the piece *Sometimes doing something poetic can become political, and sometimes doing something political can become poetic?*, becomes quite prominent. Alys played the video to eleven activists of different political affiliations and asked for their commentary and critique. In the installation, the viewer can select which commentary to listen to while watching the video, so the screen opens up for different encounters and histories. Alys creates the Ettinger borderspace. She describes this process quite elaborately (and for the beauty of the thought, I will enclose the whole citation, the highlighted text is my choice that reflects on Ayls work):

The artist, who is working through traces coming from the immemoriale, not only of herself but of others to whom she is borderlinked-which opens lanes to deepen a singular metramorphoses in the matrixal field-*is a woman-artist even when she is a man*. She wanders with her spirit's

eyes, mounted upon her erotic antennae, and she channels anew trauma(s) and jouissance(s) coming from non-I(s) that are linked to her matrixal borderspace. Her art works through bifurcate, disperse and rejoin anew but in difference the traces that whoever was there had lost during its wandering, and *she is acting on/from the borderline, transcribing it while sketching it and displaying it and opening it wide, to turn it into threshold and transform it into yet another borderspace.*

(Ettinger, 2000:111, italics added)

Alys himself describes his process as an attempt to spread stories and generate situations, which can provoke through a sudden unexpected distancing from the immediate situation and can shake up assumption about the way things are. He hoped through his work to destabilize and open up, for just an instant, a different vision of the situation, as if from inside (Alys in Ferguson et al., 2007:40).

The notion of line inhabiting space emerged early in the trajectories of Almeida's work. The 'space line' reveals a keen interest in unnamed, latent, freed space. This line can more accurately be described as a conduit, occupying an arena of sensorial contact, of anticipatory freedom, of mutual contagiousness; it is the membrane that defines the zone of organic exchange between artwork and viewer. The line offers the possibility for an encounter. Or as Almeida describes it: "I turn myself into a drawing. My body as a drawing, myself as my own work-that was what I was searching for. When you make lines on a piece of paper, vibrant areas inside the drawing come into being, and because of this the drawing is not enough. Right away you've got to enter another dimension, move into another artistic language" (2009:51).

Inhabitation, as a condition, has remained a constant preoccupation for Almeida, expressed as the impulse to occupy a work of art; or to transform it as an environment that embraces the body. For Almeida, the body is an instrument of mediation and communication, a means of generating plastic space, and trigger for phenomenological experience. The concept of the organic line and the physical limits of the art object are inseparable from notions of sheltering and corporeality. Even the titles of her work (*Inhabited Painting, Inhabited Canvas, A casa*) reflect this. In Portuguese, the word 'casa' signifies home and house, indicating an emotional as well as structural shelter. In her work architecture is conceived as body, it is the site of living and lived experience,

singular to each of us. The line of the body and the linear divide are clashing and merging in her work. She works around the tender relationship of division and invisibility, so characteristic of female artists. Through the line, Almeida, tells the story of being a female artist in a male art world, where the line has strict representational meanings and signifies a long theoretical discussion of the form. While in her work, the story of the line is composed of mythologies, histories, ideologies-the stuff of identity and representation.

4.3 Line as element of the Process

In the last section of this chapter Line as element of the Process, I am concentrating on how line as a sign had emerged in my practical work and what it brings to my research and to my process.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section **Lines**, under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/466874/gallery/lines>

4.3.1. Lines on the ground, lines on the skin

In the practical work created for this thesis, the line as mark, symbol and constitutive element reoccurs on many occasions. The line is set in the context of changing physical and conceptual status of the border. The line in the landscape, the line as marking a spot, the lines as a walking challenge. After the Second World War a linear idea of a border had some purchase of reality (the Case of Macedonia, Israel-Palestine etc.), but these days the 'border' has actually become a three-dimensional complex. By exploring and emphasis on the line the work recognizes the obsolescence of a purely linear idea of a border in the present age. The artistic concept of line is based on the act of "crossing the lines". Revisiting the simple act of 'paying attention' to one's self, and using this sense of self or body-state to connect and exchange with another, the play between self and others through the line creates a marked visual landscape, estranged and so familiar at the same time.

4.3.2. How the work on lines was developed

Through the use of lines both physical and metaphorical in my work, the academic exercise of “analyzing migration and emotions” became a reflexive process. The line as an (in)visible border in my work is a process that unnerves, motivates, excites, upsets, demoralizes and moves me in different ways. Therefore the line is as a metaphor that reflects on my inability to “arrive” and the feeling that I am constantly in front of a “line” or “walking on a thin line”. The line became a formative element that shaped my screen practice. Also, the negative space in my photomontage and video work reflected this ambivalent relationship. It was the organic, soft material of my process in juxtaposition with the materiality of the topic and the tools that were used. The line was a semblance to the in-betweens in my practical work. As described by Cixous, the line was marking the zone of not belonging. She poetically depicts:

I went toward France, without having had the idea of arriving there. Once in France I was not there. I saw that I would never arrive in France. I had not thought about it. At the beginning I was disturbed, surprised, I had so wanted to leave that I must have vaguely thought that leaving would lead to arriving. [] In the first naïve period it is very strange and difficult to not arrive where one is. For a year I felt the ground tremble, the streets repel me, I was sick. Until the day I understood there is no harm, only difficulties, in living in the zone without belonging.

(1998 :169)

The “Microprojects on walking and waiting” was produced as a response to the provocation of walking and waiting in a place that you are not familiar with. The method that was used (described on p.65) produced numerous images and videos that due to the nature of the landscape that was explored, were intercrossed with lines. The physical lines marked on the coded landscape of the Racecourse (a park and sport open space), initiated an exploration on how one walks between these lines and what they mean as a repetitive element in ones life. For me, these lines started to become more than just demarcation on the ground. In fine art traditionally, the **line** is a series of points; an area whose length is considerably greater than its width; an indication of direction, an apparent movement. A line is a point moved or moving through space. While in my work the line is static, almost imposed, with undetermined length and no

clear direction. I established a symbolic relationship with my haunting past through these lines. In addition, being able to see these lines and play with them on the screen, established an element of theatricality or as described by Jo Spence a form of “photo theater”. This is a totally non-naturalistic mode of re-presentation that aims to create ‘a spectacle’ while drawing upon, and yet slightly disrupting, the genre of self-portrait (Spence, 1995:78). This strategy is even more evident in “Valid until...” where the line emerges out of the visual material and is in juxtaposition with the serenity of everydayness. It is almost like a constant shadow that uproots layers of my past and present. While in the last section of my work the line becomes a conscious decision, a way to tell the story, an encounter. I chose the act of sewing to draw the line, the craft of fastening or attaching objects using stitches made with a needle and thread to stitch three different stories and screens together. The art/craft hierarchy suggests that art made with thread and art made with paint or any other medium are intrinsically unequal: that the former is artistically less significant. But the real differences between the two is in terms of where they are made and who makes them. To sew the line on screen was an obvious choice to reflect on the possibilities for encounter. This last practical section entwines aesthetics and cultural memory with internal personal space. The work illuminates the challenges we now face in these crises of political violence and despair.

4.3.3. How the line can disappear

Several ironies surface with the use of line in my work – that I myself am deeply skeptical of lines and borders; that I have created numerous lines in order to destabilize the borderline. Through this process the line divides the screen and enforces its technological nature to serve as an obstacle. The context of what the audience of the visual work may see through this line, would only make ‘sense’ with the writing that accompanies the work. Fundamentally, what I did through the visual exploration of the line was to unwind and extend the line on my body. Through the line I offer myself as an artist an opportunity for reconciliation with the border as a division.

“D.Art:

Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art. I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order.) I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, supporting, preserving, etc. Also (up to now separately) I do Art. Now, I will simply do these everyday things and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them as Art. “

(Ukeles in Liss, 2010:52)

This chapter will examine the politics of being a foreigner and mother through a focus on maternal exploration of borders through screens. Motherhood is offered as a model for exploring how a new borderspace, at times radically, and painfully, emerges. According to Ettinger, in this borderspace another kind of process emerges: borderlinking and another kind of gazing, the matrixial gaze. The matrixial gaze is not about looking and seeing, looking and knowing, sight and power, vision and desire. In the Matrixial, partial elements of subjectivity may be affected by partial elements of an unknown other's subjectivity so that we can trans-subjectively (rather than intersubjectively) share an event. The virtual strings that we might imagine linking us in this trans-subjective borderspace, will be different for each partner-in-difference (Ettinger, 2006; Pollock, 2004; Welchman, 1996).

Motherhood has never been so visible, so talked about, so public and so deeply incoherent. In general terms in this chapter maternal refers not only to the material and embodied experience of pregnancy, childbirth and lactation, but also to identities and meanings of mothering, the ongoing emotional and relational work of being with children and others, the daily material practices of childrearing, the social locations and structural contexts within which women mother; indeed, to the whole range of embodied, social and cultural meanings, practices and structures associated with reproduction and parenting (Arrendell 2000:1194).

Letter to my daughter Number 56

You were only 5 weeks old when I had to return to work. It was so hard, beyond what I had initially expected. I think about Rachida Dati when she announced her pregnancy as a single mother, and later made a very public and glamorous return to work five days after a Caesarean section in January 2009. And the pro-life bitch Sarah Palin, who went on the election trail brandishing a four-month-old son and a pregnant teenage daughter, whilst the Ivy League educated Michelle Obama declared herself the nation's rightful 'mom in chief'. Well, apart from the lunatic idea that I can cope with this, I don't share anything with them, especially not the army of nannies that escort their children. It is just your Dad and me, both of us struggling to provide and support all of us in this foreign place. You would think that with our education and experience, I would be safe at home looking after you, but no, I am two hours away, trying to figure out my motive and intention.

The first thing the receptionist said to me: "*Why, you don't look like you have just had a baby...*" I shy away, my body leaks, feels liquid, smells, and feels smelly. I think about an article that I read where Jessica Ringrose argues that, 'the feminist political dilemmas of housewife versus career woman ... have been replaced by narratives of renaissance women who juggle thriving careers ... with motherhood' (2007:473). Well, I just feel like a cubist Venus at this moment, every part of my body is in the wrong position.

Probably this was the worst mistake ever.

5.1 Maternal as encounter

Through the above letter a new subjectivity is called into being, and to describe this would entail a particular attentiveness to what this specific, maternal experience is like. It brings back the notion of the peculiar approach, coming from a peculiar perspective or as Battersby suggest:

Rather than treating women as somehow exceptional, I start from the question of what would have to change were we to take seriously the notion that a 'person' could normally, at least always potentially, become two. What would happen if we thought identity in terms that did not make it always spatially and temporally oppositional to other entities? Could we

retain a notion of self-identity if we did not privilege that which is self-contained and self-directed?

(Battersby, 1998:2)

This links to Elizabeth Grosz's (1994) statement that women's bodies are constructed as 'modes of seepage' and her examination of the concept of 'abjection'. Motherhood is an unfolding, an interplay, of nature *and* culture. Especially, pregnant bodies threaten to break their boundaries, to spill, to leak, to seep (see Grosz 1994 on women's bodies being read as 'modes of seepage').

Grosz (1994: 192–210) uses Mary Douglas' (1966) ideas on dirt and Julia Kristeva's (1982) notion of abjection in order to explore the 'powers and dangers' of body fluids and 'women's corporeal flows'. Neither Grosz, Douglas nor Kristeva discuss maternal women's corporeal flows as such, but I think that their work is instructive in relation to maternal bodies. For this reason I outline some of their ideas about body fluids, dirt, abjection and borders before linking these ideas to motherhood in my practical work.

In an excellent paragraph, Grosz captures something of the disquiet about, and unsettling nature of, body fluids or corporeal flows – tears, amniotic fluids, sweat, pus, menstrual blood, vomit, saliva, phlegm, seminal fluids, urine, blood. She explains:

Body fluids attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what the death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body's inside and outside. ... They attest to certain irreducible 'dirt' or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the unspecifiable that permeates, lurks, lingers, and at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the 'clean' and 'proper'. They resist the determination that marks solids, for they are without any shape or form of their own. They are engulfing, difficult to be rid of; any separation from them is not a matter of certainty, as it may be in the case of solids. Body fluids flow, they seep, they infiltrate; their control is a matter of vigilance, never guaranteed.

(Grosz 1994:193–4)

Grosz, Douglas and Kristeva all conceptualise fluid as a borderline state, as liminal, and as 'disruptive of the solidity of things, entities, and objects' (Grosz 1994:195). Linked to these ideas about seepage and boundaries is the concept of abjection.

Abjection is the affect or feeling of anxiety, loathing and disgust that the subject has in encountering certain matters, images and fantasies – the horrible and dreadful – to which it can only respond with aversion, with nausea and distraction. Kristeva (1982) argues that the abject provokes fear and disgust because it exposes the border between self and other. This border is fragile. The abject threatens to dissolve the subject by dissolving the border. The abject is also fascinating and desirable, however. It is as though it draws the subject in order to repel it (Young in Longhurst, 2001:83). Grosz, in discussing Kristeva's work on abjection, claims: "The abject is what of the body falls away from it while remaining irreducible to the subject/object and inside/outside oppositions. The abject necessarily partakes of both polarized terms but cannot be clearly identified with either" (1994:192).

The abject is undecidable – both inside and outside. Kristeva uses the example of 'disgust at the skin of milk' (Kristeva,1982:2) – a skin which represents the subject's own skin and the boundary between it and the environment. Abjection signals the tenuous grasp 'the subject has over its identity and bodily boundaries, the ever-present possibility of sliding back into the corporeal abyss out of which it was formed' (Wright in Longhurst,2001:84). In ingesting objects into itself or expelling objects from itself, the subject can never be distinct from the objects. These ingested/expelled objects are neither part of the body nor separate from it. The abject (including tears, saliva, faeces, urine, vomit, mucus – but also the fetus/baby, 'waters', colostrum, breast milk, afterbirth) marks bodily sites/sights dramatically.

5.1.1. Encountering from inside - Susan Hiller observing pregnancy

In Western society a woman who is a producer of cultural images is in an awkward position. As a producer, she assumes the position of the subject but in dominant culture she is always seen as the object, always represented as the Other. Given this contradiction, Kenrick questions how a woman artist represents herself and how she defines her relationship with others (Kenrick in Griffin, 1994:110). Probably one of the most prominent examples of this complex interrelationship is Susan Hiller's piece "10 Months", where we see a

so-called impersonal record, month by month, of the expanded stomach of a pregnant woman. As argued further by Kenrick: “These seemingly simple images are bound into an extremely complex system of signification. The images invite the spectator’s speculation about mysterious areas of knowledge and collective fantasy about women’s bodily potential and power, beyond the rational” (Kenrick in Griffin, 1994:110). Indeed, no body is more cruelly poised at the intersection of the visible and the invisible, the public and the intimate, then the maternal body.

Ten months, produced in London in 1979, one year after I was born, recalls some of the interweaving body and perceptual changes I myself, felt during pregnancy. Attending sonogram sessions almost every four weeks during my first pregnancy, made my sense of self forever altered, though my sensual and perceptual awareness were heightened. Yet, I felt estranged from the actual physical changes going on inside me. Just the ever-progressing belly, oddly extending my body line.

Hiller took full-body photographs of herself every day and kept a journal, but she did not have any intention of turning these elements into an art piece. After her son was born, Hiller decided to crop the photographs and use only the section showing her developing belly, what she referred to as “the section of the body you couldn’t talk about, the pregnant part” (1996:50), which accounts for the graininess and “imperfection” of the images. The line of images seems to be the equivalent of the nineteenth and twentieth century medical records which categorize human types and diseases. Her photographs distance the body from its owner in images that paradoxically convey the witnessing detail of medical photographs. These images immediately suggest the moon in all its subtle phases; Hiller herself talks about this association and connection of a woman’s pregnancy with the lunar months. This is an observation that Hiller’s project insists on with visual and textual cleverness and lucidity. According to Liss, this distancing strategy was part of a larger cultural strategy of that period, since “it was absolutely necessary for feminist artist to avoid any imagery that would code their art, especially work that dealt with anything female-motherhood being the most debased-referred to as ‘sentimental’” (2009:xix). Thus Hiller cleverly represented this reality, this ‘sentimentality’ of pregnancy, within the coded grids

of the contact sheets that represented the line of the pregnant body. In addition to taking the photographs, Hiller also kept a journal while she was pregnant and each section of *Ten months* has an accompanying text recording anxieties and theoretical speculations, in marked contrast to the seeming coolness of the images. Hiller placed the first five texts below the first five photographs because at that point in her pregnancy she was dwelling on her body's physical changes. In the second half of the installation the order is reversed, a structural organization that mirrored her emphasis on her fluctuating status as observer and participant in the process she increasingly researched and theorized in order to understand what she was going through (Hiller, 1996:50).

The contradictions between being mother (a creative activity which excluded women from the public sphere) and being a creative artist (which propelled one into the public sphere despite being a woman) are presented in this text. The intriguing texts according to Liss reveal "Hiller's thinking-woman self reflecting on her own subjectivity at the very moment when a new being was on the verge of changing her sense of self " (2009:16). She refuses the place of the distant and assumed nonbiased witness. Hiller's project was and is still provocative because it addressed pregnancy from the artist-mother's intellect and sexed subjectivity. The provocative strategies that underlie *Ten Months* are in correlation with philosopher Rosi Braidotti's ideas on subjectivity, the sexed subject and bodily knowledge:

The "body in question" is the threshold of subjectivity; as such it is neither the sum of its organs-a fixed biological essence- nor the result of social conditioning- a historical entity. The "body" is rather to be thought of as the point of intersection, as the interface between the biological and the social, that is to say between the socio-political field of microphysics of power and the subjective dimension.

(Braidotti,1989:89)

5.1.2. Encountering from outside – Pipilotti Rist

In a similar manner, in the work of Hiller's contemporary, Pipilotti Rist, we can find clear traces of assertion of the female body as both a medium and a subject. Rist's camera takes a similarly autobiographical approach to the physical and emotional geography of the body. The boldness with which she

confronts her desire for erotic, emotional and social freedom encourages, in turn, boldness in the viewer, not only to look at her bodies, including the artist's own, but to do so within a communal setting, alongside groups of strangers. Rist's democratic approach undercuts the objectification of the female body that occurs in the power relations that are inherent in the dominant art scene. The idea that Rist proposes a space without walls is rooted in a desire 'to escape one's own loneliness and the isolation of one's body, and to enter into a shared mental bubble with others' (Iles in Rist and Rosenthal, 2011:112). This works on a similar premise to Ettinger's ideas of artworking as an encounter. Ettinger talks about her process:

Artworking is sensing a potential co-emergence and co-fading and bringing into being objects or events, processes or encounters that sustain these metamorphoses and further transmit their effect. Art evokes further instances of trans-subjectivity that embrace and produce new partial subjects, and makes almost-impossible new borderlinking available, out of elements and links already partially available in bits.

(Ettinger, 2005:710)

The link between the body lines, limits and encounter are especially evident in Rist's piece "*Mutter, Sohn & heiliger Garten (Mother, Son & The Holy Garden)*" (2003), that can be read as a self-reflexive intervention. Producing excessive visual proximity to a mother breastfeeding her child, Rist draws us into scenes of intimacy, re-enacting this bond visually. The maternal breast is foregrounded as the camera repeatedly tracks towards the maternal body until the nipple touches the lens. The overproximity emerges as an exposure and an opening, a fusion of two bodies inviting us to viscerally partake of the feeding put on display. At the same time, this scene of intimacy is superimposed on a geographical map, juxtaposing extreme bodies with abstract cartography. The entangled body of mother and child, travels around the frame of the image, as though floating in free space, while the camera also pans along the colored routes inscribed on a road map, which at times opens out onto an actual landscape or is infused by its scenery. It seems that Rist is performing the border between the fused bodies of a mother and a child and the actual geographical space where they are positioned. It seems that the bodies exist on top of it, they somehow cannot be merged, they simply overlap. It is as if mother and her child are mapping and searching their position, somehow undetermined

and their impossible journey.

Through this work, I am drawn to the notion that motherhood perhaps through the kinds of particular and peculiar extremities that Rist charts, has opened up new possibilities for her; new ways of experiencing herself, new 'raw materials' with which to work, or perhaps, that it even 'made her anew'. This video seems to depict unexceptional incidents in which a mother crosses a street with a pram and a toddler holding her other hand, bursts into tears without knowing why, goes to a school play, dislikes using her child's name, juggles bottles, nappies and bags in the urban landscape. Yet, by thinking about the experiences potentially visible in this video, something we might call line of maternal subjectivity may emerge. As argued by Baraitser, "characterized not by fluidity, hybridity or flow, but by physical viscosity, heightened sense, a renewed awareness of objects, of one's own emotional range and emotional points of weakness, an engagement with the built environment and street furniture, a renewed temporal awareness where the present is elongated and the past and future no longer felt to be so tangible, and a renewed sense of oneself as a speaking subject"(2009:4).

The above two examples ('*Ten months*' and '*Mutter, Sohn & heiliger Garten*') are in a way a provocative gesture toward characterisation of the Western tradition of women's and especially mother's bodies as chaotic and disorderly because of uncontrollable, hysterical fluids-blood, milk, emotions, and tears.

Diary entry Day 124

I am so happy to see you, it had been a year, and both of us have been through a lot. You lost another pregnancy. I lost my country. *I felt perfectly at home, nowhere*. I have to tell you that I am pregnant, a bit hesitant, but can't hide; you are my best friend after all. We start on a less slippery territory, talking about your new job. I can feel hesitation in your voice, a bit of resentment.

"It is a job after all, you know how difficult it is to get a job in Macedonia, and I was waiting for an opportunity like this for two years. I enjoy the stability."

"I am sure it will get better"

“Doesn’t matter, nothing gets better here, but I can cope with this better than not having job.”

“ Well on a more sunny side, ...I am pregnant again!” I blurred.

Your eyes get tearful; you hug me and caress my belly.

“You are really brave, you know? Was it planned?”

“Well you know that we want a big family, but not really...We are happy that I am pregnant. I am a bit scared that I have to give birth in England.”

You stand up and change your tone.

“Don’t you ever bring those kids back here. Let them enjoy the freedom of the West. We know it is a lie, but it is a better one than the lie we are living. Make sure to stay there.”

“Oh, we are not sure if we WANT and we CAN stay...”

“No, you will do everything to stay. Don’t steal their childhood, you know how painful it is to lose childhood early.”

I know, we lost ours so early, I don’t even remember being a child.

“Enough of this, get your jacket, we have to celebrate!”

We go by the river, to our favorite spot, where the soul of the city slowly dies, under the fallen bridge. We were drinking cheap wine here numerous times, dreaming about going to different places, listening to warplanes and shotguns in the distance. No wine this time, strangely silent, me and you holding hands and crying. We both know that we will stay.

5.2 Mothering as a migrant, bordering as mother

What seemed crucial for my practical work, when I recall the above diary entry, was the physical, perceptual experience of our encounter. I valued occupying (breathing in, moving through) the same space as my friend, being able to hold and touch her, to exchange looks, share drinks and hear her voice. Multi-sensorial bodily experiences were undoubtedly a fundamental part of the reunion, and affected the emotional dynamics of my practical work created after this encounter.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section Hotel Makedonija, under the Gallery, on the following link:
<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/660283/gallery/hotel-makedonija>

Agreeing with Ruth Behar that locating oneself in one's own text "is only interesting if one is able to draw deeper connections between one's personal experience and the subject under study" (1996:14), I return again to a personal account as it is relevant to the discussion in this chapter. The visit to my childless friend in the moment when I am confronted with accepting my second pregnancy demonstrates how emotions, regarded as powerful processes in which people experience and situate themselves in the world through meaning and feeling, can be a driving force for social action. Furthermore, my own case illustrates an important point made by anthropologist Loretta Baldassar namely, that even though long-distance connections can be maintained through the creative use of communication technology, return visits have a specific quality that cannot be reproduced "from a distance". The multi-sensorial dimension of co-presence, the ability to see, hear, smell and touch each other, and to interact emotionally within the same time/space frame, allow for a unique form of intimacy which is irreplaceable by communication at a distance (2008:253). As human geographers have recently stressed, many of the events and communities that shape our senses of self are connected to particular places (Conradson and McKay 2007). In addition, because leaving one's country was often experienced as a radical and traumatic departure, return visits could have a healing function, offering the one who left the possibility of ending their bereavement and restoring their relationship with their motherland.

Irene Gedalof introduces the theoretical approach that pivots on the notion that migrant women's reproductive work can be characterized as a kind of 'juggling between two worlds'. For example, Ruba Salih's work on Moroccan migrant women in Italy (2003) provides much fascinating detail of the complexities of home for migrant women and the material and emotional work that goes into maintaining transnational links and identities. Yet I feel that this theoretical framework does not go far enough in terms of practical application. While it allows us to recognise that migrant women are involved in complex and

dynamic work when they mother, it still leaves us with a sense that this work occurs between two, relatively stable sites of belonging, the 'here' and the 'there'. While this certainly captures part of the processes of making home in which migrant mothers are engaged, it does not quite get at the messy, dynamic nature of the reproductive processes and practices involved (talking daily on Skype, shifting between languages, answering in the right language, crying, leaking, vomiting in a foreign space, in a foreign culture). The question is not only how migrant mothers are constrained by pre-existing structures in their agency, but also, how we understand both structures and agents of belonging as messy and dynamic entanglements of constraint and enablement, being and becoming, movement and inhabitation. As Salih herself suggests, if cultural identities are always dynamic and changing, then the work of being 'rooted' in those identities necessarily involves 'historical processes of adaptation, negotiation and reformulation of cultural and religious identities in postcolonial societies' (2003: 124). Some of the work on migration by feminist geographers has expanded this insight by drawing on a more fluid and dynamic concept of 'place' (Massey, 2005) and the intricate relationships between body, place and identity (Dyck, 2006). The point of the matter is that we live in a world which is organised along multiple axes of mobility, circulation, flows of people and commodities (Cresswell, 1997: 368). Displacement is a central feature of the postmodern era (Probyn in Braidotti, 2006: 78).

5.3 Stitch, shadow, gap

In the practical work created for this thesis, the line was one strong constitutive element that reoccurred. In addition to this there are three distinctive elements: the stitch line, the shadow and the gap. They are interconnected, but still work separately as well. The stitch was used both visually and metaphorically to talk about a condition of my body (Caesarian section) and to talk about the possibility of connecting three different stories and narratives together. The stitch was something that needed healing in order to release voice. The shadow is used as an element and offers the possibility to disappear as an artist and to overlap with the Other in a manner similar to the relation between mother

(nature) and child (artist). The gap or the black space in my video work, which on one hand frames the imagery, but on the other constrains its meaning, was an opportunity to talk about the impossibility of arriving “home”. This visual element addresses the actual physical space that needs to be crossed and passed on multiple occasions.

5.4 Stich as element

In the “*Last place where we were together*”, the last series of work created for this thesis, I look at the state in which the boundaries of inside and outside, self and other, dissolve. I take the maternal as a starting point, since the maternal body points to the impossibility of closure, to a liminal state where the boundaries of the body are fluid.

I explore the maternal through the screen as an object that protects on one hand, and obscures on the other. The screen is a curtain, a window, a digital representation. I am inspired by the long tradition of how women interact with the screen as a shape, object and signifier. We hide behind screens, pray in front of screens, hesitate and tremble at their site, feel in control or out of our comfort zone, they are framed and change the frame.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section Stich, under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/466869/gallery/stich>

The screen was fundamental in shaping my experience as foreigner and mother during my research. On screen presence was maintained through use of Skype, video clips and photographs, where mothering was reassembled through the notion of distance and abjection. The relationship with my children and the (in)visibility of my (pregnant and mother) body was a crucial element determining the screen shape, form and material. The shifting between analog and digital screens was an element that determined the method used to document and reflect on the working process. The relationship between the screen and the mothering experience was a central motive to widen the scope

of this thesis. It made me think further about the digital screen and explore first of all my own and then female relations to the screens as obstacle and division. The practical reflective work accumulated through this exploration involves shapeless screens made of curtains, a digital screen precisely framed, window screens into my inside. But most of all, the screen was used to shelter precious memories, to reflect unknown territories and to establish links with the past and the future.

Letter to my daughter Number 96

When I started working on the last part of my PhD , I started thinking about my mothering and my culture in a different way. The inevitability of failure. I have become aware of different ways in which my anecdotes about my life can be read. I am nervous now about how my stories sound, what they reveal about my mothering and my past. I carry this sense of motherhood as a sickness that I will transmit to you, my child.

I read Ettinger again, she describes maternal subjectivity as a process of mother and child becoming together, mutual but different, recognizing each other before knowing. The womb is a site of 'hospitality and compassion for the other in their otherness'. I am comforted by the idea of mutual care between mother and child - an ongoing becoming together. I wallow in the possibility of compassion. I think of you asking me what my childhood was like.

As a child I was a witness to witnesses. When I perform or when I listen I am that too. My parents are proud of their silence. It was their way of sparing others and their children from suffering. But in this silence everything was transmitted except the narrative.

5.4.1. Last place where we were together

I had my first daughter with Caesarian. In a reflective writing after a somatic performative exploration in dyad, during an Authentic movement session I wrote the following about the experience:

My hips are so tiny, it's been 12 hours, is my baby ok, where is the doctor? I feel pain, I can not move properly. 2 minutes, breathe, lay down, stand up, M is holding my hand, he is behind me, helping me. I have to go, it is time they say. I just want to be finished. I am a bit annoyed, there are so many people around me, put me to sleep, I don't want to know. I am alive. Where is my baby? My hips are so tiny and heavy. I can't move them. It is so painful, my whole body is gone, I only have hips.

(Marcevska 2010:unpublished)

This is clearly a somatic exploration of the complex web of relations between creative practice-led research, personal story and the bodily-felt and experienced implications of social and cultural location. My body was marked clearly after this experience; I had a borderline on my stomach where my first daughter had met the world for the first time, while I was asleep under anesthetic. During my second delivery (this time in UK) I was offered induction to speed up my birth. The nurses who were examining me and helping me to prepare saw my scar. She was explaining the process and what is happening at different stages. She said that if the induction did not help the process, I would have to have another Caesarian. Almost like a joke she said: "You know they haven't done a good job with your previous one, our doctors will fix that, so your scaring will be almost invisible." Suddenly that line, the sewing process that marked the birth of my first child, became a cultural divider of how things are done properly and better. How things are done here and there. And me in between, sewing the memories, patching up the experiences.

For my last practical exploration, I chose the act of sewing, the craft of fastening or attaching objects using stitches made with a needle and thread to stitch three different stories and screens together.

The first room was set up as a conventional single channel video installation. There were two sofas where the audience can sit and watch the looped video

on a big digital screen. I decided to start with this setting, since the moving images and illuminated surfaces of screen-reliant works provoke a different kind of attention from other art objects, both psychologically and physiologically. On the most basic level, moving and illuminating imagery persistently solicits the observer's gaze and in so doing disciplines his or her body. I decided to play the sound loud, so the harsh mechanical process of machine sewing splits the room when you enter. The action in the video is quite simple, a woman is sewing on a machine, black stitch on a white fabric. But the video slowly unfolds and the sound fades out, while the fabric changes color and starts to melt into a pixilated image, merging into a skin like surface. My intention was to talk about how the borders are threaded on the human body and how the marks will never fade away, although the wounds will heal.

The second room is split in two parts.

The first object is a pristine white box, with a small glass front, where you can look at the remnants of the last place where two bodies were together. The mother and the child. And a needle, that makes a stitch, that remains visible on the female body, a mark that burns with memory.

The third and last piece is a cradle. In an empty, silent white space. Behind a transparent screen of curtains. When you approach it, you see the white fabric from the first video, and the black stitch dividing the cradle in two. A sharp shadow on the floor, makes you ponder, who was sleeping there? It is nearly the same as the cradle of my childhood nightmare. Where is the child that was in this cradle?

In this piece I look at the border as an encounter. This encounter remains firmly marked on my body, and is transmitted to everyone that brushes past me. Bracha suggests that through art work this encounter can appear. The artwork is a screen on which this event—personal or historical, from past and present—is projected and unconsciously shaped. The viewer is attracted to this screen without knowing the event that has made the work emerge. This encounter generates responsiveness that comes from the histories that we all carry, known or unknown.

Letter to my daughter Number 59

Since the minute I have you in my arms the name comes. Strange and unthinkable at the beginning, it sticks to my tongue and I say it – Marina. I look at your father, he nods in approval. Marina, Marina, Marina. Your eyes are focused on my face, so strange, I always thought that newborns are not able to recognize patterns. Marina... You are born on an island, surrounded with water; I was born in a landlocked, mountain country, dry and windless.

As Marc Augé explains, in certain parts of Africa, a mother who delivers her child outside her place of residence will often choose a name for the child which is derived from some feature of the landscape in which the birth took place (1995: 53). Augé thus uses this as an example of what he terms 'anthropological place': that is, the notion of space and place as constituent 'of identity, of relations and of history' (1995:51). Against this he contrasts the liminal 'non-places' characteristic of 'our' postmodern era: the motorways, waiting rooms and airport departure lounges which are 'there to be passed through', and which subsequently focus upon individuals operating within a perpetual present, bypassing any sense of place 'as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity' (1995:77).

I wish to agree with Augé, but this birth experience was so dislocated from spaces and places. It almost feels like it happened only in my head. I only had you, as living proof that something happened. You, my bridge, my arc, my beholder and the water, the water, everywhere.

5.4.2. Sewing the border

While working on "*The Place where we were last together*" scholarly and autoethnographic methodologies that I mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, finally coherently came together. Intertwining crucial theoretical text with strategic first-person voices (my own, my daughter's, my family's). My thinking on "voice" bears an affinity with that of feminist law professor and writer Drucilla

Cornell: "I use 'voice' in contrast to muteness that makes feminine 'reality' disappear because it cannot be articulated. Muteness not only implies silencing of women, it also indicates the 'dumbness' before what cannot be 'heard' or 'read' because it cannot be articulated" (1991:3). This links to Bacon's concept of "voice of her body" where she asks the crucial question of how a woman artist can be sure that the (artistic, academic, personal) 'voice' she has is being received in the way that is important for her. She further suggests that in order to answer this, the artist needs to attend a careful process of inner listening and allowing that provides the ground from which she can move to find her body/self (2010: 72). Working with feminist concepts of intersubjectivity (Ettinger 2006, Cavarero 2011, Bacon 2010) in "*Place where we were last together*" I explore how to empathetically be in the place of the other and inside one's self, how to care for another and one's self. The visual exploration of borders and motherhood that I work with here renounce patriarchal, sexist, and racist attitudes that separate body from the mind, the intimate from the political, and human beings from each other.

The position mother-border emerged from the beginning of my practical process for this thesis. Arriving at the University of Northampton as an international student with a one year old child was a mark, which somehow made me different and visible to every one of my colleagues. Just as I was finishing this chapter, one of my colleagues mentioned how stunned he was when he first met me during our Induction in 2007. I was 6 months pregnant at that time and still quite unaware of the complicated relationship that could emerge and influence my work completely. He said that he loved my spirit and proposal, but thought that he would never see me again, since I was about to become a mother and supposedly not capable of returning to work. He said, "You know you proved me wrong. Twice!" Funnily enough this conversation took place while comparing notes for submission.

In "*Microprojects on walking and waiting*" the presence of my daughter was an encompassing element. She was still physically attached to me and breastfeeding, but also it was just both of us together in this country, trying to find our way through the new life. Her small body next to my body in almost every single image and video, standing, playing, running, sleeping, copying.

Like a shadow that makes me think and consider how and why I reflect things on screen. A series of videos and photos of her walking, standing and crossing lines. A child's obsession with walking straight and my retrospective exploration of what these lines mean in our mutual existence.

In "*Valid until ...*" her voice and body encompassing mine; traversing the physical boundaries. Us in transitional spaces, us at home, us in a liminal limbo waiting for visas. Endless drawings of houses, endless questions of where we belong, endless memories of where we don't belong. And then another challenge, being joined by my second daughter...

In "*Place where we were last together*" both of them are invisibly present. How to find a way to tell you, my daughters, why I am doing this. A string of letters about my joy and pain, ambivalent motherhood on the border. Remnants of our bodies, umbilical cord, empty cradle, and process of sewing, sewing everything together on screen, paper, fabric. Through this practical exploration desire paths were sewn, paths in relation to my maternal task to establish links between borders and cultures. Drawing on De Certeau's (1988: 117) notion of 'space as a practical place' Nicholas Crane describes desire paths as:

the imprints of 'foot anarchists', individuals who had trodden their own routes into the landscape, regardless of the intentions of government, planners and engineers. A desire path could be a short cut through waste ground, across the corner of a civic garden or down an embankment. They were expressions of free will, 'paths with a passion', an alternative to the strictures of railings, fences and walls that turned individuals into powerless apathetic automatons. On desire paths you could break out, explore, feel your way across the landscape.

(Crane, 2000:131)

This goes along with Baraitser 'maternal non-place' which she explains emerges as an encounter of other mothers in the material landscapes, although mothers talk of experiences of mothering in isolation. When mothers 'mass', when they trammel their way across the urban landscape, they create multiple and complex desire paths as they go (Baraitser, 2009:23). I believe that what mothers make public is perhaps the politics of affective encounter after all – the affective work that is required to live alongside one another in co-operative ways. And my last practical exploration draws on this particular politics of being in the borderspace and encountering the difference through the screen.

5.5 Shadow as element - Tracing the invisible

When the shadow of the body is being washed away by the waves or lost in the snow, the feelings of separation, loss, mourning, absence and void accompany the rejection of the body. This transitory aspect of my work, which uses the shadow as a main element, whose borders became washed away also erased the separation between the places where works of art were made and displayed.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section Shadow, under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/660259/gallery/shadow>

The shadow appeared as an element, when I was exploring my relationship with the screen. In Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*, the first definitions given to the term *screen* is: 'that which shelters from observation, a partition' (1888:145). This meanings makes me want to ask the further question about how I (as artist, women and mother) relate to the *screen*: who is being sheltered? Who is doing the sheltering? From what am I or is someone being sheltered? And crucially: who is the implied observer? And what is he or she wishing to observe?

Stephen Wright reflects on this while discussing what makes something art: the frame, or the specific visibility. According to him, there is an assumption that nothing can remain in shadow if it can be mapped. But he argues further:

Mapping is a form and technique of attention getting, and since there is little point drawing specific attention to that which is already basking in it, cartographers tend to focus on the invisible or barely visible. Does mapping aspire to a perfectly luminescent, shadow-free world? There is certainly a way to go in a world shrouded in covert data accumulation and concealed agendas, which is what makes the rise of cognitive-mapping practices over the past decade such a compelling critical by-product of contemporary political and artistic culture. However mapping's white dream inevitably encounters its own blind spot: for, like all refracting and occluding devices, maps, too, cast shadows

(Wright, 2012:unpaginated).

In my work, the shadow connects to the disappearing body, to the aspect of my herstory that is yet to be discovered. It also, questions the technological embodiment and the idea that the screen offers final erasure of gender and race as culturally organised systems of differentiation. But even if the material body is systematically replaced piece-by-piece, system-by-system, gender identity does not entirely disappear.

In one of my blog entries, I reflect on this:

How to remain unmarked in the digital space? How my body to skip the representation, the numeric data and remain unmarked? How to cope with Phellan warning that: "there is a real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to representation as a political goal." (1993:6) When the process of marking, of dividing is actually forming my identity.

I come from a country that is divided. As long as I remember people around me talk about divisions, splits and marks remained from the process of discontinuity. That is why I am always questioning the borders physiognomy and I try to challenge their accessibility, permeability and potential as contact and communication zones. Only through trajectories of marking, the pain of searching for origins will be released

(Marchevska, 2010:unpaginated).

Through a series of videos and still images, I played with the shadow as element of both foregrounding and forgetting. The shadow is my connection to homeland; it is an extension to the outland. For Maki, homeland and outland are mental landscapes. The homeland is a landscape already inscribed with time. The outland, however, is a landscape in which time and space are both obscure (Maki, 2008:119). But for my artistic process the most interesting division that he tries to apply is considering the outland as an imaginary created space, which is gradually transforming the hard-edged, tactile world into a world of different dimensions. In this case, the screen can be considered as an outland. Homeland is a spatial image carrying the full weight of time. It possesses a clear visual pattern and a recognised structure of meaning. The screen as outland is liberated from time, visually amorphous and in a state of suspended meaning. In the homeland, space is controlled by the powerful will of the group, but in the outland, on the screen, the individual's imagination is permitted to wander (Maki, 2008:120). Accordingly, the work that explore the shadow as

element were almost as a dialogue with my internal self and as something that is there, but not really there. Like the shadow in the dirt, the photograph and the screen point to its absent double from which it became separated. My work that uses shadow as element, involves an initial act of creation, the documentation of that act, and the disappearance or disintegration of its material component. This process makes it clear that my art is fundamentally based in performance. Through this element I try to explore the potency of dissolution, absence, and intangibility. This work asks the viewer to learn, in Phelan's words, to value what is lost and unmarked (1993:5).

This element of my practice demonstrates how the reality of the screen body is very much tied to its discursive construction and institutional situation. Digitised representations of corporeal identity impact material bodies. The politics of representation in these cases are doubly complex in that it is difficult not only to determine how the body is being represented, but also who is the agent of representation and how is this read. Or as Lévy summarises:

The more memory we store on data banks, the more the past is sucked into the orbit of the present, ready to be called up on the screen. A sense of historical continuity or, for that matter, discontinuity, both of which depend on a before and an after, gives way to the simultaneity of all times and spaces readily accessible in the present.

(Lévy, 2010:2)

5.6 Gap as element - The gap, in-betweens and negative space

Throughout my process, I was haunted by two questions, one of them very pertinent in the recent feminist discussion about access to technoculture, the other one very private and connected with my irrational artistic practice on screen. The first one is perpetuated in the writing of many media scholars and art practitioners and that is: how can we support democratic efforts to increase the participation of women, and other underrepresented agents, in the process of technological development, but at the same time avoid a naïve belief in biological, racial or sexual essentialism? The second one, stemming from discussions with my supervisors, is how to frame the access and discuss the

screen, outside the technological given square frame. For both questions I need to address the gap, the gap in knowledge structures surrounding screen exploration and the in-betweens manifested in the negative space that appeared in my photographs and videos.

While reading this part of the thesis, please view the section Gaps, under the Gallery, on the following link:

<http://screenassite.prosite.com/93123/534794/gallery/gaps>

To address these questions I need to use the technological imagination strategy developed by Balsamo. Technological imagination is a mindset and a creative practice used to analyse, design and develop technologies. It is an expressive capacity to use what is at hand to create something else. This is a quality of mind that grasps the double-nature of technology: as determining and determined, as both autonomous and subservient to human goals. It understands the consequences of techno-cultural production and creations for multiple perspectives. It enables a person to understand the broader set of forces that shape the development of new technologies and take account of how these forces might be modified or transformed. According to Balsamo, developing this imagination is a necessary step in shifting our collective world-view so that we can evaluate more clearly the path we are on, and more importantly, act ethically in developing the foundation of future technocultures (2011:31).

5.6.1. The screen as a gap in female praxis

Female practitioners need reliable maps and innovative tools to navigate the technocultural screen terrain. According to Balsamo it is especially important that these maps and tools remain attendant to the dual aims of feminist technoscience studies: to be critical of the social and political consequences of screen practices and to be supportive of the women who choose to pursue this road (2011:35). The maps that we create through praxis must be able to guide travellers through rapidly changing landscapes, identify rocky roads and

smoother trails, and provide pointers toward destination sites of inspiration. More importantly, we need to provide women with guidance in how to do things differently within this landscape. The crucial step is to gender the technological innovations and to focus on how things are done differently with screen technologies, especially as these involve relations with other histories. The gendered transformation of the technological imagination is not solely a matter of theory, but a matter of praxis.

5.6.2. Typology of negative space – black gaps

A typology, simply put, is a collection of members of a common class or type. A typology is assembled by observation, collection, naming and grouping. These actions allow the members of the class to be compared, usually in search of broader patterns. These patterns may reveal biological constants if the subjects are living things, or social truths if the subjects are human creations. Ordering activities are more often associated with science than the arts. However, in the past several decades, it has been increasingly common for artists to take an analytical or critical stance through the use of typology in photography or video. The typology as a working method forms a common denominator for many artists (Rineke Dijkstra 1994, Sally Mann 2000 etc.) though the backgrounds and goals of the artwork vary considerably.

In my work, a typology is a specific type of series concerned with autobiographical exploration in which the elements have equal weight and no fixed sequence—in a sense, the pictures and the videos are modular. Through this method, the personal blends with the political in my work. The micro-politics of walking and standing with my children are mapped onto the macro-politics of foreignness and mothering. In an almost diagrammatic fusion of the personal with larger cultural meanings, the separations and the black, negative space in my imagery and video allude to the border as an event in my life. This contrasts with the self-images that depart from traditional portrait formats, which use narrative, retrospection and historicisation. Creating the photographs and videos this way, I did not record past events, I both literally and metaphorically reframed these events. Art is a medium through which I come to terms with and

transcend of a painful and imperfect past, and memory is the thematic basis for my typological exploration. Louise Bourgeois talks about this process when contemplating the use of memory in her sculptural work:

They are my documents. I keep watch over them...To reminisce and woolgather is negative. You have to differentiate between memories. Are you going to them or are they coming to you. If you are going to them, you are wasting time. Nostalgia is not productive. If they come to you, they are seed for sculpture.

(1998:225)

As I mentioned in the introduction, my approach employs Svetlana Boym's distinction between reflective and restorative nostalgias, elaborated in her analysis of post-communist urban cultures: "If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym in Heddon et al, 2009:11). Reflective nostalgia positions the individual on a flexible historical trajectory and it constantly challenges the unattainable destination called "home". For me the black space, which on one hand frames the imagery, but on the other constrains its meaning, was an opportunity to talk about the impossibility of arriving "home". The images of my walks are loosely framed and are filled with light; the body in interaction with the elements- ground, sky, sun, rain. This stems from the method used to make these images: the mobile phone camera is set, I am standing with the camera in hand or it is attached to my body or to an object that I carry, it records the action undisturbed. In my editing process, I juxtapose these self-representational images, by creating gaps and negative space as a border to the relationship of the private to the public. As Leigh Gilmore has noted in her book *The limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (2001), self-representation is constantly burdened by "its public charge to disclose a private truth" (2001:14). This links to Lejeune's notion of a 'pact' or 'contract' between reader and author in literary autobiographies in which the expectations of both are tacitly agreed, although, as Lejeune more recently notes, the terms of the contract will vary from reader to reader (1989:125). This contingency extends to the relationality of the self to the public context in or for which the autobiography is produced and consumed. The act of

sousveillance²⁷ or self-recording that I used displays a wide variety of concerns about my relation with the public context. I use picture within picture to simultaneously explore tautology and the cultural implications of the image environment. In other words, through the black space I try to build the bond with the viewer, to give them space to contemplate. This positions me as an artist at the interface between the public and the private, which is variable and elastic in the forms that it can assume and remains in a constant flux.

²⁷ **Sousveillance** refers to the recording of an activity by a participant in the activity typically by way of small wearable or portable personal technologies.

Conclusion or about the inability to arrive

Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection. It is a painful re-remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. (Bhabha, 1994)

Just before we left Macedonia, to come to our new life in the UK, we had a long walk by the riverbank, my husband and I. We left our one year old with my parents, and decided to have a goodbye discussion with our city. We were still struggling with the idea of leaving everything behind and starting all over. We owned a flat, owned a car, both of us had decent jobs and both of our families were nearby. What was ahead was quite gloomy; we just had two suitcases, one young child and some savings to start all over. We walked slowly, listening to the river and the noise of the city in the background. It was a quiet early autumn night. Many couples with their children walking, old people sitting and playing chess on the benches, joggers on the running path, the smell of the river, the smell of my childhood. We sit on the grass, dry and crispy under our bare feet. We look at the Old Fortress, and the big flag that was recently put there. We detest the government ability to claim ownership over history that remained unclaimed by many armies and invaders, which was utterly belonging and shaping our city. A group of young people pass by us, half of them are wrapped in the national flag, singing a newly composed version of traditional songs. Drunk with nationalism, wide smiles of ignorance on their young faces. It is Independence Day soon, they march the streets day and night. These young people, that somehow I haven't noticed breed in our country. Marko feels my aversion, and tries to calm me down: "Everything will change in a couple of years, we will be away either way. When we return everything will be back to sanity. Nothing is as constant as change."

The practice that was developed for this thesis provided insight into what might

be the features of a performative practice that explores the mediated space of the screen as a border site. By weaving together strands of theory, practice and reflective writing this dialogue has produced a body of work articulated through “*Microprojects on proximity of walking and waiting*”, “*Valid until...*” and “*The place where we were last together*”.

This final chapter draws upon the autoethnographic nature of these process oriented pieces by summarising their contribution to the narrow field of feminist performance research concerned with the politics of the screen and its performative and somatic values.

In addition, the artists that were studied provided insights into territories that bridge the topics of subjectivity, border and the screen. However, it needs to be underlined that none of these art works were made having exactly these three terms together in mind. In this sense, the criticism and analysis of those practices throughout the thesis are to be seen as indicating further research in both practice and theory rather than a conclusive assessment of the artworks.

This chapter articulates the thesis’s contributions to feminist screen and performance studies, drawing conclusions about the relationship between theory and practice, and outlines future possibilities for research in the area of performative and embodied interaction with the screen.

6.1 The screen as a map of memories

Many things have changed in between. We accepted our decision to leave. Many things changed in our country, for better or worse. We can still point out on the map where it is. We get that question often, where exactly is your country?

Official boundaries can easily be internalised; county, state and national borders are identity makers. “Speaking of the new computerized ‘cartographic regime’”, Jack Hitt writes, “the whole earth is catalogued. Including, perhaps, your own home” (1995:32). Probably Hitt could not even imagine of Google maps and Google Street view, but he narrowed down quite accurately the abstract screen documentation of the neutralised spaces. Unfortunately, where we want to be is in-between. That narrow place, on screen, that exists only for

half an hour when chatting and smiling with our family on Skype. This place "... is not on any map, true places never are" (Melville, 1922:57).

In the late eighties to the early nineties the words "bridges", "boundaries" and "borders" became popular as titles for exhibitions, performances, and conferences in the field of cultural studies. As Jeff Kelley has put it, "stereotypes loom largest at the border, beyond which awaits the other, threatening to cross" (Kelley in *The Border Art Workshop* catalogue, 1990: unpaginated). The gist of most progressive analyses in these forums was the blurring of boundaries, the porousness of national, racial, ethnic identities, the unstable, shifting ground on which any of these are constructed, and the creation of a hybrid state. As Gloria Anzaldúa has written of all working-class people of colour (and it could be extended to the female artist working on this topic), "our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people" (1987:82). The active discussions have quietened down, and somehow transformed into "more" pertinent topics (Occupy as most recent example), although this territory is constantly revisited and questioned by many artists and theorists alike (Braidotti 2010, Rogoff 2010, Trinh Minh-Ha 2011).

When I delved into this realm, by intuitively following my practice, I could not imagine that it would open up so many sections and passages built by other artists. Or that all of them would overlap with my own memories and artistic processes. I dived into an area subjective and problematic, difficult to navigate, but also so familiar and comforting at the same time, that I ostensibly knew that I was on the right track. The past is not as separate from the present. I am reminded of this when making decisions for my children everyday, on multiple occasions. The past is constantly broken down and reintegrated into the present. In my case, the past had found its way into my screen reliant practice. This process can surely be characterised by many as nostalgic. Nostalgia is a way of denying the present as well as keeping some people and places in the past, where we can visit them when we feel like it. It can also be seen as an apology for the betrayal of forgetfulness, a halfhearted bow to the significance of histories we are too lazy to learn. One reason to know our own histories is so that we are not defined exclusively by others, so that we can resist other people's images of our past, and consequently, our futures.

6.2 Contribution

In order to summarise and frame the thesis contribution, I need to outline the research objectives that derived from the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The research objectives were:

1. To explore and reflect on the screen as a border site through performative process-oriented practice.
2. To approach the screen as a technological object that can be used to divide and enhance border in both my own practice and existing artistic work (Mendieta, Pena 2000, Fusco, Ostojic, Landau) .
3. To address the screen as a metaphor when used in my own and other's feminist artistic practice (Hiller, Rist, Billal), that address motherhood, identity and encounter.

These three research objectives form the basis for the discussion of the thesis and its contributions to the field of feminist performance research concerned with the politics of the screen and its performative and somatic values.

Every time I go back to my city, I am trapped in an in between feeling. I can somehow see my past and future blurred into a present moment. My city became a prisoner of ultra-nationalistic grand ideas, it is buried in someone else's unlearned past. When I saw the new urban plan of my city on Facebook, my heart stopped. First of all, the idea was dull, obnoxious and unrealistic. But most of all, I realised that I am not there and I will not change with the change of the space. I will only have this screen to contemplate on.

In a 1972 book inventively titled “*What time is This Place?*” Kevin Lynch observed that the preservation of a certain kind of past channels us into a certain kind of future. He asks the core question: “Why save things and what should be saved?” Then comes a drumroll of provocative queries, which, if considered in depth, would change our individual ways of thinking about our local surroundings:

Are we looking for evidence of the climatic moments or for any manifestation of tradition we can find, or are we judging and evaluating

the past, choosing the more significant over the less, retaining what we think of as best? Should things be saved because...they are unique or nearly so or...because they were most typical of their time? Because of their importance as a group symbol? Because of their intrinsic qualities in the present? Because of their special usefulness as sources of intellectual information about the past? Or should we (as we most often do) let chance select for us and preserve for a second century everything that has happened to survive the first?

(1972:36)

What do we remember beyond the screen?

6.2.1. Assembling the process oriented practice – PaR contribution

At the beginning of this study, I used Latour's (2004) 'assemblage' and Bacon's (2006) 'processual approach' as a springboard to discuss my practice and how it was developed. It is useful to return now to this term in order to state more clearly how my practice relates and contributes to the wider field described in this thesis.

Practice as research is still in a state of flux, growth and acceptance; it has yet to secure a universally agreed language. My research contributes to the PaR field that is focused on the process. Research of this kind involves a specific intentionality and establishes a key difference between a practitioner-researcher and an 'ordinary' artist. My process was generally intended to add to a shared knowledge, and create experiential knowledge through process. The interest and valuing of experiential knowledge is part of the rationale for the written exegesis (Bolt, 2004:online). The exegesis was not considered 'translation' of the artwork or practice in this thesis, but was created as a document that can be read in conjunction with the work, the one informing and explicating the other and vice versa. This exegesis brought all the elements together and gave voice to the research results through conceptual and representational tools. The rigour of this research is evident through the chain of reasoning (Biggs, 2005:5) rooted in the relationship between the research aim, the political and cultural context, the methodology and the outcome of research.

This form of research is not necessarily concerned with whether or not a thesis can be shown to contain something that is innately correct so much as the extent to which it produces a potential solution: this creates an embrace of trial-and-error procedures that sees error as being no less valuable than success. These processes offer an embrace of notions of self-discovery. The very process of discovery leads the discovering researcher to new points of knowledge and new directions to take. For Paul Rae this understanding of 'artistic and research practices as mutually implicated in a process of invention [allows us to be] simultaneously invested in and led by the work as it unfolds' (Rae, 2003:online).

6.2.2. Screen as a metaphor – contribution to screen studies

As evident from many artists' cases discussed earlier in this thesis and from my own process, it is difficult to grapple with the binary about screen technology and its performative use. The term binary implies that technology is either rejected or demonised on the basis of the alleged threats it poses to essential human values, or it is unquestioningly celebrated on the basis of its alleged contribution to human progress. But through my process and careful consideration of the field, I came to a realisation that however dissimilar in appearance, these positions share a common assumption. In both cases, the technological artefact serves as the mediating device generating the distance between subject and world. Such mediation works to reinforce the dichotomy subject-object, upheld as a means to counterbalance the ever-receding possibility of the human domination of the world. In the first case, technology is conveniently charged with obscuring, distorting, and violating an otherwise original and 'true' access to world. In the latter cases, technology functions as instrumentalised and productivity machinery plainly submitting to the goals and demands of the sovereign subject. Both of these attitudes towards technology are faulty in one very important respect, namely, in their objectifying approach to the technological artifact. In short, the subject-object model, which frames these attitudes, does not leave any room for the inherent relationship between subjectivity and its artifacts to emerge, as it ignores the fact that technology

springs from the very human condition of embodiment.

Opposed to rigid theoretical determinations, the body exhibited in the screen-reliant work created for this research is neither the entity of full presence nor the ghost of absence implied in the 'erasure of the body' theory. It is a body that is in process, which feels, thinks and copes between past and present. It is fair to say that the screen is an essential part of this process as well. By keeping the screen as a main site of this process, I tried to stay culturally attuned and not only to grasp the screen's technologically doubled-nature as determining and determined, as both autonomous of, and subservient to, human goals- but exploring the screen. Thus it is important to remember at this point that the screen was never a singular thing with set boundaries or well-defined edges. It was always, and still is, an unfolding set of possibilities and metaphors.

6.2.3. Future research

At present, as viewers are routinely constructed as screen subjects, in art as in everyday life, the urgency to appreciate the complex interaction between bodies and media screens is unmistakable. Contemporary visuality is so overwhelmingly defined by screens - from mobile phones and laptops to Jumbotrons and electronic billboards - that the dramatic subjective effects of screen-based viewing often go unnoticed. Walter Benjamin's famous "*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*" can serve as a useful model here. In evaluating early drafts of the Frankfurt School theorists' seminal text, film scholar Miriam Hansen explicates how Benjamin was able to imagine that the cinema constituted a "sensory-reflexive horizon in which the liberating as well as pathological effects of techno modernity" could be "articulated and engaged" (2004:21). This argument is based on Benjamin's initial conception of the cinema and cinematic reception as a critically disruptive site. It is Hansen's effort to extend the implications of Benjamin's position to the current day. This was especially inspiring for my context. Her concluding thought was: "All the more reason for us, historians, critics, and theorists, artists, writers, and teachers, to take Benjamin's gamble with cinema seriously and to wage an aesthetics of play, understood as a political ecology of the senses, on a par with

the most advanced technologies" (2004:20). It is arguably by engaging in such aesthetics of play that screen-reliant art allows contemporary viewers the opportunity to reconceptualise their relationships with dominant technologies of visualisation. These are some of the potential areas of future research into this screen-body dynamic and territories of subtle interaction that need to be unravelled.

Another potential area of future research can be in relation to Whitton argument that "if we accept – as we surely must – that all performance constitutes research into theatre, then ultimately there is nothing new in practice as research except its framing as research in terms that are acceptable to the academy" (2009:86). How, and in what ways does this statement advance or close off our understanding of performance, performance as research, and its constitutive elements? How do we establish practice as research outside of academia?

Furthermore, Whitton notes that "framing creative practice as research in an academic sense necessarily involves practitioner-researchers in a set of obligations to the research community which they are not required to engage with as creative artists. Practice as research can hardly constitute its own end without becoming solipsistic" (2009:86). Here, Whitton proposes that practice as research has distinct and limited boundaries that inhibit its application. If this is so, how might we reform or reframe practice as research so it is better able to contribute knowledge?

6.3 Beyond the screen

This summer we went for the first time back to our home country, after the new urban plan was executed. We walked yet again by the riverbank with both of our children. New buildings and monuments were lurking at us from every angle. Our children found the landscape quite entertaining, while both of us were sinking into a deep space of remorse and sadness. My husband, as pragmatic as only as an engineer can be, whispered into my ear, "That's it, we will never return to this city again, this is not our city anymore. I can't bare this

change.” In the silence that was wrapped up around my brain, I recalled the Stavans meditation “I only love my country when I am far and away. Elsewhere—that’s where I belong: The vast diaspora. Nowhere and everywhere” (2007:186). Then my elder child yelled from joy: “Look mommy it is that man, that man that we saw on your computer, he is so big! Who is that man mommy?” It was a statue of Alexander the Great and none of us was ready for that historical lesson. We offered ice cream and wandered away, like tourists on a nice sunny day.

In line with this, Anne Friedberg argues that: “the limits and multiplicities of our frames of vision determine the boundaries and multiplicities of our world” (2009:7). It is incumbent to theorise, practice and construct our interaction with screens as conscientiously as possible. Art practice that is cognisant of the interimplicated relationship between screen objects, screen spaces, and viewing/acting bodies is better prepared to confront the challenges (artistic, ethical, etc) of the shifting connections among them. The work in this thesis is grappling with exactly this intrinsic relationship. With the fact that something exists in between the theory and practice, the screen and the reality. This thin screen border can be easily overlooked. It points to us the impossibility for closure, but, also it enables encounters with the deepest aspects of borderspace as a condition of existence in the twenty-first century.

Letter to my daughter, Number 178

It is Friday late at night. I just got home, after spending most of my day away from you, staring at a screen, arranging and rearranging words and images. It seems that I can’t see beyond that screen anymore.

I was in my teens, when my grandfather got a new TV. We went for a lunch and to help him set up all the programs. He proudly opened the box and together with my father pulled the TV out. They put it in the corner of the room, the old spot, although it seemed slightly awkward, since it was bigger and filled the whole space. My grandmother appeared from the kitchen with her handmade crochet, washed and whitened. Walked to the TV and put it on top of it ,

arranged it to be in the middle and set next to my sulking but silent, grandfather. As one of her favorite nieces, I tried to persuade her to remove it, while chatting about unconnected things. When she flatly rejected all my suggestions, I asked her simply:

“Why do you need that crochet on the TV, grandma?” .

She answered with a smile:

“To make it less square”.

Yet again I remember, Anne Friedbergs conclusion that the limits and multiplicities of our frames of vision determine the boundaries and multiplicities of our world. How do you make a screen less square in today’s culture of framing everything?

I watch you sleep peacefully in your cradle, hugging the dolly, somehow the whole world collapses and there is nothing in between. Just the breath. In and out, and the silence. I have arrived.

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