GEOGRAPHY OF AFFECTIONS

Tales of Identity, Diaspora and Travel in the work of Monica de Miranda

Figure1   Untitled, from the series Erosion, 2013

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ABSTRACT

My research has been a critical analysis, developed from the perspective of my own artistic interventions, dialogue and debate, gained through my practice as an artist. As part of my investigation, I have developed a series of artworks utilising video and photography. The work deals with issues of migration, family, home, place, identity and travel in connection to my own biography. I have undertaken four research field trips to Brazil, London, Angola, Cape Verde and Portugal. In order to create my practical research work, I participated in programmes of residencies with galleries and foundations in those countries and I have also worked with my own family network.

I have been analyzing theoretical issues related to auto-biography and identity in relation to alterity, diaspora, and hybridity within contemporary post colonial art practices. I have examined theories raised by my artwork in relation to notions of travel and migration and to psychoanalytical theory , film studies, feminist postcolonial theory and psycho- geography, I connected these notions to concepts of post-modern theories. Subsequently I have been examining models of the artist as a producer, researcher, traveller, and self-ethnographer.

The work that I have developed for this research are: *An Ocean Between Us* (2012) a short video work and some photographs connect to this work; a series of photographs entitled *Erosion* (2013) and the main installation piece of the research, *Once Upon a Time (2012)*, a tryptic video. I presented the work I have been producing for my practice-based research in three exhibitions in Lisbon, Portugal in October and November 2012 respectively in *Carpe Diem* and *Plataforma Revolver*, and in January 2013 at the gallery *Appleton square*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

>*'We are born into relationships that are always based in a place'*
>(Bird, J. 1994:97)

My research concerns the mapping of my own '*Geography of affections'*. A geography that is defined as a place of bounds and personal emotional relationships, a place to search biographical processes that shape my own transcultural identity. It is an investigation into methods of enquiry that are 'practice-as-research', which deals with notions of story telling and takes the form of a tale told as a process to find my own locations, stories of belonging and sentient cartographies. It encompasses the human, cultural, social, and subjective aspects of personal experience.

As part of my investigation, I formulated a research project entitled *Once Upon a Time,* composed of a series of artworks including video, installations and photography. The key question of my research deal with autobiographical, 'transcultural identities' and auto-ethnography issues associated to concepts of migration, family, home, place, identity, cultural identity and travel in relation to notions of alterity, diaspora, hybridity linked to fantasy, unconscious and archetypal processes. These questions are about positioning my own practice and myself as an artist-self-other at the cross-roads of many issues within post-colonial theory in relation to psychoanalytic theory. The comparison model I set in my research in between these theories have informed and enriched my own artistic practices and are a framework to propose a new model for understanding the concept of 'self' as part of the 'other' as an idea that have formed the whole composition of my investigation and artwork and have made a specific contribution to the field of contemporary art by proposing new ways of dealing with biography and notions of the 'other' in understanding the 'self' as a production of both fantasy and documentary processes. Both the thesis and the work seek to frame an affective 'journey' through this field.

The travel involved my participation in a personal journey where I explored questions of history, collecting, representation, narration and identity. The diaspora experience of my family framed the boundaries of the places where I travelled, defined through a 'fragmented self' that occupies multiple territories that are always shifting and changing. I explore cultural theories including 'third space', 'hybridity', 'diaspora', 'inbetweeness' and 'non places' by authors including Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Marc Augé, James Clifford, Gayatri Spivak and Benedict Anderson. I explore methodological approaches to research within the roles of the artist as producer, storyteller, researcher, traveller, and ethnographer.

I undertook five research field trips to places linked to my own biography: Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Luanda (Angola), Mindelo (Cape Verde), London (UK) and Lisbon (Portugal). I participated in artist residencies with galleries and foundations, and also worked with my family networks living in these countries.

In my research I examine postcolonial studies through the analysis of cultural representations of my own biography, by questioning and reinventing the cultural ways of viewing and of being viewed. My methods extend themselves from feminist postcolonial theory, film studies and psychoanalytical theory to psycho- geography, drawing from the theories of Michel Foucault, Jaques Lacan, Joseph Campbell, Elizabeth Cowie, Julia Kristeva, Griselda Pollock, Mary Ann Doane, Christian Metz, Umberto Eco. I focus on my individual lived experiences and my family and their localities, upon the geographies that they /I live in within my/their own communities. Through psychoanalytical theory I examine both my own subjective experience and analyse my own unconscious creative processes and archetypes of my own psychological identity formation and development within the relationship with my family. I look at psycho-geography as an approach to geography that emphasises playfulness and 'drifting' around urban environments with links to my biographic locations.

The art projects and exhibitions form the basis of my practical submission. These projects include: *An Ocean Between Us* (2012), a short video work and photographic light boxes that were presented at *Transboavista* art space in Lisbon, Portugal in November 2012*; Erosion* (2012), a photographic series shot in Mindelo, Cape Verde and presented at *Appleton square* gallery in January 2013 in Lisbon; and, the main research project and exhibition, *Once Upon a Time* (2012), a triptych video installation and a series of sculpture installations entitled *Home Sweet Sour Home* presented at *Carpe Diem Art research* art space also in Lisbon, in October 2012. These exhibitions were curated by the London-based Argentinean curator, Gabriela Salgado. I also created the website, *www.o-u-t.org*, which documents and registers the processes and outcomes of the research.

Practice as research: Concepts and aims

> *'Mythological travellers´ tales are analogous to psychological experiences, to identity transformation, to artistic processes and works, to aesthetic experiences, and to patterns of cognition. It is through their power to evoke all of these that such tales are constituted as mythologies'* (Lichtenberg-Ettinger 1998:38).

My research is a critical analysis developed from the perspective of my own practice as an artist. As part of my investigation, I created a major body of work that will be the framework for the research, titled *Once Upon a Time,* this work comprises of a series of exhibitions and a website that is the result of a creative process developed through fieldtrips, residencies and site-specific projects.

My artistic work is produced in a space that reflects my own biography and provides a language that intends to create a dialogue with my own familiar networks. It is defined in a place of circuits and transits, among different spaces, times and cultural systems, resulting in the development of issues such as transnationalism, intercultural flows and cultural globalization. It reflects how transnational flows are present for the creation of new territories

and geographical locations that are changing and creating constant redefinitions of culture and identity.

I define the 'transcultural' experience through my work as a form of learning about the world through processes of dislocations, relocations and re-settlements. The main frame of reference is a transnational space of flows, transit and transitions *'the overlapping and non-linear contact zones between natures and cultures: border, travel, creolization, transculturation, hybridity and diaspora'* (Clifford 1994:303). The 'transcultural' space in this view is related to various trajectories of migration, displacement and travel, and to transnational movements of people, capital, commodities and cultural iconographies.

I draw a parallel between my work involving a personal journey and postcolonial concepts of transculturalism. I also explore the notion of 'geographies of affections', a concept that I am developing through my research and in the process of defining through my emotional relationships and through my social reality and experiences of travel as stories of migration. My research recreates my histories and places of belonging through a narrative of displacement and affections and my work has become an emotional field, 'an imagined geography' where I express what I am and where I come from but also what I can become. I understand identity as a state of 'becoming', not as being a complete process. ' Where do I belong?' seems to be the question that better defines my own sense of identity, even though it is a question without a single answer. Identity here is a process of research and enquiry.

My research involves an autobiographical ethnographic approach to open a dialogue and investigation of cultural identity and representation. The 'I' who writes speaks from a particular place and time, from a history and a culturally specific identity associated with Lusophone culture. My identity has three presences - African, European, and South American- multiple 'traces' that define it as hybrid and transnational. Furthermore, it is through its multi

location configuration and formation that I am able to go beyond or transcend national boundaries.

I used research methods including art-residencies and fieldtrips. The locations of the residencies are associated to my biographical stories, related to my own experience of diaspora. I went to Mindelo, (Cape Verde) with *Zero Point* gallery, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) with *Capacete*, Luanda (Angola) with *Geração 80*, and developed a self-managed residency in Lisbon (Portugal) and in London (UK) in 2012. Apart from developing the residencies organised by various galleries and foundations.

Chapter 1
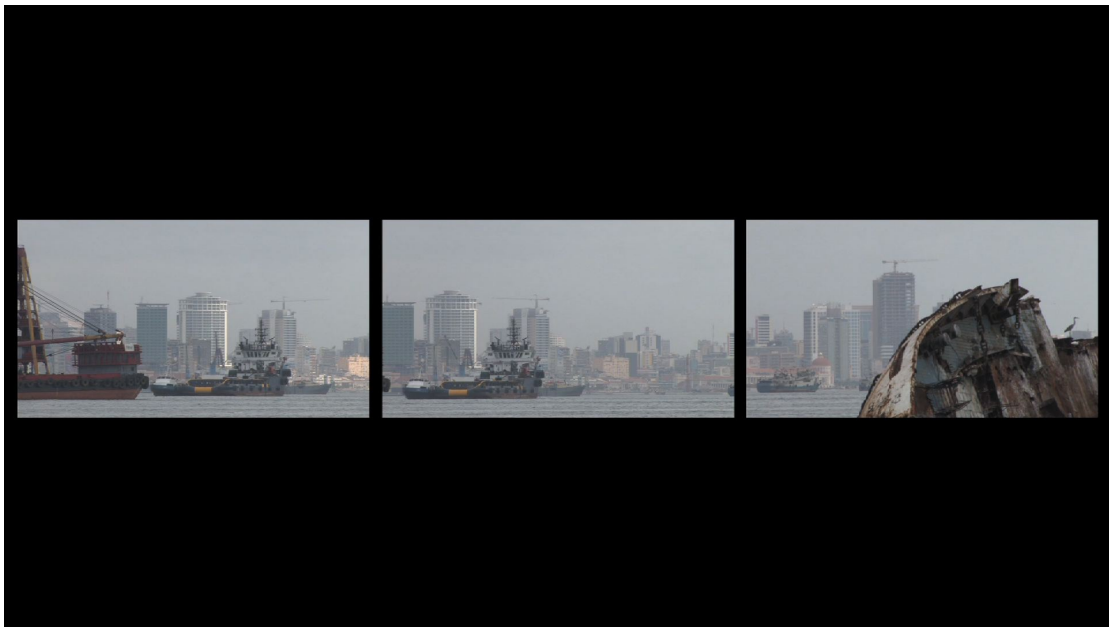
Figure 2   Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013 (Luanda city view with a shipwreck)

Once Upon a Time: Tales of diaspora and place

Once Upon a Time: Tales of diaspora and place

> *' Once upon a time is a travel diary, a tale of stories of mislaid events of mis-encounters, desires and memories. It refers to the nuances of the transitory expressions of a path to landless roots that are here yet are from there.' (Monica de Miranda, 2013)*
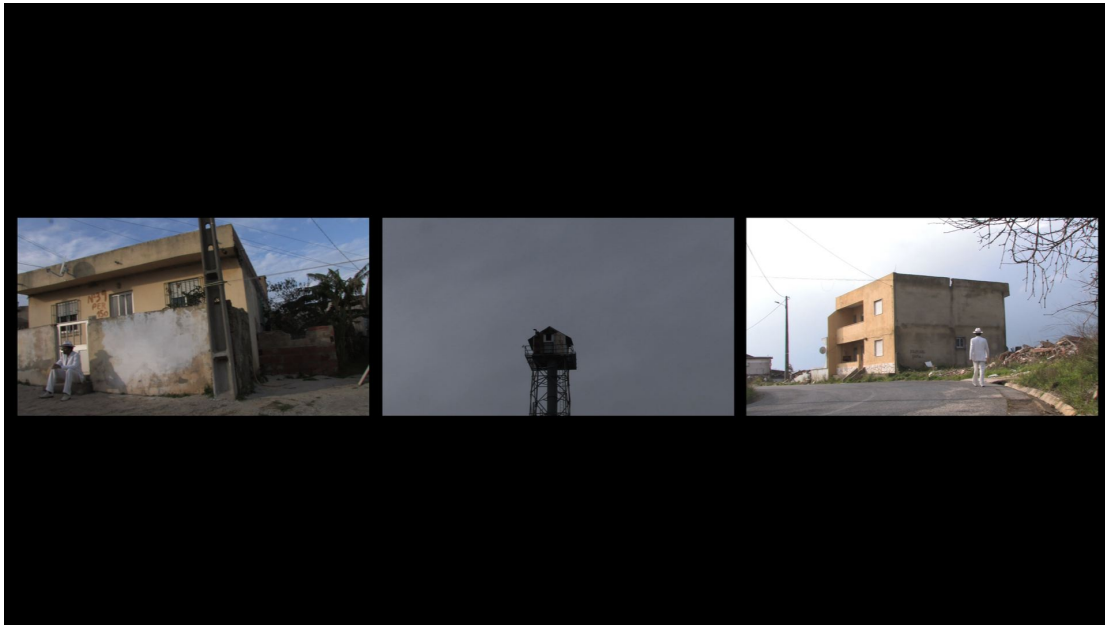
Figure 3   Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013 (The film settings are houses in different locations, London, Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro)

Once Upon a Time is a project, composed of a series of photographs, video, installation artwork, a website (*www.o-u-t.org*) and an installation. The artwork that I developed as part of the research, is a film and installation also called *Once Upon a Time* (Appendix), which is composed by three screens and a sound track, created from the research material. The narrative of this work follows a constructive format that describes at the same time a sequence of non-fictional and fictional events and can be categorised somewhere between fiction and documentary. It intends to document some aspect of reality, primarily for the purpose of referring to a historical record of my own

autobiography, even though it is mixed with a form of narrative that deals, in part with events that are not factual, but rather, imaginary.

Figure 4   Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013 (The film settings are houses in different locations, London, Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro)

The video/film narrates a portrait of a wandering family that navigates distant landscapes, perpetually trying to reach a horizon that is forever changing. The family, constituted of a couple and a child, is always in transit between cities, houses, airports and roads. These are places of transit but are also places that are paradoxically intimate and familiar, portrayed through intimate domestic spaces such as the house. The couple portrayed have the same memories, know the same locations and share the same child, but never meet and are always endlessly searching. This autobiographical story discloses my own life romances and search for identity and home: actors are real people, my friends, my partners, my daughter, and myself. The action took place simultaneously across different scenarios and cities: London, Mindelo, Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro and Luanda. Time and place become intertwined without borders in different places and time zones, existing together through the simultaneous projection of videos from these places. The places portrayed

are conceptually related to my family's cross-cultural experiences, which are spread throughout these cities, as a result of processes of migration and diaspora.

> *'Diasporas are positioned somewhere between nation-states and travelling cultures'* (Cohen 1997:135).

Once Upon a Time is about these encounters of diaspora and the displaced 'homeland' and describes a personal tale of my own diaspora and travelling culture, which crosses the boundaries of nation-states and is located   in between different geographical places.

Figure 5   View of the video installation *Once upon a time*, 2013 at Carpe Diem, Lisbon .

Through this film work I explore a historical interpretation of the term 'diaspora' but also try to further explore and conceive the term in relation to more recent forms of migration and transcultural experience. I look at the

'diaspora' through a transcultural comparison in a Lusophone postcolonial context, delineating the relationship of my own diaspora group, ancestral homeland and countries of present residence. I recognize that the relations of a diasporic group are presently not only aligned with their country of actual residence and their ancestral homeland but have been blurred with many other diasporas and cultures

> *'In view of late 20th century technological achievements such as telecommunication and the internet, the master narrative of a Diaspora's …has become blurred and multiplied… however rather than thinking of a relational triangle, many globally distributed Diasporas …constitute a diasporic network or web with joint-venture points and various gravitational centers' (Baumann 2000:331).*

The term diaspora emerged from a geographic-sociological construction to signify dispersed groups and transnational relationships. The narrative of diaspora in the late twentieth century came to be used to 'denote people living far away from their ancestral or former homeland', (Baumann 2000:313) and the term began to be used to refer to any processes of dispersion, dislocation related to displaced communities and individuals. There was a profound conceptual shift from the use of diaspora, which assumes a fixed starting point, which is profoundly tied up with notions such as 'ethnicity'. Since the 1990s authors such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, seeking to move beyond essentializing notions such as ethnicity, adopted the term diaspora to express notions of identity, ambivalence and culture bipolarities, hybridity, memory fragmentation, double consciousness, cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth. Gilroy claims in his latest book, titled Against Race (2000), that the idea of diaspora 'offers a ready alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging...' (2000: 123), which it 'is a useful means to reassess the idea of essential and absolute identity precisely because it is incompatible with that type of nationalist and raciological thinking' (2000: 125), and that it 'provides conceptual 'distance' from 'the

disabling assumptions of automatic solidarity based on either blood or land' (2000:133).

I recognize the process that gave rise to the term diaspora and understand it as a form of 'awareness' that enables access to 'recovering' non-Western narratives and models for cosmopolitan life and transnationalities, struggling against fixed notions of identity and nation and attempt to define it through my work. I identify diaspora as a consequence of globalization and connect it to a personal network of affections and to a motivation to communicate beyond fixed boundaries.

Figure 6   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013

The film or photos of the *Once Upon a Time* research project involved some degree of re-making my personal narrative and re-imagining the past. Some of the scenes featured in the film are set in between fiction and factual story narrative, entailing a degree of re-making personal narratives, especially those of my family's past histories. I searched for the houses and places where my diasporic family lives and has lived, becoming an anthropologist and a historian of my own stories and romances, an archaeologist of my own

memories and a storyteller of my own fictions. Throughout my research I raise questions that are connected to my sense of belonging to various places and cultures and I investigate the concepts of integration and separation, the public and private, and the opposition of here and elsewhere, This project researches my sense of place and identity, my memories, my search to belong, my life romances and my challenges of being a mother living away from home in a broken family context.

Autobiography: In between fantasy and reality

Figure 7   Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013

The narrative of the film is about my own experience and it follows a story telling tradition, where I was able to 'produce' the knowledge for a 'self-ethnography'. I want to reclaim the term 'ethnography' and define it as 'auto-ethnography' a research method aimed at learning and understanding my own cultural experience which reflects the knowledge and system of meanings guiding my own life and culture. In this sense, Ellingson and Ellis (2008) see auto-ethnography '*as a social constructionist project that rejects*

the deep-rooted binary oppositions between the researcher and the researched, objectivity and subjectivity, process and product, self and others, art and science, and the personal and the political ' (Ellingson and Ellis 2008:450–459).

The narrative in my work is a non–linear story embedded with documentary elements and recreated stories in order to blur boundaries between fact and fiction, art and auto-ethnography, identity and subjectivity. The media remnants used in the narrative of the story exist as fossils but also as a research object that is simultaneously of the past and of the present. These fictional documentary endeavours are efforts to make manifest the imaginaries that haunt a landscape of forgetfulness, amnesia and impossible representations of diaspora.

The interface between art practices and 'auto-ethnographic' enquiry about biographic processes, provides a key site for apprehending the affective potential of fictional documentary narratives, which crystallise personal, social and political imaginaries. Hal Foster's (1996) essay, *'The Artist as Ethnographer'* (1996), investigates how artists can employ an 'ethnographic' practice. Foster, inspired by Walter Benjamin's essay, *'The Author as Producer'*, redeploys Benjamin's 'productivist' argument to situate an enquiry of artists appropriating ethnographic frameworks, arguing that the artist must be one of these cultural 'others' in order to fully access a 'transformative alterity' (Foster, 1996:304). Therefore the 'other' is an experience of the 'self', in the sense that a person's definition of the 'other' is a part of what defines or even constitutes the self. The process becomes a 'self-othering', a paradox where I am an other to myself and the other is a part of myself. More than alterity itself, it is auto analysis and introspection derived from Jacques Lacan's (1989) notion that the self requires the Other to define itself. For Lacan the 'I' is always in the field of the Other. This creates the idea of the other as constituent in self-consciousness, which in a philosophical context is being conscious of oneself as an individual. I argue here that personal identity (the self) depends on consciousness, awareness and identity is formed to the extent that we are conscious of our past and future thoughts and actions in

the same way, as we are conscious of our present thoughts and actions. Various environmental cues and situations I created through my performance in my video was a way to induce awareness of the self through the act of being videotaped or recorded. I was creating a 'mirroring'[1] of myself, where I made use of a self-ethnographic framework to access and analyse my own alteirity, 'self' and 'other' within my own identity. The 'mirroring' here refers not only to the relation between the ' self', space and the body, but is also characterized by illusions of similarity and reciprocity, but also to the relation between the Imaginary and the Real [2].
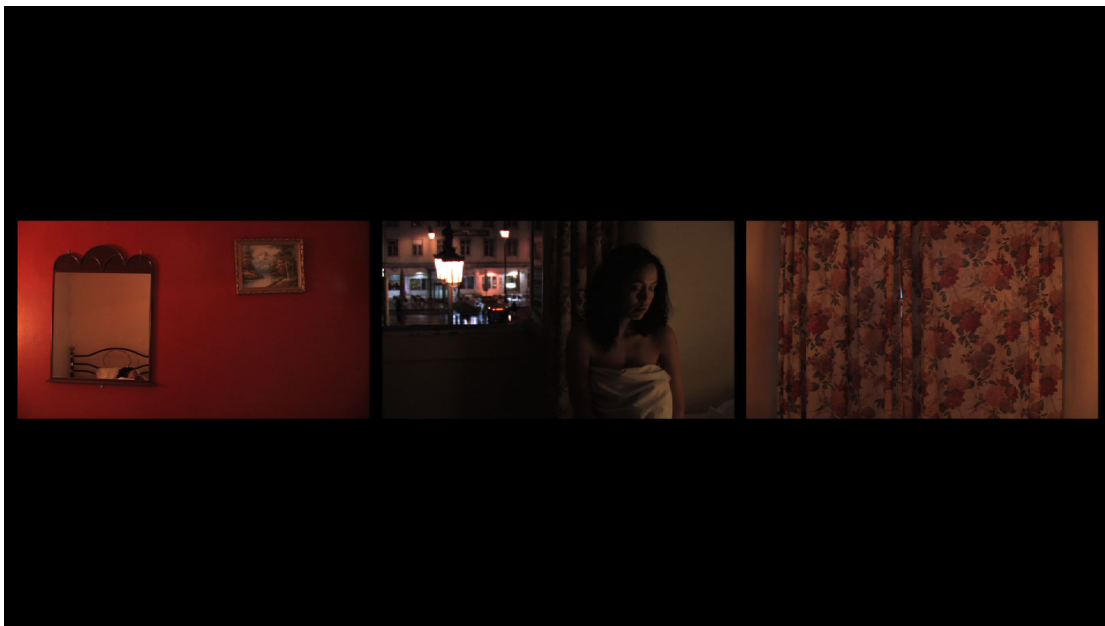
Figure 8   Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013 (A self-portrait inside of an hotel room in Lisbon, refers to the identity relationship between body and self, real and imaginary)

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[1] The mirror stage is a concept in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. it has historical value as it marks a decisive turning-point in the mental development of the child. In the second place, it typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image. In Lacan's fourth Seminar, La relation d'objet, he states that 'the mirror stage is far from a mere phenomenon which occurs in the development of the child. It illustrates the conflict nature of the dual relationship'- that means in between ego and self, real and imaginary.
[2] Lacan's paper, 'The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the I as reveale´-d in psychoanalytic experience', the first of his Écrits.

The objective of this project was to evaluate and compare my current and past experiences in order to understand my inner values and cultural background. I became self-aware through this project and realised that it functioned as an objective evaluator of my own subjectivity. This project also served to increase the accuracy of my personal memory as It allowed me to create knowledge of the self through memory. Personal memories provided information on what the self is, what the self was, and what the self can be, information, which was categorized into lifetime periods such as everyday life activities, relationships, and different geographical locations that contain thematic as well as temporal and spatial knowledge.

Figure 9   Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013 (Autobiographical scene recorded in a family house in Rio de Janeiro- Brazil)

These autobiographical memories vary as to their level of detail. Although some of the intimate scenes reveal greater detail, in general, the memories represented in the video contain a generic feel of biographic events that are vague and hold little detail; this can be categorized as generic memories, where one memory of an event is representative of a series of similar events. These memories were experienced from different perspectives. They were

recollected in the original perspective, from a first-person point of view. Although older memories representing narratives of my past family history were recollected through an observer perspective and through the stories told to me by my family about these memories of life events, the point of view was at the same time subjective and objectified. The source of a remembered memory was attributed to my own personal experience; while the source of a known memory was also attributed to an external source, to a collective memory. Therefore, the reconstructed memory was both personal and collective because it emerged simultaneously from an internal and an external source, and from within the realm of my own family context.

In autobiographical practices that are self-ethnographic, the gaze is turned inwards and realities are reinvented so alterity can also be produced. Here artists can be their own ethnographers with the power to retell their own stories and fuse documentary and fictional narratives. I believe that in order to gain ownership over conveying one's own story, one needs to be simultaneously the protagonist and the narrator of the story.

Figure 10 Still from the video *Once upon a time,* 2013 (Scene in the film shoot in London at Richmond Park)

This is the case portrayed throughout the travel narrative created in my film *Once Upon a Time*, an auto-ethnographic tale that contradicts the more traditional notions of ethnography thus creating strategies of resistance to notions of *'other'[3]*.

While ethnography tends to be understood as a qualitative method that describes human social phenomena based on fieldwork, auto-ethnographers are themselves the primary participant/subject of the research in the process of writing personal stories and narratives. This notion differs from ethnography, in that 'auto-ethnography' focuses on the author's subjective experience rather than the objectification of others*.*

The narrator of Once Upon a Time is a 'self- ethnographer', a re-teller of realities and personal archaeologies. In this regard James Clifford presents the ethnographer as a re-inventor of realities. '*Is not every ethnographer something of a surrealist, a reinventor and reshuffler of realities?'* (Clifford 1988:147). In embracing personal thoughts, feelings, stories, and observations as a way of understanding the social context I am studying, I am using an auto-ethnographic method to also shed light in understanding my own geographical settings and by making my every emotion and thought visible to the reader.

Furthermore in the realm of 'surrealist ethnography' the role of the creative artist is redefined by rediscovering realities also in the psychic realm of dreams, myths, archetypes and the unconscious, the 'real' is not only a conscious form but can also be reinvented and be, in itself, a fantasy. Unlike traditional methods of qualitative research where the researcher gazes outwards, the method of 'auto-ethnography' requires the artist's gaze to turn inside-out to explore the artist-researcher's personal experience and connect his/her autobiographical stories to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings.

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[3] A theoretical postcolonial concept meaning the social or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group. It is a state of being other or different; the political, cultural, linguistic, or religious other.

Personal archaeologies:

Third spaces and imagined communities

Figure 11   View of the video installation *Once upon a time*, 2013 at *Carpe Diem,* Lisbon.

The video *Once Upon a Time* reflects places of transit. The story is set between different locations; there is the play of time-space compression, which echoes on the question of place. There is a search to find a sense of place in the dislocations, space disruptions, lived by the experience of diaspora. The narrative of the film is set between cities, houses, airports and roads, private rooms, family houses, hotels, places of private life, in places of my own memories but simultaneously set also in those 'non-places' belonging to no one. Through the narratives played out in the film, I recreate a 'third space', a space that is related to concepts of landscape, territory and home defined through a self made fairy tale story described as a family album. Homi

K. Bhabha, describes a 'third space', as one which holds *'assignations of social differences - where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else beside'* (Bhabha 1994:313). The term 'third space'[4], developed by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), has been challenged and contested recently by other theorists such as Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner, in *Communicating in the Third Space* (2009) [5] where they rethink and open a critical debate around the term in relation to contemporary space, globalization and intercultural and transcultural communication.
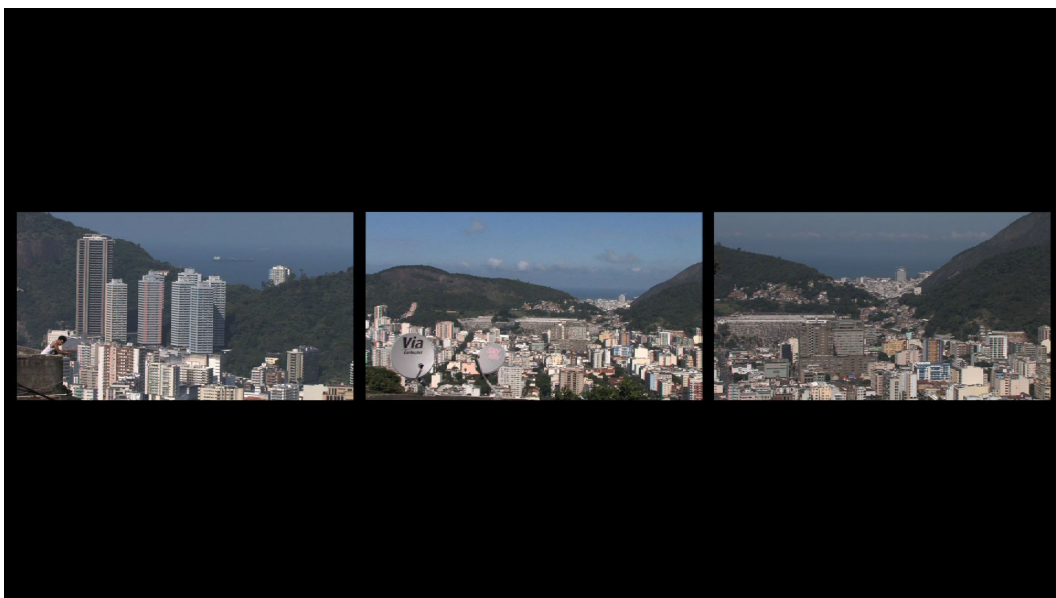
Figure 12   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013

The concept of space in 'third space' is constituted by concepts related to the idea of '*place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography*' (Ikas and Wagner 2009:50). There is a need to critically rethink the complex relations of identity, difference and space

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[5] *Communicating in the Third Space* intends to clarify Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the third space by reconstructing its philosophical, sociological, geographical, and political meaning with attention to the particular advantages and ambiguities that arise as it is applied in practical and theoretical contexts.

because 'third space' as a concept is perhaps not fully capable of avoiding the problem of traditional concepts of identity and difference. Although I recognize the historical value of the term, I am attempting to understand its use and complexity in a contemporary context. The multiple terminologies by which 'third space' identities may be designated are in themselves an indication of rapidly shifting meanings in this area.

Figure 12   View of the video installation *Once upon a time*, 2013 at Carpe Diem, Lisbon .

The triptych multi-screen projection of *Once Upon a Time* gives shape to a representation of the '*triangle identity'.* The condition is represented through a projection of stories and narratives that happen across three different continents, as if a hybrid condition, a state of eternal movement of arrival and departure of not belonging anywhere and belonging everywhere. It is a portrait of this ambivalent feeling of being at the same time here and there, of being a stranger to myself by having a fragmented sense of belonging and displacement. Hybridity and transnationalism are dependent on the notion of

'nation' but paradoxically are a construct of multiple cultural references that go beyond origin or place of birth and residency, and are connected to 'imaginary communities'. Benedict Anderson (1982) describes the unified feeling of nationalism as being imagined because in a nation citizens can only rely on faith that their contemporaries share the same beliefs.

Figure 14   View of film installation *True North* (2004) by Isaac Julien

This sense of an imagined community is well enacted in the triptych video installation *True North* (2004) by Isaac Julien, a reminder of ways in which nationalism and territories are imagined. *True North* makes reference to a mythical dimension, the artist describing this work as a cinematic "re-memorizing" of the story of Matthew Henson, the black engineer who accompanied polar explorer Robert Peary in 1909 on the first expedition to the North Pole. The video's narration is taken from an interview Henson gave in 1966, in which, 30 years after Peary's death, Henson claimed that he had reached the Pole before Peary. This story is a reminder of ways in which the discovery of territories and mapping has no single truth and can be challenged through personal journeys and through a close relationship

between North and South junctions. Julien immerses viewers in the haunting landscape of the North Pole, which has seduced scientists, explorers, writers and visual artists since the 19th century. Shot in Iceland, *True North* unfolds on three screens; images zoom in and out on the icy vistas to provide different perspectives on Henson's journey. *True North* addresses issues of fragmented identities and is a type of contested nationalistic, mythological, story, an ironic representation of something 'authentic' around conquest and the formation of the so called ' triangle identity ' that I also explore throughout my research. Julien's interest in this work is to relocate the subject of black identity in a contested field of conquest and colonization through the re-telling of events forgotten to history and enunciated from the perspective of the forgotten hero. He re-traces those footsteps relocating history in another set of narratives and diasporic reflections contesting cultural imperialist hegemonies and colonial facts.

Sharing the same intention as *True North, Once Upon a Time* attempts to re-trace the dispersed fragments of the so called 'triangle identity' and to relocate this subject in a contested field of history and place through personal stories and subjective travel narratives of adventures. In this manner I build on and develops Julien's intentions/strategies through the tale of the 'hero adventure' by relocating history at the cross roads of the biographic. My practice takes a different dimension to the work of Julien´s as is the tale of my own journey, so the representation here is subjective and not objectified, the narrative is told on a first person perspective where past, present and future are intertwined within the narrative of the tale. While in the work of Julien's the tale is told on a past tense, in a third person perspective and the story here is different to the authors personal story.

Mapping emotion of motion: Cinematic semiotics
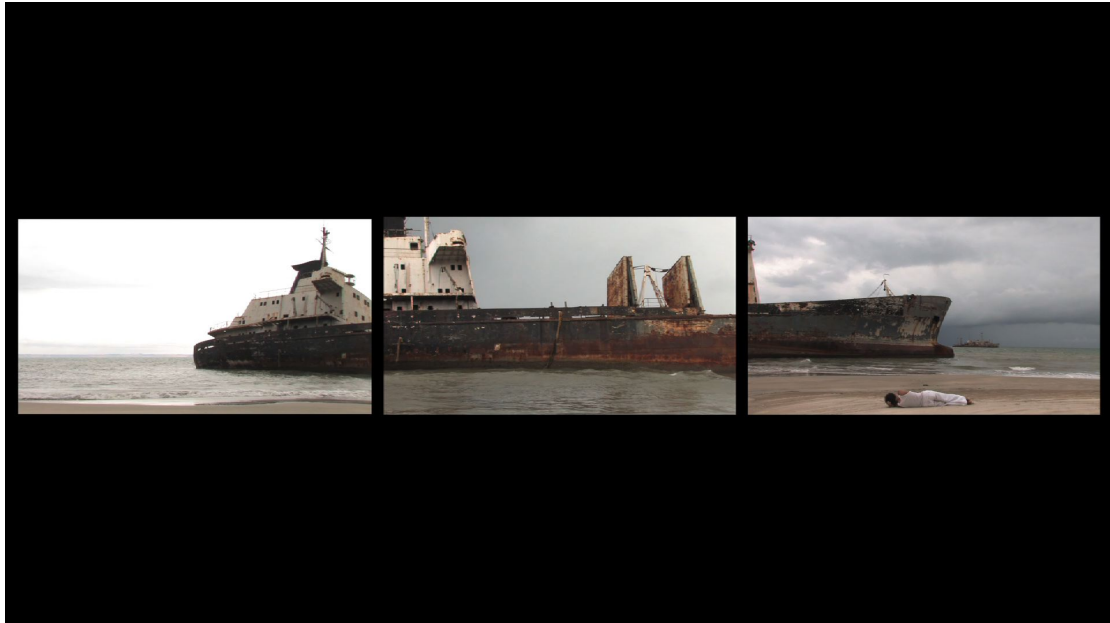
Figure 15   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013

The *Once Upon a Time* project is a tale intended to map subjectivity. Mapping, like film, offers the 'emotion of motion' in the form of a voyage, set in the film installation, offering an architectural heterotopia[6]- a sense of being somewhere else now, at the moment. The documentary and travel film presented in the form of an installation are geographic and cartographic representations of an idiosyncratic world, they are ideological formations

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[6] Heteropia is a concept in human geography elaborated by philosopher Michel Foucault to describe places and spaces of otherness, which are neither here nor there, that are simultaneously physical and mental. Foucault uses the term heterotopia to describe spaces that have more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than immediately meet the eye such as prisons, boats, etc.

connected to my system of cultural codes and world 'views'. The research process has been a subjective drive for a personal discovery which crossed different geographical territories, through the visual rendering of images that had capture seas and land across three different continents I captured a personal architecture of my own emotional geographies. I attempt to measure, analyze and represent my cultural references and my personal experience of diaspora and migration, however I also aspire to represent my desires and ideologies, my own reality.

Umberto Eco argues that reality is represented in cinema through a system of cultural signs that are closely related to ideology. Eco challenges the view that cinema is made up of iconic signs which only attain meaning in connection to the circumstances of perception. Additionally, he states, '*film possesses meaning in isolation*' (Lapsley and Westlake 1988:45). This view takes into account the audiences perception of film's visual elements, such as light, shade, textures, and colors that contribute to the comprehension of the filmic narrative. Subsequently, Eco, to some extent, adjusted this model by distinguishing that signs are defined by their context and environment and that their significance cannot be fixed or permanent, stating *'signs are better thought of as sign-functions connecting an element of expression with an element of content in a temporary encoding'* (Lapsley and Westlake 1988:46).
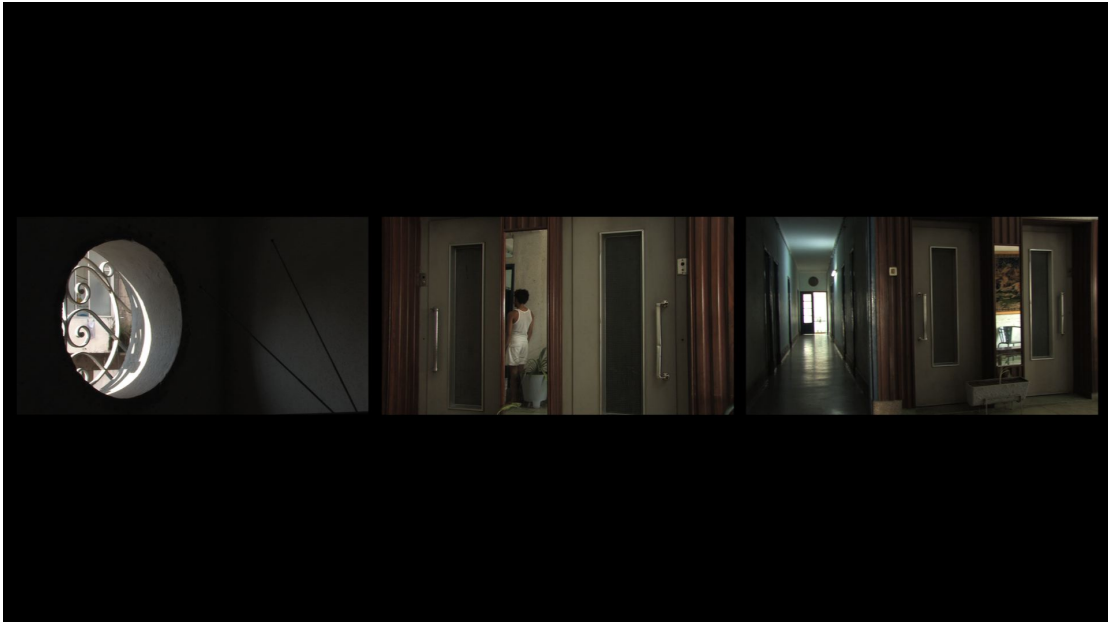
Figure 16   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013

In the film installation the connection between the subject and the narrative is created through this impermanent journey, which is always changing through the sequence of images of various landscapes, houses and horizons. The light, shade, textures and colors of the images are arranged in a subjective manner and pretend to capture a sense of nostalgia, of a distant time, and a sense of disconnection to a space. These chromatic and light arrangements are important for the creation of the narrative and the viewer's perception of the meanings and contents of the narrative. The long shots and takes that this film articulates are the very experience of my personal space and its navigation, they mediate on various means of spatial articulation, including houses and other cultural environments. Furthermore the architecture of these spaces become like the backstage of the movie, where memory is revealed to be an archive of images. At times the light is dim and diffused representing the domestic space, while other times, it is bright and contrasting, presenting outside scenes. The scenes, range from night to day shots, record a sense of time of everyday life. I strived to create a feeling of duality by creating simultaneously a sense of longing and homesickness through recording different shades of light and contrasts and projecting them over the scenes

and the characters in action to signify distant cultural codes. These atmospheric moods are created by impressions of light, shades and contrast in the image composition. The meanings conveyed by the compositions are subjective, as they are part of an individual cinematic narrative, which intends to construct its own system of signifiers and a language concerned with representing my family and personal histories.

In *Questions of Cinema* (1981) Stephen Heath argues that the medium of cinema is concerned with representation and that representation itself is a form of language. A language, by definition, is a semiotic means through which thought may be expressed, although film uses not only words, but also different kinds of processes like image and sound, but also different kinds of shots, angles and speeds. The organization of images into a narrative is one of the most important ways that film is like a language. Implicit in the need for a cohesive structure driven by a recognizable and powerful theme lies the necessity for this film language to be fold together in a way that enhances the flow of the film and generates the realism necessary for the audience to be engaged. The way in which those shots are sutured together is another form of communication between the film and its audience. The means by which film expresses itself to its audience also constitutes a language. In relation to this Christian Metz states:

> *'One might call language any unity defined in terms of its matter of expression; Literary language, in this sense, is the set of messages whose matter of expression is writing; cinematic language is the set of messages whose matter of expression consists of five tracks or channels: moving photographic image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded noises, recorded musical sound, and writing. Thus cinema is a language in the sense that it is a technico-sensorial unity graspable in perceptual experience'.*[7] (Metz in Stam 1992:37).

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[7] pag 37 Stam, Robert, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond. New York: Routledge, 1992.

In this sense, Eco argues in *Articulations of the Cinematic Code,* (1967)[8] that the photographic image is arbitrarily constructed, just as the linguistic code is arbitrary and subjective. The means by which film expresses itself to its audience constitutes a language; it cannot constitute a linguistic system, because the audience can respond to a film's semantic meaning, that audience cannot engage in the concerns regarding the film in the same language the film used to convey its argument. My film installations are about these perceptual experiences. They deal with these subjective articulations related to the cinema language, as they attempt to recreate the projections of my personal myths and of spaces and places that are culturally distant to me but to which I belong to through descendece and blood ties. The language of the film here is a paradox as it is both arbitrary and constructed. I recreate the spaces of the past where my family lived; they are re-constructions of my ideas and fantasies about what theses spaces may have been like- not real, but fictional places.

Figure 17   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013 (Family house in London)

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[8] Umberto, Eco , Articulations of the Cinematic Code", Cinemantics, no. 1, Jan. (1970) London.

Some of the sets chosen for the film are my family's properties that are spread out through different locations and some landscapes and places that appear in the film were casual encounters that happened during the journey and spontaneously chosen during the process of the residencies and fieldtrips. They were not part of the original script but were improvisations and experimental encounters with those places. The editing of the different shots and scenes and the arrangement of the sequences involved both a rational and an emotional process, through rethinking various places, which are assembled into a sequence that brings together unrelated places to a single plane of visualization.

My film installation falls under the category of video art installation and experimental film, genres that are generally quite different from the practices of mainstream commercial and documentary filmmaking. My film is characterized by the absence of linear narrative and the use of various abstracting techniques such as out-of-focus and rapid editing. The goal was to place the viewer in a more active and more thoughtful relationship to the film. These films were made on a very low budget; self-financed and financed through small grants, with a minimal crew or, sometimes, the crew was only one person, myself- the filmmaker. The language of this video installation is a paradox between a fictional and documentary genre with the intention of resisting stereotypical readings as it avoids fixed interpretations and set perceptions of the cultural contexts it represents. It resists colonial modes of perception as it deconstructs the colonial space through the absence of a fixed representation of place and the unidentifiable stereotypical representations of race or nation. The figures portrayed cannot be pinpointed to a place, belonging simultaneously to many places and to none; they are real friends with these identity questions in their lives. This film installation does not use words, but it uses a sound escape and an assemblage of different kinds of shots, angles and speeds that forms the language that is used to convey its argument. The framing techniques are subjective; the shots create its composition in the same way the framing of still photography, ranging from wide to extremely wide to mid-shots and close-ups.

Figure 18   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013 (This still image from the video shows how the shots to create the film composition range from wide to extremely wide to mid-shots and close-ups.)

In the wide range shots the emphasis was to place the figure in its environment. These are used as establishing shots for the audience to see the whole setting and orient themselves in the space. Whereas, these shots also allow plenty of room for action to take place and for multiple subjects to appear on the screen, the mid-shots are used to deliver facts and general information. The close-up shots emphasize the emotional state of the characters and are used to reveal their intimate and private side, drawing revealing facial expressions that convey emotion with the intention of drawing the viewer into the subject's personal space and relate to the subject. The film was shot at an eye-level camera angle, the most common view camera angle that allows the audience to relate directly to the subject represented, which is perceived as a real-world angle that we are accustomed to seeing in cinema and television because it shows the subjects as we expect to see them in real life. I chose a fairly neutral shot in order to draw attention to the subject and the environment.

Figure 19   Still from the video *Once upon a time*, 2013

The narrative of the film possesses two components: the story presented and the process of its telling- the narrative discourse. The story is a series of represented events, characters and actions out of which a fictional time, place, and cause–effect world is constructed. The process of telling the story is composed of a narrative sequence, where the end comes around to the beginning, one shot echoing the other in the resolution of the rhythm of the film; and, at the same time as the distance travelled forward in the scenes, the space redefines itself in the light of the dramatization that is affected by the characters lost in space and translation. The film used location filming for several key scenes, where the composition and framing of the film evoke emotions and a sense of longing. For instance the characters are always alone wondering through space, helplessly entangled in the network of shadows, enmeshed in 'the spider's web' of their own doubts, anxieties and searches, either isolated in the immense and dramatic landscapes that surround them or in solitude in a hotel or a private room.

Figure 20 View of the film installation *Once upon a time*, 2013 at Carpe Diem, Lisbon, Portugal

The film is presented as a triptych installation, as it aims to create a three-dimensional effect where space, time and depth of field embrace the spectator. The framing reveals the theatricality of the characters performance, through the many interiors with European architecture mixed with tropical architecture. The house scenery include steps, walls, beds, and corridors combined with many exterior scenes with wide-angle landscapes that provide a stage effect that zooms in and out scenes and from private to public spaces: characters are often centred and with sharp perspective and in some scenes move unpredictably in different directions without a clear destination, gazing abruptly at a horizon that is forever changing.

The soundscape is an assemblage composed of ambient audio (that includes direct background sound from the recording location), room tones (sounds of the empty rooms) and wild sound (noise from the areas surrounding the locations) that is sometimes synchronised with the footage and shots but many times during the film is mixed with multiple input channels of recreated

sounds. This sound compilation gives a voice to the memories connected to the spaces epitomized creating an aural-based landscape instead of a geographical landscape. In this sense, the soundscape in the film is the space in which the characters live. This sound includes both ambient sounds of wildlife, human events and a sound diary of recreated sounds, a three dimensional audio space that gives the impression of location, real or fictional.

The film's soundscape is composed of both natural and acoustic environments (natural sounds, sounds of weather and other natural elements) and a combination of sounds that emerged from a personal and impersonal environment (sounds created by people and through musical composition and sound design). It combines realistic environmental sounds one might encounter with abstracted versions of the same sounds that suggest an underlying symbolic dimension. As part of the audio installation there are occasional moments of disruption to these acoustic environments resulting in a kind of interference or noise pollution that creates a sense of disorientation in the space and within the audio environment. This soundscape attempts to recreate the sense of diaspora disorientation. As diaspora subjects come into different socio-political systems, they bring with them the overwhelming experience of displacement, which can provide new sites for diasporas to rearticulate their identity across the borders of different and opposite cultures. The soundscapes in the film enunciate this border culture's disarticulation of diaspora and spatial disruption. This identity is thus deconstructed in the video installation through occasional shifts from a predominantly visual to an aural orientation: an unfixed identity or postcolonial 'self' which vibrates and resonates and is in a constant state of becoming, never steady, never definitive.

Jean-Luc Nancy in his book *Listening* (2007) explains that 'sound', has an internal resonance without which there would be nothing to listen to. This internal resonance also projects outwards; it spreads in space and becomes perceptible by a 'self'. Nancy also claims that this self is marked by reflection and self-reflection, in other words by resonances, *'resonating from self to self, in itself and for itself, hence outside of itself, at once the same and the other*

than itself, one in the echo of the other, and this echo is like the very sound of its sense.' (Nancy 2007: 9). This film investigates the deployment of sound systems in the modulation of resonances of affect and identity. Bruce Smith (1999) argues that resonance is what links people to their environment and that sound, through resonance, *'seeks a listener'* and *'seeks communication'* (Smith 1999: 14). In other words, every sound invites a response, and it does so by resonating. Resonance creates a connection between people within a particular environment. The audio resonance in my film creates the environment for thoughts, affect and memories; this soundscape was created to simultaneously create a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment. Sound is here deployed to produce affects, discomfort, and express emotions and to create an ambiance or a state of mind.

Chapter 2

Figure 22   An Ocean Between Us, Light box, 90x60cm 2012

An Ocean Between Us: A place without a place

An Ocean Between Us: In transit, spaces of becoming

Figure 23   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

'A new geography was constructed that adopted the principle of editing and created an architectural heterotopia- an "elsewhere now here". In this way, a new form of voyage was set in motion, one set in the movie theatre' (Bruno 2002:185)

Places of memory and belonging are enacted in the project *An Ocean Between Us* (2012) (Appendix) part of the project *Once Upon a time*. This project was presented as an exhibition at *Transboavista* art space in Lisbon, Portugal and compromised a series 13 light boxes with a video Installation. The video and light box installation tell a story about a couple that roam inside a boat moored in a slip along the dock by the port of Lisbon, waiting for the 'last call' to departure to Luanda. In the video the audio track is composed of the sounds of boat engines and waves from the ocean that brought this couple together, and now take them apart. They walk close to each other, but are spiritually far apart. Even if they share the same physical space they

never speak to each other; they live in a state of transit and wonder. *An Ocean Between Us* is about the globalization paradoxes such as the impossibility of the meeting between cultures and the absurdities of living in diaspora.

Figure 24   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

The boat is the main location and the backdrop to the film's narrative. According to Michel Foucault the boat *' is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in, on itself and the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea*' (Foucault 1967:47). That self enclosed 'place without a place' that is closed in on itself, unlike all the places occupied or traversed daily, is open to diverse and plural narratives concealed by the image of the sea, image that is in itself related to the experience of diaspora, exile and migration. The experience of living away from home and the movement implicit in the travelling between an origin and a destination place are projected onto an image of the gateway of the ocean that implies in itself separation and reunion *An Ocean Between Us* metaphorically re-designs a cartography through a personal story of power relations that are

simultaneously local and global. The sound piece is a composition made as an assemblage of radar sounds, S.O.S. signs and maritime radio communications. These sounds allude to the transnational effects of advanced technologies designed to control the flows of people such as radar and satellite technologies, video and infrared cameras. In this work, the boat is suspended in time and space; it is in exile a place, where boundaries are lost. The place of the boat becomes here an absent territory, it is like multiple zones converging upon and coexisting in the same space. The figure of the migrant represented here through the roaming couple is caught in an in-between zone. This migrant story in the work is about a suspended, often impossible present; a lost horizon, nostalgia, a memory re-collection and the rumination of the acoustic traces of travelling and migration. These are spaces of otherness, simultaneously physical and mental, which are neither here nor there.

Figure 25   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

The Near and Elsewhere: Between arrivals and departures

Figure 26   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

> *'Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten. But non-places are the real measure of our time, one that could be quantified-with the aid of a few conversations between area, volume and distance (…) the distance between places and non places derives from the opposition between place and space'* (Augé 1995:79).

Marc Augé´s seminal text *Non-place* (1995) conceives of the contemporary world and of cosmopolitan life as characterised by a compression of time and space, brought firstly by the changes of the rapid means of transport to the cities such as public transports, the underground and the railway available to urban masses, and secondly, by the widespread access to air travel. This is also a consequence of the influence of globalized technologies such as the

Internet into our everyday lives, the 'near' and 'elsewhere' have become simultaneously close to each other. 'Non-place', he argues, refers to spaces we typically encounter when travelling such as airports, bus or underground terminals, hotels and so on, which are often only remembered in very generic terms. Even if we not travel often we come across a preponderance of generic spaces like malls, fast food outlets, freeways, spaces we feel we know but are at the same time strange and distant to us. In his perspective these are striking features of our contemporary life.

Figure 27   An Ocean Between Us, light box installation at Plataforma Revolver , Lisbon, Portugal 2012

The work *An Ocean Between Us* is a geographical (hi)story-telling that tells my stories of immigration and personal histories of diaspora. It alludes to places of transit, in-between zones where all ties are suspended and time is stretched to a type of continuous present. I have passed through these spaces of non-belonging and detachment – these no (wo)man's lands without a fixed territory or a place of refuge. These spaces of transit are a metaphor

for my experience of immigration; they made me aware of their relevance in designing geography of embodied crossings that include here the routes of container ships and my own embodied crossings across various borders.

Storytelling- the hero adventure
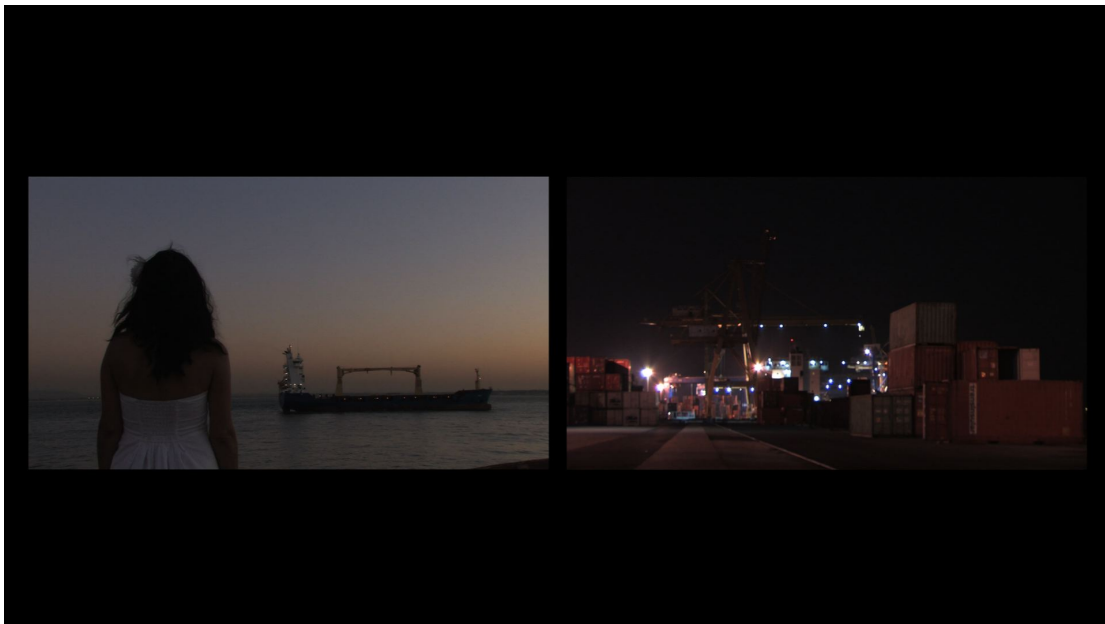
Figure 28   *An Ocean Between Us*, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

> *'Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious processes. Therefore their value for the scientific investigation of the unconscious exceeds that of all other material'* (Franz 1996:1).

The project *Once Upon a Time* takes the form of a fairy tale, it engages with lived experiences and personal memories, myths and tales. According to Walter Benjamin (Benjamin in Arendt, Hannah 1968:78) when the storyteller, an important character belonging to oral culture, re-tells a story, the storyteller intertwines his/her experience and his/her knowledge of everyday life into the

story he/she tells. Benjamin (1936) defines storytelling as a history of somebody's experience. According to Benjamin, the beauty of the storyteller was his ability to communicate a story and allow the audience members to integrate this story into their own experience. Peter Brooks expands on this idea, stating that the storyteller gives the narrative *'a 'chaste compactness' that commends it to memory'*; (1994:81), the story is conveyed to the reader, and the experience becomes one with the reader. In turn, according to Brooks, a type of wisdom is imparted to the listener. Through narrative and discourse, one is able to reflect upon experiences and share them with others. In this project I tell my own tale through the film and the photographic pictorial emulsion of my conscious and unconscious psychic processes, but with a concern to communicate and share my experience with the audience.

> *'Fairy tales mirror the more simple but also more basic structure-the bare skeleton-of the psyche'* (Franz 1996:26).

The tales are an expression of my collective unconscious, stories that I performed through the enactment of my life stories. The archetypes in the stories are a psychic impulse, a drive of the self to know itself, a search for identity, indicative of a will for personal growth and transformation. Tales have hidden meanings beyond the story, they represent emotional journeys and psychological quests: for courage or for a sense of home. The *Once Upon a Time* project is the beginning of the story, of a tale that symbolises my inner fears and desires, along with the dark undertones of a tale that features forests, seas, abandoned buildings, shipwrecks, journeys through the wilderness. These places are not only physical places but also psychological states of being that symbolise my unconscious, my fears or repressed feelings.

Fairy tales are expressions of enchantment that allow us to imagine things far beyond the scope of reality and invent narratives to conquer our imagination, to transcend our reality and play out our personal myths. It is one way we structure our past experiences and, in some ways, create our reality or transcend it. In this sense, our personal mythology is the story of our life seen

looking backward to move forward. The story is told in the past tense but its aspiration is the future tense. Through this project I view and analyse my life through the process of storytelling, thus creating my own personal myth.

I will argue that the mind constructs stories as a form of communication, and we construct stories around life's events in an attempt not only to portray but also to find meaning. Our own mind has a propensity for storytelling about past events rather than the present because the present active structuring our past, or immediate and recently past experiences. Therefore, our personal mythology is the story of our life seen looking backward. We are mythical beings, but only realise this in the past tense when we view and analyse our lives through the process of storytelling and become mythical beings. The story of our lives is our myth. This project was a way to play out my myth where I went on a personal journey into the unknown of my collective memories. In this way, the adventure and travel quest can be compare to the traditional story tale genre of the 'hero's journey' (Campbell 1949) [9].
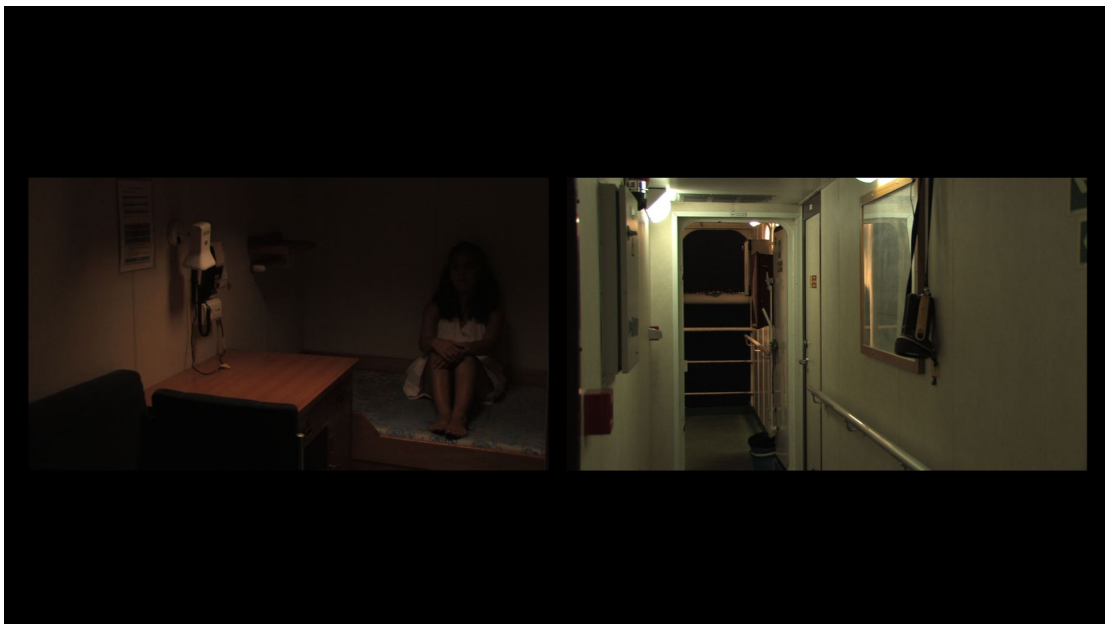
Figure 29   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

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[9] The 'Hero's Journey' is a pattern of narrative identified by the American scholar Joseph Campbell in the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, that appears in drama, storytelling, myth and psychological development. It describes the typical adventure of the archetype known as The Hero, the person who goes out and accomplishes great deeds.

With this project I walked through many regions and locations in search of my story, I stepped into the field of adventure and travel, left the known limits of my present world and ventured into the unknown, and into the realm of my ancestors' stories. In this case, a single mother and her daughter are the heroes of the story searching to belong to a place. The quest itself was a process that did not have a beginning or an end; it was a cyclical journey where the points of departure and arrival were constantly shifting because the journey was not linear. In traditional stories the hero returns home or continues the journey, bearing some elements of the treasure that have the power to transform the world as the hero has been transformed through the journey itself. In my story the search for home is the journey and I chose to make this journey because I wanted to know more about my family's history and venturing away from my present life in order to learn more about my origins and myths, the places from where I belong.

Sea: desire and the unconscious

Figure 30   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012
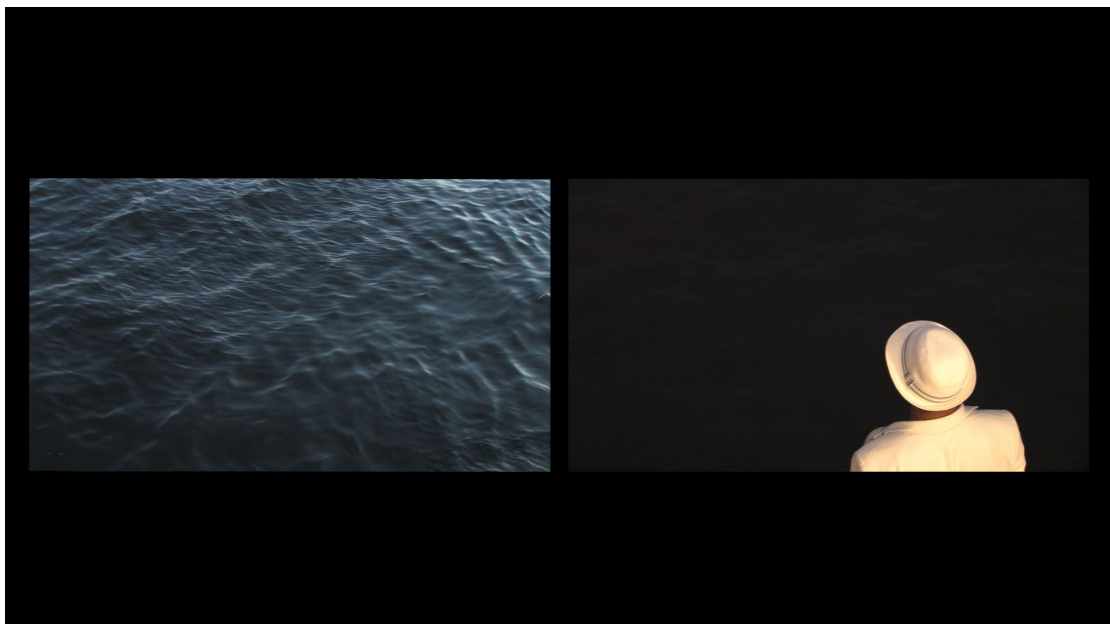
> *'The life of the nomad is the intermezzo…he is a vector of deterritorialization'* (Deleuze and Guattari in Braidotti 1986:58).

The nomadic, migrant characters portrayed in the narrative of the film of *An Ocean Between Us*, are devoid of unity, signing patterns of movement through unfixed routes and rhythmic displacements. This is about crossing boundaries, about the act of going and not returning. This is an act of 'deterritorialization'[10]; ' it is about crossing boundaries regardless of destination. In the context of globalization, 'deterritorialization' is a cultural feature connected to migration and commodification which characterizes globalized modernity' (Hernandez,2002:2). There is in the film a sense of dystopia[11] that is presented here through a fictional story and represented through the decline of a relationship. Although here 'deterritorialization' refers to a weakening of ties between culture and place, it is about the movement of people from one location to another space and time. It implies that certain cultural aspects tend to transcend specific territorial boundaries in a world in motion.

The subject connected to migration and globalization in the video installation signals a change of the spatial organization of the world from a '*space of places*' to a '*space of flows* '(Castells 1996:6). Our sense of spatial relations ordering our world has undergone a historical mutation with the unprecedented speed of various means of transport, such as airplanes and other means of modernity, causing geographical space to shrink .The space engendered by the communication technologies of postmodernity however, as Paul Virilio (1984) puts it, '*is not a geographical but a space of time'*. Historical

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[10] Deterritorialization is a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in Anti-Oedipus (1972).

[11] A dystopia here refers to the recreation of a fictional relationship that symbolises a fictional entity, that is in some important way the metaphor for an undesirable, dysfunctional community

events no longer take place in their immediate locality, but may be broadcast simultaneously and appear in a multitude of other places. An *Ocean Between Us* is about this time and space compression that produces a relational geography, which assumes as a starting position the diasporic and nomadic identity of a multi-located subject and attempts to articulate it across the many variables that compose it.

Figure 31   An Ocean Between Us, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

> *'Desire full stop is always the desire of the Other. Which basically means that we are always asking the Other what he desires'* (Lacan, 2008:38).

The key notion to understanding multiple identities here is 'desire'. In Lacan's formulation (1977)[12], we have to desire things that are desirable to the 'Other' – whether other people or the 'Otherness' of our socio-cultural context – and

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[12] Desire here is defined in Lacania terms as something innate inside us. Indeed, for Lacan our desires are not even our own – we always have to desire in the second degree, finding a path to our own desire and our own recognition by asking the question of what the Other desires.

through that process the desire of the 'Other' becomes our own Desire. Desire here appears as a social construct through the impossible love story, since desire is always constituted in a dialectical relationship. Desires are often born out of an unconscious need, and drive much of how we feel and hence what we do. Identity, depending on subjectivity, is a retrospective notion, and is constructed through longing and desire. Our desires are what evade us: in the very act of propelling us forward they leave us with an indicator of who we are, the traces of where we have been - that is to say, of what we have already ceased to be. Desire here is about a presence and also an absence. The absence of a love story in the work implies a lack that is in itself opposed to desire; it portrays an incomplete and unachievable wholeness.

Figure 32   A An Ocean Between Us, Light box, 90x60cm 2012

The performance of the two figures takes place in the confines of a ship, but this is a subjective space, contextualized through a personal narrative. The tale describes the desire and memory of a fantasised place suspended in time

and space, a place, which pertains to the affective and discursive dynamics of a colonial sphere as a whole, but also to the multi positioning of post-colonial identities. In the narrative of the tale there is a sense of loss, when the figures are endlessly walking, there is a sense of a search for a destination that never arrives, the figures are lost in space that is in itself the desire for 'lost origins'[13]. This 'endless desire to return to lost origins' lies at the heart of the diasporic experience of living away from one's homeland. For Stuart Hall '… *It is because this New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to "lost origins*' (Hall, 1990:235-6) and yet, this '*return to the beginning'* is like the imaginary in Lacan - it can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery - in short, the reservoir of the cinematic narratives of the *An Ocean between Us*.

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[13] This is a concept formulated by Stuart Hall meaning the longing for homeland and this the desire to return to lost origins' lies at the heart of the diasporic experience of living away from one's homeland.

Figure 33   An Ocean Between us, light box installation at Plataforma Revolver , Lisbon, Portugal 2012

Our desires are a part of who we are and contribute to our sense of identity, so they are like a mirror. Desire is actually triggered in Lacan's Mirror phase (1949) [14], who explained how the imaginary misrecognition *'situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction'* (Lacan in Gay 2000:44). The mirror separates us from our selves, in order to recognize myself; I have to be separate from my self. Thus I consider identity as a notion through this notion of mirror. We constantly put ourselves into the subject positions of language and cultural codes in seeking to fulfil the desire for wholeness. The desire for the connected whole and the desire for individual perfection represents a tension between non-identity and identity . The blurring of boundaries between self and other is an essential part of any identification, and is central to every relationship such as: colonizers and colonized, lover and beloved, master and slave. This is what the separation in the relationship of the tale is about.

The ocean symbolically represents the unconscious desires, and the relationship represents the dualities within the self. The mirror of the relationship in the video installation is about desire and also fantasy and illusion and this fantasy and fictional element of the tale are part of the cinema language itself. Fantasy here is a staging of the subject's desire, a shifting process, not fixed; it is a liminal, fictional space and is a projection of the unconscious mind. Elizabeth Cowie places fantasy as the staging of desire or *'the mise-en-scene of desire'* (Cowie 1993:147). The significance of fantasy for feminist theory lies in what Cowie (1993) describes as *'de-subjectivisation'*, an exploration of the role of fantasy that engenders shifting and multiple identifications and that goes beyond dichotomising gendered approaches to psychoanalytical film theory. She borrows this term from Lacan. In fantasy,

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[14]   Lacan's mirror phases: when the image of wholeness seen by the baby in the mirror creates a desire for that being. Within the 'imaginary order' of this stage, the child continues to build its self-image, oscillating between alien images and fragments of the real body. Beyond this phase, Lacan argues that the subject, separated from itself by language, feels a sense of absence, of being not fully present, and thus desires wholeness.

the subject is fluid and does not occupy a fixed position, becoming part of the grammar of the sequence of the film itself. Following this through, Lacan's theorization of fantasy opens the way for the analysis of cinematic identification that is not dominated by patriarchal systems.

The narrative comes from a female's point of view, however it takes on multiple identifications that are not sutured into a gendered identity. The meaning and subject of the narrative is not fixed and the fantasy elements of the fictional tale explore modes of interpretation of many conflicting forces within the diasporic experience. Cowie argues that in fiction film as in fantasy, the subject's identification is likewise not fixed: *'both the daydream 'thoughtlessly' composed and the more complex fictional narrative join with the 'original' fantasies in visualizing the subject in the scene, and in presenting a varying of subject positions so that the subject takes up more than one position'* (Cowie 1993:149). It is a subjectivity that is unendingly disjointed, fragmented and complex, which concerns multiple opposing forces, yet contains an underlying foundation of unity, coming closer than any theory before it to explaining the diverse, labyrinthine nature of the human psyche.

Figure 34   An Ocean Between Us, Light box, 90x60cm 2012

In *An Ocean Between Us* the fictional narrative takes many positions because it is an interpretation of real life feelings, desires and psychic states of my own mind. This subjectivity is split and fragmented as it is at the mercy of various opposing archetypal and cultural forces that define the state of being in between, of being from the diaspora and being a migrant between places and cultures.

Figure 35 Middle Sea (still from video installation) Zineb Sedira (2009)

 An Ocean Between Us can be contextualized in the framework of contemporary art practices and seen in parallel to the same themes explored by the work of Zineb Sedira. In Sedira's work, *Middle Sea* (2009), issues of diaspora, fantasy, longing and travel are at play in the narrative of the visual story being told through the metaphor of the boat and the sea. *Middle sea*

also charts a journey by boat, an archetypal, timeless passage between two places. Set on a boat sailing between Algeria and France – but with the direction never clearly specified – the film focuses on the journey rather than departure or destination, therefore presenting a poetic vision of migration. In the narrative of my work the journey is charted by the spaces inside the boat and the relationship in between two people and the impossibilities of love, departure and destination. My own work builds on and develops some similar intentions/strategies as Sedira´s work. The action in the narrative of my film is correspondent to her work as is set in a place of transit and is an evocation to migration, travel and diaspora. Although in my work this same action is not only related to issues connected to a 'postcolonial self' understood through the colonial overtone of the past but is also about `miscegenation´ and to a cultural reference that is not fixed in history, time or place and is also related to psychoanalytical processes that are not only located on the postcolonial connotation but are related to archetypes and to unconscious processes of the mind. The process of my work is about an evocative introspective, cathartic and analytical self-process related to a contemporary 'transient mixed self ', where author and subject are simultaneously the same.

The invisible partners

Figure 36   *An Ocean Between Us*, video HD, sound, 6m, 2012

As in the project, *Once Upon a Time*, the tale of the video installation, *An Ocean Between Us* illustrates the importance of fantasy and conveys the inner workings of relationships. *An Ocean Between Us* expresses the desire for a relationship that is made up of transitions, successive time shifts, and coordinated changes without an essential unity. Historical travel often is associated with conquests - sexual and territorial. The search for love in this work generates multiple and conflicting metaphors and paradoxes, from the need to be in the space of the beloved, to the need for solitude. In this narrative and tale the lovers never meet but are in the same space. These companions in the narrative of the film never meet physically as they are unconscious expressions, a love story and an inner relationship of the self. This self is constituted by a binary opposition, male-female, and is connected to psychoanalytical ideas of drives, desire, fantasy and libido or affect. The individual here is recognized as a conjunction of inner expressions that produce history, subjectivity and meaning. The male and female figures in

the film are symbols of archetypes of the unconscious mind. The subject here is constructed through archetypes, desire, pleasure and play and is connected to a history, an unconscious and conscious search of identity and to a place of belonging. This is certainly connected to the construction of my own history in an act of remembering what was forgotten. It hardly seems necessary to point out here that psychoanalysis is in every sense the construction of history. Mary Ann Doane reservedly suggests that '*psychoanalysis is, in some sense, the construction of history, and history in its turn, an act of remembering*' (Doane 1990:59). Although Doane sees history as related to a social past that transcends the subject, she believes that memory is firmly connected to the individual.

Adding to this idea Julia Kristeva criticizes 'classical' semiotics on the claim that it cannot deal with desire, play or transgression from social code: 'The science of linguistics has no way of apprehending anything in language which belongs not with the social contract but with play, pleasure or desire' (Kristeva 1986:26). She criticizes the view that the speaking subject is a 'transcendental ego' detached from its history, its unconscious, and its body that 'underlies any and every predicative synthesis' (Kristeva 1986:27).

Furthermore, according to Kristeva, the speaking subject is a divided, a split subject. In keeping with the views of both Freud and Lacan, she proposes that the speaking subject consists of a conscious mind containing social constraints such as family structures and modes of production and an unconscious mind consisting of bio-physiological processes, which are what Freud previously referred to as 'drives'[15]. According to Lacan and Freud, one can hear the unconscious in repetitions, in the way desire has accommodated itself to the drives. The split that occurs in the subject in relation to the encounter enables us to apprehend the real, and through the split the real finds itself to a degree the accomplice of the drive. Kristeva goes further in

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[15] According to Sigmund Freud, there are only two basic drives that serve to motivate all thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. These two drives are, simply, sex and aggression. Also called life and death respectively, they underlie every motivation we as humans experience. Freud believed that the majority of what we experience in our lives, the underlying emotions, beliefs, feelings, and impulses are not available to us at a conscious level. He believed that most of what drives us is buried in our unconscious.

proposing a 'new' semiotics, called semiology, in which meaning is conceived of as a signifying process rather than a sign system. Semiology allows for the theory of the split subject to be meaningful in understanding cultural and subjective structures and history in relation to the unconscious processes.

In *An Ocean Between Us* desire is contained in this semiology that allows for a split of the subject to take shape. The figures that never meet on this impossible love story represent this split and drive.

The spaces of silence
Split: The gaze and the eye

An *Ocean Between Us* charts the splitting between self and other, male and female, unconscious and conscious, real and imaginary, and between the gaze and the eye.[16] This work examines the dialectic of looking and the gaze and reverses a colonialist and sexual voyeurism once the characters that appear in the film are the subject and the object, the seeing and the seen, the male is part of the female, and vice-versa. In traditional film settings the scenes of looking often contain ideological symptoms of colonialist voyeurism, in their repeated emphasis on intrusive and yet thwarted vision. But in this work the gaze is turned outside-in and inside-out and resists voyeurism.

In *An Ocean Between Us* the gaze is absent, thus allowing the subject to gain its full subjectivity. The actors turn their backs to the camera, or guide the spectator to a place where the gaze is absent. The search is interior and the actors guide the spectator through a space that is immeasurable, without time and without a recognizable location or territory. The eye of the spectator is invited to wander through the space, to take a journey with the figures that circulate in the boat in many directions with out coordinates, to move aimlessly without a specific destination.

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[16] 'Gaze' is a psychoanalytical term brought into popular usage by Lacan to describe the anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed. The psychological effect, Lacan argues, is that the subject loses a degree of autonomy upon realizing that he or she is a visible object. This concept is bound up with his theory of the mirror stage.

Figure 37 An Ocean Between Us, Light box, 90x60cm 2012

It is important here to reflect on how through the notion of the gaze, the representation of gender, sexual identity and human relations have been discussed through the media and art, and become a dominant tool for interpreting film patterns; it takes as a starting point the way film reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking, and spectacle. Here 'psychoanalysis', is useful because it describes *'a systematic comparison of the cinema as a specific kind of spectacle and the structure of the socially and psychically constituted individual'* (Stam1992:123).
Stam explains:

> *'If psychoanalysis examines the relations of the subject in discourse, then psychoanalytic film theory meant integrating questions of subjectivity into notions of meaning-production. Moreover, it meant that film-viewing and subject-formation were reciprocal processes: something about our unconscious identity as*

subjects is reinforced in film viewing, and film viewing is effective because of our unconscious participation. Moving from the interpretation of individual films to a systematic comprehension of the cinematic institution itself, some film theorists saw psycho-analysis as a way of accounting for the cinema's immediate and pervasive social power. For them the cinema 'reinscribes' those very deep and globally structuring processes which form the human psyche, and it does so in such a way that we continually yearn to repeat (or re-enact) the experience' (1992:124).

Figure 38 An Ocean Between Us, video installation 2012

It also makes sense to refer to Lacan's representation of the intermediate space between the eye and the gaze as this can also be identified through the space of the screen as the screen is a platform that creates a relation between the eye and the gaze. This is important to then understand the relationship between the film *An Ocean Between Us* and the spectator, and

subsequently to understand how this film resists modes of patriarchal or sexual hegemonies.

> *'The gaze is the lack that constitutes castration anxiety, and the gaze functions to determine the subjectivity of the human being within the 'scopic field', the field associated with the scopic drive'* (Lacan 1964:73).

Figure 39 An Ocean Between Us, video installation 2012

In Lacan's scheme of the eye and the gaze, we see that the subject and the object are incessantly involved in a mediation that starts with the eye, but is connected to all other forms of media image. The screen on which the image is projected can take many forms: computer screen, television, canvas, sculpture, etc. Thus the experience of visual mediation always takes place in

the scopic field[17] and engages the scopic relation. Lacan's scopic field as imagery space is one of the primary resources to investigate how our subjectivity is mediated by the images appearing on screens. The subjectivity of the narrative in my film is mediated through a scopic field as an imagery space.

The space of the boat in *An Ocean Between Us* is a discursive boundary; a subjective limit in the viewers' eyes, a dual interrogation of self as spectator and self on screen. The installation where the film is projected is a black box, a boundary for the projection of the subject. Is it actually there on screen, in the film, inscribed in its slow montage of long takes and in the stillness of the images in their silent frames that another space is acknowledged; this is a space of silence, which is there alongside the imaginary pull of my own cultural and ideological representations. The video installation intends to subvert the basic model of the camera's construction of the gaze, whether it is a female gaze or another gaze is not essentially a different one. In this film they are the same and not separated through the gaze.

I am, at the same time, the artist behind the camera, the performer and the director. I recorded and constructed the narrative, looking through the camera at the world to re-construct a story that developed through my own understanding of my own cultural background, to explore possibilities to both produce and counter produce social visions and ideals.

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[17] In 'The Split Between the Eye and the Gaze,' Jacques Lacan looks to the 'scopic field' as identified by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty identifies the eye as the "guide" in his examination of ideas in the aesthetic world, and also points out the fundamental obstacle in understanding the 'scopic field': the experience of seeing oneself seeing oneself is thus the result of the experience of the scopic relation. The gaze has enabled the subject to believe the fantasy that he can see him/herself. The fantastic element of this moment lies, of course, in one of the fundamental definitions of the scopic field. As Lacan mentions '*I see only from one poin*t', and that point is inside the subject.

Chapter 3

Figure 40   View from the exhibition *Once upon a time* at Carpe diem, Lisbon 2012

Home Sweet, Sour Home: Journeys home

Home Sweet, Sour Home: Memories of place and identity

Figure 41   *Home Sweet Sour Home*, Laser engraving onto acrylic, 2012

In the installation *Home Sweet, Sour Home* (2012) (Appendix), I recreate memory maps of the houses where I have lived. The maps of the houses are representational sketches of dwellings contained in a location, in a territory. These maps symbolize multiple addresses in cities in different locations, regions and countries. There are 25 maps of houses: from squats, to temporary accommodations, to family houses and hostels with addresses in Angola, Brazil, Portugal and the UK. The maps are architectural projections of my memories of the houses I passed through between childhood to adulthood. The maps are also representations of houses I have never been to or seen, such as the houses where my mother and grandparents have lived in Angola. These houses symbolise struggles and conquests, insecurities and securities, absences and presences, oscillating between feelings of belonging and exclusion. In my research, the 'house' is a place where the search connected to self takes place, a search of identity contextualized within the

travels of diaspora and the territories created through this experience. Home is like a return to lost origins, a document into my own memories. The house is recreated through my childhood memories and family stories but also through my own personal myths and fantasies.

The notions of home and family in my research are a place of arrival and departure, a place of intersection, a place of rest, a commonplace but also a place of struggle and uncertainty .The process involved on the making of the work allowed the start of the mapping of the context of a path, a history a narrative of migration and travel. Home in my work relates to a mental or emotional state of refuge, belonging or comfort, as opposed to a place fixed to a physical location. Furthermore, it is a place that triggers self-reflection, thoughts about who I am, who I used to be or who I might become. Benedict Anderson (1983) describes national cultural identities as 'imagined communities'. Anderson's concepts of 'place' and 'displacement' can be understood in relation to my 'imagined community' and the journey I pursued in search of my 'imaginary 'home'. I identify home as an emotional and psychological form that binds place and time. I define 'home as place', where home is described as a community, a family encounter. Gayatri Spivak suggests home '*stands for a safe place, where there is no need to explain oneself to outsiders; it stands for community'* (Spivak 2012:97).

I also define '*Home as time'* by defining home within and outside the boundaries of time, though not time as what is measured by the clock, but the temporal position of events with respect to the transitory present and its continual state of change. Therefore, '*Home as Time'* is the gathering of history and subjective recollections, where home functions as a reservoir of myths, archetypes and collective memories. To review my postcolonial self, then I must return to the past or to the crossroads of history where '*home is time and place'*.

Imagined home

> *'Cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return'* (Hall, Stuart in Woodward 2002: 53).

The work *Home Sweet Sour Home* concerns the transient aspects of the self*. This work is a process of tracing and tracking a 'route to the roots' of my 'imaginary home' and 'imaginary community'* (Benedict 1982). My cultural identity is like an 'imaginary home' a place of imagination and recreation of distant affections. The work developed for my research also alludes to Paul Gilroy's *'imagined return'* (1993) where he states that the diaspora and migrant question of home and belonging is also about 'roots and routes' – in other words, about origins and exile.

Home Sweet Sour Home (2012), is bound to certain territorial and geopolitical coordinates, but also points to my sense of genealogy and historical memory. The work takes the representation of the houses to a state of enactment. I have re-visited these houses, first by making architectural memory drawings representations of them, and by recording the houses, and then I enacted my relationship to these places through a performance. This resulted in the video installation entitled*, Once Upon a Time* discussed in the previous chapter.

The '*journey home'* takes place through the staging and the recording and representation of these places. I recreated this journey by revisiting the houses of my family living in Luanda, London, Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro and Mindelo. I re-enact my return to locations where the sense of home and belonging goes beyond physical or geographical borders. The "imagined

home" is that geographical place of affections that exist as a powerful evocative space, where I enact identity.

Figure 42   *Home Sweet Sour Home*, Laser engraving onto acrylic, 2012

Some of the houses were re-creations made from stories I was told about those spaces, especially my mother and grandmother's houses in Angola, houses I never inhabited or knew. Home in these cases is defined as a 'virtual or imaginary home'- 'a third space'. I define my diaspora as a transplanted culturally mixed Angolan-Portuguese living in Europe between Lisbon and London; I see myself as a colonizer as well as a colonized; a white and a black person who defines her identity in the space 'in between', I am therefore also an example of 'third space'. In formulating the part of my self that draws on my heritage, my search is defined from that multi- layered self and search for home: the home here is a recreation of the self, contextualized through autobiographical narratives. These houses are reservoirs, reminiscent of the 'third spaces' I had inhabited but they are also spaces of transit that reflect transcultural experiences, diaspora, migration and globalization experiences

portrayed through the family 'house album'. National, global, and collective narratives are accessible through my family history by mapping the changes that occurred to my family's houses and the reasons my family moved ((un) employment, marriage, divorce, distance from other relatives and friends, etc.) from one place to the other, from one block, city, country or state to another.

Home as a life archive

Stuart Hall argues in Jana Eva Braziel :

> '*Cultural identity…is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything, which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialist past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past*' (Braziel 2003:13).

Home Sweet Sour Home is about cultural identity; it is a '*historical reservoir*', a re-collection of my house memories as signifiers of my cultural memories and identity. An individual's '*cultural arena*', or the place where we live, has an impact on the culture that someone wants to abide by or belong to. The people in the environment's surroundings influence how we feel about our own culture. As a 'rite of passage', this work passes through various phases and stages of life, such as parenthood, marriage, and the dying of relatives. The houses represented signal all rites of passage from my childhood to my adulthood within the space of an intimate and private space: the house. The sketch of the family and of the houses of my childhood is a part of the past

that is situated elsewhere, both in time and place. The houses were places of passage and an attempt to register them through drawings was an exercise of imagination and memory and the image of the house was created through fictional facts and representations. Using biographical facts and fictional facts produced a particular uncertainty on the anatomy drawings of the house. The house sketches revealed strange fragments of dwellings as their representations were imprecise because they were represented through my memories and appeared with child-like characteristics. The space was sometimes out of proportion and without a coherent spatial structure, revealing an 'emotional space'.
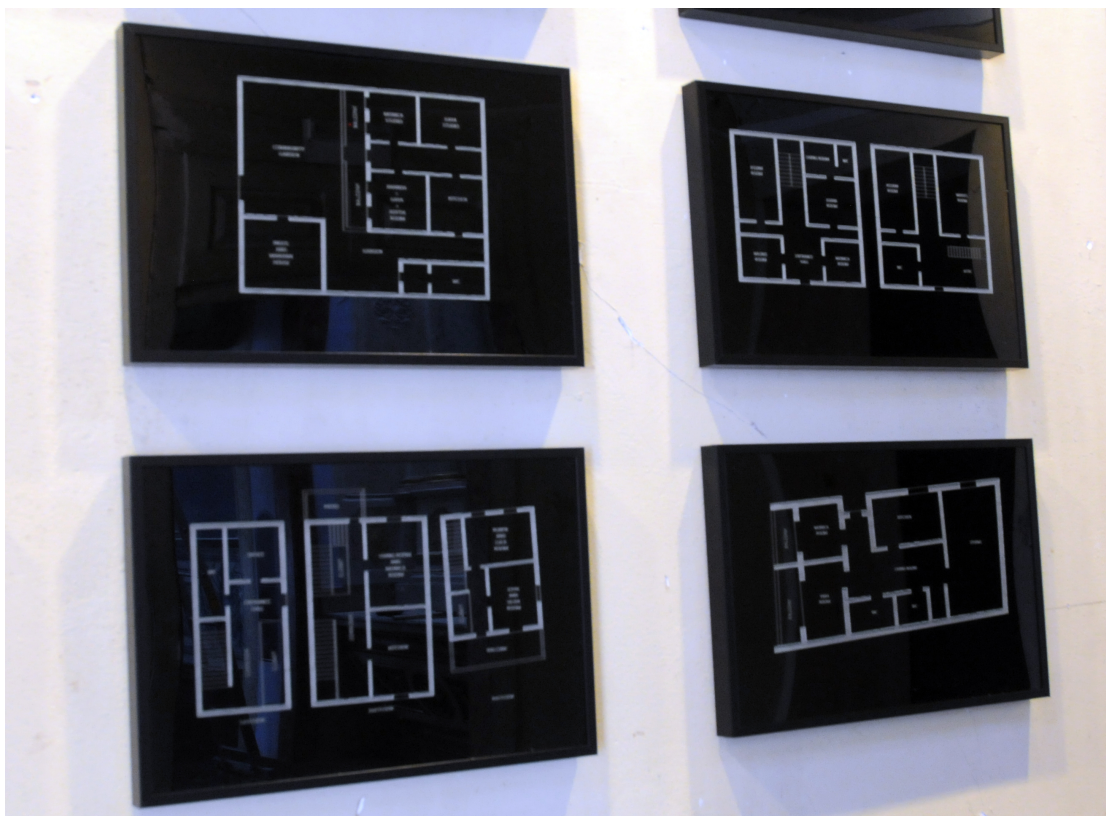

Figure 43 Home Sweet Sour Home, Laser engraving onto acrylic, 2012

Because the houses were represented through my memory, they were projections made of affections, where some of the proportions of the drawings were influenced by my relationships with the people with whom I shared the

house. Some rooms in the work are larger than they are in reality, other rooms do not have doors or windows. I include corridors that do not connect rooms to one another, and represent fragmented places that symbolize fragmented relationships lost in space and time. These places codified in a language that was too personal and emotional, needed translation, therefore I contracted some architects to redraw my houses and translate them into architecture sketches, so I could understand the projection of my own emotions contained through the house drawings in a more rational way. This was an exercise of making real these unreal child-like representations, an act of rendering the places of my affects and emotions in order to understand the shadows of my imagination, my unconscious processes and my emotional places of residence.

This was an attempt to archive my fragmented memories and give them shape by creating readable drawings and organizing them into a chronological sequence to stand for my development, my biography of place and the events of my life. These houses are the threshold of my own being as they recall intimacy and signify my inner life. The drawings are a collection of images of my own memories; an attempt to preserve history, even though the houses become tangible reminders of that which no longer exists. Nonetheless these spatial images play an important role in my family history, in my lost past, corresponding to a strange place that I have already forgotten and only exists now in the realm of my imagination.

The house drawings recall a personal memory - they speak about love relationships, marriage, divorce, and changes of economical status. These houses, demarcating stages of family history, are archives of memory, loss and survival stories. They are records of multiple ways of living. I assert with this 'house hunting' research that being oneself is part of being a foreigner; and being adaptable is feeling most at home in someone else's home, but also feeling like a stranger. 'Where do I come from?' appears to be the most urgent question and the answer has multiple locations. The critical question is not so much 'where do I come from' but 'what can I become?', which is about

regaining awareness of the past in the construction of a future place where I can be at home with myself.

Home Sweet Sour Home is about reclaiming my own histories by regaining access to my lost routes through living in Diaspora*. Home Sweet Sour Home* is therefore, a process by which I reclaim my own multi-location histories and self. Identity here cannot be a fixed location, as it is placed in different times and spaces, so the identity referred to, through the house drawings is part of the past. Therefore it cannot represent what I am at the present moment, can only signal the history and formation of the self in relation to location. *Home Sweet Sour Home* is an archive, which offers a fragmented sense of belonging and displacement of my culture and identity.

Timothy Wilson in his essay ' *Strangers to ourselves* ' asserts that:

> *'…there is no "true self"; rather, in modern life people live in multiple crosscurrents of conflicting social forces, and they construct many narratives specific to particular relationships and cultural circumstances'* (Wilson 2002:216).

Hall adds that cultural identity, whilst routed in the past also transcends place, history, culture and identity. It belongs as much to the past as it does to the future. Although identity is about 'being' in the 'present' (and offers a sense of unity and commonality), it is also in a constant state of 'becoming' and in transformation or 'production', referring to the 'future' (or a process of identification, which shows the discontinuity in our identity formation).

Home as biography: Personal and collective unconscious

Home Sweet Sour Home is a record of both time and space of the relationship between an (auto) biography and architecture, connecting the experience of space to identity. Biography is an important part of my memory and my past. We think about ourselves in terms of what we have done-our identity is built

around our past and here it is built around the spaces I have inhabited. In the architectural spaces represented, the relationship between space and biography are used as a way to explain sets of my own social, cultural and spatial relationships. The work *Come home to the place you have never left,* part of the series *Home Sweet Sour Home (2012)*, refers to home as a space of biography, of personal but also of a collective unconscious.

Figure 44 *Come home to the place you have never left,* Black iron , 2012

The unconscious mind is made up of the processes in the mind that occur automatically and are not available to introspection, and include thought processes, memory, affect, and motivation. It contains thoughts, memories, and desires that exist well under the surface of conscious awareness but that still exert a great impact on behaviour and identity formation. In this work the home is the container of these thoughts, memories and affects. The child-like representation of the houses manifests in itself unconscious phenomena because it includes repressed feelings, shadows, subliminal perceptions,

thoughts, complexes, hidden phobias and desires. In psychoanalytic theory, unconscious processes are expressed in symbolical form. These houses are in themselves a 'slip of the tongue' a symbolic form of the unconscious. Thus, the *Home Sweet Sour houses* are representations of the unconscious mind, symbols and repositories of forgotten memories. This work signals for archetypes, and my own remnants of memories, to a collective unconscious to 'what Freud called 'archaic remnants' - mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind.

The houses here are archetypes, remnants of memory that mark life events. They reveal archetypal events such as: birth, death and separation from parents, initiation, marriage and divorce. The transition from childhood to adulthood was registered here through a change of address and country of residence and a drastic change of accommodation (when we moved from a family home to a squat). This transition signals the process of leaving home that forms a kind of displacement. Leaving home is signalled in this work as a disruption from safety of the 'maternal' home into the strangeness, dangerous and insecure dwellings to an unknown world.

Psychoanalytical theory becomes of relevance, strengthening a link to my past by helping me recall childhood experiences and emotions through my past places of residency. Therefore by understanding my childhood I can better understand my stories of adulthood. I go from being a dependent child to a rebellious teenager, to a non-conformist adult with difficult love stories, to a single mum. I write the names of my lovers, my ex-husband, the father of my child in the rooms contained in the houses where I lived to document the changes of my marital and relationship status. This signs stories of reunion, separation, love, hate, independency and dependency within the house space. All these events of life are inscribed on the titles of the house drawings. These inscriptions are white shadows onto a black board, visually and metaphorical those slabs embody the exercise of remembering, they are memorials.

Home sweet sour house, employs drawing to create a series of memory renderings of all the houses I have inhabited in my life. From the imprecise contours of childhood homes to my current domicile, the descriptive exercise is interrupted by the passing of time, whereas broken by conflict, exile or migrations and unsettled by the ambiguity of feeling. Home *sweet sour house* is a repository of memory, a personal archive made of expressive calligraphies that reconstruct emotional space.

Chapter 4

Figure 45   View from the exhibition *Erosion* at Appleton square, Lisbon 2011

Erosion: Maping the (e)motion through territories

Erosion: In between routes and roots, exile and origin

> *'New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother and go to the beginning'* (Hall 1990:245).

Figure 46   Untitled, from the series *Erosion*, 2013

In the photographic series, entitled *Erosion* (2013) (Appendix) presented at Appleton square gallery in Lisbon, the narrative takes place on the island of Cape Verde (Mindelo) where I enact the return to my lost origins and homeland. Cape Verde is an island country spanning an archipelago of 10 islands located in the central Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Western Africa. The islands, made up of volcanic origin, are mostly rocky and do not have a lot of vegetation or green landscapes, due to the infrequent rainfall on the island. The population is mostly Creole. Few countries have experienced emigration as extensively as Cape Verde. The diaspora out-numbers the resident population, and virtually every household has an emigrant family member. In *Erosion* I explore the history and myths of the relationship between the eroded landscapes of Cape Verde with emigration. The work uses the eroded soil as a metaphor for the experience of emigration in Cape Verde. Tough economic times during the last decades of its colonization and

during the first years of Cape Verde's independence led many to migrate to Europe, the Americas and to other African countries.

Figure 47   (Detail) *Untitled, from the series Erosion,* 2013

In the photographs, the isolation of the landscape is enhanced by its relation to a secluded figure. The return to home through the allegorical country of Cape Verde in Africa is enacted through my photographic performance as I fall to the earth and crawl into my own body, holding my frustrations of separation and reunion with homeland. It was a real return, although a fleeting meeting that was not sustained, as I could only be back for a short period of time. This same action of falling to the earth happens over and over again in the work I create in Luanda, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon or London. It is through the act of falling and rising that I find a path and place in the world. This is an act of imaginative rediscovery, a staging of 'hidden histories', an 'imaginary return' that re- enacts the diasporic experience of dispersal and fragmentation. I do this by 'figuring' Cape Verde as a metaphor of migration,

and exodus, as the mother-land of these different traces of the 'Triangle' of the cultural formation in my own identity. In relation to this 'triangle identity' formation, Stuart Hall argues, *'This Triangle is, after all, 'centered' in Africa. Africa is the name of the missing term, the great aporia, which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked'* (Hall 1990:224).

Topographies of history: Miscegenation and erosion

Figure 48 Untitled, from the series *Erosion*, 2013

Erosion is a process by which soil is transported to another location, a topographic process symbolising the experience of diaspora. While erosion is a natural process, human activities have increased at which erosion is occurring globally and now roads and urbanisation have major effects on the erosion process. The work *Erosion* is about the archaeology of my own personal landscapes and about the process of erosion and urbanisation caused by an exodus, migrations across multiple territories.

The photographic images on the mosaic panel, *Untitled, From the Erosion Series* (2013) represent the various landscapes my relatives crossed that make up the various migrations across decades. The landscapes of different locations are juxtaposed in one plane of visualisation to allow the reading of spatial distances. Although it also emphasises the differences of the places through the composition of remote places that are here placed near each other. There are also plaques with addresses that belong to the different past locations related to these locations. The landscapes point to the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea as a cultural highway connecting Africa (Angola and Cape Verde), Portugal, and Brazil. This is evident in the photographic diptych,

Figure 49 *Untitled*, from the series *Erosion*, 2013

Untitled (2013), of images of the sea recorded through two sides of the Atlantic in connection with the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean and

Atlantic sea here are not so much a frontier or barrier between the north and the south, or the east and the west, but rather an intricate site of encounters and currents, involving the movement of my own family histories and cultures that underlines the continual sense of historical transformation and cultural translation that makes it a site of continual transit.

Although I return to and reflect on that history, my intention has less to do with the idea of getting the historical record straight, than to play it again in order to listen to my own stories across these histories. Through this experience I seek to understand where is my place now in the present and where I will stand in the future. This work signals multiple cultural connections that have a past historical construction to its present formation in the creation of personal and subjective stories and hybrid identities.

The interconnectedness of Luso-Afro-Brazilian premises that have had lasting effects in the postcolonial time-space of the Portuguese-speaking world, is found in the theoretical work of sociologist/anthropologist Gilberto Freyre. His concept of Lusotropicalism has become one of the most powerful and controversial metanarratives to explain Portuguese colonialism. In synthesis, Lusotropicalism argues that due to a series of interrelated climatological, geographical, historical, cultural, and genetic factors, the Portuguese have been more inclined to racially intermix. The epistemological basis for Lusotropicalism is laid out in Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933) (The Masters and Slaves), as the myth of racial democracy, and Brazilian national identity. Hence, the national identities of both Brazil and Portugal would be inextricably intertwined. In fact, for Portuguese sociologist/anthropologist, Miguel Vale de Almeida, the discursive field of Lusotropicalism is '*built like a game of mirrors played by Portuguese history, the formation of Brazil, and Portuguese colonialism*' (2004:49).

Freyre provides a discourse of cultural difference in order to explain Portuguese, Brazilian, as well as Lusophone individualized and collective identities. In the particular cases of Brazil and Portugal, the Freyrean Lusotropicalist nexus, in spite of its many critics, has proven to be quite

resilient, as it has drifted from cultural studies into the realm of politics, with lasting effects. In fact, notions such as miscegenation, 'mestiçagem', and hybridity in the Lusophone world have become, according to Almeida, *'discursive knots that contaminate (political) emancipatory practices with ambiguity'* (2004:79). The ambiguity derived from the lasting power of Lusotropicalist ideology is part of my own identity that is made up of mixed histories and creole identities, which I cannot trace with certainty because this collective identity has been eroded by a history of centuries of miscegenation.

To assist me in thematizing the historical and geopolitical, but ultimately, the human drama that unfolded in the South Atlantic, involving Portugal, Brazil, and Angola, and in which the trans-Atlantic slave trade played a significant role, I refer to the Angolan novel *Nação Crioula* (or 'Creole Nation') (1997) by José Eduardo Agualusa. Agualusa's novel is a postmodern historiographical meta-fiction that focuses on the complicity of Luanda's Creole elites and Portuguese, as well as Brazilian merchants in the illegal trans-Atlantic slave trade during the second half of the nineteenth century, providing a nuanced critical reading of the history of the triangular relations between Angola, Brazil, and Portugal, rooted in the slave trade. Agualusa calls attention to the fact that at the historical heart of today's celebrated multicultural family of Portuguese-speaking nations, or lusofonia, lies the disgraceful history of the commerce of human lives. The *Nação Crioula* populated simultaneously by slaves, slave traders and abolitionists becomes a floating-signifier, reminding us of Paul Gilroy's description of the chronotope of the trans-Atlantic slave ship crossing the middle passage: '*a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion'* (1993:4). In this case, *Nação Crioula* emerges as the final mobile vessel linking the various points of the Luso-Brazilian/Angolan colonial-slave-trading system across the south Atlantic with all of its historical and cultural contradictions, symbolizing the inescapable interconnectedness of the hybrid, multicultural and racially and socio-economically unequal nations and cultures that were forged out of this tragic system. This is the historical and cultural context that has built my own identity, as the history of my family it happened in a context of miscegenation and migration and displacement. The landscapes represented in my work symbolize the

archaeology of these histories, the memories and territories that created my family narratives of diaspora and displacement.

Archaeology of place: Imaginary Landscapes

Figure 50 *Untitled* , from the series *Erosion*, 80x60cm 2013

> *'Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our head'* (Meinig 1976:66).

The work *Erosion* alludes to landscape history and archaeology as a study of the mode in which humanity has changed the physical appearance of the environment – both past and present. This work uses evidence and approaches from other disciplines including archaeology, architecture, ecology, historical geography and local history in relation to globalization and to my personal stories. I understand landscape, with both it physical origins and cultural overlay of human presence, to reflect the living synthesis of

people and places vital to the formation of local and global identities. Landscape in my work is the dynamic backdrop to the reconstruction of the places that are elements of my biography and stand for land; these landscapes are connected to my biography. At this point, geography systematically examines the phenomenology of these represented landscapes. I trace the development of natural and urban landscapes that are connected to my own life stories through the designed and intentionally created landscapes produced for this work. I use landscapes that allude to a subjective place with a specific location, as areas that comprise distinct associations of forms, physical, human and natural, and regard them as cultural and personal landscapes.

Figure 51 *Untitled* , from the series *Erosion*, 80x60cm 2013

This work is about de-territorialized and de-colonised landscapes and represents common signs in the circuits between different countries that signal a route of affection in search of my own personal stories in connection

to a route of history in relation to the decolonisation process in a Lusophone context. It is a history that through a constant struggle is pieced together and then continually decomposed and recomposed, interlacing the experience of what I have inherited and where I am now. *Erosion* represents and recognises the differentiated territories where my imaginary is actively disseminated and my family routes are simultaneously dispersed. This work allows me to question and reconsider the histories I have inherited and inhabit: the histories of language, politics, culture and experience.

Figure 52   *Untitled, from the series Erosion,* 2013 (installation view)

Erosion uses a method of landscape art, by employing the depiction of natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, seas, and forests but also focusing on man-made features and disturbances in those landscapes. Buildings in the composition indicate an erosion process caused by urbanisation and exodus. In the arrangement of the images, I use a wide view, with the elements arranged in a composition where the sky is almost always in the view, and the weather is an element of the composition. These landscapes function as a background for a figure dressed in white, although the emphasis is on the landscape as the figure turns its back to the spectator and guides the eye into

the scenery of the image and subject represented. The landscape becomes an archive of these multiple sites, visual and sensory textures of enfranchisement and belonging. The role of the landscape here is to support a sense of identity that has been eroded by the process of multiple migrations within my family history.

A sense of place: Maps and landscapes

Figure 53   Untitled, from the series Erosion, 2013 (installation view)

'The concept of country, homeland, dwelling place becomes simplified as environment – that is, what surround us. Once we see our place, our part of the world, as surrounding us, we have made a profound division between it and ourselves' (Lippard in Lazy 1995:116).

Erosion concerns a study of my subjective places and of an environment that examines into my personal world and ecology. The places re-created are maps of my own social and cultural contexts; places I have inhabited or visited that are part of my family heritage. This work activates my experience of my places of belonging that have eroded throughout time and remain as an

album now, a mosaic that attempts to reconfigure memory and place. This work is a booklet guide, a walking tour and a directional sign captioning the history of my family, of the houses where they/ I lived, that suggests the depths of a landscape and the sense of an eroded, hyphenated, transitional community. I inhabit a socio-cultural universe in constant motion, a moving cartography with a floating sense of culture and identity. This world is a transcultural border culture - a multilingual environment. Landscape and environment are positioned here as material signifiers of land, territory and environments that contribute towards connectedness with global cultures and subjective narratives. In fact, the very idea of 'landscape' was invented to control territory.

Figure 54   *Untitled* , from the series *Erosion*, 80x60cm 2013

The landscapes presented in my work however refer to a colonial legacy from a postcolonial world, and my family stories are a potent site for understanding process within my family stories. Colonial control over territory is well known and discursively established through technologies of surveying, mapping and

representing landscape. The landscapes at this juncture are a living geography of subjective spaces; they are maps that point to a specific direction, a destiny and a route. These maps in form of a landscape inform me where I am, where I come from, and show me where I am going. Understanding my own cultural and affective geography is a necessary component of the reinvention of my own nature, place and identity.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, in my research I have concentrated on practice-based research through the project *Once Upon a Time* and the exhibitions connect to this project: to investigate notions of auto-ethnography, transcultural, autobiography and identity, home and culture in relation to concepts of diaspora, hybridity and unconscious and fantasy processes. I have examined theories raised by my artwork in relation to notions of travel, displacement and migration. I explored the main aspects of postcolonial theory and practices that are the dialectical subjects of investigations into issues of hybridity, diaspora, inbetweeness and non-places. I have considered methodological approaches to research such as the notions of the artist as producer, researcher, traveller, and ethnographer. I have also explored theoretical methodologies concerned with feminist postcolonial theories, psychoanalysis, and storytelling, focusing on the cinematographic imagination by examining filmmaking theory and artists who have influenced my own practice. In relation to the use of feminist psychoanalytical theory, I only intended to focus on concepts of 'de-subjectivication', 'transcendental ego', 'semiology' in supporting me to understand the split of the conscious and unconscious processes of the self , to then create a framework to understand the cinematic language of my work. These theories where relevant to understand the positioning of my own practice as an artist-self-other at the cross-roads of many concepts I had raised throughout my thesis.

Furthermore, I write about the creative decisions made during the performance and film editing, and how I articulate them with subjective experience. These processes involved fieldtrips, residencies, exhibitions and studio practices.

The project *Once Upon a Time* is formed of a series of photographic, video and installation work and a website. This project was a way to explore my multiple movements and those of my own family, through places linked by a common colonial matrix, where I have built my own emotional maps in a variety of mediums. I located the subject/object of study as the individual - it

was in this territory of subject construction that home became a shifting paradigm where the journey of the self was essentially a constant attempt to belong, my entire art production becoming an exercise of emotional geography.

This project was presented in Lisbon through three exhibitions that are in themselves the chapters of the research, which were presented through art works at exhibitions. The first exhibition was located at Carpe Diem and was entitled *Once upon a Time* and is part of the first chapter of the research. This was presented as a video triptych. This installation attempts to offers a rich panoply of fragmentary imagery collected during my transits through three continents, where I undertook five research field trips to places linked to my own biography: Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Luanda (Angola), Mindelo (Cape Verde), London (UK) and Lisbon (Portugal). The video narrative is a re-enactment of my personal geography, and it weaves a complex story where fictional and real places intersect personal spaces of memory and longing to build a non-linear narrative. The video lyrically describes loss and the pain of separation, weaving a thread passed from generation to generation in a landscape of broken ancestries.

The second chapter of the journey *An Ocean Between Us* was presented at *Plataforma Revolver* in *Transboavista,* Lisbon, and is a video diptych where the fluvial port and a stationary cargo ship become the stage for metaphorical transits. The river evokes the journeys that connected the continents, providing a ground for the encounter of cultures and the understanding of the multiplicity of the diaspora experience. Conceived as a set of light boxes and a video projection, in *An Ocean Between Us* ships for maritime travel become stages and the ocean and a river, a mother and a daughter, and a lost love, symbolically represent the spatial ambiguity and the melancholic feelings of living in between cultures.

The third chapter of the research is presented by the installation *Home sweet sour house,* where I employ drawing to create a series of memory renderings of all the houses I had inhabited in my life. From the imprecise contours of

childhood homes to my current domicile, the descriptive exercise is interrupted by the passing of time, broken by conflict, exile or migrations and unsettled by the ambiguity of feeling. The result is a codified language in need of translation. Later interpreted by an architect into technical renderings, the hand drawings became pristine plates showing sensible layouts that nonetheless retain the personal features recalled by memory: rooms of uncertain proportions encapsulate the names of people who occupied them. *Home sweet sour house* is, once again, a repository of memory, a personal archive made of expressive calligraphies that reconstruct personal space and memories.

As an example of the most convincing attempt to recreate and reinvent my own geography, I presented in *Appleton Square* the fourth chapter of the project with the exhibition *Erosion*. This exhibition offered a visual journey to a place of fiction woven through biographical fragments. My imagination here attempted to connect three continents - Africa, Europe and America - forming a puzzle that aspired to compose a whole imagined and desired landscape. The eroded landscape of the island of São Vicente, Mindelo in Cape Verde is the centerpiece in the puzzle. The rocky, lunar landscape, evoked a promise of fertility which attracted an ambitious colonial project to plan the big jump from Europe to the New World and test what would become the largest imperial expansion in the history of Portugal. A veritable laboratory of colonization, a place where commerce - goods and human beings – flourished, in the confines of the Empire, Cape Verde, would be a launching pad for permanent migration, forming a fragmented community with most of its population now in exile. *Erosion* here is a metaphor for the multiple facets of the exodus and this emotional Atlas refers to metaphoric associations to catch the secret whispering of diasporas - traces and remnants of a promised, eroded land. This work redeems the bond between mothers, mother earth and mother-artist, who here sustain each other in a long and timeless embrace that alienates the distances and eliminates temporal discontinuities.

In this territory of subjectivity, the house and land are employed as metaphors for identity, becoming a paradigm shift where the journey is essentially a constant attempt to belong, an exercise of mapping emotional geography. *Once Upon a Time* is a project that seeks to build bridges between creative places and different cultural realities, portrayed through the technique of the video and photo album as a personal diary and a family archive. The concept of place, identity and memory is addressed in the form of an emotional architecture. I reinvented my own affective geographical narrative through researching my family archaeology. I also encourage the viewer to participate in the narrative, inviting one to look through airports, train stations and other places of passage. These become moments of suspension, sustained between arrivals and departures, memories and fictions, a search for traces of a life in transit. *Once upon a time* is a portrait of a post-modern world, marked by convulsions of wandering and uncertainty, an emotional archaeology or a diary chart of possible 'impossible' narratives. The various chapters of this travelling exhibition aspire to present an archaeology of the self through passages and landscapes. Travel becomes a vehicle of knowledge, where representation can never be trusted as the depictions of places reside within the realm of the unconscious, and memories are the tools for an exercise of healing the personal and colonial wound.

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APPENDIX- Timeline of project

Description	Dates	Place
Residency and fieldtrip in Portugal in Obras foundation and self-managed residency	June to August 2010 and throughout 2011-12	Evorá and Lisbon
Residency and fieldtrip with Capacete Foundation in Brazil and self-managed within my family network	May to July 2011	Rio de Janeiro
Self-managed residency and field trip " Hotel tropico" in Angola supported by the curator André Cunha and self-managed within my family network	April 2012	Luanda
Self-managed residency and fieldtrip within my friends and family network in England	Throughout 2010-2012	London
Exhibition " Once upon a time" at Carpe Diem	October 2012 to January 2013	Lisbon- Portugal
Exhibition " An Ocean between us" at Plataforma Revolver	November- December 2012	Lisbon- Portugal
Exhibition " Erosion" at Appleton square	January 2013	Lisbon- Portugal
Writing thesis	February –June 2013	London