

# (Dis)Identifying Female Archetypes in Live Art

A Practice as Research Thesis Submitted in Part Fulfilment for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Magdalena Šimić Anderson, B.A. (Hons), M.A.

Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University  
May 2007

## Author's Declaration

This thesis is my own, original work and has not been previously submitted elsewhere in support of any degree, qualification or course.

Signed

Dated

Magdalena Šimić Anderson, B.A. (Hons), M.A.  
(Dis)Identifying Female Archetypes in Live Art  
Ph.D. Submission  
May 2007

## Abstract

My thesis considers a feminist arts practice as a form of political agency. My research is practice-led. It consists of three performances/live art events (*Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial*), its documentation on three sets of DVDs and a written dissertation.

Female archetypes, which have tended to be associated with the canonical, underpin my research investigations. Through my arts practice I intervene in three archetypal images of women that are representative of the patriarchal canon: Medea (the anti-mother), Mary Magdalene (the penitent whore) and Joan of Arc (virgin martyr). I juxtapose their 'universality' with the experiential, the local and the contemporary. I draw on the authoritative personal voice of the lived anxiety of the experience of motherhood (Medea), name identification (Mary Magdalene), spirituality/heroism (Joan of Arc) and the sense of 'being foreign', seen as 'Other'. Working from my subject figuration of a 'Foreigner' (Croatian, living in Britain), my local community and experience of my daily life as a mother and artist-researcher in Liverpool, I (dis)identify with socio-culturally prescribed forms of the feminine, as conventionally represented by these archetypes. The production of my arts practice is understood as my political commitment to the world, a part of and an intervention into my everyday living.

This thesis is situated and contextualized within the field of contemporary British Live Art practices, feminist solo performance and transnational arts practices. For the purposes of facilitating my agency as an artist, throughout the thesis I use postcolonial and transnational feminist studies as well as feminist discourses on the 'politics of location' and 'lived experience', particularly the work of Sara Ahmed, Atvar Brah, Teresa de Lauretis, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, Doreen Massey, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Elspeth Probyn, Gayatri Spivak and Iris Marion Young.

## Acknowledgements

My deepest thanks to:

Elaine Aston

Also to:

Geraldine Harris, Kerstin Bueschges, L.I.C.A. and Theatre Studies, A.H.R.C., Arts Council England and Jill Godfrey, Bluecoat Arts Centre and Cathy Butterworth, Art Workshop Lazareti and Slaven Tolj & Srdjana Cvijetić, Nuffield Theatre and Matt Fenton, Steph & Dom, 'Women's Writing for Performance' and all its participants, L.A.D.A. and Lois Keidan, the Magdalena Project and Jill Greenhalgh, Oreet Ashery, Margareta Kern, Silke Mansholt, Tanja Ostojić and Rosa Casado.

All the mothers that participated in *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, my Dubrovnik family Nela, Željko, Ivan, Zvončica, Griša, baba, Pavo for all their effort for *Magdalena Makeup*, Sonja Stahor, Dale Rathbone and Ross Dalziel for their support.

And finally to:

Gary, Neal and Gabriel.

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	
On the Title of My Thesis	6
<b>Chapter One</b>	
The Trouble with Female Archetypes	15
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
The Lived Experience of a Female Foreign Condition in the Local Community: Performing Homes with Indefinite Leave To Remain	33
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
Towards A Transnational Arts Practice	54
<b>Chapter Four</b>	
Foreigners Under the Umbrella of British Live Art	77
<b>Introduction to My Arts Practice</b>	
Performance Making Tactics	101
<b>Chapter Five</b>	
On <i>Medea/Mothers' Clothes</i> : Medea/Mother Trouble	108
<b>Chapter Six</b>	
On <i>Magdalena Makeup</i> : Name Post Card Encounters Journey Home	123
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	
On <i>Joan Trial</i> : Performing Agency	147
<b>Conclusion</b>	
On the Politics of My Arts Practice	164
<b>Appendix A</b>	
Supporting Material for <i>Medea/Mothers' Clothes</i>	177
<b>Appendix B</b>	
Supporting Material for <i>Magdalena Makeup</i>	187
<b>Appendix C</b>	
Supporting Material for <i>Joan Trial</i>	195
<b>Bibliography</b>	208

## Introduction

### On the Title of My Thesis

My research is a platform upon which I am allowed time, space, resources and finances to further my artwork and ask critical questions about the world and my arts making processes. Through much of my research I have been returning to a quote from Gayatri Spivak which inspired me to think about my being-in-the-world and my politics through an arts practice. Therefore, I would like to open the written part of my thesis with that quote:

I wrote above that the will to explain was a symptom of the desire to have a self and a world. In other words, on the general level, the possibility of explanation carries the presupposition of an explainable (even if not fully) universe and an explaining (even if imperfectly) subject. These presuppositions assure our being. Explaining, we exclude the possibility of the *radically* heterogeneous.

On a more specific level, every explanation must secure and assure a certain *kind* of being-in-the-world, which might as well be called our politics.

(Spivak 1996: 33)

My Ph.D. thesis is both my explanation of and my intervention into the world. I understand the production of my arts practice as my political commitment to the world, a part of and an intervention into my everyday living, and finally, as my own being-in-the-world. More specifically, in this research project, through my arts practice, I (dis)identify with socio-culturally prescribed forms of the feminine, conventionally represented by female archetypes, by employing my subject figuration of a 'Foreigner' (Croatian, living in Britain), my local community and experience of my daily life as a mother and artist-researcher in Liverpool.

I will start by elaborating on the title of my thesis ‘(Dis)Identifying Female Archetypes in Live Art’. *Female archetypes*, invented and appropriated by patriarchy, are undoubtedly the Master’s tools which in the words of Audre Lorde ‘will never dismantle the master’s house’ (Lorde 1984b: 112). The very title of my thesis resurrects a patriarchal term, which categorizes women and myself, as a *female* artist. However, I am concerned to mobilize the terms *female archetypes*, as Master’s tools, through my arts practice, and contest the categorization of women into *female archetypes*. Gayatri Spivak looks at ‘phallogentrism’ as something ‘that enables us’ (Spivak 1990: 147). Since *female archetypes* are often read as something universal that anybody to an extent feels they have an opinion about, and possibly identify with, they are a fertile ground for contention. It is through *female archetypes* that I am ‘enabled’ in my agency as a female artist. *Female archetypes* provide me with a departure point, a way into the critique of ‘phallogentrism’ as the Master’s discourse. I have chosen three canonised, *female archetypes* as tactical departure points for my artistic investigation.

The term ‘archetypes’ references the theories of Carl Gustav Jung (see Chapter One). By ‘archetypes’ Jung refers to thought patterns within the so-called collective unconscious. In his extensive writings and specifically *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Jung 1959), he claims that archetypes are inherited dispositions in the human psyche to form primordial images, that they are determined by their forms only and that they manifest themselves through various images, stories, myths and representations in specific cultures, religions, societies and finally individuals. In my thesis I deal with three such archetypal manifestations: Medea, Mary Magdalene and

Joan of Arc. Medea is the anti-mother, the monster who kills her children; Mary Magdalene is a penitent whore, both a sinner and saint and Joan of Arc is a virgin/martyr, who dresses as a man. All three belong to certain canonical traditions. Medea derives from classical Greek mythology, Euripides and Greek drama. Mary Magdalene is sourced in the Bible, religion and ‘master paintings’, whilst Joan of Arc is a French historical heroine, with links to romanticism, nationalism and modernism. Each one is somewhat of an anomaly who in her own symbolic existence destabilizes the patriarchal structures to different degrees. It is, therefore, not surprising to see these three figures in the realms of women’s international groupings inspired by cultural and global feminism like the Magdalena Project, an international network of women in contemporary theatre (see Chapter One for discussion of this point). However, it is important to remember that such powerful figures also aid the reading of real women through archetypes as presupposed ‘natural’ feminine categories.

My understanding of the term ‘woman’ and the subsequent naming of myself as a *female* artist has been influenced by the feminist theorists Judith Butler and Denise Riley who have understood the term ‘woman’ contingently as opposed to ontologically. Butler defines ‘woman’ as ‘a site of permanent openness and resignifiability’ (Butler 1992: 16).<sup>1</sup> Riley writes about the inconsistency of the category and inadequacy of the label ‘woman’ (Riley 1988: 111-112). However, ‘woman’ as a term is not to be abandoned, but used strategically. Riley argues that ‘it is compatible to suggest that “women” don’t exist – while maintaining a politics of “as if they existed” – since the world behaves as if they



unambiguously did' (Riley 1988: 112). In the same vein, Gayatri Spivak calls for strategic essentialism:

Since one cannot not be an essentialist, why not look at the ways in which one is essentialist, carve out a representative essentialist position, and then do politics according to old rules whilst remembering the dangers in this?

(Spivak 1990: 45)

This kind of strategic essentialism is useful in my work as an artist. Developing the artwork through female archetypes, I emphasize my own *female* gender as a departure point for my artistic interventions. Being a *female* solo performer working on *female* archetypes I am marked by my gendered difference, even if that difference is not necessarily essentialist *per se*. My gendered difference is constructed and produced by society and the contexts I inhabit. Being *female*, and furthermore in my case, being a *foreigner* (Croatian living in Britain), become my chosen, *tactical differences*. They both work for me while I work on this specific research project of contesting 'female archetypes'. (For further discussion of my 'foreign female condition' see Chapter Two.)

I use the word *tactics* and not *strategies* to allude to my own subjectivity and a position in the world. My arts making processes, methodologies and tactics are intrinsically those that are of my daily life. According to de Certeau (1984: 37) 'a tactic is an art of the weak', small-scale, for those without executive power as opposed to 'strategies' for those with power who draw managerial outlines (for example institutions such as Arts Council England and universities). In the tradition of cultural studies and feminism my work comes from below: the personal and the lived. Thematically I am juxtaposing female archetypes with my local, daily, lived and experiential. Even if my

living conditions for making the work are provided by an Arts and Humanities Research Council studentship, intellectual and academic scholarship by Lancaster University, resources and production costs of each project by Arts Council England's 'Grants for the Arts', it is my daily life and interactions I have within my community that inspire and inform my artwork.

I have developed three arts projects, *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial*, around the three female archetypes. Each project is based upon a certain theme/issue that I discuss through my chosen female archetype. My artwork is archetype-aware and wary of Jungian, biologically determined definitions of archetypes as primordial patterns. Rather than determining whether or not archetypes *really* exist I am concerned to highlight the way 'female archetypes' have been put to work within contemporary, everyday living. Sara Ahmed stresses the importance of our own investment within certain categories:

If we are too invested in certain categories and versions of ourselves, then it becomes difficult to escape or change them. Nevertheless, feminism cannot simply do away with or even forget the categories that are produced in institutional spaces and everyday life (such as woman/female/feminine/women). Instead, we maintain that we need to analyse and understand the (psychic and social) investment in them.

(Ahmed *et al* 2000: 15)

My psychic and social investment in the female categories derives from the lived experience and the socio-cultural context of my 'local', my two homes of Liverpool and Dubrovnik. My personal interplay with the female archetypes happens along the lines of (dis)identification with them and on that basis (dis)identifications with portrayals of women in contemporary society. This is evident through the social encounters in my

neighbourhood where one becomes easily appropriated as a (good/bad) mother, a (dangerous) foreigner, a (devout) Catholic or a (strange) artist. It is through an arts practice that I (dis)identify from the mould, the predetermined categories, and politicise my subjectivity as an artist with agency in my socio-cultural context.

My use of the term (dis)identification is inspired by the writing of Teresa de Lauretis who examines the 're-definition of identity as dis-identification' (de Lauretis 1990: 116). Through performance I identify my female archetypes, but at the same time (dis)identify with the Master's ideology they carry. In *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* I (dis)identify the institution of motherhood and feeling of foreignness. In *Magdalena Makeup* I (dis)identify my legal name of Magdalena, my home and local community. In *Joan Trial* I (dis)identify my religion, war experiences and childhood hero worship. I am taking on these three archetypes, playing with their meanings, inhabiting them on camera and stage while making their 'archetypal' existence clash with my foreign female condition of daily living in my locale. As my arts practice is a part of my daily living, my artwork is produced and often in the first instance delivered through and by the help of a group of 'known' people. I engage my 'fellow locals' in my arts practice. In 'Interview with Radical Philosophy' Spivak states: 'The only things one really deconstructs are things into which one is intimately mired' (Spivak 1990: 135). Even if I am concerned to contest the archetypal thinking as such and, consequently, these three female archetypes, my interplay with them starts from below, from my daily, my lived and experiential, which allow for Spivak's idea of being 'intimately mired'. Therefore, it is not the female archetypes, but my intervention into them, the themes around them and the lived that is

capable of providing a politicised reflexive subjectivity and furthering my agency as an artist.

My momentary contexts, experiences and circumstances feed into and determine my arts practice. These are numerous and include: the arts context I find myself in through the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool, Art Workshop Lazareti in Dubrovnik and Nuffield Theatre in Lancaster; the institutional connections I have with Lancaster University and its Practice as Research academic culture; current Arts Council England policies on ‘cultural diversity’ that mark me as a priority artist in this time and place; networking, residential and training opportunities through the Magdalena Project, (international network of women in contemporary theatre), ‘Women’s Writing for Performance’ (A.H.R.C. funded research project at Lancaster University)<sup>2</sup> and New York based ArtsLink foundation; my experiences of being trained from 1994 to 1999 at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Bratislava, Slovakia and the London Academy of Performing Arts which gave me a strong training background in the classic theatrical canon; my present circumstances of living in Liverpool, my local community and my being a mother to two young children.

However, in the title of my thesis I refer to (dis)identifying female archetypes in ‘Live Art’. (For further discussion of the British Live Art scene see Chapter Four.) My initial involvement with the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool from 2001 to 2004 and their Live Art programming was instrumental in positioning and naming my own artwork as Live Art: to a certain degree the Bluecoat Arts Centre served as a catalyst for my arts

practice (I refer to my involvement with the Bluecoat in Chapter Two). However, the term 'Live Art' also most appropriately supports the aims of my research project: my (dis)identification with socio-culturally prescribed forms of the feminine from my specific 'foreign female' condition. 'Live Art', defined as a strategy and not an artform allows cultural agency (see Chapter Four). Defined as a strategy the term is broad enough to include my foreignness, my daily life, my three female archetypes and my classical drama training. Additionally, by naming my arts practice 'Live Art' I intervene into my theatre schooling. The foregrounding of my local community and experience of my daily life as a mother and artist-researcher in Liverpool in juxtaposition with female archetypes in and through Live Art allows me to develop new processes of making work and my performance making tactics (see 'Introduction to My Arts Practice' for further discussion of this point). My first project *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, both a performance and an installation, sits more comfortably within 'Live Art' than *Joan Trial*, which is my final examined piece and the most conventionally theatrical of the three. *Magdalena Makeup*, which figured as an experiment and work-in-progress for the research, was a durational piece and again sat more comfortably as 'Live Art'. However, my insistence on naming my arts practice Live Art is a form of cultural agency.

My written dissertation consists of this general introduction, four contextualizing chapters, an introduction to my arts practice, three practice chapters, a conclusion and three appendices. Chapter One discusses the historical, theoretical, cultural and popular perceptions of archetypes and provides the background and conditions for my own intervention into female archetypes. Chapter Two frames my working methodologies as

an artist through my ‘female foreign condition’ in the local. Chapter Three explores the issues of networking and contextualizes my own artwork amongst transnational arts practices with the aim of seeing how a transnational arts practice might further agency. Chapter Four addresses the context for my arts production, primarily the British Live Art scene and looks at other ‘foreigners’ within it. The ‘Introduction to My Arts Practice’ introduces my performance research questions and elaborates on my performance making tactics. My three arts projects *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial* are discussed in the last three chapters. Relevant supporting material regarding their development, delivery and documentation is included in appendices A, B and C, with the aim of making my working processes more explicit. Finally, the conclusion is a self-reflexive account of my research aims and arts projects, and seeks to measure the efficacy of the overall project including its future activities.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In ‘Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Postmodernism”’, Judith Butler writes:

I would argue that any effort to give universal or specific content to the category of women, presuming that that guarantee of solidarity is required *in advance*, will necessarily produce factinalization, and that ‘identity’ as a point of departure can never hold as the solidifying ground of a feminist political movement. Identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary. This is not to say that the term ‘women’ ought not to be used, or that we ought to announce the death of the category. On the contrary, if feminism presupposes that ‘women’ designates an undesignatable field of differences, one that cannot be totalized or summarized by a descriptive identity category, then the very term becomes a site of permanent openness and resignifiability.

(Butler 1992: 16)

<sup>2</sup> ‘Women’s Writing for Performance’ A.H.R.C. funded research project initiated and developed by Professor Elaine Aston and Dr. Geraldine Harris took place at Lancaster University at the same time as I was working on my Ph.D. (2003-2006). The project allowed me to participate in a number of workshops (Jackie Kay, Bobby Baker, Vayu Naidu, Geddy Aniksdal & Gilly Adams, Anna Furse, Leslie Hill & Helen Paris, Peggy Shaw & Lois Weaver and Marisa Carnesky) as well as helping me develop networking opportunities. For more information about the project visit <<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/depts/theatre/womenwriting/>>.

## Chapter One

### The Trouble with Female Archetypes

This chapter addresses the perception of archetypes as outlined by Carl Jung, his followers, popular culture, cultural and global feminism, feminist scholarly theatre theory, and finally, theatre practice, specifically the Magdalena Project, an international network of women in contemporary theatre. The aim of this chapter is to emphasise the danger of equating and reading female experiences through archetypal categorizations both in contemporary culture and in arts practices. This chapter sets up the background and conditions for my own interventions into female archetypes.

I start the chapter by discussing archetypes as perceived by Carl Jung, and specifically female archetypes as outlined by his followers Toni Wolff and Ann Ulanov. Secondly I address the appropriation of female archetypes in popular culture (through TV series and bestsellers) and contemporary society. Drawing on feminist theories around the category of experience (Teresa de Lauretis) as well as transnational, postcolonial and Black feminist critiques (Minoo Moallem, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan) I proceed to question some aspects of cultural and global feminism which are reliant on the universalized category of female experience. I briefly outline the differences between feminist scholarly theatre theory (specifically using Lesley Ferris and Geraldine Harris) and practice, which in the tradition of international modernist theatre, allows for certain adorations of female myths and archetypes. I particularly address the Magdalena Project,

an international network of women in contemporary theatre by drawing attention to their publication of *The Open Page: Theatre, Women, Myths* (1996) and three presentations which took place during ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ forum in Aberystwyth in July 2005, co-organized by the Magdalena Project and the University of Wales: ‘Crossing the Threshold: Love, Death and Narratives of Survival’ by Susan Bassnett, ‘Concentrated in Mindlessness’ by Gilla Cremer and ‘Feminine theatre: Training the young practitioner in intuitive performance’ by Carran Waterfield. I proceed by discussing Gilla Cremer’s *m.e.d.e.a.*, a solo performance from ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ forum, and finally, close the chapter by drawing attention to my own conditions and methodologies with regard to interventions into female archetypes.

### Universal archetypes

Archetype (from the Greek *archetypos*) means an original model or pattern. While the term is used in epistemology and comparative religion, it is mostly through Jungian psychology and the idea of the ‘collective unconscious’ that archetypes found their way into popular culture and the arts. In *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1959)

Jung writes:

From the unconscious there emanate determining influences which, independently of tradition, guarantee in every single individual a similarity and even a sameness of experience, and also of the way it is represented imaginatively. One of the main proofs of this is the almost universal parallelism between mythological motifs, which, on account of their quality as primordial images, I have called *archetypes*.

(Jung 1959: 58)



Archetypes thus get linked with the unquestioned ‘universalism’ of collective unconscious, ancestral memory, tradition and past, which when used and applied in popular culture and arts, allow for easy generalizations about the world, its structures and inhabitants.

Jung introduces archetypes as inherited dispositions in the human psyche to form primordial images. They are determined by their forms, not content, which allows for varying manifestations within each culture, religion or social grouping. However, all manifestations have the same origin: the collective unconscious. He writes:

The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a *facultas praeformandi*, a possibility of representation which is given *a priori*. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect they respond in every way to the instincts, which are also determined in form only.

(Jung 1959: 79)

Comparing them to instincts, Jung admits that his theories are based on biological, natural determinations. Instinctual and natural behaviour requires no critical thinking, but a (re)connecting with souls, spirits, true selves, or as Jung would call it, collective unconscious. Jungian psychology relies on managing the world through the process of *individuation* (Jung 1959: 275): an individual journey through an array of archetypes, a reconciliation of individual consciousness with the collective unconscious (and its archetypal forms). Such a process would usually involve finding a true inner self (Self archetype), undertaking a heroic journey in life (Hero archetype), finding a soul-mate (anima/animus), and finally, fighting the darker side (Shadow archetype). This kind of

archetypal thinking reduces and categorizes lived experiences while at the same time seeking to explain the world away.

Jung bases his theoretical work on the human psyche upon binary oppositions between the feminine and the masculine, or in his terms anima and animus. He believes that these opposing unconscious elements feminine 'anima' and masculine 'animus' should, during a life, be reconciled within the conscious mind. In other words, women should get in touch with their animus and men with their anima. In his essay 'Anima and Animus' Jung discusses his view of females and males based upon the biologically given, 'natural' categories; he ascribes 'personal relations' as something females are 'naturally' interested in and 'politics and commerce' as something closer to males (Jung 2003: 88-123). He writes:

If I were to attempt to put it in a nutshell the difference between man and woman in this respect, i.e., what it is that characterizes the animus as opposed to the anima, I could only say this: as the anima produces *moods*, so the animus produces *opinions*; and as the moods of a man issue from a shadowy background, so the opinions of a woman rest on equally unconscious prior assumptions. Animus opinions very often have the character of solid convictions that are not lightly shaken, or of principles whose validity is seemingly unassailable.

(Jung 2003: 108)

Even though Jung insists on the feminine element, anima, for the healthy development of the males themselves, and very clearly accepts that both elements are necessary and different, rather than one being inferior to the other, his theories, with their strong 'natural' implications, are detrimental to both men and women, being determined chiefly by biological sex. Such ideology forces women to fit too easily into the archetypally

given 'natural' feminine categories: they become good mothers, seductive mistresses, innocent virgins and evil witches.

The work of Jung's followers Toni Wolff, a disciple and lover, and Ann Ulanov, a professor of psychiatry and religion, elaborates on 'natural feminine categorizations'. In *Structural forms of the feminine psyche* (1956) Wolff develops four 'feminine structural forms': Mother (mother and spouse), Hetaira (companion, friend), Amazon (independent, self-sufficient) and Medial woman (agent, conveyor, artist). In her view each woman has one dominant form, while each woman's life journey towards the Self should aspire towards encompassing at some level all four feminine structural forms. This kind of ideology yet again requires no critical awareness, but reconnecting with deep inner feelings, a rediscovery of what is 'ancient', 'true' and 'unquestioned'. Ulanov's *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology* (1971) evolves from Wolff's ideas and connects these basic four feminine types to culture:

These fundamental archetypal forms of the feminine as described in the myths and legends of all cultures throughout history, as for example in the recurrent tales of the princess, the maiden, the wise woman, the witch, etc. ... The archetypal forms of the feminine describe certain basic ways of channelling one's feminine instincts and one's orientation to cultural factors. They also indicate the type of woman one is or the type of anima personality of man is likely to develop.

(Ulanov 1971: 195)

The language Ulanov employs such as 'basic ways of channelling one's feminine instincts' is devoid of any kind of critical thinking about the social construction of gender. Both Wolff and Ulanov consign women into representational roles by calling upon history, nature, religion and instincts as uncontested entities, and connecting those to culture.

## Popular archetypes

In popular culture women are often read through archetypal categorizations: they are judged as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ mothers, promiscuous or virtuous wives, whores or virgins, independent businesswomen or dependent housewives. Popular TV series like *Sex and the City* (HBO TV series 1998-2004) and *Desperate Housewives* (ABC TV series 2004-ongoing) promote impossibly ‘perfect’ female images, where good looks, sex and money prevail over all other difficulties like childcare, relationships and work. A number of self-help books, which feature easy-to-understand formulas for living (practical self-help guides for ‘healthy archetypal activation’ like Carol. S. Pearson (1986) *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By* and (1991) *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World* or Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992) *Women Who Run With the Wolves*) promote universal archetypal values: the heroic journeys, the struggle between good and evil, the holistic approach to the world. Such a simplified and categorized way of life is closely linked to the ideas of promotion and success as encountered in Western capitalism, with a touch of spirituality from the ‘authentic Eastern cultures’; Jung himself is renowned for his work on Mandala symbolism.<sup>1</sup> In addition to appropriating feminism for the promotion of materialistic culture and the political right,<sup>2</sup> these series and books appeal to our senses through the great leveller of female experience.

As a more ambitiously global project than self-help books and entertaining TV series, certain strands of feminism that go under the names of the radical, the cultural and

the global have made claims about global sisterhood through the category of universalized female experience. For such feminisms, particularly cultural feminism (Cixous 1981, Daly 1979, Davidson and Broner 1980, Gilbert and Gubar 1979, Griffith 1978, Millet 1970) female archetypes in the form of the Great Goddess myths, various mythological female figures, legends and heroines, that are supposedly remembered in our female bodies and sourced by our female energies, have often been presented as capable of crossing cultural and geo-political borders.

The terms 'global feminism' and 'cultural feminism' have been criticized by Black, postcolonial and transnational feminist scholars (Lorde 1984, hooks 1984, Anzaldúa 1987, Grewal & Kaplan 1994, Spivak 1990, Moallem 1999). Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan write: '[t]he term "global feminism" has elided the diversity of women's agency in favor of a universalized Western model of women's liberation that celebrates individuality and modernity' (Grewal and Kaplan 1994: 17). Discussing transnationalism, feminism and fundamentalism Mino Moallem, a sociologist with a research interest in postcolonial and transnational feminist cultural studies, compares cultural feminism to fundamentalism:

In the case of feminists, certain culturalist positions, by depending on a form of essentialized nurturing femininity associated with women's nature and the construction of a glorious matriarchal past, thereby import fundamentalist components into feminism. Consider, for example, the notion of 'goddess' worship as 'a symbol of the affirmation of the legitimacy and beauty of female control' [Christ, 1980, 278], 'Womanspirit' [Christ and Plaskow, 1979], 'mother-child love' as 'passionate, sensual and personal love' [Starhawk, 1979, 264], and the need for a holistic worldview. For both, feminism of this kind and for fundamentalism, a nonnegotiable fictive past determines the vision of the future.

(Moallem 1999: 324-325)

An all knowing and prevailing past thus becomes detrimental to the future. The return of the Great Goddess matriarchal time is anticipated and idealized, while essentialized femininities, like female archetypes, are encouraged. As such, essentialized female archetypes have found their way into the arts, a problem I will address below.

Instead of looking for universal female experience and reading women through essentialized female archetypes, we need to understand the experience as an ongoing process of subjectivity construction, influenced by the social/historical power relations (de Lauretis 1986). Such a take on experience could provide a way of working with agency. (I elaborate on the mobilization of my lived experience in Chapter Two.) Even when there has been an attempt to form ‘feminist archetypal theory’,<sup>3</sup> which tries to foreground female experience, its own psychotherapy discourse insists on the importance of the unconscious as some kind of sacred sphere of our existence. It urges individuals to reconnect with the collective unconscious, which leads us back to nature, spirituality, religion and ideology.<sup>4</sup> ‘Feminist archetypal theory’ seems to align itself with certain cultural feminist positions, various ‘alternative’ movements from New Age hippies, healers, greens and eco feminists as well as certain arts practices all of which claim to *use* ‘archetypal energy’.<sup>5</sup>

### Performing archetypes

Critical thinking, arts and performance can offer alternative and subversive views, but some aspects of women’s theatre/performance art continue to reinstate problematic

culturalist positions through ‘archetypal thinking’ and the celebration of ‘naturally’ given feminine qualities. Feminist scholarly theatre theory is archetype-aware (Aston 1995a, Ferris 1990, Goodman 1993, Harris 1999), but arts practice often lags behind. Lesley Ferris, a theatre theorist and historian, offers a detailed account of ‘Archetypal Images of Women in Theatre’ in *Acting Women: Images of Women in Theatre*. Ferris poses ‘the question of the legacy of male-generated Western theatre by examining some of the major female images’ (Ferris 1990: xiii). The ‘Archetypal Images of Women in Theatre’ are broken down into a number of categories such as Penitent Whore, Speechless Heroine, Wilful Woman, Golden Girl and Women Acting Men.<sup>6</sup> While it is clear that Ferris uses these categorizations as a way of commenting upon patriarchally bound theatre history, artists themselves must beware of not falling into the trap of reinstating ‘female archetypal images’ through their art. The female practitioners need to engage in reflexivity and the categories into which they are made to fit.

Medea, which falls under the category of ‘unfit mother’, as the ultimate anti-mother archetype, is frequently used in contemporary female performance. During the last decade there have been many significant revivals of Medea: Gilla Cremer’s *m.e.d.e.a.*, Valerie Dréville and Anatoli Vassiliev’s *Médée Matériau*, Fiona Templeton’s *The Medead*, new interpretations of Euripides’ *Medea* by Deborah Warner and Fiona Shaw, the Foursight Theatre and by Italian playwright/director Emma Dante.<sup>7</sup> (For further contextualization and the discussion of my own take on Medea see Chapter Five, specifically pp. 108-109 and endnote 1.) However, Geraldine Harris, a feminist theatre scholar, is reluctant to interpret Medea along the lines of the natural, biological

'feminine' whose sources can also be traced back to Jungian archetypes. Harris draws her criticism from the attendance of a one day seminar in 1992 at Warwick University: 'Women and Theatre: Archetype, Stereotype, Prototype' (chaired by Susan Bassnett) and responds to the surge of using 'the feminine' element within British women's theatre practice and theory. She warns us that accepting any notion of the existence of archetypes, be it only a 'blueprint or model from which to build or rebuild' (definition given by Bassnett at the seminar), starts drawing categorizations of women based on nature and subsequently claims that there is a universal identity of 'women' waiting to be discovered (Harris 1996: 13). Harris is more concerned with asking questions around the actual structures of power that operate within society through law: 'My own political and personal perspective immediately begs certain questions; who were the architects of this blueprint and for what purposes was it drawn, how is it now being employed, by whom and for whom?' (Harris 1996: 14). She believes that 'such [essentialist/feminine or based upon the archetypal] strategies could also easily cut women off from real power relations that govern the world and as such may be perceived as creating a diversion from the actual social and political problems faced by women in everyday life' (Harris 1996: 12).

Following on from the issue of real women being cut off from power relations and reduced to archetypal depictions I would also like to note the recent publication of *Medea's Daughters: Forming and Performing the Woman Who Kills* by Jennifer Jones (2003) which takes a close look at six accused murderesses and their legal, cultural and dramatic representations. Comparing the real women with Medea does them no favours, but reinforces archetypal views of women in society. Harris points out that Medea, as a



character, has all the archetypal feminine characteristics, but warns us against the psychological reading of Medea as a real person. In her words:

a mythical figure Medea does not exist to explain why women turn to murder but to embody powerful and frightening forces outside of human understanding or control. She represents the ultimate *Other* and is not rescued in the final moments out of pity for her humanity but out of respect for her divinity.

(Harris 1996: 19)

She argues that equating the divine, mythological figure of Medea with her archetypal connotations to everyday women harms women's position in the actual power structures of society. Archetypes thus act against women in the everyday.

However, Carl Jung and his theories on archetypes have found fertile ground amongst many theatre practitioners, male and female. The twentieth century avant-garde modernist directors, most prominently Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, have looked for unifying solutions, universal performance languages and subsequently a negation of 'our' differences.<sup>8</sup> This is also the case with cultural feminist and theatre practitioner Hélène Cixous in her search for an *écriture féminine* as well as numerous female performance artists<sup>9</sup> and international theatre groupings such as the Magdalena Project, which itself has strong connections to the modernist avant-garde tradition of Odin Theatre.

The Magdalena Project is an international network of women in contemporary theatre, which was set up by Jill Greenhalgh in the mid-eighties with regular events, festivals and workshops.<sup>10</sup> During its twenty years of existence the Magdalena Project

has addressed the mythical and the archetypal. I am singling out the Magdalena Project as a high profile international network in women's theatre because of its accessibility to new generations of women practitioners (especially through internet and mailing lists), its fondness for 'natural' feminine qualities and my own personal involvement. In the last three years as part of my research I attended three of their events: 'Transit IV: Roots in Transit' Women's International Theatre Festival and Meeting at Odin Theatre, Denmark in January 2004, 'Magdalena Sin Fronteras' (Magdalena Without Borders) festival in Santa Clara, Cuba in January 2005 and 'The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice' forum in Aberystwyth, Wales in July 2005. I also published an article 'An Everyday Privilege' in the 2006 edition *Women Theatre Practice* of their annual journal *The Open Page*. Even though the Magdalena Project is mostly visible on the web through their website [www.themagdalenaproject.org](http://www.themagdalenaproject.org) and its web queen Helen Varley Jamieson, the driving force for the organized meetings are the self-proclaimed 'Magdalena grandmothers' (Jill Greenhalgh, Julia Varley, Cristina Castrillo, Brigitte Cirla, Ana Correa, Geddy Aniksdal, Deborah Hunt, Sally Rodwell, Margaret Cameron and Gilly Adams) and the annual publication of the journal *The Open Page*. As a group of women around the age of fifty they all very much belong to the twentieth century modernist theatre tradition, which is one of extensive training, experts and 'masters'. The 'Magdalena grandmothers' travel the globe and present their work at various corners of it, facilitating workshops and touring their performances.<sup>11</sup> As a global network, the Magdalena Project has relied on the tradition of cultural feminism and the reinstating of myths and archetypes. Numerous Magdalena festivals, meetings, publications (Bassnett

1989, *The Open Page*) and most recently the academic forum ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ (2005) have dealt with myths and archetypes.<sup>12</sup>

The first issue of *The Open Page* journal entitled *Women Theatre Myth* (1996) opens up a discussion of female mythical and archetypal images. The views of several practitioners contributing to this journal edition (Cristina Castrillo, Gerd Christiansen, Anne-Sophie Erichsen, Zofia Kalinska and Julia Varley) appear not to acknowledge the dangers of portraying females through their mythical representations.<sup>13</sup> The present is not questioned but rather explained through the past, the everlasting and the mythical. Female archetypes are often taken at face value, supported by a belief in their creative and healing energies. Archetypes are often deployed in acting methods, the idea being that the ‘archetypal energies’ are channelled through demanding actors’ training, such as vocal invocations and strenuous physical exercises. Such theatre training methods are intrinsically linked with a twentieth century modernist tradition and rely heavily on the professionally trained performer.

With the aim of examining the relationship between academia and professional performance practice in July 2005 Jill Greenhalgh organized an international forum entitled ‘The Articulate Practitioner - Articulating Practice’.<sup>14</sup> The forum took place over five days in Aberystwyth and was jointly supported by the University of Wales’ Theatre, Film and Television Studies department and the Magdalena Project. What I am concerned to highlight from the Forum are three presentations where myths and archetypes took centre stage: ‘Crossing the Threshold: Love, Death and Narratives of

Survival’ by Susan Bassnett, ‘Concentrated in Mindlessness’ by Gilla Cremer and ‘Feminine theatre: Training the young practitioner in intuitive performance’ by Carran Waterfield. Bassnett is a British academic, a Professor in the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies at Warwick University, Cremer is a German actress, writer and producer with nine solo performances and Waterfield is the artistic director of the Coventry-based Triangle theatre. Bassnett opened up her presentation ‘Crossing the Threshold: Love, Death and Narratives of Survival’ with four stories that she and the other three participants of a theatre festival in Turkey exchanged some years before. She emphasised the link, but not a probable clash between our personal stories and the mythical. She argued that there was an element of the mythical within our daily existence and the narratives we carried with us. She mentioned the images of the Srebrenica massacre and a recent media image of a mourning mother of a 7/7 London bomb victim and equated her suffering to certain Greek myths. Cremer’s presentation reflected upon her working processes as a performer. The previous night she performed *m.e.d.e.a.*, a solo performance, whose story centres on a contemporary woman, Renate, being left by her long-term partner for a younger woman. Waterfield drew on her experience of working with young female students from the University of Birmingham and talked about the role of pedagogy. She addressed the concept of ‘threshold’ which she believed young female students experience when entering higher education. She connected their transitional experience to her own performance work on rites of passage.

There are a number of issues here I would like to look at in a critical light. In Waterfield’s case, the material she creates on stage with young female performers (as

young trees) might be reinstating, through scenic language, prescribed feminine natural categories. Bassnett does not consider the possibility that equating 'real women' with mythological characters might actually work against 'real women'. On a more general note, the danger of equating the historical events like the fall of the Mostar bridge, the Srebrenica massacre or mourning mothers with the mythical and archetypal might go some way to justifying those events by reducing them to convenient, easy to manage categories. Rather than rationalizing specific historical occurrences as 'archetypal' we need to politically contextualize each of these events as well as reflect upon the structures that made these myths our legacy. The problem of such comparisons between the contemporary political and past archetypal makes it easy to look at history and the past as something legitimate, as something 'true', which consequently becomes used for political/ideological purposes. We tend to say that the past has always been like that, that it will never change, statements which then become our 'lessons from the past'. However, critical thinking through arts and feminism aims to open up ongoing political processes and to strive for change. Artistic interpretations of various political events can offer a form of critical engagement with prescribed social conditions.

Cremer falls into a similar trap while talking about Medea's 'archaic way' which she in her role as Renate uses in *m.e.d.e.a.*. Cremer believes that Medea, who is 'on her side', allows Renate to 'borrow' her archaic anger. Relying on 'female sympathy' as well as a virtuosity of her performing skills she universalizes female experiences of relationship break ups through the character of Medea and her archaic anger. By so doing, she misses the opportunity to question the production of the archaic, theorize the

production of her angry emotions, and address the fact that those archaic angry female emotions might be true only to the extent they are constantly being reproduced through repressive ideologies that go under the name of social norms. While I believe that the use of Medea's 'archaic anger' could be a good tactic through which it is possible to address underlying inequalities between genders in society, emphasising Medea's 'archaic anger' as typically female, as Cremer does, helps categorize and naturalize women. Such a biologically determined categorization might lead us to conclude that 'women', as a universal category, never change and, subsequently, all too easily, fit the desired archetypal structures. In this case, 'archaic anger' becomes a conveniently reductive 'feminine' category.

By contrast I use Medea, Mary Magdalene and Joan of Arc as my feminist tools. My artwork utilizes the idea of the supposed power of these 'universal figures' as female archetypes, but is at the same time firmly rooted in the local, communal and the daily. I am aware that different forms of archetypal thinking might have become interchangeable with spirituality and arts and may have inspired work in the community, but very often such archetypal thinking, by being connected to spirituality, has induced a political apathy. My aim, as an artist, is to restore a political commitment to the arts practice I produce in the community and the local.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See 'Concerning Mandala Symbolism' in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Jung 1959: 355-390). Mandala in Sanskrit means 'circle' and is related to religious rituals, mostly used in Tibetan Buddhism.

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion about feminism being appropriated by the political right see Angela McRobbie 'New Ways of Being Young Women' in *Feminism and Youth Culture* (2000: 198-214).

<sup>3</sup> I am specifically referring to a collection of essays *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-visions of Jungian Thought* (1985) edited by Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Ruppert and *Jung and Feminism: Liberating Archetypes* (1988) by Demaris Wehr.

<sup>4</sup> See Lauter and Schreier Ruppert's *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-visions of Jungian Thought* (1985: 220-237) and Demaris Wehr's *Jung and Feminism: Liberating Archetypes* (1988: 114-117).

<sup>5</sup> Eco feminism of the 1970s (Griffin 1984 [1978]) as well as recent art activism of 2000s (Evans and De Angelis & Diesner in Harvie 2005) very often portray female roles as connected to nurture and nature.

<sup>6</sup> Each of my chosen figures belongs to one of Ferris's categories: Medea is a Wilful Woman, Mary Magdalene is a Penitent Whore and Joan of Arc is a Woman Acting Man.

<sup>7</sup> For Gilla Cremer's discussion of *m.e.d.e.a.* and her working processes, see 'Concentrated Mindlessness' in *The Open Page: Women, Theatre, Practice* (2006: 6-9).

For the discussion of Valerie Dréville and Anatoli Vassiliev's *Médée Matériau* see Nataliya Golofastova's article 'Médée Matériau: the Assassination of the Spectator' in *Performance Research: On Form* (2005: 99-110).

For Fiona Templeton's *The Medead* see <<http://www.fionatempleton.org/the%20medead.htm>>.

For Foursight Theatre see <<http://www.foursight.theatre.boltblue.net>>.

Daniela Cavallaro discussed Emma Dante's 2004 version of Euripides' *Medea* in her presentation 'Greek Character in Search of a Female Author: Medea and Italian Women' at an interdisciplinary conference entitled 'Medea: Mutations and Permutations of a Myth' which took place at Bristol University in July 2006. For more information about the conference visit <[http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/birtha/themes/medea\\_conference.html](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/birtha/themes/medea_conference.html)>.

<sup>8</sup> See Eugenio Barba's (1991) *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, Jerzy Grotowski's (1969) *Towards A Poor Theatre* and Peter Brook's (1988) 'The World as a Can Opener' from *The Shifting Point: Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration, 1946-87*, (Brook 1988: 129 – 134). Brook attempted to find universality through an invented language 'Orghast' (with Ted Hughes) as well as through the concept of dharma (duty) in his performance *The Mahabharata*.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Annie Sprinkle, a feminist performance artist, references female archetypes most prominently in her workshop 'Sluts and Goddesses'. For further information see <<http://www.anniesprinkle.org>>. In RE/Search publication: *Angry Women* Sprinkle gives Linda Montano a make over into different female archetypes (Juro and Vale 1991: 58-59). Sprinkle is notorious for her explicitly sexual performances (*Post Porn Modernist*), but while these might be viewed as liberating for women and their sexual desires they are also grounded upon naturalized, biologically given female bodies.

<sup>10</sup> For more information refer to project's website <<http://www.themagdalena-project.org>>.

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<sup>11</sup> These highly emotional and extremely skilled solo performances, for example Anna Wolff's *Seeds of Memory*, Cristina Castrillo's *Umbral* or Julia Varley's *The Castle of Holstebro*, have all been performed for several years at most of the network's festivals and meetings. However, I would argue that even when thematically addressing the political, these performances tend to stay locked in their own aura of high modernism. Even when each one of these performances was developed within specific geo-political and cultural frames, they seem almost devoid of reference to their context and community, but rather serve as examples of immaculately skilled artworks that get to be transferred across global spaces. Performances inspired by archetypes and archetypal thinking tend to promote generalizations and ignore the specificities of positionality.

<sup>12</sup> It might be unfair to criticize *all* Magdalena Project participants for their dependence on the archetypal. The network has other benefits. What I find inspiring about the network is its encouragement of emergent women practitioners (see Chapter Three, pp. 63-64).

<sup>13</sup> For example, Cristina Castrillo's article 'An Ancient Heritage: Reflections on Myth and Creation' (1996: 16-18) looks at 'transpersonal memory', as a connection between individuals' everyday lives and unconscious geography (Castrillo 1996: 17). In her words 'in the very centre of a world that boasts incredible progress, but turns a blind eye in face of the evidence of constant existential loss, the human being is of necessity the fruit of perplexity and disconcertion, bearing the signs of primordial contingency that have marked the boundary between consciousness and the hidden labyrinth of his/her unknown world' (Castrillo 1996: 17); and furthermore she understands the 'creative' urge to be motivated by this very situation. Gerd Christiansen takes 'the energy of archetypes' at their face value and works with those in her creative process, as explained in her article 'Re-conquering of Archetypal Landscapes: On the Influence of Myths and Archetypes in a Visual Theatre Form' (Christiansen 1996: 19-21). Anne-Sophie Erichsen's article 'Archetypes as a Reference in Actor's Work' (Erichsen 1996: 22-23) presupposes the same archetypal qualities. Zofia Kalinska's acclaimed performance of *Nominatae Filiae* which is discussed in 'My Work With Myths' (Kalinska 1996: 38-39) also aspires towards 'true' archetypal inner qualities. Julia Varley's 'Mysteries, Confessions and Personal Myths' (1996: 73-76) praises the power of women and their ability to connect the daily with the mythical, without the necessary critical engagement.

<sup>14</sup> For more information see

<<http://www.themagdalenaoproject.org/archive/articulatepractitioner/index.htm>>.

Findings from the forum will be made available through the *Performance Research* journal. The forum itself had the potential to bridge some elements of theatre scholarship with different artists and their arts practices. It is interesting to note that one of the closing forums consisted of new emerging practitioners who have decided not to recognize a theory and practice binary. They believe their work cuts across that binary and they feel their work is both practically and theoretically informed.



## Chapter Two

### The Lived Experience of a Female Foreign Condition in the Local Community: Performing Homes with Indefinite Leave To Remain

This chapter addresses the archetypal in connection to the local. My rationale for working with archetypes within the local arises from the lived experience of my 'female foreign condition'. 'Female archetypes', with their 'universal values', become tools through which I act within my local community. They give me, in my tactical figuration of a female foreigner, a stepping-stone for interaction within the local community.

I start the chapter by using the writings of Teresa de Lauretis and Joan Scott and discuss 'Lived experience' and its relationship to feminism. My interest is in connecting these theories to the processes of autobiographical performance and particularly my arts practice. Secondly I address what I describe as my 'Female and Foreign conditions'. I discuss my 'foreign' figuration taking on board de Lauretis's theories on (dis)identification and Woman/women detachment, Gayatri Spivak's work on marginality and Otherness and Sara Ahmed's investigations of difference and encounters with others. Following on from feminist discourses on the 'politics of location' and inspired by the writings of Elspeth Probyn, Iris Marion Young and Jacques Derrida I look at 'Local community' critically, not as an authentic, essentialist configuration, but rather as a departure point for my artistic interventions into 'female archetypes'. Finally, in 'Performing homes with ILTR' I address the work by Atvar Brah, Sara Ahmed, Doreen

Massey and Chandra Talpade Mohanty around the configuration of ‘home’ and link it with my lived and arts context. While considering arts practice as my newly found Home, I offer up a discussion of my local homes of Liverpool and Dubrovnik, as well as two arts centres: the Bluecoat Arts Centre (Liverpool) and Art Workshop Lazareti (Dubrovnik). My local translates into the political of a transnational arts practice.

### Lived experience

The question of ‘experience’ is set centre stage in the discourses of feminism, autobiographical writing and female performance, as well as some aspects of Jungian theories.<sup>1</sup> Teresa de Lauretis states that ‘the relation of experience to discourse, finally, is what is at issue in the definition of feminism’ (de Lauretis 1986: 5). Experience has often been assumed to be a common bond for all the women in the world in order to create ‘global sisterhood’ or a shared performance language as I have pointed out through the discussion of ‘cultural feminism’ and the Magdalena Project in the previous chapter. My understanding of ‘experience’ and subsequent use of it in my artwork has been informed by the writings of Teresa de Lauretis and Joan Scott, who both emphasise the social /historical relations in the process of the construction of one’s subjectivity.

In ‘Semiotics and Experience’ de Lauretis writes about experience as a crucial issue of women’s movement and feminist political practice and defines it as ‘a *process* by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed’ (de Lauretis 1984: 159). In her words:

Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, even originating in, oneself) those relations – material, economic, and interpersonal – which are in fact social, and in a larger perspective, historical. The process is continuous, its achievement unending or daily renewed. For each person, therefore, subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, it is the effect of that interaction – which I call experience; and thus it is produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning and affect) to the events of the world.

(de Lauretis 1984: 159)

Working from de Lauretis's definition, Scott asks how one can write about identity without essentializing it, how to advocate both identity and experience as open categories and how to try to understand the operations by which identities are ascribed. She concludes:

Experience is not a word we can do without, although it is tempting, given its usage to essentialize identity and reify the subject, to abandon it altogether. But experience is so much a part of everyday language, so imbricated in our narratives that it seems futile to argue for its expulsion. It serves as a way of talking about what happened, of establishing difference and similarity, of claiming knowledge that is 'unassailable.' Given the ubiquity of the term, it seems to me more useful to work with it, to analyze its operations and redefine its meaning. This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction. Experience is at once always an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, always therefore political.

(Scott 1990: 37)

I understand my lived experience as an ongoing critical process through which my politicized subjectivity with my agency as an artist in the world is formed. My lived experience involves the processes of (dis)identifications from the prescribed categories of the feminine. Subsequently, my processes of creating artwork are critical of the world. My experience is never finished, never a platform from which I speak as I please, but rather a set of options from which I select, driven by my agency as an artist, to emphasise certain content in connection to producing and delivering specific arts projects.

Much feminist performance has relied on using autobiographical personal narratives. However, I am not concerned to replicate my 'personal story' on stage, but rather, through my artwork, comment on the social structures that produce my specific circumstances. I am interested in abstracting my experience, re-creating it anew on stage. Discussing the problematic of a performer's subjectivity in her article 'What's In A Name?....' Dee Heddon, following de Lauretis's definition of experience as a process through which subjectivity is constructed (de Lauretis 1984), stresses that 'experience does not indicate some central core of identity, but seems to constitute subjectivity and, rather than being the reflection of some reality, should be the ground for an analysis of discursive systems' (Heddon 1998: 52). Experience thus ceases to be something personal and authentic but rather has to do with a feminist engagement and agency. Even though my arts practice deals with 'common' themes such as motherhood (*Medeal/Mothers' Clothes*) or religion (*Joan Trial*) I think it is important to contest these themes, rather than try to 'fit into' them together with my fellow mothers or Catholics (in these two specific cases). Discussing females and naming, Heddon writes:

The challenge, then, when using one's own personal narratives, is to speak from the specificity of one's own circumstances and thus avoid speaking for an entire category, while simultaneously contesting the notion of 'category' or 'identity' as a pre-given, immutable 'truth'. The performer who uses the personal should, according to this, show a subject who is multiply designated, non-unified and fluid.

(Heddon 1998: 52)

Drawing on the 'specificity of one's own circumstances' I speak from my 'home' locations and my interaction with those. My specificity is realized through the Foreigner figuration (as my difference) and my lived experience. Through my arts practice the lived experience becomes a field of contradictions between 'myself' in my position as a

Foreigner and ‘female archetypes’ as socio-culturally constructed images of women. I am concerned to challenge the reinstating of ‘female archetypes’ (through Medea, Mary Magdalene and Joan of Arc) as unchangeable and true and to speak out from my very specific position of a Foreigner in the community I live in. Thus, for the purposes of my three arts projects, I draw from my experience of everyday living that labels me both ‘Female’ and ‘Foreign’.

### Female condition

Teresa de Lauretis suggests that we, as ‘women, the real, historical beings and social subjects who are defined by the technologies of gender and actually engendered in social relations’, need to detach ourselves from a patriarchal construct of a ‘Woman with the capital letter, the *representation* of an essence inherent in all women (which has been seen as Nature, Mother, Mystery, Evil Incarnate, Object of [Masculine] Desire and Knowledge, Proper womanhood, Femininity, et cetera)’ (de Lauretis 1987: 9-10). Slipping in between their various representations and at the same time remaining tied within real social relations, de Lauretis understands women, conscious female subjects of feminism, to be at the same time ‘both inside and outside gender, at once within and without representation’ (de Lauretis 1987: 10). For her, feminist theory (which in my particular case translates to feminist performance practice) lies in the contradiction between women and Woman. Female subjects of feminism are ‘at once inside and outside the ideology of gender, ... at once woman and women’ (de Lauretis 1987: 114).

My 'female archetypes' obey the same patriarchal rules as Woman; they are socio-culturally constructed from a patriarchal point of view.

However, I am not proposing that women, 'conscious female subjects of feminism', have somehow escaped the socio-cultural production of themselves as subjects. Judith Butler warns us that '[f]eminist critique ought also to understand how the category of 'women', the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought' (Butler 1998: 275). Feminism and its subjects, women, are products of the socio-cultural system they live in, not outside it. However, even if our understanding of gender is that it is produced and constructed, 'women' still remain a group whose identity is 'always up for grabs' (Spivak 1996: 21). Therefore, 'we, women' need to take our representation seriously, even when aware that that representation is not outside the socio-cultural system that produced it. A feminist position, if taken as a strategy as is the case in feminist theory, or as a tactic in my artwork (for differentiation between tactics and strategies see Introduction, p. 9), can be used in order to draw attention to how meanings and identities are produced through certain structures of power. Popular culture has a claim over women's lives as mothers, daughters, wives, virgins and mistresses. The everlasting naturalized 'feminine' (the witch, the mother, the whore, the virgin) continues to be reproduced in various modifications in contemporary social and cultural representations of females in everyday life. (For a fuller critique of female archetypal categories see Chapter One).

In her article 'Eccentric subjects: feminist theory and historical consciousness' (1990), Teresa de Lauretis examines the role of 'eccentric subjects' and the 're-definition of identity as dis-identification' (de Lauretis 1990: 116). She writes: 'That displacement – that dis-identification with a group, a family, a self, a "home", even a feminism, held together by the exclusions and repression that enable any ideology of the same – is concurrently a displacement of one's point of understanding and conceptual articulation' (de Lauretis 1990: 139). Thriving in the gaps between the socio-cultural images of Woman with Her institutional responsibilities and my personal experience of reality, (dis)identifications open up a creative process in my arts practice. They become my 'conceptual articulation', interventions into 'female archetypes' based upon various encounters in my local.

### Foreign condition

The Foreigner has been formed and moulded by the social, the cultural, the local, the experiential. My local neighbourhood marks me as foreign. The local people ask me to explain what brings me *here* to Liverpool. I tell my stories. I become even more foreign as I retell the stories of arrival to the UK. The moment I open my mouth and reveal my nuanced English, I am foreign: I am different from you. While I am produced and labelled as a Foreigner through my daily encounters with various Others, I creatively seek myself out as a Foreigner when confronted with developing artwork. It is from my re-instated difference that I choose to speak.

I have chosen my Foreigner as a subject position: my 'privileged' social identification, as an anomaly, something most limiting in the eyes of society and most tactically useful for my artistic intervention into 'female archetypes'. The Foreigner is my chosen specific, tactical 'difference', a 'difference that matters' (Ahmed 1998: 192). The term Foreigner distinguishes me from the group whilst informing my social and artistic identity. As Spivak puts it: 'People are similar not by virtue of being similar, but by virtue of producing a differential, or by virtue of thinking of themselves as other than a self-identical example of the species' (Spivak 1990: 136).

In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Sara Ahmed suggests that 'it is the processes of expelling *or* welcoming the one who is recognized as a stranger that produce the figure of the stranger in the first place' (Ahmed 2000: 4). Ahmed continues to argue that 'the encounter itself is ontologically prior to the question of ontology (the question of the being who encounters)' (Ahmed 2000: 7). My identity is formed through the others, the meeting with them, and the exchanges that take place. It is important to understand these others not as definitive 'outside' from my own being, but rather as instrumental to my own identity formations.

Being marked as foreign allows for a different kind of claiming of the culture I find myself in, and yet in my artwork my foreign perspective gets positioned as central. Spivak comments on the strategic use of presenting oneself at the centre:

In a certain sense, I think there is nothing that is central. The centre is always constituted in terms of its own marginality. However, having said that, in terms of the hegemonic historical narrative, certain people have always been asked to cathect the margins so others can be



defined as central. Negotiating between these two structures, sometimes I have to see myself as the marginal in the eyes of others. In that kind of situation the only strategic thing to do is to absolutely present oneself at the centre.

(Spivak 1990: 40-41)

Having crossed international borders many times, lived in different countries, been exposed to different interpretations of histories and cultures, I have taken this opportunity of doing a practice-based Ph.D. to carve out a space for political comment. My particular positioning, a certain self-identification as a Foreigner, is tactical and always operates within a given socio-political context, in this case, in the North West of England (Liverpool where I live and Lancaster where I study) and in Dubrovnik, Croatia (my hometown that I often visit). As a Foreigner, I like to think of myself as peeking out from the ticked box of the 'Other White European', educated, privileged position. As I assess my right to claim difference of the Foreigner, I am aware that my arts and academic context has produced this position as much as the already discussed lived experience in my locale. Within the 'arts and academic world' I accept the Foreigner label as a convenient position from which I embark upon my practice-based research. The Arts Council (North West England branch) and academia (A.H.R.C. funds my research) embrace me as a Foreigner. They might be ticking their boxes or responding to the multicultural criteria prescribed 'from above', but the fact remains that monies have been committed, to the Foreigner, to embark on her arts projects and research.

A Foreigner might be capable of staging the clash between herself and some of the categories of 'female archetypes'. My Foreigner flatly refuses to fit within the prescribed categories of 'female archetypes'. The Foreigner can choose to be a bad mother (Medea), a whore (Mary Magdalene), a bloodthirsty soldier (Joan of Arc) and

work from that Other position. Spivak warns us: ‘Only the dominant self can be problematic; the self of the Other is authentic without a problem, naturally available to all kinds of complications. This is very frightening’ (Spivak 1990: 66). Through my arts practice I am exploring the contradictions and complications within the Other, the Foreigner me. My claim to otherness is intrinsically linked to my contexts and the politics of my arts practice which is based on lived experience.

My Foreigner figuration and the artwork produced through it enable me to act within the local community. Even though at first as a Foreigner I might be considered an excluded element in my community, through my arts practice I am bringing my action into it. By involving the community in my artwork I am acting upon it and opening it up beyond its local. The interactions between the Foreigner and her local inform and transform one another. The boundaries of the Foreigner are open. The Foreigner is not an entity, and will inevitably enter into the process of her own re-figuration during the period of creating, delivering and reflecting on her arts practice. The social and the Foreigner will change through their encounters with each other. They modify and mediate each other.

## Local community

The real critic is not so much interested in distancing him or herself, as in being vigilant. To universalize the local is a very dangerous thing and no good practice comes of it.

Gayatri Spivak (McRobbie 1985: 8)

I don't much like the word community, I am not even sure I like the thing.

Jacques Derrida (1995: 355)

The immediate, experiential local feed into my arts practice. My daily life with kids, rides on a bus to school, going to toddlers' groups, walking in the park, feeding the ducks, meeting other mothers, doing yoga classes at local community centres, going shopping at Tesco, attending dance classes with kids, encountering friends and passers-by, presenting myself as an artist, speaking with a nuanced English, taking driving lessons, hanging up the washing and chatting to neighbours. All these form and mark the politicised construction of my subjectivity and, subsequently, my arts practice. My local plays an important part in the development, production and dissemination of my artwork. However, even if my local becomes an entrance point into the archetypal through my artwork I hope to enter my everyday local critically. My intention is to scrutinize the local, the lived and the familiar. I aim to disclose its hasty ideological assumptions in relation to female representations.

In the tradition of feminist discourse on the local and politics of location<sup>2</sup> Elspeth Probyn in her article 'Travels in the Postmodern: Making Sense of the Local' suggests that we do not abandon the local, but 'work more deeply in and against it' (Probyn 1990: 186). She is quick to notice that the 'local does not exist in a pure state' (Probyn 1990: 182). The investigated and trialled local loses its lure of 'truth' and 'authenticity'. In the conclusion of her article she articulates the local:

The local is only a fragmented set of possibilities that can be articulated into a momentary politics of time and place. Against the postmodernist gesture of local, feminism can render the local into something workable, somewhere to be worked upon. This is to take the local not as the end point, but as the start. This is not to idealize the local as the real, but to look at the ways in which injustices are naturalized in the name of the immediate. In conceiving of the local as a nodal point, we can begin to deconstruct its movements and its meanings. Thus, in thinking of how locale is inscribed on our bodies, in our homes and on the streets, we can begin to loosen its ideological affects.

(Probyn 1990: 187)

Taking up local as a ‘momentary politics of time and place’ addresses the here/now of the situation, the here/now of my context in which I produce my artwork. The local is seen only as a moment in time and space, and thus removed from its essence and its lure of authenticity. However, ideological presumptions that the local carries are still strong. ‘Staying vigilant’ and addressing the presumptions that are inscribed upon us in the homes/streets/communities through my arts practice becomes a way of dealing with the immediate as well as letting the others (audiences from different locals) into the discussion.

The local is closely linked with the idea of community, which can be seen as a dangerous essentialist configuration. Jacques Derrida admits his dislike of the word and ‘the thing’ of community (Derrida 1995: 355). The word community derives from *communio* (fortified on all sides) and *munis* (defence), terms which have military roots of building a common defense and keeping foreigners out (Caputo 1997: 108). Community is furthermore criticized by cultural sociologist Richard Sennett (1993), whose theories I note in connection to my project *Magdalena Makeup* in the Chapter Six, and Iris Marion Young. Young’s essay ‘The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference’ (1990) critiques the ideal of community which thrives through the metaphysics of presence, denying difference and creating exclusions. Young is sceptical about community presumptions that ‘subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves’ as well as the desire for community which in her view ‘relies on the same desire for social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism on the one hand and political sectarianism on the other’ (Young 1990: 302). She applauds the

modern urban configuration of a city, which ‘embodies difference’ (Young 1990: 318). Living in a multicultural city, like Liverpool, allows for a certain anonymity and openness, but that ‘urban living’ is often an imaginary construction which I explore through my arts practice across local and transnational spaces. I see my local community of L17, my neighbourhood of Liverpool, as only my beginning, a departure point, never a destination.

While I first developed my arts practice through and within the local, I have taken the performances ‘beyond’ the local, to the urban, national and international environment through theatre festivals and meetings. My arts projects have left their local ‘home’, places where they were first developed and are finding ‘homes’ elsewhere, just like the Foreigner me. The local in my performances gets performed and undone. The video images from the performances of my two homes of Liverpool and Dubrovnik are read elsewhere and their readings differ. Some of the festival audiences in Cuba read Liverpool through the Beatles. Dubrovnik often gets to be exotic, regardless of my aim to portray it as mundane. It would, however, be unreasonable to assume some kind of hierarchical system, where all things global are more important than those local. In *Space, Place and Gender* Doreen Massey warns us that ‘the term local is used with derogatory reference to feminist struggles and in relation to feminist concerns in intellectual work (only a local struggle, only a local concern)’ (Massey 1994: 10). Her project proposes to look at the local in terms of its connections to the global and conceptualize places as meeting points of intersection, defined not through borders but their connections to ‘beyond’. She urges us towards ‘a global sense of the local’ (Massey

1994: 156). By developing my arts projects through engagement with the local community, and at the same time modifying and presenting them beyond their immediate locations of development and production, I wish to scrutinize and yet open up my local.

Alexander and Mohanty observe that ‘grounding analysis in particular, local feminist praxis is necessary, but we also need to understand the local in relation to larger, cross-national processes’ (Alexander and Mohanty 1997: xix). In this sense the arts practice developed from the local is capable of referencing the global. During the production process, the global within the local is never forgotten. *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* acknowledges that the mothers’ clothes themselves were manufactured in different ‘global’ places around the world. The *Joan Trial* themes of war and destruction reference not only my hometown of Dubrovnik in Croatia but allude to contemporary wars that are taking place elsewhere. *Magdalena Makeup* sees the exchange of postcards between my two homes, Liverpool and Dubrovnik.

## Performing homes with ILTR

In postcolonial, diasporic and transnational feminist discourse ‘home’ becomes theorized as the everyday lived experience. Atvar Brah places ‘home’ in the local and experiential:

It is a discourse of locality, the place where feelings of rootedness ensue from the mundane and the unexpected of daily practice. Home here connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various other ‘significant others’. It signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of neighbourhood or a home town. That is, a community ‘imagined’ in most part through daily encounter. This ‘home’ is a place with which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it. It is a sense of ‘feeling at home’.

(Brah 1996: 4)

Referencing Brah, Sara Ahmed elaborates on the sensual aspects of 'home':

Home as 'where one usually lives' becomes theorised as the lived experience of locality. The immersion of a self in a locality is not simply about inhabiting an already constituted space (from which one could depart and remain the same). Rather, the locality intrudes the senses: it defines what one smells, hears, touches, remembers. The lived experience of being-at-home hence involves the enveloping of subject in a space which is not simply outside them: being at home suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other.

(Ahmed 2000: 89)

This leakage of the space and the subject in my own context of producing artwork from the local and the lived, allows me to bring my 'foreignness' into the picture and through it refigure local 'home' beyond its own locality. By living my arts practice through the local and the foreign, I re-inscribe the idea of 'home' and see my home beyond its specifically geographical places of Liverpool and Dubrovnik. The Foreigner carries with her the idea of somewhere else, of a different world, of strange language and miscalculation. In Liverpool 17 my children are told off in Croatian; in Dubrovnik city centre they mix languages between Croatian and English. We, as a transnational family unit, unsettle the restaurant punters: they are unsure whether to mark us as tourists, or ignore us as locals. The local, the authentic, if only for a moment, ceases to exist. It is invaded by difference, which provokes discontent. My artwork uses the 'dis-authenticated' local as its breeding ground.

In the article 'Crafting Feminist Genealogies: On the Geography and Politics of Home, Nation, and Community' Chandra Talpade Mohanty charts her journey of home and identity through the various labels she encountered as a South Asian immigrant in America and expatriate Indian citizen (NRI) in India and argues that the question 'how one understands and defines home – is a profoundly political one' (Mohanty 1998a: 487).

She writes: ‘the very crossing of the regional, national, cultural, and geographical borders seems to *enable* me to reflect on questions of identity, community and politics’ (Mohanty 1998a: 498). Seeing and understanding one’s identity, and connecting it to the questions of community and politics, through the crossing of various borders, is a familiar experience: it is at the ‘borders’ that we are asked to assert our identities, our status, our nationality, our ‘otherness’. Mohanty finds her home in ‘the feminism of U.S. women of color and Third World women’ (1998a: 491). While asserting that nothing happens in isolation, Mohanty states that her genealogy as described in the article is ‘partial and deliberate’, but ‘it is a genealogy that I find emotionally and politically enabling – it is part of the genealogy that underlines my self-identification as an educator involved in a pedagogy of liberation’ (1998a: 499). Mohanty chooses her own genealogy for the purposes of stating a point through the act of writing and publishing that particular article.

Inspired by Mohanty’s ‘partial and deliberate’ genealogy and Indefinite Leave to Remain stamp in my passport I would like to assert my own agency as an artist in finding my ‘home’ through arts and specifically two arts centres: Art Radionica Lazareti (Art Workshop Lazareti or ARL) in Dubrovnik and the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool. Finding home away from home is challenging. Brah asks:

When does a location *become* home? What is the difference between ‘feeling at home’ and staking claim to a place as one’s own? It is quite possible to feel at home in a place and yet, the experience of social exclusions may inhabit public proclamations of the place as home.

(Brah 1996: 193)



Social exclusions at places we call ‘home’ are various, ranging from physical violence, verbal abuse to feelings of discontent and alienation. My feelings of exclusion vary: sometimes I am happy proclaiming Liverpool as my new home, exchanging my ILTR status for British citizenship, and leaving Dubrovnik behind. Sometimes I fear betraying my ‘Dubrovnik-ness’. Sometimes, I choose to exclude myself from both ‘homes’. However, when I take on my self-identification as an artist, then I am eager to find a ‘home’ – as a place where artwork can take shape. My first explicitly autobiographical live art project *Touch Up* (2003) explored concepts of ‘home’. This was devised in collaboration with my husband Gary Anderson and took place at the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool and Art Workshop Lazareti in Dubrovnik. Gary and I coupled our hometowns Dubrovnik and Liverpool not only artistically through this live art event, but also in production: I managed the Liverpool event and Gary managed the Dubrovnik one. *Touch Up*, therefore, connected me, as an artist, to Liverpool and Gary to Dubrovnik. Part of our plan was to reduce the sense of alienation we both felt in each other’s cities.

Dubrovnik, my hometown, is the most southern Croatian city, a picturesque place, with rich (medieval and renaissance) history as an autonomous city-republic. Every summer Dubrovnik becomes a cultural centre, that hosts Croatia’s biggest mainstream theatre festival. Being geographically isolated from the rest of Croatia, Dubrovnik, a regional place, lives with the tourists and seasons. ARL in Dubrovnik was set up by Slaven Tolj in 1990.<sup>3</sup> Tolj and ARL have always chosen to emphasise Dubrovnik’s marginal position: ‘Being remote from the centre allowed for a gradual and natural growth of the initiative’ (Tolj 2001: 50). While openly rejecting the mainstream

art initiatives in Dubrovnik, ARL and Tolj have stayed committed to the regional Dubrovnik as a marginal place, for the past fifteen years.

Tolj has been developing and programming ARL with a number of symposia, events, film screenings, actions and concerts. 'Karantena' (Quarantine), a festival of alternative theatre, that takes place for ten days every year in late August/early September and gathers together former Yugoslavia and some international artists, has been a major part of ARL's programme.<sup>4</sup> Tolj is locally active, frequently interviewed in the local media and very interested in nurturing Dubrovnik audiences. For the last ten years he has fought with the local and national governments over the rights of the arts centre's building to remain for cultural and educational use, rather than to be used for commercial and leisure activities. His commitment to the ARL was evident in his own performance event during 'Karantena' 2004 where he publicly had an ARL logo tattooed onto his arm. ARL is a place of action and resistance. It might feel exclusive to certain artists but not to its audiences, who even if not coming to see an artwork, pop in to socialize. The last time I visited in April 2006 together with Gary and Srdjana Cvijetić, ARL Project Manager, we made a protest video film about Condoleezza Rice's visit to Liverpool and Dick Cheney's visit to Dubrovnik entitled *Coming to a Town Near You: Condo in Liverpool, Dick in Dubrovnik*. Next year I will be organizing a meeting of female 'diaspora artists' from ex-Yugoslavia living abroad. My link with ARL is based on friendship and commonality, rather than artistic professionalism. I have never approached the centre with a CV in my hand.

My first encounter with the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool included carrying a CV and showing it to Cathy Butterworth, who had been its Live Art Programmer since 2002. My sense of belonging to a certain artistic community around the Bluecoat has been made through attending most of their live art events, becoming a part of an ongoing discourse around live art and collaborating with the Bluecoat on two pieces: *Touch Up* and *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*. In March 2004 Butterworth organized a two-day symposium on Live Art and autobiography, where invited practitioners (Giovanna Maria Casetta, Ronald Fraser Munroe, Sharon Smith, Adrian Challis, Silke Mansholt, Roger Hill among others) shared their views and histories. This two-day meeting opened up many interesting avenues of thought around art and its practice; but most of all I realized that art is and should be a part of daily life. I lost the idea of time 'before' and 'after' work. Work and life became one.

I let go of an idea that artwork should be geared towards a product, a final production, but rather began to understand that my artwork happens in process as I develop my practice. For me the separation between art product and working processes became redundant. I started living my art at 'home', in the places I inhabited. My agency now lies in transforming that 'living and thinking' about locale into performance practice, performing the local as transnational and moving my 'personal' and the 'lived' into the political of a transnational arts practice. Even when my artwork is produced and developed within certain contexts, more specifically in and around my two homes Liverpool and Dubrovnik (for further discussion see Introduction, p. 12), I would like to

consider it to be beyond the limits of the national. In the following chapter, I will address transnational arts practices.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jung links his concept of ‘individuation’ to experience. He insists that archetypes ‘gain life and meaning only when you take into account their numinosity – i.e. their relation to the living individual’ (Jung 1964: 98). *Individuation* is an individual Self-journey through which the unconscious (with its archetypal forms) meets the conscious. Jung insists on the individual perception of archetypes. *Individuation* is defined as ‘the process by which a person becomes a psychological “in-dividual”, that is, a separate, indivisible unity or “whole”’ (Jung 1959: 275). This process of *individuation* is closely linked to *experience*. However, even though Jung takes individual experience into account and frequently in his writing refers to himself as an empiricist (Jung 2003: 117-119), I am sceptical about his ideas of reaching ‘whole’ or ‘Self’ as a final archetype. In such a view experience is read as a prescribed journey towards the Self goal: a life is being performed towards, in the name of, for that, specific, pre-determined *a priori* Self Archetype.

<sup>2</sup> The local and the politics of location have been discussed by a number of feminist theorists such as Elspeth Probyn, Doreen Massey, Audre Lorde, Caren Kaplan, Jacqui Alexander and Iris Marion Young among others. In the 1990 collection *Feminism/Postmodernism* edited by Linda Nicholson, a special chapter is entitled ‘The Politics of Location’ which includes articles by Elspeth Probyn and Iris Marion Young amongst others. In her article ‘The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice’ Caren Kaplan (1994) writes:

A politics of location is most useful, then, in a feminist context when it is used to deconstruct any dominant hierarchy or hegemonic use of the term gender. A politics of location is not useful when it is constructed to be the reflection of authentic, primordial identities that are to be reestablished and reaffirmed. We should be suspicious of any use of the term to naturalize the boundaries and margins under the guise of celebration, nostalgia, or inappropriate assumptions of intimacy. A politics of location is also problematic when it is deployed as an agent of appropriation, constructing similarity through equalizations when material histories indicate otherwise. Only when we utilize the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity’s structural inequalities can we recognize and work through complex relationships between women in different parts of the world. A transnational feminist politics of location in the best sense of these terms refers us to the model of coalition or, to borrow a term from Edward Said, to affiliation. As a practice of affiliation, a politics of location identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities between women in diverse and asymmetrical relations, creating alternative histories, identities, and possibilities for alliances.

(Kaplan 1994: 139)

<sup>3</sup> Tolj is one of the most prominent performance artists in Croatia and has often ‘represented’ Croatia at international biennials and arts exhibitions. Tolj’s performances/happenings/actions are never repeated; he sees them as ‘an accumulation of time, a sediment of the perceived sensations, emotions and experiences’ (Tolj 2001: 55). His early work *Food to survive* (1993) together with Maria Grazio Tolj was inspired and influenced by Marina Abramović and Ulay; in his later work he has dealt with the themes of war in Dubrovnik with *Desert of Freedom* (1990)

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and globalization with *Globalizacija* (2002), an event in which he drinks vodka and whiskey to the point of collapse.

<sup>4</sup> At the moment ARL is reconsidering the format of a ten-day festival and is looking at spreading its programme over the whole year rather than concentrate a lot of events in a short space of time. While I as an artist would be more interested in having a densely packed festival which would allow me to meet up and network with other artists, Tolj is more inclined to spread the festival over the year and thus create an interesting programme for audiences all year long.

## Chapter Three

### Towards A Transnational Arts Practice

This chapter addresses the fields of ‘transnationalism’ and ‘transnational feminism’ and contextualizes my own artwork amongst transnational arts practices. Transnationalism and transnational feminism have both addressed issues concerning political agency. I look at them in connection to a transnational arts practice with the aim of seeing how a transnational arts practice might further agency. In this context I understand agency, which is enacted through an arts practice, as a critical intervention into the world, its structures and relations, a certain kind of resistance, and an aspiration to social transformation. To engage with ‘transnationalism’ and ‘transnational activities’ I turn to Alejandro Portes’ differentiations of the terms ‘international’, ‘multinational’ and ‘transnational’. Portes, a social scientist concerned with globalization and the movement of people and capital, differentiates between international, multinational and transnational from the perspective of the actors involved: “‘international’ pertains to activities and programmes of nation-states, “multinational” to large-scale institutions such as corporations or religions whose activities take place in multiple countries, and “transnational” to activities initiated and sustained by non-institutional actors’ (Portes 2001: 181). However, my transnational arts activities are facilitated by various institutions (Lancaster University, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Art Workshop Lazareti, Arts Council England, ArtsLink foundation) but at the same time very much reliant on

personal encounters in the local as well as regional, national and international networking.

I prefer the term ‘transnational’ over ‘multicultural’ when discussing my own arts practice partly because of my non-citizenship status in Great Britain. In addition, the term ‘multicultural’ is favoured by ‘citizens’ who allude to their bi-culturality and bring that bi-culturality into the nation. A transnational arts practice, on the other hand, works in opposition to the national spaces in which it is produced.

I start the chapter with a section entitled ‘Part one: A transnational condition’ which engages with the academic fields of transnationalism and transnational feminism and assesses their relation to agency through arts. The work of Sara Ahmed, Caren Kaplan, Inderpal Grewal, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Elspeth Probyn and Gayatri Spivak helps contextualize my daily transnational condition and my feminist agency as an artist. Taking my cue from the feminist debates around the issues of multicultural, transnational, national, international and global, in the second part of the chapter ‘Transnational art’ I look at arts and artists. The first section ‘International artists, problems of national representation and networking’ problematizes national representation and argues for personal networking amongst artists within international groupings. The following section ‘Examples of transnational arts practice by internationally recognized artists’ offers a reading of four female practitioners: Andreja Kulunčić, Kristina Leko, Rosa Casado and Tanja Ostojić and compares their arts practices and their potential feminist transnational agency.

## Part one: A transnational condition

We define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.... An essential element... is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies.

(Basch *et al* 1994: 8)

This much quoted definition of 'transnationalism' has been formed by a group of social anthropologists, and has since figured in academic discourse. Defining a study of transnationalism as a new research field, Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt write about transnationalism as being composed and experienced everyday by the 'growing number of people who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having two homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders' (Portes *et al* 1999: 217).

Being classified, or classifying oneself as 'transnational' is often a privileged position (Phizacklea and Westwood 2000), usually found in urban cosmopolitan spaces. In the introduction to their book *The Transnational Family: New European Frontiers and Global Networks*, Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vuorela allude to the privileges of the transnational elites:

Transnational elites are perceived as 'mobile' rather than 'migrant'. As cosmopolitans – people who have entered international careers – transnational elites seem to move more by choice and be in a better position to negotiate their connections, their nationalities, and benefits associated with their choice of a national residence. The symbolic capital of education and language enable them to move freely, offering relatively easier access to border crossing and citizenship. However, the issues of connecting, mixing and networking are very much the same between the mass of international migrants and transnational elites.

(Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 8)



While my transnational position and Foreigner figuration (for further discussion see Chapter Two) do afford me certain privileges in my arts and scholarly practices, I am determined not only to accept and address them but also use my feminist agency as an artist to further investigate the themes of Otherness, migration, home and dislocation.

Anne Phizacklea and Sallie Westwood also agree that ‘the subjective mark of the transnational would be cultural hybridity or the way in which transnationals can challenge the notion of a fixed identity’ (Phizacklea & Westwood 2000: 118). My aim is to point out certain artistic challenges to the notions of fixed identity: transnational arts practices that go beyond the national, the dominant and patriarchal. The thoughts of my privileged transnational position also enable me to see the obvious contradictions of the world: some migrants are less equal than others.

The term ‘transnational feminism’ comes from Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan’s 1994 anthology *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. Their insistence on the term ‘transnational’ is clear in their emphasis on the ‘transnational linkages [that] influence every level of social existence’ (Grewal and Kaplan 1994: 14). Furthermore they elaborate on the notion of transnational feminist practice and call for ‘transnational feminist cultural studies’:

In the midst of liberal versions of feminism that celebrate ‘multiculturalism’ in order to manage diversity, we argue for the emergence of what could be called ‘transnational feminist cultural studies.’ Rather than maintaining and reproducing the divides between Marxism, poststructuralism, and feminism, transnational feminist cultural studies would bring these approaches and tensions to bear on each other.

(Grewal and Kaplan 1999: 349-350)

Transnational feminist cultural studies thus calls for a different set of linkages, not multicultural ones concerned to manage ‘diversity’ but ones that are inclusive and not afraid of the tensions between the different constituent parts.

Transnational feminism arose as a criticism of global feminism which presented itself as global by essentializing women’s experience from a white middle-class Westerners’ perspective (for further criticism of women’s experience and categories of female archetypes see Chapter One).<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to the anthology *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (1999), Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón and Mino Moallem discuss the problem of ‘global feminism’ with reference to the ideas of nation-states and their self-representations:

‘Global feminism’ makes nations look ‘natural,’ mystifying the humanism inherent to representations of world alliances among sovereign nations [Berlant 1991]. The related notion that ‘global sisterhood’ constructs an essentialized category of woman through the invention and reinvention of a globalized woman’s body, leaving the nation undisturbed. Refusing ‘global feminism’ requires questioning of dominance of the nation-state’s mythic narrativization or representation of itself.

(Alarcón 1999: 13)

My experience of living in between at least two cultures and entering and exiting different nation-state territories in my own transnational condition enables me to depart and distance myself from the immediate – ‘nation-state’s mythic narrativization of representation of itself’ - and engage in critical perspectives. As a transnational I find myself able to observe the host society and its structures: I observe that certain things get passed off as ‘natural’ and ‘global’. Transnationals are capable of introducing an element of instability into the mechanisms and structures of nation-states by comparing them to those ‘back home’ and subsequently both ‘home’ and ‘host’ states are subject to critical

scrutiny. My own interventions into the mythical nation-states manifest themselves through an arts practice which deploys such a transnational perspective.

Furthermore my personal transnational networking in and through arts allows for different kinds of linkages and border crossings.<sup>2</sup> Here I would briefly like to acknowledge some of the networks that I belong to: the Magdalena Project which allows me to travel the world on the premise of being an artist and not a tourist; ArtsLink foundation which facilitated not only my artistic residency in the USA but provided me with the opportunity of meeting like-minded artists; ‘Women’s Writing for Performance’ which (even when predominately UK-based) afforded me an opportunity to participate in a number of creative workshops led and attended by a variety of female artists and students, which also opened up an opportunity of further collaborations;<sup>3</sup> ‘Diasporic Futures: Women, the Arts and Globalization’ conference and network which aims to connect women artists in diasporic spaces everywhere and Art Workshop Lazareti which enables me to organize a meeting between female artists from the territory of ex-Yugoslavia living/working in the affluent Western countries. I will further discuss the Magdalena Project and ArtsLink in the second part of the chapter via some concrete examples of transnational networking and arts (for my criticism of the Magdalena Project’s work with archetypes see Chapter One).

Sara Ahmed calls for transnational feminism ‘that does not simply reaffirm the border-crossings that are already taking place in global capitalism’ (Ahmed 2000: 178). She writes about transnational feminist activism:

I would suggest that we need to think of feminist transnational activism as a way of *(re)encountering what is already encountered*, in the very crossing of national and regional borders. We need to ask: how can feminism be translated across national spaces in a way that works with the very gap between the writing of 'women' as global actors, and forms of action or collective activism? It is where the document fails to translate – where it fails to constitute women as subjects within and subjects of 'the globe' – that an alternative form of transnational feminist activism might become possible.

(Ahmed 2000: 178)

Ahmed argues for close encounters as a form of transnational feminist action, but close encounters that remain strange, with the open question of discovering '*what it is we may yet have in common*' (Ahmed 2000: 189). Transnational arts practice has that ability to hold contradictions, to play with the idea of discovery of Ahmed's '*what it is we may yet have in common*', to engage with strange encounters amongst artists themselves and potential audiences and at the same time allow for and enable political activism. It is through the experience of producing and encountering artwork that we can politicize our positions and engage in the world politically. While my work is situated within the field of 'live art', and I would not define my arts practice as a promotion of 'transnational feminist cultural studies' (Grewal & Kaplan 1999) or 'transnational feminist activism' (Ahmed 2000), my daily living and my agency as an artist has been influenced by these fields. It is through my agency as an artist that I connect with the issues of transnational feminism which consequently allows for critical thinking about the world, its structures and relations. As I am taking on my transnational condition politically, my arts practice becomes my action in the world.

## Part two: Transnational art

Arts networks and events exist in many forms, from ‘international biennials’ to gift economy meetings, email exchanges and accidental encounters. Through a series of examples of different arts networks I will refer to my own position as an artist with agency. While I do not classify myself as an artist of international standing (like some of the artists I discuss in the chapter) I see my artwork as capable of crossing borders differently - transnationally. My project *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* plays with the foreign use of English; *Magdalena Makeup* unveils an exotic, prostituted Other and calls for the act of sending post cards across international borders; *Joan Trial* brings a foreign yet personalized war to a new home country. Additionally I have toured and continue to tour my performances beyond the places of their development, nationally and internationally. (For more details refer to the three last chapters about my arts projects and specifically to Appendix A, performance journal of *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes*, entry in January 2005). My aim is to avoid and to criticize the position of artist as cultural ambassador, where an artist is deployed to expand the borders of her nation-state through culture and arts. I am more interested to mark and celebrate transnational arts practices and networks which speak beyond the limits of nationalism. (For a further contextualization of my own position as a ‘foreign’ live art practitioner within the British Live Art Scene see Chapter Four.)

## International artists, problems of national representation and networking

The question of 'speaking *as*' involves a distancing from oneself. The moment I have to think of the ways in which I will speak as an Indian, or as a feminist, the ways in which I will speak as a woman, what I am doing is trying to generalise myself, make myself a representative, trying to distance myself from some kind of inchoate speaking *as such*. There are many subject positions which one must inhabit; one is not just one thing. That is when a political consciousness comes in. So that in fact, for the person who does the 'speaking as' something, it is a problem of distancing from one's self, whatever that self might be.

(Spivak 1990: 60)

International art events often require the presence of 'national' artists. Asking whether an artist can represent one's country is a complex issue. The problems of becoming a representative of a nation at international art events are specific according to the circumstances of each event. However, understanding one's context, position and responsibilities within the system in which one, as an artist, becomes employed and agrees to be employed, are crucial. Artwork does not exist in a pure state, but is always part of the context which produces it. Harris writes:

The political effect of any given work is not a matter of authorship or form, or of individual readers, or of interpretative communities, or institutional, social or material location, theories or practices, but of the specific dynamic existing between these diverse elements at a particular moment in time.

(Harris 1999: 172)

Artists are always already inscribed in the system, in the world, in the nation that they come to represent. Their participation at any given event needs to become a question of Spivak's 'political consciousness', a responsibility to act in the world, and an understanding of particular conditions and circumstances they agree to enter into.

At international biennials artists are asked to represent their nation-states and through their participation lend support to the international art world and its operating structures. That kind of position can have disconcerting consequences not least of all for the artists themselves.<sup>4</sup> Since the artists always remain implicated in the arts events it is to their advantage to take an interest in the production and dissemination of the artwork as well as create meetings and networks, which can become instances of political feminist agency.<sup>5</sup> After all, it is through the making of personal connections and networking that artists can continue to support each others' artworks and learn about each other's cultures, histories and contexts 'differently' than provided for by a globalized, capitalist market.

Julia Varley, one of the key figures in the Magdalena Project and a long standing actress and pedagogue with Odin Theatre, often talks about touring as a way of going to see her artist friends and not the countries they come from on the other side of the world ('Transit IV: Roots in Transit' International Women's Festival and Meeting, Odin Theatre, Denmark, January 2004). Lois Weaver talks about Split Britches' visit to the queer community in Taiwan, not Taiwan itself ('Women's Writing for Performance' symposium, Lancaster University, April 2006). Invitations to festivals and meetings usually happen through personal connections.

The Magdalena Project, an international network of women in contemporary theatre, is a good example of a long standing network that provides artists with such collaborating possibilities. Through the Magdalena Project I met a number of individuals

who either needed my support or supported my work. For example, in July 2005 in Aberystwyth at ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ forum, I met a Turkish feminist scholar Guzin Yamaner. Yamaner will be organizing a feminist festival in Istanbul. She came to the forum in order to meet some potential international guests, who, she believes, would make the Turkish national feminist scene more visible in her own country: the national media and popular opinion are ready to recognize the importance of its own national feminist scene if accepted on an international basis. I visited Santa Clara in Cuba in January 2005 to attend the Magdalena event ‘Magdalena Sin Fronteras’ due to my email exchanges with Roxana Piñeda, the organizer. Rosa Casado, a Spanish cultural activist and an active member of the Magdalena Project, has asked me to write a few lines about her performance *Paradise 2: the incessant sound of a falling tree*, first presented at ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ forum. Casado needed a few international reviews/reflections to submit to the Spanish Arts Council in order to receive the funding for her next project. Casado writes about the Magdalena Project:

This network is the place where I’ve been ‘listened’ to for the first time. I collaborate in the newsletter, I try to be part of the meetings organized in different places, I keep contact and work with different Magdalena women... It feels like home, a known place.

(email correspondence with the artist, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2006)

The opportunities and ethical clearance to travel to another part of the world are often provided by networks like the Magdalena Project, which justify artists’ travel on grounds other than touristic.<sup>6</sup>



ArtsLink,<sup>7</sup> a New York based foundation dedicated to linking Central/Eastern European artists and arts managers with their US colleagues, is also relevant in this discussion. ArtsLink organized and funded my artist's residency at Ohio State University in the autumn of 2003. In the beginning I was suspicious of the idea of deliberately and systematically, perhaps instrumentally mixing U.S. and Central/Eastern European representatives of the art world, artists and administrators for its clear 'globalizing' potential due to the involvement of the countries of unequal economical influence and power. However, ArtsLink has, in addition to facilitating my meetings with U.S. based arts organizations, institutes and artists, created an opportunity for me to meet numerous other Central/Eastern European based artists and arts managers. Coming out of the ArtsLink residency, I am left with my own personal experiences and further networking possibilities.<sup>8</sup> It is the personal networking possibilities that work better than the official ones.

Branka Cvjetičanin<sup>9</sup> and Mirsad Sijarić are two artists that I met through ArtsLink during my 2003 artist's residency. While Mirsad lives and works in Sarajevo, Branka has lived in New York for a number of years and at the moment lives in Berlin. Mirsad is a Bosnian poet. His poems are about some of his banal experiences during the war in Bosnia. With the experience of being recruited as a soldier, he gives a striking poetic account of being a young person placed in the middle of a war. Branka is from Zagreb, a trained economist and dancer, who had a career in arts management, and finally, set up her own foundation [www.polygon.hr](http://www.polygon.hr) to pursue her own arts projects and collaborate with others. At the moment she is working on a project entitled *War Fields*, which would re-

enact the famous fifteenth century battle, which took place in Krbavo Polje, Croatia between the Turks and the Christian Croat population. Thematically all three of us are preoccupied with the big theme of war, which links us abroad and yet divides us in our own home countries by our own different war experiences. Branka spent most of the war years in Zagreb which saw very little bombing, I was often in Dubrovnik shelters and Mirsad on the field. At home 'war stories' are often read as tragic testimonies which one is allowed to tell or not tell depending on one's personal loss, while abroad 'war stories' are allowed to roam freely out of the realm of personal tragedy. Once translated into English and heard on a stage of a New York café, Mirsad's poems, removed from the home experiences that created them, managed to be much more intimate.<sup>10</sup> Mirsad's short transnational poetry transference in a New York café opened up a political space, a discussion and an encounter for a newly created artistic community and accidental audiences.

### Examples of transnational arts practice by internationally recognized artists

In the last section of this chapter I would like to compare and contrast four international female artists in relation to their arts practice and its potential feminist transnational agency. By addressing transnational qualities in their artwork I am asking whether their position as artists in the globalized world today is adequately investigated and whether that position is also linked to feminist agency towards social transformation. The four artists are Andreja Kulunčić (Croatia), Kristina Leko (Croatia), Tanja Ostojić (Serbia/Germany) and Rosa Casado (Spain). Kulunčić and Leko are two Croatian female

artists most frequently featured at international art events. In this sense they have become Croatian international artists. They both come from a visual arts background. Casado is an activist, creator and performer. She is an active member of the Magdalena Project. Ostojić is a cultural activist and artist who uses her own body as a political tool. She currently lives in Berlin, Germany.

For the Liverpool Biennial 2004, Kulunčić presented *Teenage Pregnancy*, a project which also included displaying a series of posters of teenage pregnant girls at bus stops around town. On her website Kulunčić explains:

Proposal: nine different posters put up around the city resembling commercial posters (young persons presented as cheerful, self-confident, dressed in the latest fashions) by their visual message. The posters need to look 'actual' (appealing, well-designed, as for any commercial product) in order to catch the attention of the viewer, and only a more detailed reading of the poster reveals the different, socially engaged message of the campaign.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the girls featured in these staged anti-adverts were from Huyton, Liverpool, infamous for the UK's highest percentage of teenage pregnancies. While the intention of this socially engaging art project might be laudable, there are some difficulties with it too. Kulunčić made similar work in Croatia in 2000 using advertising boards to highlight redundancies that lots of female workers faced from 'NaMa', once a socialist state-run department store then facing privatisation. Posters of shop assistants were installed around central Zagreb with the caption NAMA – '1908 employees, 15 department stores'. Using advertising methods, Kulunčić pinpointed the economic problem of soon to be redundant female workers and made the 'advertising female objects' seem more real. However, even if I am sympathetic towards Kulunčić's work with 'NaMa' female

workers, I feel that using a similar formula to transfer her successful artistic project from Croatia to the UK within the context of an international biennial is ridden with ethical complications and smacks of superficiality. The Huyton teenagers become used as ‘something local’ that can give her, in her role as international artist, credibility in the city in which the biennial is happening. What right does Kulunčić have to speak on behalf of the pregnant teenagers, or even lend them a voice within the context of an international art event? How can Kulunčić, in her role as an international artist, appropriate Liverpool with its social problems, like teenage pregnancies? Does not the fact that Huyton, as an area of Liverpool, with the highest percentage of teenage pregnancies in Britain (and Britain having the highest percentage of teenage pregnancies in Europe) become a convenient opportunity for producing an arts practice? On account of this I might be tempted to label her work as ‘international art’ rather than ‘transnational arts practice’.

Kristina Leko also uses different communities and participatory audiences in her socially engaged projects to highlight different contemporary issues. She refers to her artistic genre as ‘social realism’ (Leko 2004: 59). Her interdisciplinary project [www.sirivrhnje.org](http://www.sirivrhnje.org) (*cheese and cream*) in 2002/03 featured Zagreb Milkmaids and small-scale farmers from Croatia and Hungary. The project challenged the economic and social implications of Croatia joining the EU and losing its dairy industry. The project involved interviews with Zagreb Milkmaids, a gathering of Croatian and Hungarian milk producers, round table discussions, a gallery exhibition in The Institute for Contemporary Art in Dunajvaros, Hungary, and finally, an exhibition of the research process at the PM

Gallery in Zagreb. Politicians and the media appropriated the project for their own agendas, but the artist herself believes that the discussion around the dairy industry belongs to everyone. Leko is primarily concerned with the social and ethical implications of an arts practice.<sup>12</sup> Her latest project *Amerika* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in May-June, 2005 involves an emigrant Croatian community of elderly women in New York who bring into the institutionalized gallery space their personal objects, stories and their live presence. Leko, in the role of an artist-ethnographer, co-authors the exhibition with emigrate women, and projects their 'private stories' publicly.<sup>13</sup> Leko's work connects with different communities (Zagreb milkmaids, Hungarian dairy farmers, emigrant Croatian community of elderly women in New York) in an engaging and personal way. She works across different communities that traverse the national, even if its main protagonists might have strong 'nationalistic' feelings, which is often the case with Croatians in diaspora and small-scale farmers. While Leko herself takes making friends and friendship as 'the ultimate criterion of evaluating an artwork' (Leko 2004: 30), the affect of her work goes beyond the relational politics of the artist and the participants: it is rather that the personal relationship between the artist and the participants functions as a starting point when confronted with Leko's arts practice.

Rosa Casado is a Spanish cultural activist, living in a small village called Peroblasco near Madrid. Peroblasco was abandoned in the sixties, but its rebuilding started in the eighties which prompted some of the old inhabitants to return. The village counts fifteen inhabitants and is in a quite isolated zone. Casado notes: 'this context makes me very conscious about being part of and living in society' (email

correspondence with the artist, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2006). Casado equates the role of a producer with artistic activity:

For me to organise, curate, produce is the same of create – create chances, possibilities... any of the events I have organized are for me pieces of work, as my performances; for me, any of the work I do consists in creating common spaces to do something whatever it is in any occasion. I consider myself as a citizen that participates in the construction, transformation, of the world; this is what I consider *political*. With my work I make myself questions about parts/things/facts/perceptions of the world that makes me enter contradiction, paradox, difficulty to rationalise, assimilate... I consider extremely important that one's reflection has to transcend to the collectivity.

(email correspondence with the artist, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2006)

Her latest performance *Paradise 2: the incessant sound of a falling tree* is a highly politicized solo performance reflecting on tourism and migration in which Casado describes her holiday trip from Spain to Mali, and Mr. Boye's migratory trip from Senegal to Spain. Casado uses performance art as a critical opportunity to engage reflexively as an artist and a Spanish/EU citizen in relation to the migrating world. Towards the end of the performance Casado sets herself a task of eating a chocolate-made model paradise island and its numerous trees. Casado consumes the island very slowly and with great concentration, eating it bit by bit whilst at the same time looking at all the audience members. It is through the sensual experience of eating chocolate and art that we, as audience members, get to ponder the absurdities of our planet, the deep injustices at its core that get passed off as 'natural' and 'normal'. Casado's performance makes the world's injustices more obvious: some people are less equal than others. *Paradise 2: the incessant sound of a falling tree* positions Casado's political commitment and her contribution to collective, incremental social and environmental change. Casado's wish in *Paradise 2* is to 'transform the spectators into witnesses of a part of the

world' (email correspondence with the artist, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2006). Her arts practice is of the world, implicated within it.

By living abroad and directly addressing the transitory immigration issues through their arts practice, cultural activists and artists like Tanja Ostojić have managed to add to the current debates around fluid identities. Tanja Ostojić (Serbia/Germany) is my accidental 'Google' connection. Ostojić's work is sensational, unapologetic and highly political. Ostojić is concerned with examining social configurations and relations of power and does so from her perspective of a migrant woman from Eastern Europe to the affluent West. Ostojić worked on a series entitled *Crossing borders* (2000-2005) which included *Illegal border crossing* (adopting strategies of trespassing border crossing into the Schengen countries),<sup>14</sup> *Waiting for a Visa* (a queuing action in front of the Austrian consulate in Belgrade with hundreds of other people) and *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport* (an interactive internet action where Ostojić posted a striking nude photo of herself and invited EU citizens to reply). Ostojić eventually, after exchanging hundreds of emails, married German artist Klemens Golf, who secured her an entry to the EU. She currently lives in Berlin. She writes: 'In order to take my own rights that I have been restricted from by current EU laws, I explicitly applied the strategy of violation of law to gain the right to move freely and live and work where I wanted' (email correspondence with the artist, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006). While living in her new homeland she developed the *Integration Project*, which included an intensive course in German, installing herself in her office and trying to get in touch with people and arts institutions in the region and beyond. Ostojić sent out letters/requests for collaborations

to different arts institutions, art curators, artists, journalists and writers. As a part of the *Integration Project* she organized *Divorce Party* (2005, gallerie35, Berlin). Her latest performance *Integration Impossible*, commissioned by the Prologue (live): New Feminism/New Europe event, which took place in the greenroom in Manchester in October 2005 summarizes her experiences of living in Germany as a woman-immigrant. Ostojić continues to intervene into the EU politics of exclusion and allies her own personal migrating story to the stories of other migrants:

Migrants are constantly abstracted by the media and laws and treated often as one alienated group. I showed my self in that position, my individual story as well as collecting later on the individual stories of others that I met, so the audience gets a chance to understand the variety and deepness and to identify with me, with them, with us.

(email correspondence with the artist, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006)<sup>15</sup>

Ostojić blurs the barrier between her life and art. Using herself and her body as a highly politicized instrument she not only physically crosses geo-political borders between countries, but also provokes audiences into active participation and discussion around the themes of immigration.

Casado, Leko and Ostojić, all in their capacities as international artists, challenge the notions of states and borders. Dealing with issues of immigration and mobility, they put themselves on the line be it through their own body (Ostojić), intimate relationships with others (Leko) or by the sensual remapping of the world and its power relations, revelation of the most obvious and yet the most forgotten injustices (Casado). Their arts practices, even if presented within the parameters of the art world (international theatre festivals and renowned galleries), bring in their socially engaging processes into the



‘clean’ art spaces. Their transnational arts practices are their agency, resistance to the power structures and hope for change.

What I want to further address in the following chapter is *my own context*: the British Live Art scene and its immigrant transnational artists, ‘foreigners’ within. This grouping of ‘foreign’ artists is interesting because on the one hand its members are clearly labelled by nation-state and its arts funding systems whilst on the other hand they are in a position to appreciate and critically engage in their own ‘foreign’ conditions. Being thus situated the foreign transnational artists can turn their difference into a critical asset.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Since its inception, ‘transnational feminism’ has also been criticized. For example, in ‘Ethical Ambiguities and Spectres of Colonialism: Futures of Transnational Feminism’ (2001) R. Khanna points out that often well intentioned ethical responses become ‘non responses’:

Transnational feminism has allowed us to perceive the centrality of different relations to rules. This perception has initiated a fracturing. Difference has been reified to such an extent that separate ethical universes have been produced, with the overarching imperative being that one does not comment on another context. An ethical response, then, often amounts to a nonresponse. Chandra Mohanty has called on us to understand the complex relationality between women transnationally; all too often this recognition results in paralyzing feelings of guilt by those who structurally and economically benefit from the impoverishment of others, rather than the respectful coalition that many feminists from Spivak to Mohanty, Lugones, and Spelman have called for. Given this situation, an ethical response that results in inactivity and the reification of difference is ambiguous and, more often than not, politically inefficacious. From fear of an overarching ethnocentric universalism of the claim of justice, a new concern arises for feminism at the end of the century. How does one respond to another, and how does one address conflict with an end in sight that allows for transnational feminist action and scholarship?

(Khanna 2001: 102)

I believe that some of the answers could be found in the examples of feminist transnational arts practices.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to acknowledge a draft of Elaine Aston’s article ‘Women’s Writing for Performance Project’ (publication pending) which helped me think through the issues of transnational networking in connection to this chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> One of the outcomes of A.H.R.C. funded 'Women's Writing for Performance' research project and particularly workshops provided has been a workshop network called 'Floor Factory', formed and initiated by some of the participants (Kerstin Bueschges, Clare Duffy, Louie Jenkins, Abi Lake, Emily Underwood and myself) in order to support each others' practices. The network's aims and objectives are in the making. For more information visit <<http://factoryfloornetwork.blogspot.com>>. The first three meetings took place on 21-23 July 2006 in Lancaster, 17-19 November 2006 in Chichester and 30 March – 2 April 2007 in Glamorgan. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in Liverpool in June 2007.

<sup>4</sup> In his master's thesis 'The Influence of the Nation-State on Art - The Case of the Former Yugoslavian Countries' <<http://www.spikyart.org/nationstate/nationstateintroduction.htm>> Shinya Watanabe draws attention to the negative effects nationalism and nation-states confer on artists. Watanabe compares Marina Abramović's performance installation of *Balkan Baroque* at the 47<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 1997 and Sanja Iveković's video installation *Miss Croatia and Miss Brazil Read Žižek and Chomsky* at the Sao Paolo Biennale in 2002. Abramović and Iveković were scheduled to participate as representatives of their nation-states Serbia & Montenegro and Croatia at the renowned Venice and San Paolo Biennials respectively. Both artists encountered problems and their artworks were threatened with withdrawal from the events.

In the case of Abramović, after her initial inclusion by the national selection team, Goran Rakočević, the Montenegrin Minister of Culture, protested since he felt that Abramović, as an émigré living in Western Europe, could not represent Montenegro appropriately. Through national newspapers Rakočević insisted against Montenegro being represented as 'a cultural margin' and 'a homeland colony for megalomaniac performances' (*Podgorica*, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1997). In his opinion, Montenegro would be better represented by painters currently living in the country. After Abramović had withdrawn from being an official national representative of Serbia & Montenegro, Vojo Stanić, a landscape painter, and obviously, according to officials, a more fitting representative of the nation, was announced as her replacement. Abramović did however participate in the Biennial since Germano Celant, the chief curator intervened and invited her as a part of his central exhibition in the Italian pavilion. Abramović was in the end, as a famous, canonized figure in performance art, protected.

Sanja Iveković's situation turned out differently. Her video installation *Miss Croatia and Miss Brazil Read Žižek and Chomsky* was dropped from the Sao Paolo Biennale in 2002. Sanja Iveković was initially selected by the curator Leonida Kovač to represent Croatia. However once the state selectors learnt about the critical content of Iveković's proposed project, a video installation which aimed to problematize national representation through beauty contests and international art biennials, Iveković was dropped from representing Croatia. The chief curator of the Sao Paolo Biennial Alfons Hug did not intervene on Iveković's behalf.

<sup>5</sup> I would also like to note that Julia Varley at one point invited the participants of 'Magdalena Sin Fronteras' festival in Santa Clara, Cuba to write down on a piece of paper their personal ambition and the possible first steps towards its realization. I was surprised to find that my ambitions tended towards organization and production. One of my minor ambitions has been to organize a meeting between artists from the territories of ex-Yugoslavia who are currently living in affluent Western countries. Pending funding from the Croatian Ministry of Culture, that project, preliminary named 'Art Diaspora Live' will take place in Art Workshop Lazareti in Dubrovnik in 2008.

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<sup>6</sup> I would like to note that while internet and email lists have provided us, the privileged transnationals and citizens of the 'First World', with numerous opportunities of networking and travel, there is a direct link between our privileges and those who provide them ('Third World' labour). Refer to Donna Haraway's 'Manifesto for Cyborgs' (1991: 149-181).

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the foundation refer to <<http://www.cecartslink.org/cecip.html>>.

<sup>8</sup> I am at the moment applying to tour my performance *Joan Trial* in California and Louisiana (states where I was based during the outbreak of the Yugoslav war) in the spring/summer 2008 through the ArtsLink funding grant *Independent Projects*. Arden2, an arts organization in Costa Mesa, California are interested in hosting my performance and developing further collaboration. Alicia Tycer, a Ph.D. student from the University of California, Irvine who was visiting Lancaster University for the 2005/2006 academic year autumn semester brought this to my attention.

<sup>9</sup> Branka Cvjetičanin will be one of the participants in my 'Art Diaspora Live' project in Dubrovnik. Other preliminary participants include Margareta Kern, whom I met at *Necessary Journeys* symposium at Tate Modern in November 2005 (I discuss her work in Chapter Four), Žana Janjić, whom I had known from Dubrovnik, but had met in New York during my ArtsLink residency, Tanja Ostojić, whose work I discuss further in this chapter, Karolina Spaić, whom I met during 'Transit IV: Roots in Transit' festival in Odin Theatre, Denmark in January 2004 and Visnja Majewski whom I met at 'Diasporic Futures: Women, the Arts and Globalization' conference at V&A museum in London in July 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Mirsad Sijarić read his poems at Bowery Poetry Club in New York on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2003. Here's one of them:

TO IMAGINE (translated by Ammiel Alcalay)

WE HAVE ALL BEEN STRUCK BY THE DEATH  
OF THE POLICEMAN FROM OUR BUILDING  
MEN WERE SMOKING IN A CIRCLE  
MAMA WAS WHISPERING TO THE NEIGHBOR  
HOLDING MY ONLY DOLL IN HER ARMS  
THE POLICEMAN'S DOG WAS SNIFFING AT A TIN OF SARDINES  
AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN  
WAS TALKING TO HIMSELF  
ABOUT HOW THE RUSSIANS AND THE AMERICANS WERE COMING  
HOW THERE WAS NO MORE BERLIN  
HOW NO ONE WOULD BE SAVED  
I GET UP  
TURNING AROUND MYSELF  
IMAGINING I AM EARTH

<sup>11</sup> See <<http://www.andreja.org/>> under Teenage Pregnancy, About the Project, Poster [accessed 17 May 2007].

<sup>12</sup> For further reference see Leko, K. (2004/05) 'On Milk, People and Art', *Frakcija: Performing Arts Magazine* 33/34, 48-6.

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion about the exhibition see Fowkes, M. and Fowkes, R. (2004) 'Glocal Practices in Contemporary Croatian Art' *Praesens: Central European Contemporary Art Review* 4, <<http://www.translocal.org/writings/glocalpractices.htm>> [accessed 17 May 2007].

<sup>14</sup> In June 1985, seven EU countries signed a treaty to end internal border checkpoints and controls. Since then eight more joined and implemented the treaty. These are the current implementing Schengen Agreement members: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. The borders of the Schengen Agreement area are consequently heavily fortified.

<sup>15</sup> See Ostojić's video film *Sans Papiers - illegalized people* (with David Rych 2004), a portrayal and interviews of illegalized people in Berlin – Koepenick, one of the major deportation jails in Germany and *Naked life* (2005), a video-performance, based on the information from the Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Centre Concerning Germany for Consideration by the United Nations Human Rights Committee at its 80th Session, March 16, 2003 - April 3, 2004 <<http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2135>> [accessed 17 May 2007]. For more information about these projects visit <<http://www.parakanal.com/rych/sanspapiers/>> and <<http://www.kultur.at/howl/tanja/set01/roma.htm>> [accessed 17 May 2007].

## Chapter Four

### Foreigners Under the Umbrella of British Live Art

The contemporary British arts scene prides itself on the inclusion of ‘foreigners’: fifty percent of artists (twenty five out of fifty) represented in the British Art Show 6,<sup>1</sup> currently touring Newcastle, Manchester, Nottingham and Bristol were born outside Britain, yet all the fifty artists live and work in Britain. This new breed of ‘British foreign artist’ who might or might not have British citizenship, frequently obtained through marriage, but also through political exile, open up questions of cultural difference and ‘Otherness’ transnationally as opposed to multiculturally. As I have already pointed out in Chapter Three the reason that I feel more comfortable with the term ‘transnational’ rather than ‘multicultural’ when used in discussing my own arts practice is because of my non-citizenship status in the country I live in.

This chapter addresses the context for my arts production, primarily the British Live Art scene and looks at other ‘foreigners’ within it. Coming to the British Live Art scene in the first decade of the twenty-first century I have experienced it as a highly diverse field both culturally and in artforms. If asked to name ten live art practitioners off the top of my head my list would include a number of artists who are either ‘foreign’, born elsewhere than the UK or ‘culturally diverse’ for example: Franko B (Italy), Oreet Ashery (Israel), Kira O’Reilly (Ireland), Silke Mansholt (Germany), Kazuko Hohki (Japan), Stacy Makishi (Hawaii), Joshua Sofaer (Jewish), Robin Deacon (Black British),

Jiva Parthipan (Sri Lanka), Marisa Carnesky (Jewish), Juliet Ellis (Black British), Qasim Riza Shaheen (British Asian)... I would also remember Bobby Baker and Grace Surman. However, most of these live art practitioners are 'different'. In Live Art UK<sup>2</sup> vision paper Keidan writes:

For many women, gay, culturally diverse and disabled artists, marginalised within the dominant culture, Live Art has proved to be a potent site, where the disenfranchised and disembodied become visible, where the politics of difference are contested, where complexity is confronted and different ways of being in the world are illuminated.

(Keidan 2004: 3)

Could it be that the 'marginalised' artists are turning towards Live Art, as a field where their differences are seen, heard and accepted? Has Live Art made 'difference' its calling card, and should the different artists embrace Live Art for it?

I start the chapter by outlining Lois Keidan's definition of 'Live Art' as a cultural strategy for the inclusion of diverse arts practices (in 'Live Art as a cultural strategy') and presenting my argument for taking on Live Art as a useful term for my own arts practice (in 'Live Art as a cultural tactic'). I am alluding once again to the distinction between tactics and strategies as outlined by de Certeau, previously discussed in the Introduction, p. 9. Secondly I look at recent Arts Council England policies on cultural diversity ('Cultural diversity and commodification of difference') and juxtapose them with some of the arguments on the theme of 'Otherness' and 'multiculturalism' as presented by the feminist theorists Sara Ahmed and Trinh Minh-ha. The following part of the chapter ('Curatorial projects and five foreign female artists') notes three recent curatorial projects that address issues of cultural difference: *You Are Here*, a specially commissioned

programme of Live Art for the Liverpool Biennial 2002, as developed by the Bluecoat Arts Centre in collaboration with the Live Art Development Agency, Artsadmin 2005 calendar *Performing Difference* and *Necessary Journeys* (2005) project, developed out of the ‘decibel legacy’, which is the recent ACE policy on ‘cultural diversity’. Within those I highlight its five foreign female participants Oreet Ashery, Kazuko Hohki, Stacy Makishi, Silke Mansholt and Margareta Kern, all of whom have been in one way or another influential in my own arts practice during the period of my Ph.D. studies.<sup>3</sup> I furthermore discuss these artists’ themes, approaches and artworks in connection to Trinh Minh-ha’s idea of the re-creation of ‘Otherness’ into ‘critical difference’ (‘Encountering critical difference’). Finally, the concluding part of the chapter (‘Foreign discomfort’) opens up further questions around categorization. The aim of this chapter is to offer a contextualization of my arts practice within the framework of other foreign female artists in the UK.

### Live Art as a cultural strategy

The term ‘Live Art’ dates back to the mid-eighties when it was used in festivals like the annual ‘National Review of Live Art’, which ran from 1981 under the name of ‘Performance Art Platform’ and ‘The Four Days’, first renamed into ‘National Review of Live Art’ in 1986 in Glasgow, or in Arts Council publications such as *Live Art Now* (1987). However, Lois Keidan refigured the term as a cultural strategy during her post as a Performance Art Officer (1990-1992) in the Visual Arts Department in the then Arts Council of Great Britain in London. Keidan’s paper ‘National Arts and Media Strategy: Discussion Document on Live Art’ (1991) acknowledged the prevailing Eurocentricity of

performance art and introduced Live Art as a strategy for the inclusion of both diverse artforms and artists. Keidan based her paper on the recommendations from ‘Cultural Grounding; Live Art and Cultural Diversity: Action Research Project. A Report to the Visual Arts Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain’ by Michael McMillan (January 1990). This report, in the words of Sandy Naire, Director of Visual Arts of the Arts Council of Great Britain, ‘had commenced with a rather cruder question: Why are there so few black performance artists? [and] was commissioned to discover how the Arts Council might widen it’s [*sic*] view of Performance or Live Art, recognize the importance of interdisciplinary work and give a place to innovatory Black performance work’ (McMillan 1990: 3). Keidan’s aim, in her role as a Performance Art Officer, was to reinvent Live Art, as a cultural strategy, and commit to the policies of inclusion both across artforms and cultures. Live Art in the UK might have once seemed a white elitist artform for a privileged few,<sup>4</sup> and while there is still a certain exclusivity to live art as an artform in terms of its accessibility to all, there are certainly more ‘culturally diverse’ live art practitioners.

While Keidan is in no doubt that different live art practices exist across the world she emphasises that it is in the UK that Live Art functions as a cultural strategy with funding provision, which affords diverse artists a space for experimentation.<sup>5</sup> In the UK the term ‘Live Art’ has thus since the nineties presented itself as a cultural strategy and not an artform. Lois Keidan and Daniel Brine of the Live Art Development Agency (L.A.D.A.)<sup>6</sup> offer this definition of Live Art:



In the UK the term 'live art' is understood not so much as a description of a singular practice or discipline, but a cultural strategy to include a catalogue of processes and practices that might otherwise be excluded from more established curatorial, cultural and critical discourses: a strategy – or approach – that acknowledges ways of working that do not easily sit within received structures and strictures, and that privileges artists who choose to operate across, in between, and at the edges of more conventional artistic forms.

(Keidan and Brine 2005: 74)

L.A.D.A. website ([www.thisisliveart.co.uk](http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk)), which also functions as a study resource and reference centre for live art also promotes Live Art as a strategy:

Live Art should not be understood as a description of an artform but as a strategy to 'include' a diversity of practices and artists that might otherwise find themselves 'excluded' from all kinds of policy and provision and all kinds of curatorial contexts and critical debates.

Live Art is thus offered to artists as a niche through which their different arts practices might become included, categorized and contextualized. The 'excluded' are welcomed into the term. Whether it is challenging arts practices (outside the prescribed context of exhibiting or performance spaces) or culturally diverse artists (gay, disabled, Black, Asian...) that get 'included', Live Art, as a cultural strategy, becomes for many 'different artists' an entrance point into the world of art and cultural activism.

Finally, it is important to place the work of L.A.D.A. in context with other cultural institutions in the country. L.A.D.A. is a fixed term client of Arts Council England, and in relation to the Arts Council's overall control of the national funding for the arts and culture of the country, L.A.D.A.'s cultural strategies might look like tactics. The same could be said when compared to institutions like the Tate Modern, the National Theatre or academic A.H.R.C. funded research projects, like PARIP.<sup>7</sup> However, once

compared to individual artists' practices, L.A.D.A.'s position inevitably becomes dominant, since many individual artists rely on its resources and look to it for support.

### Live Art as a cultural tactic

I first came across the term Live Art when looking through the Bluecoat 2002 autumn season brochure. The Bluecoat was searching for new artists to join their existent 'Live Art Bluecoat' programme.<sup>8</sup> 'Live Art' was explained as time-based art that also included, amongst other artforms, performance. I rang them up, introduced myself as a theatre director and asked whether they would be interested in me doing a project with them. Cathy Butterworth, the live art programmer at the time, was. My 'choice' of becoming a 'Live Art Practitioner' was accidental, but my decision to work within and through Live Art has been tactical.

Even when I first encountered Live Art as something quintessentially British<sup>9</sup> as well as given to me 'from above', as a top-down strategy, through the Bluecoat and ACE, I happily categorize myself as a Live Artist because of its relatively liberating possibilities. Live Art allowed for ambiguity and created discourse, and yet never imposed its dominance over me: knowing nothing about it I had no respect for the term or its many artforms. The term liberated me from my traditional theatre presumptions. I was no longer constrained by an idea of the role of theatre director as I had been previously in Slovakia and Croatia. Not having to stage a 'play', like I was used to in the theatre, meant I could start playing with loose variations of themes from a 'play' (*Medea*,

for example) and tackle the issues that affected my daily ‘foreign’ life more directly. It is within such a loose hierarchical structure of Live Art that I felt capable of intervention into female archetypes and their ideologies. Live Art also helped me enter the arts funding system and employment as an artist.<sup>10</sup> Tactically I could call myself a ‘live art practitioner’ and ‘pass’ as one. Such a name, unlike ‘theatre director’ or ‘actress’ which I have also been, offered agency. I became a ‘live art practitioner’ and the producer of my own work. I started labelling my arts practice ‘live art’. Live Art thus became my cultural tactic.

The current ‘one size fits all’ simplified ‘Grants for the Arts’ ACE funding application form cuts across artforms, individuals and organizations, so individual artists seeking advice when applying for the grant rely on different arts officers, who vary from region to region. My consultation meetings for the funding application were facilitated by Jill Godfrey, the Assistant Officer, Combined Arts and Dance in the ACE Manchester Office.<sup>11</sup> It was through my first ACE funding application, as an individual artist, supported by the Bluecoat Arts Centre and the ‘Live Art Bluecoat’ programme, that I decided to tick the box ‘combined arts’ and label it as number one. I also ticked ‘drama and theatre’ and ‘visual arts’ as second and third. This made me into a live art practitioner. There is no ‘live art’ box on the form and ‘combined arts’ box seemed to be the most accurate in describing *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes*, the project I was applying for. After all, as an artist I needed to decide where I fitted (or did not fit): in order to make work, I needed to ‘belong’ somewhere. ACE current funding policies as outlined in their February 2003 manifesto ‘Ambitions for the Arts’, which promote ‘cultural diversity’

and prioritise ‘individual artists’, helped secure my three consecutively successful funding applications, but my position of ‘cultural difference’ is just one of many.

### Cultural diversity and commodification of difference

The British art scene thrives on the presence of ‘Otherness’. ‘Otherness’ in arts has been tackled on many levels: through institutional policies on cultural diversity by prioritising funding for ‘culturally diverse’ artists, curatorial projects and thematically by artists themselves.

ACE places ‘cultural diversity’ as one of its top priorities for 2003-06. In its manifesto document entitled ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ that was released in February 2003 after ‘a period of radical reform’ in the summer of 2002, with an appointment of a new Council, ‘culturally diverse arts’ are ‘at the very least promised to make more funding available to them’ (ACE 2003: 4). ACE defines ‘cultural diversity’:

The term ‘cultural diversity’ can be interpreted in many different ways. We will take a broad and inclusive interpretation, as meaning the full range and diversity of the culture of this country. In some cases our focus will be on race and ethnic background and in others on disability, for example.

(ACE 2003: 4)

Cultural diversity (with the focus on race and ethnic background) has been on the Arts Council’s agenda for three decades: from the 1976 seminal report *The Arts Britain Ignores* by Naseem Khan and the term ‘ethnic minorities’ arts’ through conferences between Arts Council England and the British Council ‘Re-inventing Britain’ (1997) and

‘Connecting Flights: New Cultures of the Diaspora’ (2002) which introduced ‘cultural studies’ discussions to art administrators, policy makers and artists to the most recent ACE publication *Navigating Difference: Cultural Diversity and Audience Development* (2006) which gathers articles from forty arts managers, policy makers, practicing artists, academics, audience members and commentators, all of whom dwell on cultural diversity and cultural identity in the arts.

ACE will soon replace the term ‘cultural diversity’ with ‘diversity’. In the epilogue of *Navigating Difference*, Tony Panayiotou, Director Diversity, ACE, writes:

Arts Council England is working on a paradigm shift to allow it to explore, discuss and respond to diversity in its broadest sense – and it will no longer use the term ‘cultural diversity’. ... This strategic and philosophical re-alignment would see Arts Council England doing more arts-related work on issues such as age, class, faith, gender and sexuality; working with refugees and asylum seekers; and responding to issues around community development such as urban regeneration, anti-poverty initiatives and the whole rural agenda.

(Maitland 2006: 208-209)

I see the dropping of ‘cultural diversity’ as a term from the ACE vocabulary as a positive step. Initiatives like ‘decibel’ (short-term: March 2003 to May 2004) and ‘decibel legacy’ (long term: scheduled to run until 2008), helped profile ‘culturally diverse arts and artists’ and introduced them to the mainstream,<sup>12</sup> but by being grouped together the artists were constrained to deal mostly with identity politics. Samenua Seshier, director of decibel, argued against the view of ‘cultural diversity’ as box ticking:

The Arts Council’s done a lot to prioritise cultural diversity – it’s an ongoing priority for us, not a box to be ticked. With decibel we have a budget and a moment in time, to not only get people talking about the issues, but to identify gaps and address some key needs of the sector.

(Khan 2003: 15)

However, while ACE policies on the inclusion of ‘culturally diverse artists’ look appealing on paper ‘real artists’ with ‘real culturally diverse’ backgrounds might feel sensitive about being bracketed within it. Additionally the term ‘culturally diverse artists’ has often become interchangeable with Black and Asian British artists, partly due to the ACE initiatives like ‘decibel’ that concentrated specifically on the promotion of African, Caribbean and Asian artists in England and thus joined them together. A ‘culturally diverse’ artist would thus need to develop a sense of irony about her own position within the system or tactically ignore that positionality and thus avoid working with the themes of identity politics.

As long as there have been strategies in place for cultural diversity there has been cultural commodification of difference. Cultural and feminist theorists have addressed this issue while artists themselves have looked to ways of subverting this commodification through employment of their very own cultural tactics. While some artists like Guillermo Gómez-Peña have worked and written extensively on the theme (see *Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism and Pedagogy* (2005), *Ethno-Techno: Los Video Graffitis* DVD (2004) and [www.pochanostra.com](http://www.pochanostra.com)), feminist theorists like Sara Ahmed have argued against provisional acceptance of difference into the standard by its requirement to be different and thus ‘allow the nation to imagine *itself* as heterogeneous (to claim their difference as “our difference”)’ (Ahmed 2000: 96). ACE’s newest publication *Navigating Difference* (2006) that addresses cultural diversity includes articles (Ghiraldi, Williams) which promote a shifting of the agendas of top-down models of policy-making by taking into consideration examples of cultural

diversities as found in local communities. However, like any institution, ACE, on the whole, just by being what it is, the organization responsible for the implementation of cultural strategies at a national level, is very unlikely to hand over its executive powers to the artists and arts organizations themselves, ACE's subjects. On the other hand, artists and arts organizations themselves, need to understand that ACE, or any other institution, is not the 'be all and end all' of their arts practices. Cultural diversity is consequently not given top-down as a strategy, but rather emerges through 'us' and 'we' emerge through it. Ahmed suggests that '[t]hinking about multiculturalism must begin, therefore, with an undertaking that the coherence of the "we" of the nation is always imaginary and that, given this, such a "we" does not abolish cultural difference, but emerges through it' (Ahmed 2000: 101). The 'we' of the nation need not to be defined by the Arts Council strategies on cultural diversity but cut across the binaries of citizens and non-citizens, immigrants and locals, strangers and friends, black and white, gay and straight, disabled and abled, and as Trinh Minh-ha (1988 and 1991b) suggests include the Other within every I. The production of my I contains the Other. I am produced by the Other. In this sense a nation emerges through the Others and artists can help refigure that always imaginary, possibly even violent 'we' of the nation.<sup>13</sup>

### Curatorial projects and five female foreign artists

The five female foreign artists I discuss here were all born outside Britain and came to live and work in Britain. These are Oreet Ashery, Kazuko Hohki, Margareta Kern, Stacy Makishi and Silke Mansholt.<sup>14</sup> All five have been promoted by curatorial projects themed

around ‘cultural diversity’ and ‘difference’, which gives them ‘artistic credibility’ at a national (and in some cases international) level.

First of all, I would briefly like to acknowledge three curatorial projects which address issues of cultural difference and in which the five female artists have been featured. These are *You Are Here*, a specially commissioned programme of Live Art for the Liverpool Biennial 2002, as developed by the Bluecoat Arts Centre in collaboration with the Live Art Development Agency, Artsadmin 2005 calendar *Performing Difference* and *Necessary Journeys* (2005) project, developed out of the ‘decibel legacy’, the recent ACE policy on ‘cultural diversity’.

The *You Are Here* Live Art Programme for the Liverpool Biennial 2002, during 18-21 September, developed by the Bluecoat Arts Centre in collaboration with the Live Art Development Agency, ‘looks at the complexities of contemporary identities and asks whether Internationalism is a geographical or a cultural concept’ (from *You Are Here* programme notes).<sup>15</sup> *You Are Here* was conceived as a dialogue between the selected works and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s *Ex-Centris* project in the Biennial’s International Exhibition. Four days saw ‘British based, “international” artists working with live and time based practices contemplate, contest and critique ideas of cultural difference, displacement and hybridity’ (from *You Are Here* programme notes). Considering questions of where ‘here’ is right now, eleven artists including Oreet Ashery, George Chakravarthi, Suki Chan and Dinu Li, Stacy Makishi, Silke Mansholt, Kira O’Reilly, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Qasim Riza Shaheen and Mad for Real: Cai Yuan and JJ Xi, all



offered their interpretations of difference.<sup>16</sup> Overall, *You Are Here* was a high profile international art event which, through its strong selection of artists, managed to convey the contradictions and complexities of contemporary foreign identities and exchange them with their receptive audiences in ‘regional’ Liverpool.

In 2004 Artsadmin published a 2005 calendar entitled *Performing Difference*, in which fourteen ‘different’ artists were promoted and written about by Rohini Malik Okon. These artists are Jananne Al-Ani, Leo Asemota, Oreet Ashery, Zarina Bhimji, Ansuman Biswas, Sonia Boyce, Marisa Carnesky, Robin Deacon, Kazuko Hohki, Maria Kheirkhah, Mem Morrison, Peter Reder, Zineb Sedira and Delroi Williams.<sup>17</sup> The publication is primarily intended as a reference point, or as Manick Govinda, Artsadmin’s Artists Advisor, states ‘a primer, a taster for readers to find out more about the artists’ (Okon 2004: 4). Once again, this is an example of an arts establishment (in this case Artsadmin)<sup>18</sup> documenting and preserving ‘difference’.

ACE funded the *Necessary Journeys*<sup>19</sup> symposium and book launch at the Tate Modern in November 2005, which was developed out of the ‘decibel legacy’, provided ten ‘culturally diverse’ artists with seven travel bursaries (Dinu Li, Trevor Woolery, Margareta Kern, Fernando Arias, Oreet Ashery, Ralph Hoyte, Jiva Parthipan) and three residencies (Jackie Kay, Keith Piper, susan pui san lok).<sup>20</sup> *Necessary Journeys* developed over a substantial period of time, including travelling and residencies, as well as various geographies from Patagonia to Japan. It encompassed many different artforms, outcomes, talks and presentations. The project’s final culmination - the artists and organizers’

exchanges with audiences - took place at the Tate Modern, and thus established its position of a centrally and properly funded project.

Referencing these three curatorial projects allows me to make a note of its five female foreign participants: Stacy Makishi, Silke Mansholt, Kazuko Hohki, Oreet Ashery and Margareta Kern and position them in relation to the British Live Art scene. What I want to emphasize however, is not the way these artists have been made to fit into the curatorial and cultural strategies but how these artists' contribution to the Live Art scene can be considered a form of cultural activism.

### Encountering critical difference

What all of my five chosen artists have and start from is their 'critical difference' and multilayered understanding of culture and identity. Trinh Minh-ha writes: 'Otherness becomes empowering critical difference when it is not given, but re-created' (Trinh 1991b: 71). While 'otherness' is inevitably given to them as a 'label' and commodified not only by contemporary society which serves multiculturalism as a product, but also by different curatorial projects and art strategies, these artists work their often superficially exoticized 'Otherness' into 'critical difference'. Creative 'critical difference' allows the possibility of a reflexive space for and with others, it moves us to think beyond the spatial limits of the nation-state and to think through issues differently, through arts practice.

Stacy Makishi uses arts practice to encounter her neighbours. In 1999 she developed the interdisciplinary project *On the Street Where You Live* in collaboration with her neighbours. Being from Hawaii, Makishi loves flowers and during British winters when there are no flowers in her garden, she plants plastic ones. She strikes up conversations with her neighbours through these plastic flowers. She talks about loneliness. Her neighbours talk back to her and sing for her. She records their voices and hears their stories. She is not confrontational about her difference; she is joyous and celebratory.

The centre of Silke Mansholt's artwork has for the last seven years been dealing with Germany and her past. Her three solo performances *Homage to the Heart* (2001), *Orphan* (2003) or *Die Gehängte* (2004) all examine her 'Germanness'. Mansholt sees them as the journey of liberating herself from old baggage but also as a celebration of the beauty of German culture (email correspondence with the artist, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006). Mansholt understands her artwork as an attempt to explore and heal the problematic relationship between the English and the German. Commenting on her arrival to England, she writes:

Coming to England has been very good for me. I had a clear from-the-distance-look at my roots and all that hanging on to them. The general dislike the English have for the Germans opened my eyes for the stuff that needs to be healed. I like being foreign. I like to be slightly removed from the rest. In a way it is the privileged position of the observer, isn't it? This place fuels my creativity.

(email correspondence with the artist, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006)

Embracing England as a place of creativity through her position as a foreign artist allows Mansholt the space for critical thinking through her art. Funded by ACE Mansholt is currently writing a book 'Instructions for a foreign performer'. Her aim is to examine 'in

a humorous but serious way how to best create and perform “foreign” work in order to be un/successful’ (email correspondence with the artist, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006).

Kazuko Hohki’s trilogy *Toothless* (1999), *Shining Princess* (2000) and *My Husband is a Spaceman* (2001) is also based on the theme of ‘foreignness’ and explores the experiences of a Japanese woman who moves to England. Hohki herself came to England in 1978. In *Shining Princess* (Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool, 1999) Hohki presents herself as from the Moon and longs for home. Her hair is half shaven in a punk hairstyle. She wears a yellow dress and plastic shoes. In *My Husband is a Spaceman* Hohki talks about England in amazement. She talks about houses with more than two rooms, massive aubergines and long Hoovers. She shows us garden gnomes and beautiful china in Kent while juxtaposing that imagery by leaning out of the window, staring at us, looking depressed in a flat on a council estate. Hohki presents this incredible world in a charming and relaxed way, through her homemade narrations, animations and songs. Everything in England turned out to be so strange. Even her husband is a spaceman. Hohki’s artwork makes us reconsider the things we take for granted, observing the familiar world around us through the eyes of a foreigner.

Through artistic and curatorial practice Margareta Kern has commented on issues of immigration and her own bi-culturality, and especially so in the exhibition she curated *Leave to Remain* (2003, ACAVA, London) which explores the issues of displacement. Her own installation *Standard Class Opinions* (part of *Leave to Remain*) gathers views of random train passengers on the standard class carriages and their views on asylum seekers coming to Britain. Kern travelled on trains across the UK to gather the material

for this installation: the passengers' answers and their portrait photos were assembled in an installation. She writes:

In 2003, I curated & organised a show called 'Leave to Remain'. ... through this project I 'worked through' the questions of my position/status here in the UK as a 'foreigner', 'refugee', 'migrant'. And one of my works from that project, titled 'Standard Class opinions' is very relevant as it deals with exactly those notions of stranger, foreigner, local, 'one of us' and the slippage between those roles.

(email correspondence with the artist, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2005)

Slippages between foreigners and locals might be contained within the artist's I, as the I gets produced by the Other. The I becomes the threshold of the Other.

Ashery's work on Otherness has been created through her alter ego: the orthodox Jewish man Marcus Fisher (Mar-Cus translated in Hebrew reads Mr Cunt). Marcus is based on her close friend in Israel who became an extreme orthodox Jew. Having fallen out with that friend, Ashery has tried to understand him through an arts practice. She also invited the audiences to confront him. Marcus Fisher starts his life in a series of black and white self-portraits.<sup>21</sup> Later, he goes out of his room and interacts with the world. Ashery exposes him to the public. On *Marcus Fisher's Wake* DVD (2000) his life is narrated by a female American voice. He sits in a Soho café; he smokes. He is looked at. He lays in the park, just next to a group of people who are picking up rubbish around them. He helps, but feels he is part of that rubbish as well. He smokes in an all-male Turkish café in Berlin. He dances with the men in Israel. He goes to the sea in Tel Aviv and throws into it all his vices: his cigarettes. The action is inspired by a Jewish custom to go to the water once a year and throw all your sins into it. Marcus is looking for a way of belonging. *Say Cheese* (2001/02) are Marcus Fisher's one on one meetings. You are

invited in, Marcus Fisher is on the bed; you sit and talk, or be quiet, or stage a pillow fight. You take a photograph of you and him, a strange fe/male in a Jewish costume. You record the Other. You talk to the Other. You are intimate with the Other. The Other and you are together.

Makishi's encounters with neighbours, Kern's interactions with passengers on trains, Hohki's charmed and singing audiences, Ashery's intimate meetings on a bed, Mansholt's therapeutic sessions, all affect their participants 'differently', through artworks, and thus appeal to reflexive consideration of their given 'Otherness' as an empowering critical difference. The audiences and artists might in the process both be affectively Othered and/or intellectually challenged. Either way they are invited into another world, into a possibility. (I will elaborate on being Othered in Chapter Six on my *Magdalena Makeup* project.)

## Foreign discomfort

*As I am working across definitions, I am labelling myself.*

*I am called different names: artist, mother, scholar, researcher, live art practitioner, foreigner, feminist, actress, critic, director, performer, visual artist, academic...*

*I want to make these terms work for me. I (ab)use them according to the specific contexts I find myself in. I am not precious about my name, but about my action, my politics. It is about action, not being. It is work/practice/action and my responsibility towards it that defines me.*

Labelling oneself a foreigner in arts can tactically be useful, though might also be restricting. I have managed to maintain a healthily sceptical relationship with labels.

Having lived in different countries as well as worked across artforms, I have learnt to be able to adapt, take on and leave different labels behind. During the period of my email correspondence with the artists, I addressed the question of labels. Silke Mansholt, like myself, seemed relaxed but pragmatic about labels:

I call myself whatever is appropriate or effective at the moment when asked. I have labelled myself everything. In fact I am pretty much everything: artist, performer, performance artist, live artist, visual artist, visual and performing artist, dancer (only in dancing circles), filmmaker, director, choreographer, composer (I do compose), photographer, director of photography, writer and healer.

(email correspondence with the artist, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006)

Ashery, who feels her Jewish roots through ethnicity rather than religion, stated that as an artist she ‘fits into the cultural diversity bracket’, but also believes that ‘not being black or Asian, one is not always included’ (email correspondence with the artist, 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 2005). Kern, however, expressed discomfort at being labelled a ‘Foreigner’:

I actually feel uncomfortable to be described as ‘Foreigner’. Maybe in the first 5 or 6 years of being in the UK I felt very much a foreigner but now, after nearly 13 years of living here, that label seems to almost drag me back a few years to the time of arrival. I can be in your section on ‘Foreigners in Britain’ but so long as my position of discomfort is stated clearly that would be fine.

(email correspondence with the artist, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2005)

She feels that ‘foreigner’ is not the position from which she wishes to speak, but a position ‘one needs to always question and renegotiate’. She wrote about the complexity of negotiating one’s identity and a wish to remain fluid and reflexive. While not wanting to run away from her predicament as a migrant to this country, she did not want this geographical and political situation to determine who she was either. Kern’s emails made me concerned about homogenizing ‘Foreigners in Britain’ in my writing and creating a

new category - a box to tick. By 'Foreigners in Britain' I refer to artists who have not been born in the UK, but might have British citizenship (obtained through marriage or political status), and thus are different from 'culturally diverse' British artists.

It is always problematic to assess one's position and field through which one can 'speak' about one's work, and often the very assertion of one's position dies the moment it takes a stand. One's position is often read as the end product of someone's work rather than the beginning. However I hope that in this case, the creating of categories is in a sense perceived as a necessary evil or a tool one takes up in certain circumstances with a mind to interrogate them and eventually contribute to their undoing. I chose to contextualize my arts practice, which is discussed in the following chapters, amongst the foreigners in British Live Art. However, that is not all my practice is, nor is it all I, as an artist, am. And surely all the artists discussed in the chapter and their arts practices are not only 'foreign', but also many other things. I chose to mark them and myself by this 'foreign discomfort' in order to allude to our presence, to make us more visible, a part of current ongoing discussions within the field of British Live Art.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The British Art Show is organized by 'Hayward Gallery Touring' every five years as one of the largest surveys of recent British art developments.

<sup>2</sup> Live Art UK <<http://www.liveartuk.org/>> is the national network of live art promoters that has operated on an informal basis since 1998; it is 'a consortium of venues, promoters and facilitators who collectively represent a range of practices and are concerned with all aspects of the development and promotion of the Live Art sector' <<http://www.liveartuk.org/about.html>>; they meet up four times a year.

<sup>3</sup> I have followed Silke Mansholt's performances through her engagement with the Bluecoat, where she developed and/or performed *Homage to the Heart* (2002), *Orphan* (2003) and *Die*



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*Gehängte* (2004). I met Stacy Makishi and Kazuko Hohki through 'Women's Writing for Performance' workshops in Lancaster (2003-06). Makishi attended 'Performing Words 2' and Hohki Vayu Naidu's workshop. In addition to witnessing their work in progress through the workshops, I saw Hohki's work live in the Nuffield Theatre in Lancaster and on DVDs in L.A.D.A. I saw Makishi's work on VHS tapes also at L.A.D.A. and most recently during the 'Performing Rights PSi 12' conference at Queen Mary University of London in June 2006. I met Margareta Kern and Oreet Ashery during the *Necessary Journeys* symposium at Tate Modern in November 2005, where I also witnessed their work. Additionally I have known about Ashery's work through the Bluecoat, the internet, the 'Performing Rights PSi 12' and 'Diasporic Futures: Women Arts and Globalization' (2006) conferences. With Oreet Ashery, Margareta Kern and Silke Mansholt, I exchanged email correspondence around the themes of labelling oneself in art, identity, citizenship and 'being foreign'.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the McMillan report, which explicitly deals with the whiteness of performance art in the UK, it might be interesting to note that Jeni Walwin's essay 'Performance Art in Britain 1985-1987' in *Live Art Now* (1987) draws only two examples of culturally diverse performance art, and those are Nigel Rolfe's *The Rope* (dealing with Irish/English divide) and Mona Hatoum's videos and performances, which are not named.

<sup>5</sup> From a personal conversation on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2006 at Live Art Development Agency in London.

<sup>6</sup> Live Art Development Agency <<http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk>> was set up in 1999 by Lois Keidan and Catherine Ugwu in order to promote Live Art practices and discourses. Its three areas of activities are professional development schemes, projects and initiatives, and resources. L.A.D.A. is the major funding body and agency for Live Art in the UK. It is a fixed term client of Arts Council England.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) refer to <<http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/>>.

<sup>8</sup> In 2002, the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool received a grant of £40 000 from the Regional Arts Lottery Programme (RALP), facilitated through North West Arts Board (now renamed Arts Council England, Manchester Office) to develop 'Live Art Bluecoat', a two year programme of live art in Liverpool and the North West. Live Art Bluecoat was launched by *You Are Here*, a specially commissioned programme of live art for Liverpool Biennial 2002, followed by 'Open Platform' a regional showcase of new Live Art, and further opportunities for local artists to participate in the programme, either through residencies or commissions.

<sup>9</sup> RoseLee Goldberg notes that Live Art is a term used in Britain and 'more directly descriptive' than performance art (Goldberg 1998: 12).

<sup>10</sup> After a couple of years of unsuccessful attempts at various mainstream theatre jobs, apprentices and professional training schemes, I resolved to try the more progressive route of creating arts projects myself, writing plays and answering calls for proposals, like the one in the Bluecoat brochure. My final farewell to classical theatre happened at the RSC at the Barbican where, after getting short-listed to the last four out of two hundred applicants, I attended the second round of interviews for the post of an assistant dramaturg. During the informal interview I was asked whether I had any obligations that would prevent my travel in the job, children or

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likewise – I stumbled and admitted having a six-month-old baby (Neal, my son, who was waiting for me together with my husband Gary in the foyer of the Barbican, was only four months old then and I felt so terrible for lying). The astounded interviewer Simon Reade, currently Artistic Director of the New Vic Theatre in Bristol and a father of four, simply said: ‘Oh.’ I never went for another theatre interview. It was pointless. I needed to find a scheme which would work better for me. The children and everyday life had to become part of my arts practice in every sense. It is also worth noting that Reade recently wrote a response to Mark Ravenhill’s provocative article ‘I didn’t get into the theatre for the work-life balance. Art takes time, so forget about family’ (*The Guardian*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2006). While Ravenhill seems adamant to live an artist’s life with bursts of uncontrollable creative energy that knows not time nor childcare, Reade fights back with ‘A work-life balance for artists is achievable’ (*The Guardian*, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2006). I found this article ironic given my own experience with Reade. Both, Reade and Ravenhill, however, argue within the strict parameters of capitalist logic which needs to divide work and life as well as from their own limited privileged positions inside the mainstream theatre world, without referencing any other possibility of artistic work or questioning their own positions.

<sup>11</sup> Jill Godfrey, Assistant Officer, Combined Arts and Dance was always extremely helpful in the period of preparing my funding applications; she attended most of my performances, gave constructive feedback and followed up on my developing processes as an artist in meetings and emails, post performances. Charles Rowley is the Combined Arts Officer and Pam Johnson is the Dance Officer. I never met Charley Rowley, but have had email contact with him with regard to my performances. Whilst ACE London Office has its Live Art Officer Paula Brown, ACE North West Office in Manchester has no such post.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Decibel’ encompassed a number of showcases with the aim of raising the profile of African, Caribbean and Asian artists in England. A couple of decibel performing arts showcases in association with x.trax took place in Manchester in 2003 and 2005, at which a number of ‘culturally diverse artists’ were featured and subsequently booked for touring. ACE 2004 publication *Decibel: A North West Profile* summons the representative ‘culturally diverse’ artists and organisations in the region.

<sup>13</sup> For further discussion about the problems of using ‘we’ in feminist contexts see Elaine Aston and Gerry Harris’s ‘Feminist Futures and the Possibilities of “We”?’ (Aston and Harris 2006b: 1-16).

<sup>14</sup> Oreet Ashery is an interdisciplinary artist from Israel/UK, currently living in London. For more information see <<http://www.7actsoflove.com>>.

Kazuko Hohki is a performance artist and singer from Japan, who came to Britain in 1978. For more information see <<http://www.kazukohohki.com>>.

Margareta Kern is a visual artist, originally from Banja Luka, Bosnia, currently living and working in London. She left Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. While she was formerly trained as a nurse, in London she got an art degree from Goldsmiths. For more information see <<http://www.margaretakern.com>>.

Stacy Makishi is a London based performance artist from Hawaii. She lives in Hackney, East London. For more information see <<http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performance-in-profile-2006-stacy-makishi.htm>> and <<http://www.sexmutant.com/makishi.htm>>.

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Silke Mansholt is a German performer, resident in Brighton, who studied graphic design, fine art, performance and dance in Germany and the UK. For more information see <<http://www.silkemansholt.com>>.

<sup>15</sup> All quotes from *You Are Here* (2002) programme notes, available electronically at <[http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/projects/past\\_projects/you\\_are\\_here\\_full.html](http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/projects/past_projects/you_are_here_full.html)>.

I would also like to note that I missed most of *You Are Here* by being elsewhere due to the arrival of my second son Gabriel.

<sup>16</sup> For *You Are Here* (2002) Ashery presented *Say Cheese*, a series of one on one meetings with audiences in a hotel room. For the occasion Ashery took on the role of her alter ego, the orthodox Jewish man Marcus Fisher:

*Say Cheese* attempts to de-territorialize geographical, gendered and religious zones. Fuelled by touristic desire to be photographed with the 'native' or the 'celebrity' and influenced by reality TV shows like Big Brother, *Say Cheese* explores the relationship between private and public and speculates on the nature of intimacy. One at a time, the audience is invited to enter and share an intimate moment on the bed with Marcus.

(from *You Are Here* programme notes)

Stacy Makishi performed *You are here...but where am I?*:

*You are here...but where am I?* is a new work created in response to the mythologies of a Liverpool, both foreign and familiar. Armed with a symbolic suitcase, Makishi will perform a series of playful and poignant actions in charged sites of departure and arrival around the city centre. Part ritual and part intervention, this is a piece about partings and our painful and magnetic yearnings for the exotic isle of 'elsewhere'.

As I am a transplant from Hawaii, my work is often told from the point of view of the foreigner. The foreigner confronts us with a projection of our own strangeness, our own foreignness. In all of my work there appears to be a tension between here and elsewhere, longing and belonging, desire and repulsion: the body constantly craving what is foreign, all the while homesick for what is familiar. For as long as I can remember, I have been dreaming of exotic places like Liverpool's Penny Lane from my tiny room in Kahuna Lane. I packed my suitcase and left home in 1993, but I find myself floundering between two shores. On one shore, I long for home. On the other, I long for more...more ocean... for motion.

(from *You Are Here* programme notes)

Silke Mansholt performed *Homage to the Heart*:

*Homage to the Heart* is an uncompromising exploration of identity and nationality with specific reference to German culture. Through a series of expressionistic movements to iconic music (Wagner, Bach, Schonberg, and Mansholt's own compositions) the work delves into ideas of duality and re-examines the nature of performance itself. Echoing Pina Bausch and Joseph Beuys, this unsettling, moving and amusing work is a process of self realisation by an artist exploring her roots from the distance of 'elsewhere'. Reminiscent of a strange ritual, the performance maps Mansholt's search for an 'authentic self' within the collective guilt and grief of German history.

(from *You Are Here* programme notes)

<sup>17</sup> Ashery is represented with a couple of photographs from her Marcus Fisher interventions: a video still of Marcus Fisher in an all-male Turkish café in Berlin (2000) and an image from *Say Cheese* of participants and Marcus at 'home' in London (2001).

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Hohki is represented with three images from her video animation for the song 'Chic Chic Shibuya' from her performance *My Husband is a Spaceman* (2001).

<sup>18</sup> For more information about Artsadmin and its initiatives see <<http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/>>.

<sup>19</sup> For more information see <[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/project\\_detail.php?rid=7&id=311](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/project_detail.php?rid=7&id=311)>.

<sup>20</sup> Margareta Kern's recent project commissioned by the *Necessary Journeys* travel bursary, took her back home to Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina where she spent four weeks observing and filming activities taking place in her mother's tailoring shop, run from her one bedroom flat (Kern in Daly 2005: 34-37). Women and girls of all ages gather in her mothers' tailoring shop to discuss dress making, drink coffee and gossip. Kern's work develops from her own position of being a stranger in familiar places and an observer of her own culture. Reflecting on her journey to Banja Luka, she talks about going 'home' for the first time on the premises of being an artist, and not a daughter, or a friend.

Ashery's latest video film, screened at the *Necessary Journeys* symposium at Tate Modern in London in November 2005, documents her crossing the border between Palestine and Israel with her British (and not Israeli) passport to meet a Palestinian artist. An encounter with a Palestinian artist, whom Ashery met via the internet, becomes a medium through which she explores the complexity of a political situation. Ashery's journey to Israel and Palestine is a re-assessment of her personal as political approach to artwork. The film draws on her father's family history of indigenous Palestinian Jews as well as Palestinians' Right to Return to their homeland (Ashery in Daly 2005: 44).

<sup>21</sup> For more information on Marcus Fisher see <<http://www.7actsoflove.org/archive/background.html>>.

## Introduction to My Arts Practice

### My Performance Making Tactics

The practical component of my submission consists of three arts projects *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial*; appendices A, B and C (*Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial* respectively) and finally, the last three chapters of my written thesis which are positioned as reflexive accounts of my arts projects with the aim of tackling specific themes within my thesis. Appendices contain supporting material for my arts projects: extracts from my performance journal (for *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* and *Magdalena Makeup*), a performance text (for *Joan Trial*), publicity material and documentation DVDs. My submission would not be complete without the inclusion of this supporting material. It is here that my research processes as an artist working from my local, daily, lived and experiential are made more explicit.

Throughout my arts practice I have had this set of research questions present:

**What new knowledge emerges when the construct of the 'universal' female archetype is re-imagined on stage through its contact with the personal, the autobiographical?**

- How are archetypal images of women – specifically the mother (Medea), the whore (Mary Magdalene) and the virgin-saint (Joan of Arc) – re-figured in performance through their juxtaposition with the experiential, with lived realities?
- How do 'female archetypes' inform the lived realities and vice versa?

**How can a female solo performer address epic figures like Medea, Mary Magdalene and Joan of Arc from her local, everyday reality?**

- How can a performer use the daily, the local, the experiential?
- How can my 'difference' ('Foreigner', Croatian, living in the UK) be used artistically and to my political advantage?

- What performance registers and working methodologies allow for a feminist subversion of grand epic ‘female archetypes’?

**Where can the political agency of my arts projects lie?**

- How can the production, delivery and reception of my artwork address my ‘being-in-the-world’?
- How can my identity be produced for the purposes of political agency through my arts practice?

My performances, my working processes of the production and development of my arts practice, my political agency in my daily life as an artist-scholar and my written thesis all form the answers to the research questions. Each of my three arts projects is positioned differently in my research. *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* opens up my research questions, *Magdalena Makeup* figures as an experimental piece and work-in-progress and *Joan Trial* is my final examined piece. All three are self-contained artworks that stand within a specific arts context (Bluecoat Arts Centre, Art Workshop Lazareti or Nuffield Theatre), address different themes (motherhood, foreignness, home, name dis/identification, religion and war) and use different performance registers (*Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* figures as a live art event/installation, *Magdalena Makeup* is both a community and a one-to-one live art event and *Joan Trial* is probably the most conventionally theatrical of the three). However, when considered within the context of this research project and the research questions posed, they become interrelated, not only through the figures of the female archetypes Medea, Mary Magdalene and Joan of Arc, but also through my developing methodology, my performance making tactics, which is an important part of my Ph.D. research and figures as one of my key findings.

I will go on to introduce the three most important elements of my arts practice which feed into my developing methodology, my so-called performance making tactics: my classical training with its relation to archetypes, my use of the homemade and lastly

my being solo, all of which enable me to work through the issues raised in the research questions.

Between the two drama academies, the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Bratislava and the London Academy of Performing Arts, which collectively constituted five years of theatre schooling, I studied classical and modern Western canonical theatre plays, I found out about European and North American theatre history, I learnt to act, direct and adapt plays for the stage. My training in directing, dramaturgy and acting was predominantly practice-based and influenced by Stanislavski's acting methods, Chekhov and Shakespeare. I am indebted to my drama school training for performing skills and for teaching me how to apply dramaturgy in my artwork. What my classical training in theatre directing left me with was a list of ten plays that I could call on at will to suggest to potential theatre venues interested in having me as their guest director. Such potential planning proved useful. I surrounded myself with 'grand figures' like Medea and Phaedra. Having my ten-play list next to my daily shopping list opened up a new way of combining art and life. I realized that myths and epic figures do not have to be suspended somewhere 'above our heads' waiting to be embodied through our performances. Grand female figures, so called female archetypes, came into my Liverpool locale: the post drama school reality of everyday living, being pregnant, having small children, feeling foreign, making friends, going shopping, working on occasional arts projects and generally trying to make ends meet.

As my arts practice is a part of my daily living, some aspects of my artwork have homemade aesthetics. Most of my collaborators are friends and family. Their contribution is either in kind (my husband Gary Anderson, my Dubrovnik family, Liverpool mothers who participated in *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*) or provided by the ACE funding (Sonja Stahor and Ben Cain worked as web/graphic designers, Tina Gverović and Ana Piplica worked as costume designers, Dale Rathbone worked as set designer, yoga teacher and baby-sitter, Ross Dalziel taught me how to edit and provided audio-visual support for all three projects). Most of the audio-visual footage in my performances is either filmed by my husband Gary Anderson or myself. My children are very often featured in the footage. Filmed in a home-movie style, the video material is 'shaky' and unprofessional, privately produced by the family, but intended for public use.<sup>1</sup> Once confronted with the public, the 'familial intimacy' of home-movies is intended to be disclosed and acknowledged as performed. Another one of my tactics for working on archetypes is through the application of different homemade 'archetypal costumes'. Medea's dress was made from scratch by my two artist friends Tina Gverović and Ana Piplica in Konavle, the most southern part of Croatia, where my grandmother's family come from. Mary Magdalene's costume was sourced from charity shops in Liverpool and friends and family in Dubrovnik. Joan of Arc's were borrowed from a family friend in Dubrovnik (soldier's uniform) and sourced locally from an alternative shopping centre in Liverpool.

I have found *being solo* a most useful way of producing my arts practice. While Gary has had the most input into my projects, especially as a cameraman and a voiceover



narrator/performer, he, just like all the other collaborators, acted upon my instructions and I made the final audio-visual edit. However, my rationale for *being solo* grew out of my concern to develop an apparatus for individual accountability. It is through *being solo* that I became both an author and a producer of my artwork.<sup>2</sup> I exchanged the acting and directing for performing and ‘presenting’. I started calling myself an artist and/or live art practitioner while at the same time I performed various functions (producer, manager, lighting designer, web designer, marketing person, director, performer) and learnt to make quick effective decisions across all fields.<sup>3</sup> Being responsible for my own funding and applying to different funding bodies provided me with an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the implications of the arts funding system within broader economic and social contexts. (For discussion of this point refer to Chapter Four.)

The following ‘practice chapters’ carry a different writing style than the first four. I have utilized a stronger personal voice and a freer structure. This has been designed to complement the writing style of my performance journals and my performance making tactics. As self-reflexive accounts of the three arts projects, the following ‘practice chapters’ are inevitably, and in my view appropriately, bound to the time and place of the arts projects’ development and production. I have placed the chapters in chronological order to reflect the maturation of my research project towards feminist activism and questions of agency as an artist. Each chapter tackles different themes that are related to the overall development of the thesis and specifically its first, more theoretically informed, part. Therefore, in Chapter Five on *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* I offer a critique of contemporary perceptions of motherhood as well as of foreigners. Chapter Six on

*Magdalena Makeup* investigates the themes of name (dis)identification, home and dislocation. Chapter Seven on *Joan Trial* raises issues of activism and agency which helps me further explore my working processes of rewriting experiences for the stage, the politics of my arts practice and the questions of agency as an artist. As a way of clarifying some of the theoretical claims from the first part of the thesis, I also address certain staging particularities of my own feminist intervention into canonical dramatic texts and female images.

Each chapter takes a closer look at the particular performance choices made and subsequent aesthetics of my arts practice in relation to my three projects. I reflect on the fact that my chosen thesis themes have been discussed through an arts practice, that my (dis)identification with female archetypes was mediated through a set of aesthetics and that certain performance choices have been made in order for it to take place. I offer a kind of performance analysis of the chosen moments in performances. I am particularly interested to address the difference in artforms among the three projects (live art/installation, one-to-one live art community event, theatrical performance) and the array of venues I performed in (toddlers' groups, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Art Workshop Lazareti, Lark Lane Community Centre, Nuffield Theatre).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gary Anderson is currently completing a practice as research Ph.D. entitled 'Politicising a Film Practice' at the University of Plymouth. One of the objectives of the research is the re-figuration of Home Movies as a form of personal political protest.

<sup>2</sup> While I was initially inspired by Walter Benjamin's 1934 text (1986) 'The Author as Producer', it is through the ideas of transnational feminist activism that I came to understand my individual

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accountability and its relation to my position as an artist with agency (for further discussion of this point see Chapter Three).

<sup>3</sup> However, it is important to mention that solo work is very demanding. It is especially difficult during the actual performances and somewhat lacklustre during rehearsals. One needs to be disciplined, write schedules and stick to them. It is lonely: it involves eating sandwiches on one's own and sleeping alone in cheap B&Bs.

## Chapter Five

### On *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*

#### Medea/Mother Trouble

*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* Live Art Event first took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2004 and the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004 at the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool. The performances were followed by an installation (from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2004) in the same space. Since its first performance at the Bluecoat, *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* has been performed at *emergency*, green room, Manchester in October 2004, at Brunel University, London in November 2004, at Teatro Guiñol, Santa Clara, Cuba as a part of 'Magdalena Sin Fronteras' festival and meeting in January 2005, at InterUniversity Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia in May 2005, at Performance Art Carlisle Event at Source Café, Carlisle in February 2006, at the John Thaw Studio Theatre, Manchester University, Manchester in May 2006, at the interdisciplinary conference 'Medea: Mutations and Permutations of a Myth', Bristol University, Bristol in July 2006, as a part of On the Edge annual programme of contemporary small scale performance at the University of Hull in Scarborough in October 2006, at the University of Winchester in February 2007 and as a part of a Postgraduate Symposium on Greek Drama 'Performing Identities' at Oxford and Royal Holloway Universities in June 2007.

*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* intervenes in the cultural mythmaking about Medea by portraying my autobiographical experiences of motherhood and my personal connections

to a group of contemporary mothers. In my performance I juxtapose Medea, as an archetypal anti-mother figure, with contemporary Liverpool mothers that I personally know from two toddlers' groups. Through the project I became the meeting point between the mothers and Medea contesting the Mother Archetype from my foreign position. The project is my artistic and feminist response to social and cultural constrictions that are placed onto me as a mother and a Foreigner. For the purposes of intervening in the production of universal female archetypes, I drew my artistic material from my everyday experience of living, which in the case of *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* had to do with the experience of being foreign, becoming a mother and attending toddlers' groups. My own take on Medea was intended as an intervention into the problematic 'natural' issue of motherhood through the highlighting of my own 'foreign' experiences.

*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* live art project was intrinsically linked with its own production processes, determined by local time, space and financial conditions. Therefore, Bluecoat Arts Centre and its live art programming was instrumental for the life of the project as well as its final artform: live art event as well as installation.<sup>1</sup> The Bluecoat commissioning of the project encouraged me to think through the artistic material as 'live art'. The Medea myth was relocated from its 'true' realist theatre setting and the Medea character was used as a platform from which I critiqued contemporary notions of the maternal. I created a critical and yet, through the use of ritual-like repetitious action of washing, a somewhat sensual response to my own experiences of motherhood.

The combination of live art event and installation as the project's final form worked well and grew out of its various stages of development. While the Bluecoat offered me in-kind support in the form of rehearsal spaces, I spent most of the project's developmental time in and around home with my children and camera in hand performing domesticity and child-rearing activities. In that light it seemed less useful to try to use the rehearsal space provided by the Bluecoat and leave the children behind. Actually the footage of me performing one of Euripides' *Medea* monologues in the Bluecoat is interrupted by the children's impromptu entrance into the frame of the shot. Lots of recorded material, which can be seen in the installation (like shopping in the supermarket, eating with kids and fellow-mothers in the local café, toddlers' group footage, bathing the kids, reading them a good-night story, doing the laundry, smoking and drinking at night when the kids are in bed, sleeping...), was a product of the everyday tasks, activities and frustrations of motherhood. The performance itself is also a task-based activity: the clothes are all washed and hung out to dry.

*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* aims to sensually as well as intellectually create a new space amongst the participants. The set display consists of a washing line stretching from one side of the space to the other, with two garments hanging on it on two different sides: Medea's costume and a white sheet. There are lots of colourful clothes piled up on the floor as well as a bottle of baby shampoo. All of these clothes were given to me by the Liverpool mothers participating in the project. Two projectors are set: slides projector and multimedia projector. In the performance I enter the stage carrying my children's baby bath, full of water. I operate the slide projector, focused onto a white sheet on the

washing line. We see changing slides of mothers' faces on a wet dripping sheet. I operate the DVD and video projector, focused onto the white screen in the background of the stage. We see images of myself in the Medea costume with my children whilst hanging out the clothes on my housing estate, cleaning the mirror in my bedroom, putting on mothers' clothes: one after another, one on top of the other, layers of the mothers' clothes on my body. We hear two Medea monologues from Euripides' play, sounds from toddlers' group and *Stabat Mater* music.

Situated in the middle of the stage with my children's baby bath, I perform the task of washing and hanging previously collected mothers' clothes. I am quietly humming nursery rhymes for boys: 'A sailor went to sea, sea, sea' and 'Ja sam gusar s Porporele' ('I am a pirate from Porporela'). I wet the clothes and hang them on the washing line. The elevation of the domestic activity from its everyday routine to its stage presence, gives me, a real woman, a space to challenge the patriarchal representations of myself as Woman/Mother/Housewife/Foreigner. This is my call for adventure, my escape. The 'doing the laundry' activity, the basic live action on stage and on video, is a representation of women's domestic activity that could be seen to contain a symbolic power of cleansing. The water is understood as a cleansing agent of both myself (baptism) and objects around me (clothes). Cleansing is understood only as an attempt, as a process rather than the aim. The mothers' clothes cannot be cleaned: that baby smell always stays within them. A Mother's work is never done. The smell of baby bath fills the performing space. The water splashes. The performer gets wet in it. The water on the stage functions through sight, sound, touch and smell (fragranced with baby bath). The

clean water is contaminated with baby bath bubbles. The Medea costume is covered with them. It is as wet as it is poisonous – an allusion to Medea’s gift of the dress to Glauce, Jason’s new bride. Once I have performed the washing of all the clothes, the video footage and sound finish. I wet Medea's costume and put it on. I leave the stage. All is dripping wet. The clothes hang and drip, and when finally dry, they still seem dirty, unwearable. The clothes are wasted, shrunken and misshaped.

The installation, which follows the performance, invites the audience for a simultaneous viewing of multiple images of myself in different representational roles and situations: a mother, an actress, a housewife, a friend, a character Medea in domestic and everyday social situations. The background screen is split into six different takes. No image is more or less true than the one next to it. The aim was to question the possibility of one identity and not settle for the Mother construct. The latest installation sound consists of me reading extracts from my performance journals, contemplating issues concerning the maternal.

Both sets of audio-visual footage, for the performance and for the installation, as well as the mothers’ slides have, for me, come to represent a document of passing time when I was faced with the joys and difficulties of motherhood, those prescribed by the dominant patriarchal ideologies, those provided by my Liverpool community, as well as my own. Over the three years of performing the piece, I have watched my children grow and the mothers in the slides go out of my everyday life. However, the urgency to perform the piece and go back to it has stayed with me. Being detached from the people



and the time when the piece was first developed and still performing it three years afterwards has meant that I could be less sentimental and precious about it and more critical about the prescribed notions of the maternal through it. This has helped me retain my work in subsequent performances.

### Medea within the community of mothers

By becoming a mother I obtained a ‘proper’, recognizable social role within my Liverpool 17 community and was expected to accept motherhood as a perfect and compulsory identity stamp for women regardless of their class, nationality, race, age and sexual preference, with the power of reducing ‘us all’ to the common denominator of Mother. The Mother, reminiscent of the Mother Archetype, the all prevailing *mater natura and mater spiritualis* – totality of life (Jung 1959: 92), re-invents itself in different social roles and cultural imaginings of maternity supported by the consumerism in contemporary living. The Mother smiles to us from Boots and Mothercare catalogues; she gazes at us from NHS education leaflets about pregnancy, birth and parenthood.

My community of Liverpool 17 is keen to accept new mothers as well as make exceptions and welcome foreigners into the wonderful world of Motherhood, as long as they all behave as ‘good Mothers’ should. The same set of normative rules applies to me, regardless of my legal and daily status as a foreigner, and all other new mothers. I could claim Liverpool and specifically L17 as my new home, based on the fact that I do spend most of my time there and that I joined two toddlers’ groups. In my own experience of

being a mother and attending a number of toddlers' groups in Liverpool I have come across a variety of mothers: dedicated full-time mums who oppose the Western ethics of work culture and ally themselves with more alternative lifestyles, ex-professionals (a GP, a therapy councillor, a film editor, a further education lecturer, a lawyer) all of whom left the workforce for the 'benefit' of their children. I have also encountered working-class mothers who worked part-time as shop assistants or dinner-ladies, full-time mums who were either entering or aiming to re-enter higher/further education... In most cases, the role of the mother was supposedly wholeheartedly embraced, regardless of it being interpreted as a subversive transgressive act of women against capitalism and Western ethics of work culture or a regression towards more traditional patriarchal family values. However, what is problematic with this wholehearted embrace of the Mother is the placing of impossible aspirations of motherhood on real mothers themselves.

Subsequently, 'we, mothers' became a group that aspired towards the ideal of the Mother, eager to speak the 'standard language of Motherhood' as prescribed by capitalist consumerist society. In such a group our identity was shared: we were 'mother' and it was difficult to assert our identity as individuals. I experienced the toddlers' groups environment as one of the most repressive places in my neighbourhood, where the patriarchal ideologies of the maternal were at its strongest. The prescribed Motherhood felt reductive and claustrophobic. I needed to rebel – to claim an identity, a voice other than the maternal, the place other than the toddlers' group.

The character of Medea (incidentally also one of the plays I had listed as ‘must do’ since my first pregnancy) symbolizes the anti-mother archetype. She transgresses from mother to anti-mother through the ultimate rebellious act of murdering her own children. In addition, Medea is swiftly judged on the assumption that she is first and foremost an immigrant barbarian with cultural difference. Referencing Sally Engle Merry’s *Urban Danger: Life in a Neighbourhood of Strangers*, Sara Ahmed concludes: ‘The ultimate violent strangers are hence figured as immigrants: they are the outsiders in the nation space...’ (Ahmed 2000: 36). Medea, as the anti-mother and barbarian challenges the patriarchal system of the nation space. However, Medea is not a woman, but Woman as sign - a construct of a canonical theatre tradition, invented by patriarchy for patriarchy to teach patriarchy a lesson. Medea has thus been allowed to become the idea, the concept, the presumption of an unspeakable danger, a disaster waiting to happen, a collapse of the system, absolute destruction of the Nation – the barbarian anti-mother. I decided to take up Medea as my feminist artistic tool and challenge some social presumptions about Motherhood. Medea, a barbarian, becomes my weapon in an intervention into the lived reality of motherhood. My aim was to both loosely connect the terror of Medea with common everyday experiences of motherhood, as well as comment on the issues of foreignness.

However, I was careful not to explain Medea’s actions in psychological terms or make her into a real woman and treat the action in the play as a headline in the tabloid press. I was aware that using female archetypes like Medea in artwork was problematic: while it might be relatively easy to get ‘Medea bookings’ with the performance, there is

also a danger of reproducing repressive ideologies by deploying and/or promoting, in the tradition of cultural feminism, specifically ‘feminine’ and ‘natural’ energy and power (refer to Chapter One for further discussion on this point, pp. 23-30 and specifically my short analysis of *m.e.d.e.a.*, a performance by Gilla Cremer). Therefore, whilst *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* combined the experiential ‘ordinary’ accounts of motherhood and Medea myth, it did so in an abstracted form, through the medium of live art, rather than a realistic theatre performance.

Once I knew that I could take my motherhood piece into the Bluecoat, I re-entered the toddlers’ groups publicly, as an artist, and had the freedom to start seeing the mothers differently. Each mother, foreigner or not, carries within herself doubts about her skills as prescribed by the Mother construct. Each mother tries to cover up her insecurity by presenting herself in the most positive light within the communal toddlers’ group environment. All the mothers act for other mothers afraid of the Mother. The secrets about the ‘real’ experience of motherhood that mothers carry within themselves start speaking from within, through little intimate confessions, through chats and teas. A new darker side of motherhood is being revealed. All the mothers are foreigners to the Mother construct. Motherhood is a trap. In order to give these secretive motherhood experiences distinctive voices, I decided to photograph each mother individually, gather a piece of clothing from each one of them, and finally, record their views on motherhood and present all these in performance. I devised an A4 outline of the project explaining to the toddlers’ groups mothers what my artistic aim was and asked for their participation. Nineteen mothers from two Liverpool 17 toddlers’ groups participated in the project.

## Balkanac Speaking Scouse

In the developmental stages of the project I took the inspiration for the piece from being identified as a foreigner. I am legally a resident spouse of a British citizen with an Indefinite Leave To Remain stamp in my Croatian passport. I have no political rights in the UK, which means I cannot vote nor stand in elections. This is coupled with my daily experiences of being identified as foreign through my ‘nuanced English’ arguably an ‘improper’ acquisition of the language of the country which I inhabit. (For a fuller account of my ‘Foreign Condition’ please refer to Chapter Two.) I became a ‘Balkanac’ - my specific version of a barbarian<sup>2</sup> - trying to speak Scouse (the language of my L17 community). The barbarian me (bar bar bala bala – with my ‘nuanced English’), the Balkanac, listens to mothers’ dialogue in Scouse and to my foreign ear it resembles a soap opera language that allows for the exchange of intimacies. As I attempt to speak Scouse I comprehend it as a ‘wrong way’ that has no capability of taking me to ‘real’ motherhood and subsequently conclude that no language, barbarian or Scouse, is adequate enough for motherhood. Scouse is just one of many other ‘wrong ways’. I am never to realize my implicit goal: the state of motherhood. Just as I could never speak Scouse, I could never live up to the Mother Archetype aspirations. Aware of the gap between myself in a communal situation of trying to speak Scouse and another self who is detached from this foreign language, I accuse myself of naively entertaining the assumption that motherhood could be pinned down.

Since I was disclosed as a foreigner in my daily encounters with the local through speech, I decided to use this nuanced speech as an important asset in the making of the performance. Sneja Gunew views foreignness as a tool to destabilize the main culture's assumptions and certainties (Gunew 2003: 44). In 'The Home of Language: A Pedagogy of the Stammer' she discusses the re-figuration of home for migrant subjects through the language and the body, while also addressing the impact that 'foreign language' has in the dominant culture. Language connects us to and displaces us from our surroundings and social interactions, some of these social interactions being the processes of developing, managing and producing arts projects.

Using a foreign language became my methodological tool in the making of a performance. Through the audio-visual footage in the performance I make Medea's improper acquisition of foreign language visible. During the rehearsal period of Euripides' *Medea* monologues, I asked my Liverpoolian husband Gary Anderson to help me with learning my lines and prompting me if necessary. This exercise became an important component of my performance. Gary's strong prompting voice gave patriarchal authority over me as his wife, a foreigner and an actress. My 'speech impediment' in the performance is evident through the recorded sound footage of Gary prompting me my lines and correcting my English. This dialogue became my comment on the supposedly inferior position of a barbarian Woman. Medea, our barbarian, with my 'nuanced English' is prompted lines by her patriarchal author Euripides, contemporary society, and finally, my husband's Scouse accent. By using a performer's subversive position in dealing with the Medea text by Euripides (see the section 'Female

performer as text' in Aston 1995a: 32) I contravene her author and comment on contemporary patriarchal society. I enter into a dialogue with the Scouse voice over me: I comment on his authority; I use Euripides' words ironically and scornfully; I interrupt the voice; I laugh at it. Moreover, I expose a barbarian Woman as constructed, making visible the hierarchy of the author and a character, male and female, Scouser (as a distinct representative of British society) and the foreigner 'me'.

Therefore, my Foreign 'reality' and performative enactment of a Foreigner allowed for the Foreigner's speech to become the centre. I, a Foreigner, become placed in a position of authority – I know both languages, I have privileged access to both cultures. The stated detachment from the English language (and I see that English language as a variety of diverse dialects and accents – I have used Scouse as an example) highlights the limits of the language as such and suggests a different way of relating to the subject on stage.

### Generously watering the audience

The aim of my live art event is to create a space for exchange and reflection upon the given content. *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* has been created with a specific audience in mind (Liverpool mothers from toddlers' groups), while striving to have the quality of being re-read in new places across the UK and internationally. The involved mothers' personal preconception of me as a foreigner, a mother and an artist, allowed for a space

that encouraged me to take risks. I could live up to and even challenge these ‘wacky’ foreign/mother/artist expectations.

‘Being generous’ as a constant reminder and motto during the pre-performance period is understood both in terms of monetary exchange, in other words production process, and in terms of an artistic offering. *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* functions as a ‘combined arts’ funded project by the Arts Council England. It fulfils the criteria of what ‘relevant art’ in North West England is today. One of the artist’s requirements that the Arts Council responded to warmly is that the event is free of charge. The Arts Council agreed that the value of the project, in terms of the awareness it brings into the community regarding the issues of motherhood and cultural diversity, exceeds the monetary value it could generate. The project thus does not need to generate its own revenue. In order to establish itself on the margins of the commodity realm, the least the project could do was offer itself as a gift to its potential audience.

Through my detailed programmes, website, performance or installation the audience of mothers were presented with an alternative perspective on motherhood. Revealing myself to the mothers (in the form of giving them programmes for my performance and thus sharing with them my ‘intimate revelations’ through the performance journal as well as performing for them in the Bluecoat) I lost the role I comfortably adopted within the community of L17. I became a public individual and blurred the boundary between the private and the public. The blurring of the private and the public is not ‘good’ in its own right, but needs to be considered within the



circumstances of the action, in my case the personal appearances within the toddlers' groups and public performances in the city centre. *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* was an act of contemplation on motherhood through an arts project, a mediation through a set of aesthetics, an encounter which wished to open up a space for interactions with others, a way of thinking which is beyond the binaries of private and public, right and wrong (way of mothering), Other and the proper. In this sense *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* was my first step towards my understanding of feminist agency as an artist.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In connection to the Bluecoat programming, I would like to refer to Rebecca Reid's performance lecture *Before Jason's House at Corinth* which took place at the centre in May 2004, not long after my own project in the same centre. Reid's critical arts practice moves Medea away from the theme of 'female nature' with its universalizing tendencies. Reid used the Medea myth to draw attention to certain socio-political structures, which are historically grounded and still present today. The performance connects 1950s urban planning of North Liverpool with the Medea myth. While loosely structuring her performance lecture on the Medea myth and Euripides' classical play structure, Reid comments upon the social and class injustices, in this case, two male architects from the Liverpool City Council housing planning office who decided to build three skyscrapers and name them Medea, Jason and Corinth. Since then these three skyscrapers were homes for the underprivileged and the immigrants, first the Irish and more recently refugees from the Middle East. Reid uses a live artform (performance lecture) and venue (Bluecoat Arts Centre) to convey her concerns about certain socio-political issues. Her interpretation of the Medea myth discloses power structures and pushes our own thinking about them further. Medea myth thus becomes a tool through which we start to consider the society we inhabit critically.

<sup>2</sup> Barbarian (from bar bar, bala bala), as a Greek term, refers to the people outside *polis* whose articulation was incomprehensible. Later, after the invasion of Rome the term gains cruel connotations (Wiles 2000: 92 and Kristeva 1991: 51-52). With reference to Euripides Kristeva notes that the "barbarian" points towards an area of inferiority that includes moral inferiority; the word no longer refers to a foreign nationality but exclusively to evil, cruelty, and savageness' (Kristeva 1991: 51-52).

'Balkanac' (an inhabitant of the Balkan peninsula) is a derogatory term used by ex-Yugoslav citizens for someone who is not 'cultivated'. The Croatians and Slovenians have a special relationship to the term because through it they position themselves as superior to the 'real' Balkan population (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia). Geographically the Balkan Peninsula covers the countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, the European part of Turkey, parts of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Slovenia but I am referring only to the ex-Yugoslavia region in connection to what the term 'Balkanac' means. On the other hand, the Yugo-nostalgic youth have adopted the term

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subversively through the alternative music scene and use it as a weapon when in conversation with the older pro-Croatian, pro-separation generation. (In other words, my parents would scold me to hear my referring to their grandchild as 'Balkanac' and this amuses me.) It is also important to note that there have been a number of curating projects around the term of Balkan in Austria and Germany, Western European countries which had been historically most connected with the region: 'In Search of Balkania' (2002) at Neue Galerie Graz, 'Blut und Honig/Zukunft ist am Balkan' (Blood and Honey/The Future is in the Balkans) (2003) at Sammlung Essl in Klosterneuburg near Vienna and 'In den Schluchten des Balkan – Eine Reportage' (In the Gorges of the Balkans – A Report) (2003). For further information refer to 'Balkanac, mirno!' by Branka Stipančić in *Frakcija: Performing Arts Magazine* 33/34, 141-147.

## Chapter Six

### *On Magdalena Makeup*

#### Name Post Card Encounters Journey Home

*Magdalena Makeup* intervenes into the figure of Mary Magdalene (the penitent whore archetype) while at the same time destabilizing the fixed notion of home. *Magdalena Makeup* is a live art event devised as a series of one-to-one sessions between individual members of the audience and myself as the performer in my Mary Magdalene figure: an exotic Other in a red silk dress and makeup. During each fifteen minute session the audience member enters a small enclosed space with the performer, watches a ten minutes autobiographical film about my connection to Mary Magdalene figure through my given name Magdalena and gets to have their feet anointed, a ritual reminiscent of the Biblical act that Mary Magdalene supposedly performed for Jesus. Through the figure of the exotic Other, *Magdalena Makeup* explores the notion of 'home' as an attempt to connect/juxtapose two cities: Liverpool (artist's resident home) and Dubrovnik (artist's place of birth). These two cities become connected through the act of sending postcards, initiated by the members of the audience. Each member of the audience is handed a stamped and addressed post card with my face on it and asked by the performer to post the post card 'back home where I belong'.

*Magdalena Makeup* Live Art Event first took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2004 from nine in the evening till three in the morning in Art Workshop Lazareti, as part of

‘Karantena – Multimedia Arts Festival’ in Dubrovnik, Croatia and on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2004 from eleven in the morning till five thirty in the afternoon in the Old Police Station, Lark Lane Community Centre, in Liverpool. During these two events, a series of one-to-one sessions between individual members of the audience and myself, in my Mary Magdalene figure, I anointed forty-four pairs of feet. In addition, *Magdalena Makeup* was re-produced as a performative paper at ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ forum in Aberystwyth in July 2005 and at ‘Diasporic Futures: Women, the Arts and Globalization’, a one-day conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in July 2006.

The following essay is a performative act, a reflection on *Magdalena Makeup* Live Art Event. I enter the stage as the Mary Magdalene figure, in silk red dress, purchased in Super Savers Liverpool Oxfam for £5, blond wig given to me by my uncle in Dubrovnik and ruby lipstick. I carry with me an alabaster jar purchased for 350 kunas in a Dubrovnik antique shop. I speak into the microphone. I tell the audience about the costume I am wearing and props I am carrying.

I am from Dubrovnik.

My name is Magdalena, after my grandmother, and inspired by my name, I assume Mary Magdalene’s Biblical status as a penitent whore and stage encounters between you and me.

Witness the process of my transformation into Mary Magdalene in Dubrovnik, always my other home. I am offering you an audio-visual individual encounter with my ‘Other’ culture. I bring you a bit of ‘Other’.

I possess perfumed ointment contained in an alabaster jar. I smell divine. I have marked my space with cloth and odour. I anoint your feet. Experience the contemplative and tangible space of a Biblical ritual. Beware, this is a contemporary experiential enactment.

I have constructed myself as an object of desire. I invite your gaze upon me. I touch...

I am foreign and sensual. I am making myself up for you. Pay me a visit...

Call 07963769108 to book your private session. Limited availability.

## Performative Name Game

**Magdalena (Magdalene):** From a title 'of Magdala'. Mary Magdalene, a character in the New Testament, was named thus because she was from Magdala - a village on the sea of Galilee whose name meant 'tower' in Hebrew. She was cleaned of evil spirits by Jesus and then remained with him during his ministry, witnessing the crucifixion and the resurrection.

([www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com))

Mary Magdalene is a penitent whore. I happen to carry her name. My name is Magdalena. It is on all the legal documents I have. My paternal grandmother used to carry the same name, but everyone called her Made. Everyone calls me Lena. Just Lena, which sounds like an incomplete name – at least in Croatia, where name giving and honouring the paternal grandparents is a custom. No one could be called just Lena, which suits me fine, because Lena thus becomes read as a part of something bigger. Lena destabilizes the idea of a proper name, like Magdalena. Through *Magdalena Makeup*, I am playing with the idea of naming the 'I'. Lena, 'my everyday improper name', figures as a denial of a proper name, which makes me look into the Magdalena name anew. Not being familiar with the sound of that name and yet legally bearing it, not responding to it and yet owning it, I dis-identify and identify that particular *name*. I occasionally carry my identity through that 'wrong' name. My dis-identification lies with my passport, birth and wedding certificates, national insurance number and other legal documents which (dis)identify me as Magdalena. This dis-identification creates a gulf between my state (non)identity and my role as an artist, which is a politicised self. I consequently decided to project my politicised, individualised identity *behind* my legal name Magdalena. Through the performative act I present and name myself Magdalena, a penitent whore figure while accentuating the naming game within my feminist arts project.

Therefore, this project is an enquiry into my cultural and ethnographic landscape through my given name Magdalena. Talking to my family I learn the history behind my name and its connection to the Mary Magdalene figure (for the transcript of the conversation with my mother see Appendix B, p. 187). I understand the Mary Magdalene figure as ‘someone’ historically appropriated by patriarchal society and turned into a powerful, social and cultural representation: a ‘penitent whore’ archetype. The Mary Magdalene figure with her cultural heritage becomes my contender. However, I would argue that the ‘penitent whore’ archetype is ambivalent and offers the possibility of subverting the same patriarchal system that invented her. The figure of Mary Magdalene, being a whore and a saint, provokes unease and my aim is to use that awkwardness tactically through my performative act.

The Mary Magdalene figure has been appropriated by many different movements, often contrary to each other. Popular fiction and ‘progressive’ Christian movements use her unique female Biblical status to celebrate the concept of ‘sacred femininity’ (see Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code*, Margaret Starbird’s *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar*, [www.magdalone.org](http://www.magdalone.org)); the Magdalena Project (Bassnett 1989) sees her as the archetypal performer; feminist critique warns us that her archetypal image of a penitent whore, fixed by patriarchal theatre history, became one of the standard stereotypical female roles for actresses (Ferris 1990 and her discussion of Penitent Whore as one of Archetypal Images of Women in Theatre); the Catholic calendar celebrates her as a saint on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July; numerous churches have been named and medallions carved after her (my mother recently visited Saint-Maximin in the South of France where Mary Magdalene’s relics

are allegedly kept and brought me a special Mary Magdalene medallion). In addition, she is hailed a protector saint for the cosmeticians, hairdressers and prostitutes (refer to [www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintm11.htm](http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintm11.htm)), as well as the penitent holy whore in tune with nature and with miraculous hair that grows and covers her naked body (Warner 1994: 358-359).

I construct her image/figure twice: once in Liverpool, my resident home, with the Dubrovnik audiences in mind and once in Dubrovnik, my birth home, with Liverpool audiences in mind. In both cases I film the process of her construction and keep a performance journal (see Appendix B, *Magdalena Makeup Performance Journal*, p.187). During the process of her construction I connect the archetypal, epic idea about the figure (obtained through ‘masterpiece’ paintings and Catholic imagery) with my personal, everyday search for the figure (looking for props and costume). Both Mary Magdalene figures are constructed to enable me to play and comment on the archetypal. My Mary Magdalene construction in Liverpool, my resident home, is in part reliant on internet research on grand ‘masterpiece’ paintings of the figure, visits to the local galleries and museums, a mapping of the Catholic Liverpool landscape, an exhaustive search in Oxfam shops throughout the city for props and costume, browsing local shops, and finally, purchases from ebay. My Dubrovnik construction of the figure is done through ‘playing’ with my personal family history and my living family’s help. I search through my hometown Dubrovnik and nearby area of Konavle and Župa where both my paternal and maternal grandmothers come from for a specific embodiment of Mary Magdalene. I make her up using my family’s stories, clothes, props, help and support.

My made up Mary Magdalene arrives in Dubrovnik and Liverpool respectively, her 'Other' home, and offers its citizens, colleagues and friends a mythical ritual of the anointing of feet. She has brought with her from Liverpool and Dubrovnik respectively, a special ointment in an alabaster jar. The two constructed Magdalenas never met; they are my two alternating figures created specifically with certain geographical audiences in mind. Each speaks a different language: Dubrovnik Magdalena speaks English and Liverpool Magdalena speaks Croatian. She is sharing with you my 'Otherness' through audio-visual footage and live action. This is my gift to you – the citizens, colleagues and friends of my Other found land.

I invite the audience into the small shabby theatrical space provided by an alternative arts festival in Dubrovnik and community centre in Liverpool. I built up expectations through my flyer for the event and yet offered the audience the somewhat more tatty reality of a visit: a performance artist showing them an autobiographical ten minutes long film about her family on her laptop, getting changed into some second hand clothes, putting on a cheap plastic wig, applying makeup, asking them to step onto the marked area covered by the throw, anointing their feet with strange smelling ointment from an alabaster jar and speaking in a foreign tongue. My aim is to have the audience experience a contemplative and tangible space of the 'anointing of feet' Biblical ritual whilst making sure they remain aware of the displacement of that experience as well as reflect on its production processes.

The process of the transformation of Lena, the 'everyday improper' me, into



Mary Magdalene becomes transparent both through the video footage on film as well as during the encounter. My audience got to watch on my laptop the short homemade film about the whole process of my transformation into the figure of Mary Magdalene (the images of either Liverpool or Dubrovnik respectively, my collecting of the costume and props in these two cities, my conversation with my mother and grandmother), as well as witness my actual dressing and makeup application in order to become the Mary Magdalene figure for their 'intimate pleasure'. While all the members of the Croatian audience in Dubrovnik understood my instructions in English, and have some kind of relationship to speaking English (ranging from fluent to terrified because they remember their very strict school teachers) my Liverpool audience had none of that relationship to Croatian.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Croatian is ranging from 'not a major language' to 'exotic' or 'funny' to English people, while English is terrifyingly serious to Croatians. English sounds proper. Starting on that unequal note, my audience members developed different relationships towards me as a Foreigner. I played along with it, making my performing Magdalenas more in tune with the audience's expectations. My Dubrovnik version was harsher with its 'proper' speech and the Liverpool one softer with its foreign fascination.

In her introduction to *Performativity and Belonging* Vikki Bell points out that 'taking the temporal performative nature of identities as a theoretical premise means that more than ever, one needs to question how identities continue to be produced, embodied and performed, effectively, passionately and with social and political consequence' (Bell 1999: 2). I pushed my temporal performative identity of the Magdalena name (dis)identification into theatrical practice and invite questions around this newly

constructed 'prostitute' identity. Through my performative act, I prostituted myself as Magdalena, as an eroticized and exoticized female, as an artist, as a performer, as a Foreigner, as an alien, as Other, as the named one.

## Encounters

*To my prospective audiences:*

*I will be gazing at them from the post card / flyer. They will look at me.*

*I will invite them into my space. I will watch them watch my film about the making of the project.*

*I will always speak foreign to them.*

*I will touch their feet. I will anoint them with ointment.*

*They will write me feedback on a post card.*

*They will send me back home where I belong...*

*I will traverse space from Dubrovnik to Liverpool and Liverpool to Dubrovnik.*

*I will travel thanks to the postal couriers and long for destinations...*

*Write over me as I have written over Mary Magdalene while archetypes claim to be inscribed over us...*

Dubrovnik *Magdalena Makeup* encounters took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2004 from nine in the evening till three in the morning in Art Workshop Lazareti, as part of 'Karantena – Multimedia Arts Festival'. I 'had' twenty-two people in six hours: Ivana, Ivona, Mirjana, Zrinka instead of Srdjana, Vedrana's friend, Couple: female and male (his name is Mario), Zvončica who is my sister-in-law... (I am running late.) ... Girl that works in hotel Vis as an animator, Sanja that mentioned Bach, Sven who is a ballet dancer, Srdjana around midnight, Nela who is my mother, Nataša, Tina, Ervin who came

with a camera, Ben, Boris who seemed a perfect case, Vlasta, Evelina and Gary around two forty-five in the morning. I finished at three in the morning. The sessions were slightly longer than fifteen minutes. It was hard work. Some people sat on the throw; others were standing. I think I preferred it when they stood, the less contact the better.

We have an exchange, an interaction, a transaction. There was no fixed price for a ticket, but I asked the audience to pay what they could for the encounter. They were invited to leave some change in a piggy bank that was in the form of a red post box. The piggy bank was placed outside my encounters room and, therefore, they were not under pressure from me to put in some money. My aim was to provide the audience members with some thinking space around monetary matters: being left alone and considering whether or how much to pay might have encouraged the audience members to apprehend the implications of payment for this particular arts event. The payer/consumer is privileged, even after the act of consumption has taken place. The consumed is secondary. In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* Sara Ahmed argues for a generous encounter which ‘would recognize how the encounter itself is implicated in broader relations and circuits of production and exchange (how did we get here? how did you arrive?), but in such a way that *the one who is already assimilated can still surprise*, can still move beyond the encounter which names her, and holds her in place’ (Ahmed 2000: 152). In my role as author/producer/performer who initiated these theatrical encounters through *Magdalena Makeup* I believe that the named one (the one who is labelled as Magdalena, Lena, foreigner, alien, female, prostitute, Other) has the possibility of being moved from her stable position *through* the audience. Put in a

position to reflect on the naming game through watching the video footage about the performer's transformation into the figure, through experiencing the Biblical anointing ritual in a shabby contemporary environment of an arts festival, through being challenged to pay for the event, through being given the post card and being invited to send it back the audience holds that key element of surprise.

Liverpool *Magdalena Makeup* encounters took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2004 from eleven in the morning till five thirty in the afternoon in the Old Police Station, Lark Lane, L17. I received twenty-two people: Rachèle, Elaine, Kerstin, Anstey (who mistook my tears, provoked by constant re-applying of bad makeup, for real tears), Netty (whose daughter Iona was crying just outside the door during the event), Dale, Laura who made ointment for the Dubrovnik event, Caroline, Andrea, Clare, Helen who had her hands anointed instead of feet, Janet, Gary, Gill who has four children aged five and under, Claire with her two-month-old son. I had a break and tea with Neal. I was tired and getting on with it with Ilva who spoke Spanish to me, Fiona, Andrew who mentioned water pipes sound, Ken who knows of me through my artwork only, Anita who brought in her daughter Rosie, Amra who is Croatian like me.<sup>2</sup>

I did *Magdalena Makeup* Liverpool encounters as a gift to my L17 community. I 'Othered' the community using my local and personal connection to the area. I performatively 'prostituted' my Foreign position, aware that it carries certain preconceptions in order to have a change of mind, to transgress the preconceived 'authenticity' of an Other. I made the issue of my Foreign descent into a spectacle; I

‘prostituted’ it through my live art event, and finally, raised money because of it for a worthy local charity. That morning I occupied Lark Lane Pre-School Staff Room. I placed my props, smells and live embodiment over the pre-existent functional community room. The occupation was agreed upon and I offered to collect some donations for the Pre-School, which had recently lost its Liverpool City Council grant, in exchange for the room. However, I would argue that my artistic occupation stimulated more change in the community than fifteen pounds in change gathered during that Saturday. *Magdalena Makeup* Liverpool existed solely within its context of L17. It was a parallel event to a birthday party taking place in the hall next door. Many members of the audience were ‘snatched’ from the party. My staff room became a place of rest, contemplation, difference. It was an excuse to leave the kids behind for fifteen minutes and indulge in something unusual: the epic archetypal figure of Mary Magdalene waited around the corner, and presented herself as being written over by myself and the L17 community. Moreover, she asked for further palimpsestic writing by the community over her Post Cards.

Strangely enough at the Dubrovnik event most of the people I ‘had’ were strangers that allowed me to keep to the form, to my cool and formal role of an artist/performer. However, I knew all the Liverpool people in some capacity except for one, Caroline.<sup>3</sup> In Liverpool I broke the self-imposed rules and started customizing the encounters. Laura was my ‘breaking point’. In order to accommodate her nervousness about the event (she made the ointment for Dubrovnik encounters and knew about the project more closely than others) I started off our meeting by showing her some footage

that was supposed to be only for the Dubrovnik crowd. The more time passed the friendlier I became... I kept on changing. I realized that I was learning whilst doing, through and in performance.

While my behaviour with the members of the audience shifted according to the closeness I had with them, I preferred those encounters that clearly allowed me to *perform* the intimacy between myself and a given client. The less I knew him/her the more intimately I performed. With people that I am the closest to in my personal life, the least I performed because I allowed myself to relax and simply get on with it. Intimacy got performed and felt 'real' with some of the audience. The trick was to dismantle that 'real' intimacy from the ownership of the audience and disclose how it first came to figure by unveiling the process *behind* it. My audience were made aware that the 'intimate exchange' between us had been planned and produced and most of all it serves to contend the female archetype of a penitent whore rather than feed the desire for intimacy.

However, as I was applying makeup and washing my face and reapplying makeup and washing my face anew for each new member of the audience, my eyes started to sting and tears would well up and my face become sore. I was labouring for the intimacy with each member of the audience through my face, through the makeup applications. These applications made my sore, laboured face appear right for the part of a penitent whore. Therefore, I started doubting the implications my physical labour had on the audience psychologically. As I approached them physically, with my penitent sore face,

my 'female vulnerability' became emphasized. They expected something personal/intimate between us. I realized that if I continued to privilege the physicality of my laboured face I would miss my chance to contest the female whore archetype and rather reinforce the stereotypical preconceptions about fragile vulnerable femininity as something 'natural' and 'true' to all women. I risked giving the audience the 'wrong' impression. My aim lay elsewhere.

I have reservations about doing individual meetings again, and especially with people I know. The audience members are not too keen on participating in them, and even though I could argue that in *Magdalena Makeup* the individual meetings made sense conceptually there was a danger of them being read as 'authentically' intimate encounters that celebrate one's individuality, both the artist's and the audience member's.

*To my past audiences:*

*When I met you in person, I was pretending we were both special.*

*I made myself up for you. I was Magdalena Makeup.*

*I was your personal machine saluting your individualism.*

*I customized our encounter for you.*

*I made myself, an artist, a fetish of your desires.*

*I was happy you came but I became lazy and uninterested.*

*I kept thinking of my next client.*

*I won't be meeting you in person again.*

*We need to meet in the collective.*

*The more distanced we are from each other the harder the impact.*

*The less alone with you, the better our destinations...<sup>4</sup>*

## Post Card Home

By setting this live art event ‘inside’ both of my homes: Dubrovnik and Liverpool, I allude to my ‘alien’ position of a dislocated ‘outsider’ within these two places. I leave ‘Od greba žudioskih 4’, my Dubrovnik address, and arrive at ‘19 Livingston Ct’ in Liverpool every year at least twice, more likely three times. I always return to both places. I have lived away from my originatory home of Dubrovnik since the age of sixteen, but I have always been obliged to return *home*. I have always travelled back *home* from my different residential homes. Discussing journeys between homes Lynne Pearce notices that ‘the repeated travel *between* these homes, old and new, affords those of us granted this privilege the opportunity of “measuring” the differences and similarities between location and communities’ (Pearce 2000: 177). Journeys between homes allowed me to unfix the notion of home as stable. They shifted my perspective. While in the past Dubrovnik has always been there for me to stay the same by offering me stability through its supposed fixity, ‘other places’ of my accidental residences kept changing (Bastrop, Long Beach, Zagreb, Bratislava, London, Bratislava again, Tomintoul, Liverpool, Bangkok, Liverpool again). Over time, Dubrovnik itself, has changed because of being compared to these ‘other places’, and finally, took on the role of the Other place. Being exposed to life in new places and always aware of their supposed non-existence before my arrival, I started to question Dubrovnik’s own authenticity in my prolonged absence. Through annual visits to Dubrovnik, I became aware of my physical and mental changes: while Dubrovnik people remarked upon my changes, I remarked upon ‘the changed Dubrovnik’. Dubrovnik became Foreign ground



for me. We alienated one another.

In *Magdalena Makeup* I juxtapose my two homes and transverse their geography. Sonja (graphic and web designer for *Magdalena Makeup*) and I have created an imaginary Post Card of 'Liverpool and Dubrovnik combined'. The performance itself allows me to be in two places at once. Magdalena physically brings a bit of Liverpool into Dubrovnik and vice versa (the costume, the props, the video images). Magdalena, the performer, invites Lena, resident of Liverpool/ born in Dubrovnik, to be in two places at once. It is the constructed Magdalena who holds the tickets for the journey in between two homes. Ahmed offers a definition of the alien as 'only a category within a given community of citizens or subjects: as the outsider inside, the alien takes on a spatial function, establishing relations of proximity and distance within the home(land)' (Ahmed 2000: 3). Through me, a self-proclaimed alien, I charge the audience with the task of re-establishing 'relations of proximity and distance within the home(land)' as well as invite them into an act of movement *between* my home(land)s. The journey between Liverpool and Dubrovnik is taken in the form of a Post Card whose movement is initiated by the members of the audience. Magdalena Post Cards create a space between two cultures.

The Flyer/Post Card for *Magdalena Makeup* is my photographic portrait filtered by paintbrush with additional lipstick and makeup on it. I, the photographed Lena, became a further representation, *Magdalena Makeup*. I, Magdalena, am read as a place of address, as a future possibility and as a past place event. This Flyer / Post Card from me to a member of the audience invites itself to be posted back to my Other home after the

anointing encounter with a member of the audience has taken place. I offer my Post Card (stamped and addressed) for posting. I, Magdalena, invite a member of the audience to send me back home where I belong. As my Other address/my Other home (Od greba žudioskih 4 in Dubrovnik and 19 Livingston Court in Liverpool) is inscribed on the Post Card I offer my contact details aware that I present myself as a Foreigner, someone whose address is elsewhere across international borders. I remind a member of the audience that I do not belong *here*, but *there*. I invite him/her to reconsider the space I occupy. I provoke him/her to reassess my position: I am a Foreigner, with a Foreign address, a prostitute artist, a female, Magdalena/Lena, an immigrant, possibly an infiltrator, a terrorist, an anomaly. I enter the current political debate on immigration; I call on my audience members to reconsider a Foreigner's position within local time and space, in one's own neighbourhood. However, I also offer the postal idea of travel, of the in-between zone between two homes, an abstract idea of free movement:

To post is to send by 'counting' with a halt, a relay, or a suspensive delay, the place of a mailman, the possibility of going astray and of forgetting (not of repression, which is a moment of keeping, but of forgetting).

Jacques Derrida *Post Card* (Derrida 1987: 65)

The act of sending embraces both *here* and *there*, *now* and *then*. Post Cards transgress boundaries of time and space. The act of sending is a generous act, it entails forgetting about itself, it erases evidence. The 'responsibility' lies with the act of sending, with each member of an audience and the postal system. Trust is placed not only with each individual member of the audience but also upon a stamp that will be marked by the date and place of departure and delivered by the recipient's Other postal system. The tax

duty has been paid to both legal states that named Magdalena in the first place and continue to name her. Two postal systems are in agreement. The Other home is expecting the 'sent'. My Other address is correct: the Other time/space is assured. I, Lena, will travel through space and time to intercept the 'sent'.

The danger of the act lies with the possibility of going astray, of getting lost in the process of travel between Liverpool and Dubrovnik, in never reaching one's destination. Not each Post Card is expected to arrive at its destination. I am happy to play with the possibility of *losing* most of them; I am happy to forget.<sup>5</sup> My post cards reach my Other address altered, modified, (dis)figured. They have slipped through time and space and my face on them, in makeup, is also (dis)figured. In this context my face connotes my 'name dis-identification'.

When I, in my corporeal body, travel from Dubrovnik to Liverpool or vice versa I always *reach* my destination. Travelling in between these two particular places is my familiar state of being. By looking at post, travel and myself in between I created a space that is in between Liverpool and Dubrovnik. Ahmed states that 'the journey between homes provides the subject with the contours of a space of belonging, but a space that expresses the very logic of an interval, the passing through of the subject between apparently fixed moments of departure and arrival' (Ahmed 2000: 77). I aimed to involve such space through the idea of a Post Card with my face on it, through its imaginary travel, through its possibility of never having a fixed moment of departure (I never knew when/if each Post Card was sent nor could ever be entirely sure of its destination). My

space of belonging in between homes is an interval, as unstable as the destiny of those

Post Cards:

What does a post card want to say to you? On what conditions is it possible? Its destination traverses you, you no longer know who you are. At the very instant when from its address it interpellates, you, uniquely you, instead of reaching you it divides you or sets you aside, occasionally overlooks you. And you love and you do not love, it makes of you what you wish, it takes you, it leaves you, it gives you.

Jacques Derrida *Post Card* (Derrida 1987: back cover)

There exists a possibility of communication, of further relationship between me and you. This Post Card is also a ‘feedback space’ as I ask the audiences (in the language of Other – English in Dubrovnik and Croatian in Liverpool) for palimpsestic writing<sup>6</sup> over my Flyer. This betokens an important change: pre-encounter, the Flyer worked as an advertising call card; post-encounter, the same piece of paper, transformed into a Post Card, has become a means of further communication. The act of sending calls for a message. I am pleased to offer my Flyer words as a background for further intervention around the conceptual ideas of Mary Magdalene, arts, home, travel and encounter.

My Liverpool 17

Each neighbourhood, and in this case, Liverpool 17, is trying to create its own sense of identity (through specific local shops, restaurants and pubs, community centres and their programme of events). However, the achieved identity of L17, as a bohemian, studenty, quirky part of Liverpool, puts it in direct opposition to its neighbouring postcode of L8, that gets to be bad, dangerous and rough and L15 as the more ‘real’ residential area with

a multicultural twist on Smithdown Road. There are invisible borders everywhere. I am taking driving lessons and the instructor is talking about getting familiar with the driving centre's catchments area. The schools need to be situated within the catchments area. Even though these invisible borders that exist between postcodes or even within them could be celebrated as 'difference' with local autonomy from larger governmental structures, they are always pushed against each other since they define and are defined in relation to each other. Moreover, they provide a shield against any kind of accountability towards larger city structures unless those are beneficial for that particular neighbourhood.<sup>7</sup>

As I started to live in the community of L17 and L17 'accepted' me locally, with warm feelings and obligatory name tags such as a foreigner, a mother, an artist, an Other, I consequently, yet unwillingly, joined in the playing of the borders game. My escape route became my performance work. I recognized my ability to *act* in the community and thus give 'my acceptance' back. I made myself visible. After *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, which is firmly rooted in the local community, I staged (as an act of reciprocating the acceptance I had received) the *Magdalena Makeup* encounters in the toddlers' group and Pre-School Staff Room at the Old Police Station, Lark Lane Community Centre. I made a 'local public space' into my intimate and politicized ground. I occupied the local public space intimately but with political agency as an artist. I felt I had the right to do it because I was acting as one of the locals belonging there. I even collected some donations for the Pre-School. However, there is a danger that my arts event might be read

as only reinforcing the borders of this particular space and providing the selected group of local people with ‘something special’.

The reality of organizing ‘arts in the community’ is in understanding ‘local intrigues and politics’. My aim was to get a locally owned space at the Old Police Station, Lark Lane Community Centre, and transform it into an artistic one. However, I was denied access to a ‘healing room’, the most suitable place for my event. I was advised to meet Jacki, the events manager of the ‘healing room’, during the Healing Day, an event run by a group of local hippies. I had to drop my cultural Saturday afternoon life and act as one of the locals at the ‘Healing Day do’ with aromatherapy, organic goods and numerous massages. I still did not get their ‘healing room’. I guess it had to do with my ‘inappropriate’ appearance, makeup and red laptop bag – I was silly enough to come to the Old Police Station straight from a Tate Liverpool event where I was attending a book launch. Can one do both in a single afternoon? This string of events and the danger that *Magdalena Makeup* in L17 might have seemed to reinforce the invisible borders, made me think twice about the implications of doing arts in the community.

Doreen Massey’s article ‘The Strangers Beyond the Gates’ (2004) is a provocation to understanding our own implications within the processes of globalizations. Massey takes on Alan Read’s quote from the material he circulated before the Civic Centre Symposium (April 2003) where she delivered the paper. The quote reads: ‘Theatre, after all, has always been an act of proximity and presence seeking the global and international within its own neighbourhood’. Massey follows by arguing for

the inseparability of local place and global space. She warns us against the privileging of the local and reminds us that the ‘global space is equally real, grounded, meaningful, as is place’ (Massey 2004:119). She writes:

The lived reality of our daily lives actually is incredibly dispersed and widespread in its sources, in its resources, in its contacts and most certainly in its repercussions. I don’t think we can seriously posit space as the outside of place as lived. ... If we really think space relationally, then it is no more than the sum of all those relations, engagements, interactions that encircle the globe. It is utterly everyday and grounded and it may go round the world. It is everywhere local but altogether it is global.

(Massey 2004: 119)

In connection to that intersection between the local and the global, Massey urges us to consider distant strangers, beyond our cities and our immediate surroundings. Raising ‘the potential wider geographies of our social and political responsibilities’ (Massey 2004: 118), she reminds us that cultural diversity is not only here and now, but somewhere else as well:

But cultural diversity, cultural difference, alterity, *is* implacably *also* far away and in different and distant lands. In our current concern for hybridity at home we must not forget that wider geography. It used to be called internationalism, and there are now different ways in which we can frame it and think it. But it seems to me that we have to put it much more firmly back on the agenda in the disciplines in which we work: the cultural, the performative, the social. I want to pick up Alan’s argument, in the quote that I gave you before. He talks about theatre and its integral relation to proximity and presence, but he then goes on to raise the possibility of linking foreground and distance, and of thinking internationally.

(Massey 2004: 121)

My position of a Foreigner compels me to think in broader terms than the local community. Thus, I refrain from calling L17 my home. I fear the locality of my performance work might do more to reinforce those invisible borders. The movement in between postcodes is possible and, therefore, I am eager to understand home as my

position in the system rather than the experienced locality. Home becomes about having a mission, in my case an artistic one. My journeys in between homes have taught me to put things in perspective and, therefore, even though I might experience locality as my temporary home, I must learn to consider it in larger socio-political relations. Furthermore I must learn to consider my arts practice ‘beyond home’.

My artistic work in *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* brought motherhood as a local issue to the surface in the city centre public space, while in *Magdalena Makeup* I indulged the local community. In the face of being unable to challenge any larger power structures my aim with *Magdalena Makeup* was to act intimately and change things locally. I attended too many community-based events and ate too many sweet homemade cakes sold for local charity initiatives, but I still believe that artwork, aware of its own positionality and the social structures that underpin them, might be capable of refiguring the local and the lived in the service of incremental social transformation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I particularly remember Mirjana, one of the audience members in Dubrovnik. Mirjana is a confident, popular, out-spoken woman. She runs the bar at Art Workshop Lazareti centre. However, during the encounter with my English-speaking Mary Magdalene figure Mirjana was transformed into a somewhat more insecure person. She couldn’t understand most of the English instructions, felt lost because of it and subsequently I, in my role as a performer, could feel a sense of superiority and power. Later on, after the event, she checked with me that she properly understood what she needed to do, i.e. post the given post card to Liverpool. She also admitted to not understanding English having never properly learnt it in school, which obviously changed the dynamics of our staged encounter.

<sup>2</sup> I reversed English into Croatian and vice versa with her, just like I did with Ben during the Dubrovnik event. Can you cross culture like me and then be ‘taught’ by me on the matter? Do you see it more favourably? Are you ready to forgive my patronising tone? Are you too comfortable in my shoes?



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<sup>3</sup> I saw her the next day on the street, on Lark Lane, and we said hello. A similar thing happened with a few people from the Dubrovnik event: there was a strange kind of ‘knowledge’ between us, enough to greet one another in the street.

<sup>4</sup> On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2004, my thirtieth birthday <[http:// www.magdalenamakeup.org](http://www.magdalenamakeup.org)> was completed. I gathered the audience encounters on the web. The web audience is able to observe the past live audience’s encounters.

<sup>5</sup> The tracking of thirty Post Cards sent from Dubrovnik to Liverpool. Twenty-two were given to audience members and eight were posted by me (I marked them ‘void’). I came back to Liverpool on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September and only two Post Cards were waiting for me. One was ‘void’ and one was from Mirjana. It read: ‘Dobro ti stoji ta perika.’ As for the rest of the Post Cards I think the neighbours mistook them for flyers and threw them away. I am sad, and yet I am happy about it. Gary’s one never came. I will never know what was destined for me. In October more Post Cards arrived. Seven marked ‘void’; one from mama: ‘M. Magdalene životni put duhovno počinje brisanjem nogu Isusa i bio je to put PREOBRAŽENJA. Slijedi je!’; one from Zvončica: ‘...Vidjet cemo se opet. I ja kao i ti uvijek dolazim i odlazim...’; one from Gary: ‘Here I am outside Kamenica thinking about how you wrote over what had been written...’ In November I received one from Mario dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November. It read: ‘...dojmljivo sudjelovati u performanceu.’ I received thirteen Post Cards out of thirty. They take ages to arrive, but I doubt any more will be coming from Dubrovnik.

The tracking of thirty Post Cards sent from Liverpool to Dubrovnik. Yet again, twenty-two were given to audience members and eight were posted by me (I marked them ‘void’). I came to Dubrovnik on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December for Christmas holidays. Nineteen Post Cards were waiting for me. Eight were marked ‘void’. Three were empty. One read ‘Neal’ from Neal; one ‘This was lost and now is found’ from Elaine; one ‘Happy Xmas’ from Netty; one ‘I’m writing with one of those pens that the kids got in their after-party bag. It is supposed to glow when I write...’ from Gary; one ‘My mother’s name is Madeleine’ from Rachèle; one ‘Thank you for a moving and intimate experience’ from Andrea; one ‘You are foreign and sensual and indelible in my mind. thank you magdalene’ from Andrew; one ‘The smell... cold feet... image of a beautiful place... a tacky room... the smell’ and something in German from Kerstin. One arrived a couple of days later. It read ‘Fascinating’. I think it is from Fiona.

At ‘The Articulate Practitioner – Articulating Practice’ forum at the University of Wales in July 2006, I handed out sixty Post Cards. Twenty-five made it back home. At ‘Diasporic Future: Women, the Arts and Globalization’, one day conference at V&A museum in London in July 2006 I handed out sixty-seven Post Cards. Sixteen arrived; others are still making their way back home.

<sup>6</sup> Palimpsest – n. a manuscript written over a partly erased older manuscript in such a way that the old words can be read beneath the new.

<sup>7</sup> In *The Fall of Public Man* Richard Sennett claims that ‘community has become both emotional withdrawal from society and a territorial barricade within the city’ which consequently means that ‘this new geography is communal versus urban; the territory of warm feeling versus the territory of impersonal blankness’ (Sennett 1993 [1977]: 301). He continues to state that ‘the community must turn toward the larger structures of city and state which have actual power, the

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community is so absorbed in itself that it is deaf to the outside, or exhausted, or fragmented' (Sennett 1993 [1977]: 310) and proceeds to warn that 'localism and local autonomy are becoming widespread political creeds, as though the experience of power relations will have more human meaning the more intimate the scale – even though the actual structures of power grow ever more into an international system' (Sennett 1993 [1977]: 339).

## Chapter Seven

### *On Joan Trial*

#### Performing Agency

*Joan Trial* took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2005 at the Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster. The project was developed and produced in Liverpool and Dubrovnik, but rehearsed and first delivered at the Lancaster University campus-based Nuffield Theatre. My performance was a part of Nuffield Theatre's 'So-Low' season promoting solo artists. The combination of the context and setting of the Nuffield Theatre, a proper black box theatre studio, and the figure of Joan of Arc, as a monumental heroine, had a large impact on my performance: *Joan Trial* became the most conventionally theatrical of my three practice projects.

A forty-five minutes performance combined documentary and homemade audio-visual footage with my live action on stage. The live action was as a combination of autobiographical monologues, physical score tasks and extracts from the Joan of Arc fifteenth century trials for heresy. The structure of the performance follows this repetitive pattern: autobiographical monologue with a still image of Joan of Arc in the background, physical score task with the moving homemade or documentary audio-visual footage in the background and the re-enactment of Joan of Arc trials with still images of the figure in the background. When first developing the project I approached the figure of Joan of Arc through the reading and sound recording of her fifteenth century trials for heresy as

well as revisiting the monologues from George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1923) and Jean Anouilh's *The Lark* (1953) that I first performed in the days of my drama school training. My performance material consisted of filming my family and friends in Liverpool and Dubrovnik, rewriting stories from my childhood memories and using documentary footage from the 'War in Dubrovnik' DVD (VSP Video, date unknown). *Joan Trial* is my intervention into the themes of heroism, religion and war: the performance puts on trial my Catholic upbringing and offers a personal story about the Yugoslav war through the female heroine archetype of Joan of Arc.

### My Joan of Arc

I first heard of Joan of Arc when I was a child. She was chosen, special and courageous. She had short hair and a sword. As a teenager I sang 'And now I know how Joan of Arc felt, as the flames rose to her Roman nose and her Walkman started to melt' (*Bigmouth Strikes Again* by The Smiths from the album *The Queen is Dead* 1986), a few years later: 'I met a lady, she was playing with her soldiers in the dark, oh one by one she had to tell them that her name was Joan of Arc' (*Last Year's Man* by Leonard Cohen from the album *Songs of Love and Hate* 1970). At the age of twenty I acted out her monologues from both Jean Anouilh's *The Lark* and George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. I watched Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) starring Maria Falconetti, and was mesmerized with its silent power. In my early twenties I happened to play Joan of Arc in one of Gary's student films. And now in my early thirties I am once again playing Joan of Arc in my solo performance *Joan Trial*.

What attracts me to the character of Joan of Arc is her determined sense of mission. I relate to her political agency, her involvement in the times she was living in. According to Marina Warner (1981: 89) Joan of Arc was never an apocalyptic mystic talking about the future, which was a common characteristic amongst the other visionaries of the Middle Ages. Joan was preoccupied with the present: her only interest was in getting the English out of France. Warner writes: 'The prophecies she made remain strictly within the narrow political sphere of the war with England, with the exception of her conviction that her voices would deliver her from captivity' (Warner 1981: 91). However, Joan of Arc is often portrayed as a universal heroine, whose greatness surpasses her own life and time. From an insignificant, ordinary, peasant girl caught in between the super powers of France, England and the Church, she is emulated as a symbol of female heroism: an archetypal martyr. She stands for the impossible. Marina Warner titles her book *Joan of Arc: An Image of Female Heroism*.

The adoration of Joan of Arc and the appropriation of this figure by various, often contradictory movements is persistent through the centuries (Warner 1981). In *Henry VI, Part 1* (1590) Shakespeare portrayed her as a villain, deserving execution. In tune with the ideals of enlightenment Voltaire derided her mysticism in the mock epic poem *The Pucelle* (1756). Friedrich Schiller recreated her as a Romantic heroine in *The Maid of Orleans* (1801). Joan thus became associated with pastoral life, and celebrated as a child of nature. Anatole France depicts her in *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* (1908) as a wonderful child, with passion and enthusiasm. Napoleon restored her as a nationalistic hero and she has since been used by right wing governments in France as a symbol of French unity. The

Catholic Church finally canonized her in 1920 in order to help stop the rapid secularization of France (Warner 1981: 264). George Bernard Shaw draws his *Saint Joan* (1923) from the trial records, and is at pains to stress her individualism, her contempt for institutions and effectively makes her into a proto-Protestant. Bertolt Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (1930) transforms her into a labour leader in Chicago. Jean Anouilh's *The Lark* (1953), written in the aftermath of World War II, encapsulates the miracle of Joan, but purposefully avoids explanation of her visions and action. Joan of Arc has recently been resurrected by Luc Besson's film *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999). Aided by an expensive Hollywood production, bombastic music and easy-to-understand psychoanalytical categories, Besson effectively transforms Joan of Arc (played by Milla Jovovich) into a beautiful, sexy, self-indulgent hysteric. Feminist lesbian playwright Carolyn Gage makes Joan of Arc return to share her story with contemporary women in *The Second Coming of Joan of Arc* (2001). Joan speaks of her experiences with the highest levels of church, state and military, and unmask the brutal misogyny behind male institutions. The play is inspired by Vita Sackville-West's biography of Joan, *Saint Joan of Arc* (1936), based on the trial transcripts, an attempt to uncover the 'truth' about Joan and to reclaim her from the distortions and trivializations of male historians. Most recently Kate Bush sings about Joan of Arc in *Joanni* (album *Aerial* 2005):

Joanni, Joanni wears a golden cross  
And she looks so beautiful in her armour  
Joanni, Joanni blows a kiss to God  
And she never wears a ring on her finger.

I no longer sing along.

Joan of Arc's rebellious androgynous image: short hair, armour and boots is easily read as subversive. The transvestite Joan passes for a perfect youth culture hero, a cross between a fundamentalist and an anarchist. When working on my own creation of Joan of Arc for my performance *Joan Trial* I sourced the majority of my costume and props at Quiggins, Liverpool's alternative shopping centre, which caters for young anarchists, Goths and punks. Cultural studies theorist and feminist Angela McRobbie compares punk girls and feminists, who regardless of their different styles, both upset public standards of propriety:

Although the stiletto heels, mini-skirts and suspenders will, despite their debunking connotations, remain unpalatable to many feminists, both punk girls and feminists want to overturn accepted ideas about what constitutes femininity. And they often end up using seminal stylish devices to upset notions of 'public propriety'.

(McRobbie 2000: 41)

The idea of femininity is upset by transvestism. In her discussion of feminism and youth culture Angela McRobbie suggests 'that subcultural formations and the inflections of their various "movements" raise questions about sexual identity' (McRobbie 2000: 36). However, exchanging the feminine for the masculine look (as in the case of Joan of Arc) is not necessarily subversive *per se*, but reinforces the already given terms: feminine vs. masculine. Judith Butler reminds us that '[g]ender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but [also that] gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized' (Butler 2004: 42). Using one's gender on stage as an apparatus through which I publicly expose my 'female experiences' (of war and religion) might help critique the ideological structures that make them 'natural'. However, gender alone will not do. Cross-dressing might upset the notions of 'public propriety', the gender might be undone, but dressing

up like a soldier 'in the army look' as Joan of Arc could also be read as feeding into the consumerist culture of 'alt. everything'.

In *No Logo* Naomi Klein addresses the appropriation of youth (sub)cultures and alternative movements by 'the corporate cool hunt' (Klein 2000: 63-85). She warns us of 'the mostly unquestioned assumption that just because a scene or style is different (that is, new and not yet mainstream), it necessarily exists in opposition to the mainstream, rather than simply sitting unthreateningly on its margins' (Klein 2000: 82). Combat boots, army trousers and jacket become no more than cultural commodities. Doc Martens designer company is after all making the profit because of its products' 'subversive qualities'.<sup>1</sup> The Croatian soldier's uniform that I borrowed from a family friend to shoot some scenes of myself and the children walking around Liverpool was stripped of all Croatia emblems and badges: it could have belonged to any army, any country, any soldier and, consequently, any shopping mall. My soldier's jacket on stage (purchased from Quiggins in Liverpool) is also 'universal', which reminds me of the absurdities of war<sup>2</sup> and yet the bold and unapologetic inclusiveness of consumerism.

The love affair between army styles and activism was also apparent during the 'Make Poverty History' demonstration in Edinburgh in July 2005. Staying at the G8 campsite, meeting self-proclaimed anarchists, socialists and activists I was struck by how the army aesthetic infiltrates fashion, from clothes to tents. One of the groups present at the campsite were the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA),<sup>3</sup> a direct action group of clowning soldiers whose justification for being an army on their website



reads: 'We are an army because we live on a planet in permanent war - a war of money against life, of profit against dignity, of progress against the future'. During the G8 summit the London bombings took place and the public attention turned from anarchists to 'religious' fundamentalists. The constant state of war is our daily condition and the London bombings brought that painfully to the forefront of public attention. That constant state of war includes all wars that are being fought at this time in different corners of the world in the name of religion, or economic dominance.

As I am dressed in a trendy army look on stage, supported by the army parachute, I refer to the places where I gathered my costume and props: the alternative Quiggins, the university library, the tourist shop in Dubrovnik, as well as ebay and the internet. All these places produce the aesthetics of the performance. An army aesthetics might not be in tune with my idealized vision of the world, but in this time and space they speak most effectively to contemporary audiences and might help foreground contemporary global conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

### The trials as a dramaturgical outline

The figure of Joan of Arc, with her rigid, historical presence, demanded a 'proper' staging. My basis for the work came from the fifteenth century trial transcripts for heresy and George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, both of which were very 'serious'. I approached the work on *Joan Trial* dramaturgically. I started working on my performance outline, through text, by writing performance scripts. While *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* and

*Magdalena Makeup* were inspired and developed through one predominant action like the washing of clothes or the anointing of an audience's feet, *Joan Trial* demanded a more linear dramaturgical structure which I came to by working on the trials and sound recording them with Gary over a period from February to May 2005. Joan of Arc's trials took place from the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1431 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1431 when she was executed. I used the trials as my performance outline. I borrowed their linear dramaturgical structure. This consisted of 'preparatory interrogations', 'trials in ordinary' followed by 'trials for relapse', and finally, the execution. The trials' strict structure was interrupted by my personal autobiographical narrative, my stories of war and religion, my involvement with Joan of Arc.

What attracted me to the trials was their banality and simplicity: the judges were interested in the saints' hair and faces and the space between their crowns and their hair. I used Walter Scott's (1956) *The trial of Joan of Arc: being the verbatim report of the proceedings from the Orleans manuscript* English translation. Here's an example from the Preparatory Interrogation on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1431:

Asked whether the saints always appear to her in the same dress,  
She answered that she [always sees them] in the same form; and their heads are richly crowned; of their other clothing she does not speak, and of their robes she knows nothing.  
Asked how she knows whether it is a man or woman that appears to her,  
She answered that she was certain it was those saints by their voices, and by what they told her.  
Asked what part of them she saw,  
She answered, the face.  
Asked whether they had hair,  
She replied: Assuredly; in the French tongue, *Il est bon a savoir*.  
Asked if there is anything between their crowns and their hair,  
She answered, no.  
Asked if their hair were long and hung down,  
She replied: I do not know.  
She added that she did not know if they had anything in the nature of arms or other members.

She said moreover that they spoke most excellently and beautifully; and that she understood them perfectly.

Asked how they spoke, when they had no other members,

She answered: I leave that to God.

She said that the voice was lovely, sweet and low in tone, and spoke in French.

Asked if that voice, that is to say Saint Margaret, spoke English,

She answered: Why should she speak English? She is not on the side of the English.

(Scott 1956: 85-86)

My performance rewrites the trials into direct speech. The questions are posed to me by my husband's voice: they are pre-recorded; I answer them live on stage. Yet again, like in *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, I am playing with a locally situated male voice (which is Scouse) and an 'improper' foreign female voice, now live on stage. Positioning the male voice as pre-recorded, my intention is to allude to its grounded dominance. Having my female voice live on stage, I play with possible interruptions of that dominance. Some of Joan's answers are read, others are memorized. Since I am not interested in 'correcting' the historical representation of Joan of Arc I never fail to answer the questions posed to me as a performer and query Joan of Arc's recorded historical answers. Her trials are a device through which I get to trial my own history: war, religion and home. Joan's banal descriptions of 'divine experiences' clicked with my youth, Catholic upbringing and war experiences.

### Rewriting my experiences for the stage

*Joan Trial* traverses my histories and my geographies. I link my childhood imaginings of the archangel St Michael during the Sunday Masses in my local church in Dubrovnik to my neighbourhood train station of St Michaels in Liverpool. The street act of an angel, witnessed in Barcelona, connects to my children's room in Liverpool. Liverpool is

remapped through a bus ride taking me and my children to their Catholic primary school St Vincent de Paul.<sup>5</sup> The ‘War in Dubrovnik’ DVD filmed in 1991 is connected to the contemporary scene of me and my friends having a coffee and a chat in Dubrovnik’s main square amongst tourists that might just purchase that very same DVD. My children become re-inscribed with that war history. I link their Catholic primary school in Liverpool to my war torn Dubrovnik. Finally, all these places meet in the Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster University. During the performance I refer to the gathering of my props. I wish for the specificity of my local homes of Liverpool and Dubrovnik to be read through its connections to beyond, be it the Nuffield Theatre or other places I perform in.

The text in the performance was partly written as a response to what connects me to the character of Joan of Arc. As a child, I was often bored during Mass. I used to stare at St Michael’s painting (after Guido Reni’s *Archangel Michael*) in my local church in Dubrovnik. I expected to be called to arms and have a mission like St Michael or Joan of Arc. The Medjugorje story of children who have visions first emerged when I was ten. I read books about little Bernardette and her visions in Lourdes. I felt inadequate for not having visions, for not being chosen by God and catered for by the angels. I visited Medjugorje a few times and convinced myself that I was experiencing visions. Many others were doing the same thing: we were all collectively seeing the cross on the hill turn around itself and the Sun changing colours.

My further connection with Joan comes through George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan* and my classical training. During my theatre studies in Bratislava, I performed a

monologue from the play, which I now use to connect and undo theatre presumptions about classical acting and fundamentalist religion. Furthermore, G. B. Shaw is often quoted in Dubrovnik. He is reported to have said: 'If you are looking for paradise on earth, come to Dubrovnik.' My hometown is a tourist resort and Shaw was its frequent visitor in the times before large-scale commercial tourism.<sup>6</sup> These days Dubrovnik gets bombarded in other ways with flocks of tourists alighting their cruising ships, going for a quick tour, buying a pen, a postcard or a miniature flag and leaving for their next Mediterranean stop.

During the Yugoslav war, Dubrovnik was a ghost town. The locals liked it a little: we were free of the smell of sun block lotions, stripy hats and overexposed and sunburnt flesh. We also felt connected. The price we paid for empty beaches and the town to ourselves were frequent warning alarms for air or ground strikes, not to mention the declining economy. While collecting audio-visual footage for *Joan Trial* and experiencing Dubrovnik, as a tourist might, through the camera lens, I decided to let go of my 'natural right' to claim Dubrovnik as my own. Put in a position behind the camera I realized it was as much anybody's as it was mine. We were all migrants and tourists. By letting go of my exclusive rights to the place, I let my memory play with my experiences and create the material for my artwork. I no longer wanted to be one of the locals, parading up and down Stradun, the main street, claiming my place. Instead I decided to be creatively invested in its production and appropriate it for *Joan Trial*.

The 'War in Dubrovnik' DVD which gathers amateur video footage, filmed during autumn 1991, the time of the severest attacks on Dubrovnik became a prominent resource material for my performance. Additionally, some of the footage is VCR recorded from the television news with foreign TV station logos figuring in the top left-hand corner of the screen. The DVD shows ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Using amateur footage and shaky camera work, the DVD packages traumas and sells the authenticity of war. It is not my intention to criticize the makers of the DVD, which was first made as a call for help to the international community with the political aim of recognizing Croatia as a new country. However, the 'War in Dubrovnik' DVD has now become a consumer item for the tourist industry: we have learnt to consume people's traumas by buying and selling them. With *Joan Trial* I hoped to intervene a little and suggest another version of the war by lending it my specific voice.

People's faces from the DVD are familiar to me. I recognize their past youth. I have forgotten their names. My cousin is in the video, just next to an UN peacekeeper. The girl who carries the baby through the rubble is just a few years older than me. Is it possible she had a baby that young, in 1991? She has dark sunglasses on and looks cool. One child with the dummy in her mouth waiting to board the refugee ship looks just like the younger sister of my best friend Barbara. But surely that's not her? She can't have been that young. There's my neighbour distributing the food. A group of young men from Mlini, a small town where my mother grew up, ten kilometres south of Dubrovnik, have gathered around the fire. They are cooking. I used to be in love with one of the boys. He lost the fingers of his right hand playing with fireworks just before the war. He

later became a soldier. Most of them did. When watching the 'War in Dubrovnik' DVD with some friends and family in Dubrovnik, we laugh about the familiar faces we see. We wonder how they made it onto the final cut. The war is so banal; anyone can make it onto the final cut.

When appropriating my experiences of my Catholic upbringing and my experiences of war in Dubrovnik for the stage I emphasize their specificity. This derives from my personal circumstances and I thus try to avoid making generalizations about Catholicism and war. Dealing with the 'grand narratives' of war and religion and 'grand figures' like Joan of Arc allows an audience an entrance point: they are entering a familiar terrain, with their beliefs and opinions. My aim is not to change those, but add my own, specific enough to open up a space for questions and not only reflection but also reflexivity. In this sense *Joan Trial* might provide an opportunity to see beyond the generalizations, categories, ideologies and archetypes.

### Joan, agency and me

Historically, Joan of Arc is clearly a political figure with religious and military agency. I see my political as made up from my own personal actions and responsibilities. One of those responsibilities that I feel I have in my role as an artist is intervening into the production of female categories, which are taken as 'natural', like female archetypes, such as Joan of Arc. I, as an artist, ought to take seriously the fact that I am personally a

site through which many oppressive ideologies are reproduced, like female categorizations and immigration policies.

As a child I believed in miracles, saints and angels: that was an easy way of making sense of the world. Now, when I don't believe in miracles, saints and angels, I have my belief in agency as an artist. This is my strongest link with the figure of Joan of Arc. I am not interested in praising the martyrdom and heroism of Joan of Arc. Through this figure I want to investigate agency. I dislike her heroism: she is individualized, special and put on a pedestal. She is a curiously perfect hero – a woman acting as a man. Her faith in God appears to be complete: she does not distrust the institution of Church; she trusts God more. I am disturbed by her absolute faith in God, her missionary fundamentalism, her heroic individualism that leads to violence and bloodshed. She makes me think about dripping blood, about St Michael stabbing Lucifer. She becomes a site through which ideological aspects of heroism, war and religion are implemented. Placing her in the contemporary world today I best see her as a fundamentalist Christian. She makes me think about the American evangelical Right, the illegitimate wars the West engage in, Bush and Blair praying to God. I am taken by the desire to burn her at the stake once again. However, I decline to stage the burning of Joan of Arc and settle for rejecting her as my childhood heroine. I think about her agency which equates with her faith in God. I wonder how Joan would do without God? What happens when Joan no longer hears voices? What happens when there is no God to help you in your agency? In my case, I am concerned to ask what my political agency might be as an artist today and where it is to be located?



## The question of agency as an artist

I use the term ‘artist’ as one of my names; one of the ways I am appropriated and wish to be appropriated in society. By naming myself an artist, I am interested in receiving and acting upon the responsibility that such a ‘public’ name carries. One of the assessment criteria outlined by ACE for receiving ‘Grants for the Arts’ funding is that the public will benefit from the activity proposed (ACE 2005b: 17). In March 2006 I attended a seminar organized at Tate Modern entitled ‘Going Professional: Live Art’, which aimed to help aspiring, emerging and emergent artists source the various funding schemes available to them. One of the participants asked: ‘How in the world is anyone able to fulfil the assessment criteria that the public will benefit from the activity proposed?’ Paula Brown, Live Art and Interdisciplinary Officer at ACE London office, persuaded the participant that any artistic activity should be beneficial to the public because, after all, any artist is a member of the public. In an interview with Angela Ingram in *Postmarked Calcutta, India*, Spivak concludes that one should speak personally, while thinking of oneself as a public individual and the representative space one occupies (Spivak 1990: 94). Being named an ‘artist’ makes me into a public individual and my artwork becomes my representative space.

In my daily practice and in my arts practice I am committed to remaining a ‘vigilant’ observer of the world and its structures on a daily basis and dedicated to ‘intervention’ through my arts projects. I want to be critical about the world through my arts practice. Spivak reminds us:

Deconstruction is good in contact politics, not in broad planning. It's good for tactical situations ... people one on one. In electoral politics it's not much use at all. It works much more strongly in the highly diversified politics of feminism and anti-racism.

(Spivak 1990: 135)

Making myself accountable through my agency as an artist and artwork I produce, I am allowing for my momentary politics. As a non-British citizen I am absent from electoral politics but my momentary politics affect the spaces and people I encounter through my artwork. My engagement with the world is evident through my commitment to comment upon it through an arts practice.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I remember Mirsad Sijarić, a Bosnian poet and a soldier, telling me how he spent some of his publishing grant on a pair of Doc Martens boots. While promoting his new book of poetry in Vienna, he headed straight for the Doc Martens shop. His own combat boots were worn out and the Bosnian army were unable to supply him with a new pair. He said they were the best investment he had ever made. Soon after his book promotion around Central Europe he was recalled back to the frontline of the Bosnian war (for more information about Sijarić see Chapter Three, pp. 65-66).

<sup>2</sup> For an effective portrayal of the absurdity of war and the haphazard desertion of one army in favour of another, see Stanley Kubrick's film *Barry Lyndon* (1975), whose beautifully long drawn out scenes often complement my Sunday afternoons. Amongst contemporary plays refer to Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* (2003) and Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (2001), both of which, in their different ways, desolate and claustrophobic, allude to the absurdity of war and conflict. It might also be worth mentioning 'In Place of War', an A.H.R.C. funded research project at Manchester University led by Professor James Thompson, which explores the relationship between performance and war. For more information see <<http://www.inplaceofwar.net>>.

<sup>3</sup> See <<http://www.clownarmy.org/about/about.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> I ran into a friend the other day. Incidentally I was wearing my Joan of Arc costume. There was no reason for it: I guess I wanted to exercise my 'right' as a solo performer of being able to wear my costumes whenever I wanted. I was my own boss. She said: 'You look like a political activist.' Army clothes might help you to be read as one.

<sup>5</sup> As I filled out the primary school application form I made a decision to send my sons Neal and Gabriel to a Catholic school. I wanted them to have angels and saints to believe in. Even though I am not a regular churchgoer, I am reluctant to let go of my Catholic upbringing and tradition. My

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parents will be pleased. Sending my child to a Catholic school makes me feel I have done my bit for religious upbringing. On the positive side, the school is inner city and multicultural. The tables have turned: I used to attend an atheist socialist school but was fed Catholicism at home. During the Yugoslav socialist regime, when attendance in church was not favoured by the ruling Communist party, my mother was cautioned for being a churchgoer and a teacher. I remember a kind of contradiction between the teaching in school and the stuff my parents used to say at home, supported by weekly lessons of catechism at St Michael's local church. Things did not make sense: teachers celebrated the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and parents celebrated Easter. I learnt never to take the things adults said for granted. I hope my own children inherit this.

<sup>6</sup> One of the ongoing arts projects for Srdjana Cvijetić of Art Workshop Lazareti (for my contextualization within this arts institution in Dubrovnik see Chapter Two, pp. 49-50) concerns tourism and Dubrovnik's seasonal living. Umjetnička Galerija Dubrovnik (Art Gallery Dubrovnik) has recently hosted Slaven Tolj's exhibition *Izvan Sezone (Out of Season)* (2006/07), a conceptual arts project which looks at the life of Dubrovnik outside the tourist season. The exhibition took place from December 2006 to February 2007, time of the year when tourists disappear and thus was targeted at local residents. I myself have written an unpublished play about the encounter between local Dubrovnikovians and Scottish tourists called *Killing G. B. Shaw*. It is also noteworthy to mention a major visual arts exhibition which deals with tourism entitled *Universal Experience: Art, Life and the Tourist's Eye* (2005/06) co-organized by the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Chicago, Hayward Gallery, London and Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Roverto.

## Conclusion

### On the Politics of My Arts Practice

For the past three years I have been (dis)identifying female archetypes in live art. I worked around three different female archetypes Medea (as anti-mother), Mary Magdalene (as penitent whore) and Joan of Arc (as martyr and female soldier). I developed three self-contained arts projects *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial* in three different artforms (live art/installation, one-to-one live art community event, theatrical performance respectively) in four different venues (Bluecoat Arts Centre, Lark Lane Community Centre/Art Workshop Lazareti, Nuffield Theatre). The projects are interrelated through the figures of female archetypes as well as through my developing methodology: my performance making tactics.

This Ph.D. is situated within the growing culture of postgraduate practice as research. It combines professional arts practice with academic research. With a strong emphasis on my position as foreign artist in the UK, engaging reflexively in the socio-cultural conditions that inform my lived experience of locality, this research is concerned to address materialist aspects of an arts practice. The research combines interdisciplinary approaches to theory, by using postcolonial and transnational feminist studies as well as feminist discourses on the 'politics of location' and 'lived experience', and applying them to the discussion of contemporary British Live Art practices, feminist solo performance and transnational arts practices.

My contribution to knowledge is in two parts: contextual and practical. The first part of my written thesis is more theory-based and serves to contextualize my own arts practice within the fields of women's performance practices, transnational arts practices and British Live Art. Firstly, in Chapter One, I discussed the historical, theoretical, cultural and popular perceptions of archetypes and contributed to the field of feminist performance practice by emphasizing the danger of reading women and their experiences through female archetypes. Secondly, in Chapter Two, I explored my working methodologies and elaborated on the issues of lived experience and local community by emphasizing the danger of understanding one's home as a closed entity. I also introduced the reader to two arts centres in my two homes, Liverpool and Dubrovnik, which were prominent contexts for the development of my arts practice, Bluecoat Arts Centre and Art Radionica Lazareti (Art Workshop Lazareti). In Chapter Three, I connected 'transnational feminist cultural studies' and 'transnational feminist activism' to arts and artists and offered a reading of transnational arts practices as a form of political agency. In Chapter Four, by looking at other foreign female artists in the British Live Art scene, I made them more visible and emphasized their cultural Otherness as critical difference. My contribution in practice is evident through my three arts projects, as my examples of feminist arts practice, and my performance making tactics (my methodology) as a form of cultural agency. My three arts projects and my methodology are discussed in the second part of the thesis.

Since this Ph.D. is positioned as practice as research, the main emphasis of my findings are on my practical contribution: my three arts projects and my working

methodology. This conclusion will evaluate these practical findings in relation to the research questions posed and address the implications this research has had on my future arts practice activities. Firstly, however, I would like to note the relationship between my practice and the theory used. In addition, I will also offer an argument as to why this research had to be practice-based. As I have already mentioned, the first part of the thesis, which is theory-based, served to contextualize my arts practice. However, the theory dealt with, during the three years of my research, had a direct impact on my arts making methodologies. The process of learning about postcolonial and transnational feminist studies as well as feminist discourses on the 'politics of location' and 'lived experience' impacted on the way I perceive the world, my community and, especially, my arts making. Since these feminist studies are grounded in the practice of everyday living, I felt that I could rely on my own experience of transnational living in the local in my arts making. In this sense the theory used had a direct impact on my practice and I never fully distinguished between the two as theory and practice. Inevitably, there were periods where I worked exclusively on the development of the performances and periods when I focused on reading and writing. However, the interrelationship between theory and practice is perhaps mostly evident in my chosen methodology and my performance making tactics, which, as a form of cultural agency, are intrinsically linked to the ideas of transnational feminist activism. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach of combining feminist theories and arts practices allowed me to open up theoretical claims through the arts practice and ask questions around them. By choosing not to engage with feminist performance theories I avoided what might be seen to be the trap of applying those theories in practice. Moreover, since this research is predominantly materialist in nature,

one of its main objectives lies in the analysis of the socio-cultural conditions that produced it, which leads me to why this research had to be practice-based.

In the tradition of cultural studies and feminism, I undertook the analysis of the constructed nature of my lived experience as a female foreigner in my locale and decided to intervene into it through my arts practice. The sheer violence of the contemporary world, its constant state of war and predominant capitalist ideologies called for some kind of direct action. My field of action revolved around the issues of female categorizations and feeling of Otherness. In the tradition of feminist and activist arts practices, I relied on the act of social interventions as my creation. In this sense this research needed to be practice-based as it needed to be of interventionist nature. The production of my arts practice is understood as my political commitment to the world, a part of and an intervention into my everyday living. I understand my position as artist as a call to agency, my being-in-the-world and my politics.

To answer whether this research has been effective is not straightforward or easy. This research has inevitably been a product of my position in this place and time. I drew primarily from the situation I found myself in: being a Ph.D. student, a mother of two small children and a 'foreigner' in Liverpool, with certain performing skills, a stage training background and connections to the live art scene primarily in the North West of England but also beyond. I could formulate my research as the development of a momentary politics of my agency through my politicized subjectivity, my emphasis on

the ‘foreigner’ figuration and my involvement in the local community. I understand that my context shapes and produces my artwork as I intervene into it.

I am aware that my identity has been constructed through the processes of arts making, my contexts, connections and networks. The production, delivery, reception, and reflection on my artwork, together formed my political agency as an artist and my identity politics, or rather my politicized subjectivity, emerged through those actions.<sup>1</sup> I understand that the action of doing arts may turn out to be more evidently political than the singled out performances or live art events. The production processes involved many ‘fellow locals’ (neighbours, mothers, shoppers and check-out girls, friends, passers-by, bus passengers) and my encounters with them allowed for an exchange: a conversation, a thought, a comment, a theatre programme or a web site link. Even when my artwork is solo and I am classified by the Arts Council as an individual artist, I aimed to speak through my own subjective position whilst remaining cognizant of how my position is produced by my context and in encounters with others.

Looking back on my three arts projects, my research questions (see Introduction to My Arts Practice, p. 101) and my overall research aim to dis-identify with the construct of ‘the universal’ female archetypes (in this case Medea, Mary Magdalene and Joan of Arc) through its juxtaposition with the experiential and the lived realities, I can say that effective dis-identification happened progressively. *Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* opened up my research questions in relation to the figure of Medea but did not exert enough critical rigor over it. *Magdalena Makeup*, as an experimental piece and work-in-



progress, allowed me to better understand what practice as research might be but also failed to dis-identify the female archetype of penitent whore fully. *Joan Trial*, as my final examined piece, became my most effective dis-identification from the female archetype of Joan of Arc. However, that is not to say that *Joan Trial* is my most accomplished performance. *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* is a more accessible piece, has had more bookings and continues to receive bookings. Moreover, I believe that the ambivalence *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* creates in relation to the figure and concept of motherhood is a useful critical tool, even when not clearly a dis-identification with the female archetype.

In this sense, I realized that in order to produce a critical feminist arts practice, it might not be necessary to fully reject the chosen figure of female archetype, but rather use its own symbolic existence with its apparent criticism of patriarchal structures and, through arts practice, explore the themes around it (motherhood, Otherness, labelling, home, religion, war, heroism). I, as the author of the work, could take advantage of the figures' symbolic power as well as the popular 'universal' appeal they hold for the audiences. However, whilst those figures provided me with a strong starting point, my aim was to expose the way the chosen figures, the prescribed forms of the feminine and the explored themes, have all been socio-culturally constructed. In order for me to transform my three figures into my feminist tools, I needed to strip them of their essentialist feminine qualities and, through performance, embark on the process of exposing the dominant patriarchal ideologies within the themes that surrounded them.

Performance, as a live and yet constructed medium, became a platform through which I could, by exposing the processes of its own construction, subsequently, develop ways to expose the predominant patriarchal ideologies in the themes I wanted to address. Thus, in *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, the staged dialogue between my foreign female voice and my husband's Scouse, where my nuanced speech is constantly being corrected, acts as a feminist intervention into the dramatic canon, in this case Euripides' *Medea*. Euripides' words and the character of Medea are used to comment on the contemporary issues of what it might mean to feel foreign. In *Magdalena Makeup* the audience member is confronted with an imperfect version of the figure of Mary Magdalene, which does not stand up to the previously seen images from 'master paintings' and is, moreover, to be found in a small pokey room, within the shabby environment of a contemporary arts festival or a local community centre. Such a displacement of the archetypal figure puts into question her pedestal status and saintly aura of the penitent whore, and opens up a thinking space around the issues of labelling and naming. *Joan Trial* plays with intervening into her fifteenth century trials for heresy and exposes the banality of the questions asked. The dominant power structure is questioned. The grand narrative of Joan of Arc gets to be replaced by a minor story of my own experience of war and religion.

The chosen aesthetics of my performances are created through the implementation of my performance making methodology. My arts practice is developed out of the 'home' setting. I have relied on my 'female foreign' condition, my local community, my lived experience and subsequently I developed my performance making

tactics (such as intervening into my theatre background through my three female archetypes and their connection to the canon, homemade video style, family and friends as collaborators, being solo, the use of autobiographical material and a personal style of writing). My world on stage is created by one-person politics. Whilst the final performances do display a certain level of professionalism (which is mostly evident through my highly developed performance skills and the eloquence of the audio-visual material) my presence, as the author of the artworks, and my politicized position, as a female foreign artist, are strongly alluded to. For example, in *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, through the staged dialogue between myself and my husband, I accept and expose my position as actor performing Medea and learning her lines; in *Magdalena Makeup* I film myself in the mirror and disclose the camera to the audiences; in *Joan Trial* I directly address both the technician and the audiences and tell them how I obtained all the props, costume and images used on stage. As I have already argued, my performances, and more generally my arts practice, are my very own contribution to the world: my-being-in-the-world.

I found that my performance making tactics are an effective form of cultural agency. The use of lived experience, local community, homemade aesthetics, family and friends as collaborators, the use of autobiographical material and a personal style of writing became my *sustainable* performance resources which also allowed me to be critical of my theatre background and intrinsic presumptions about arts making which relies on the possession of 'natural' talent and hard-won skills. By *sustainable* I mean readily available and re-usable. I am committed to exploring myself, my family, my lived

experience, my immediate environment as potential material for staging, whilst engaging reflexively in my position as a politicized being-in-the-world. This is an integral aspect of my alliance with transnational feminist activism in that such an artistic exploration combines an arts practice and my everyday life. My experience of having a woman's life (I am particularly alluding to my position as a mother) does not obstruct my 'artistic career'; life and art are constantly being reflected by and through each other.

I found out that by developing and disseminating my arts projects in the local community provided me with an opportunity to engage socially and perhaps better understand some of the ramifications that might arise from an arts practice designed for life outside the conventional frames of the art world. My first two projects *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* and *Magdalena Makeup* were broader in that sphere of activity than *Joan Trial* which was presented within arts and education establishment context (Nuffield Theatre and Lancaster University). *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* was presented at the Bluecoat Arts Centre (established arts centre in Liverpool), but its developmental stages took place in my neighbourhood's toddlers' groups in Liverpool 17. *Magdalena Makeup* was partly staged in Lark Lane Community Centre, once again my neighbourhood of Liverpool 17. However, finding a balance between a critically engaged arts practice, such as *Joan Trial*, and an arts practice which is wholly developed and sustained in the community, such as *Magdalena Makeup* in Lark Lane Community Centre, is difficult to achieve. (For a more general theoretical argument in relation to the problematics of local community see my arguments in Chapter Two and particularly references to the work of Jacques Derrida, Iris Marion Young and Doreen Massey, pp.

43-46; for a particular discussion of staging *Magdalena Makeup* in the community of Liverpool 17, see Chapter Six, pp. 141-144.) Since the concept of community is based on the ideas of togetherness and unity, arts in community may often reiterate a feeling of 'being special' and promote certain kind of closeness to the outside world, where that outside world may consist in a different postcode, city, region, country or a continent. Whilst my figuration of a Foreigner and the travel of Post Cards between two cities of Liverpool and Dubrovnik might have helped open up the local towards the ideas of 'difference' and transnationalism, *Magdalena Makeup* was lacking in a rigorous kind of criticality towards the issues I wanted to address. An example of this is the constructed nature of the figure of Mary Magdalene in relation to her apparent femininity and the performed intimacy of each encounter. The fact that the project was staged as a series of one-to-one encounters between me and the members of the public and its durational aspect did not help facilitate this critical enquiry.

Still, as one of my future activities I am interested to pursue and further develop a sustainable *and* critical arts practice in the community. In collaboration with my husband Gary Anderson and my children, I aim to develop an interdisciplinary activist arts practice that relies on sustainable resources in and of the family, but at the same time, is critically positioned regarding the structures of the familial. This project, titled 'Family Activism', grows out of both my own and Gary's practice as research Ph.D. 'Politicising a Film Practice' at the University of Plymouth. Our aim is to exercise our family activist arts practice in the community but also consolidate and contextualize such a practice within the wider constituencies of activism and critical arts practices through post-

doctoral research. We are currently developing a series of short films under the title of Home Movies. Most recent titles include 'Coming to a Town Near You: Condo in Liverpool, Dick in Dubrovnik' (2006), a twelve minute protest film about the high profile political visits of Condoleezza Rice and Dick Chaney to our hometowns of Liverpool and Dubrovnik, and 'Oil' (2007), a ten minute film which looks at the immanent presence of fuel oil within our everyday life. Both films have received Home Screenings in our own Liverpool flat for friends and neighbours. Additionally, 'Coming to a Town Near You' will be presented at Cultural Studies Now international conference at East London University in July 2007 as a part of our collaborative paper 'A Family Protest'. A collaborative nature of this project as well as a reflexive subject matter, our own family, might help us in finding ways to open up our community arts practice to more critical modes of inquiry.

In connection to my concern in researching the family and exercising activist arts practices, it might be interesting to add that I am a member of an interdisciplinary research group MaMSIE (Mapping Maternal Subjectivities Identities Ethics).<sup>2</sup> The group 'aims to establish a broad network of academics and writers interested in the maternal across a number of different disciplinary and practice boundaries. These include the social sciences, philosophy, psychoanalysis, gender and sexuality, literature, creative writing and visual art' (notes from the material circulated to the participants by Dr. Lisa Baritser at the MaMSIE's initial event at Birkbeck University in March 2007). Further events are planned at Birkbeck in November 2007 and at Cambridge in April 2008. I presented my paper '*Medea/Mothers' Clothes: A Foreigner Re-figuring Motherhood*' at

the initial event and plan to continue researching the maternal by critically re-visiting *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* and its recurrent themes. Moreover, this research project coincides with the pregnancy and birth of my third child in August 2007.

My three arts projects *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*, *Magdalena Makeup* and *Joan Trial* have all been presented through organized tours, festivals, symposia and conferences (please refer to my three chapters around practice for further details). Whilst I do not completely exclude the possibility of touring *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* and *Joan Trial* in the upcoming seasons, I also feel that this research project of (dis)identifying female archetypes has come to a close and that I am ready to embark on the development of two new solo arts projects. Picking up on my research into the figuration of a Foreigner, I will extend my transnational arts practice with the development of the project entitled *Becoming British*. My plan is to document the process of my application for the British citizenship in an interrogative and activist form, whilst contesting ideas of citizenship and nationality and continuing to ask questions around responsibility and agency as an artist and (non)citizen. Additionally I plan to build on my present networks and continue with my feminist interventions into the theatrical cannon. I am currently developing a re-figuration of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as a solo performance around the character of Masha Serghyeevna with the aim of further exploring notions around theatre/live art, acting and (be)longing. This project is being developed through 'Factory Floor', a workshop network that grew out of Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris's AHRC funded research project 'Women's Writing for Performance'. More information about

both of these solo projects as well as collaborative work on 'Family Activism' will be available through my website [www.lenasimic.org](http://www.lenasimic.org).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This remark has been inspired by Butler's criticism on identity politics and preference for the construction of identity through action:

The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed,' but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed.

(Butler 1999 [1991]: 181)

<sup>2</sup> For more information about MaMSIE visit <http://mamsie.wikispaces.com/>.



## Appendix A

### Supporting Material for *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*

Appendix A contains extracts from my performance journal, a copy of the poster/programme for the event and two DVDs. The first DVD documents the rehearsal, the performance and the installation in the Bluecoat. The second DVD contains video material for the performance and installation. The majority of the performance journal was written during the period of the project's development from November 2003 to May 2004 with a couple of newer entries from January 2005 and February 2006.

#### Extracts from *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* Performance Journal

##### Liverpool, November 2003 – May 2004

(...)

Motherhood is a new world. There are rules. I became a mother and became less of a foreigner. I had a role. Liverpool was more eager to accept me. I joined in.

Still, at a Tesco checkout, as a checkout lady begins the conversation with my baby 'Hiya' and as soon as I open my mouth... the accent... the possibility of invasion.... The justification that I am here because I married (all proper) a British person. Wow, a British person. So it is not like I came to suck up the state's benefits. Oh no, I am not the asylum seeker. Better not say Croatia... nor Yugoslavia... That might give them the wrong idea.

Now, in public I talk to the children in Croatian. It is loud and strange. No one dares to talk to me. I choose to endure the strange looks. This is much better than justifying my position of a foreigner each time I am invited to open my mouth by an accidental passer-by who casually refers to the colour of my child's hair. Ginger.

Sometimes I long to move to London... The idea(l) that somewhere it is much easier for foreigners.

On the other hand Liverpool mothers' accepted me and I am in. They all know my little story... and I became a part of community.

Now I'm a toddlers' group veteran, with two boys aged three and one.

(...)

...Maybe other toddlers' group mothers enjoy this role fully, them as mothers... and yet they forget about children. They are happy breastfeeding and being overweight. They don't seem to have any interest in sex. They, these mothers, are so not-me, and yet here I

am. Each one of them is particular, but overall they form more of an archetypal figure than Medea does. I am disassociated from them. I am indulgent in my disassociation. A foreigner. A double foreigner.

(...)

Why is it so important for 'them' to control their children's life fully? What are we protecting the children from? Which school, which friends, which snack, which toy, which hat... All organized, all for us. I am under the influence. I am obsessed with motherhood at the expense of my children's well being. I am in competition. I am in! Am I still a foreigner?

(...)

Protect the innocent!

This is a bloody foreigner, that weird one who would die and kill for a higher cause. This is a mad terrorist. This is our danger. This is not spoken to.

This.

This is no longer just a personal arena, this is politics that we don't want to get involved in. This Medea's idea is just beyond the understanding of any contemporary thought, male or female, beyond humanity. Taken out of her context, Medea is the anti-mother, the archetype.

(...)

I am learning to speak the motherhood language in Scouse.

There's a special soap-opera like language when mothers convey their 'prepared intimate speeches'. Mother-in-law talk. Breaking up with your partner talk. No wedding talk. We had a Christmas drink the other day and drank and smoked and got dressed up. The forbidden topics were 'labour' and 'breastfeeding'. Each mother so needed to be listened to. The talks. And these were those prepared talks, they've said them a million times before and yet they need to be telling them again and again to new faces, new mothers. They sound as though they are from a soap opera, but real. Learnt, rehearsed. The thoughts are formed, it is all about the delivery of lines. The delivery.

I also have these talks. The stories. I use them in these social situations. They help. It would be too exhausting to be fresh all the time, to come up with new words, too surprise oneself. How could you not have a story on your mother-in-law? Maybe when we talk about our ever changing kids, we are less sure and we invent as we go along. We learn as we talk.

(...)

be generous

Children's nursery rhymes:

A sailor went to sea sea sea...  
Ja sam gusar s Porporele...  
Loose connection of morbidity of nursery rhymes  
Men in connection to the sea  
Women and water?  
Washing the costume, lots of soap, poisonous soup...  
I am cleaning things...

(...)

Sound disconnected from the picture.  
*Stabat Mater*.  
Classical music on the top of the everyday.

(...)

Should I include the footage from the toddlers' group?  
Me and Amra (two foreigners) talking...  
There's an American in the toddlers' group now. An American. It feels really bizarre.  
Everyone is talking about her and no one wants to talk to her. Is she more foreign than me? An American – feels like a Martian has arrived.

(...)

Disclosure of myself through the writing – giving of my program/poster to the mothers and my performance diary. Suddenly I have lost my mask. I am labelled other, different.

### **Video practice one: Learning the lines from Ladies of Corinth monologue**

I am playing with Medea. I am playing with acting. I am playing with ideas about Medea and acting.

Male voice is prompting me, teaching me lines. I am eager to learn.

The absurdity of text, the absurdity of taking on this male voice, the absurdity of this theatrical canon, the absurdity of this character.

Gary is prompting me. I am relaxed. I am eager to learn. I need to learn my lines.

The text seems awkward; English is difficult. I can't get to grips with 'a' and 'the'.

Gary and I are both taking on roles and yet never letting go of our 'real' husband-wife roles.

I am convinced this method of work works. I am detached and attached. I am true in my struggle to learn the lines. I am concentrated.

### **Video practice three: Makeup**

Putting on makeup. Putting on a role. Pretending. Refusing to be what I am. Trying to change...

Becoming someone else, someone more powerful, someone tougher, someone who is out-of-order, someone who can do things, someone capable, different from reality...

I remember starting to first use my mum's makeup when she would leave me home alone. The parents were gone and I was free to roam around the flat and their interesting grown-up things. Bathroom: makeup with all those spectacular colours like sky blue and pink. The process of putting on makeup. The mirror, the small hands which were incapable of doing it accurately. Pink lipstick all over the edges of my lips. Soaping the face, getting rid of the evidence. Scrubbing the face clean. Making myself clean again. Still, the redness of my lips could not vanish. The lips just stayed a shade redder.

I managed to raise the application of makeup to perfection (or what I believed to be perfection) during my early twenties. I was advised by one of those makeup connoisseur friends on which brands to use and what magazines to consult for the look. Makeup application became art and used up a lot of time.

During my pregnancies and shortly afterwards I forgot the makeup altogether. No will, no time, no need. Makeup became absurd, funny and cheeky.

I am back. Back in makeup.

Dare I apply it in this drastic manner, as Medea, as anomaly, as changing the primal function of the makeup – making you beautiful – into – making you wild?

Playing with possibilities.

Having power.

Daring to be different.

Male voice under the text is becoming an annoyance; I am facing up to it. I am empowered by the makeup transformation.

### **Video practice four: Doing the laundry**

It is only recently I learnt that washing dirty linen in public means letting out your family secrets in public. It was one of those easy 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' questions that are only easy to those who were born and bred in the UK.

*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* live art act is about washing clothes and sheets in public.

As an artist I am bound to giving, to disclosure, to some kind of generosity that can also be disguised by arrogance, carelessness and 'who gives a damn' attitude.

The need to do this project, to wash these clothes does not come from the need to convey something to share, but rather to satisfy myself, my wish to come to terms with who I am in this particular space and time.

Maybe this is the move from theatre to live art...

I don't know.

We don't have a washing machine at home. We do the laundry at the laundrette. Last time we were there the laundrette lady commented on how Gabriel (my younger son) has grown and how they have watched him grow up. I felt he was twenty. He's only seventeen months. Will we just keep on going to that laundrette... and Gabriel will grow up? Buying a washing machine has somehow escaped our frame of mind. It's not even about money. Maybe it is about lifestyle, about doing the laundry in the community, observing the people, being pissed off cause you have to do it and cause you haven't got any change.

I commented on how it really brings the family together when we are all folding the clothes. It's the activity, not the time together, but the focused activity. Even Gabriel helps.

I miss hanging the clothes outdoors. Gary is determined not to have the flat full of wet clothes hanging around everywhere and dripping... It always rains in Liverpool; it would never dry outdoors. I am convinced that all this rain and England business is some kind of conspiracy to keep the foreigners away from the country or at least give them a bad opinion about English weather. It's not that bad. Not at all.

### **Video practice five: Costume fitting**

The costume arrived. It travelled all the way from Konavle where it was made. Konavle is the area where my maternal grandmother is from, the most southern part of Croatia. The costume takes the form of a Konavle folk dress.

As a child I belonged to Lindjo, a folk dances group, and often wore Konavle folk dress. I might even have a few photographs. Konavle dress always made me feel uncomfortable with lots of straps and lots of clips in my hair that were holding a special scarf-veil on my head. On the plus side we were allowed to wear makeup, a lot of it. There seemed to be a paradox in the whole do: dress was difficult to bear (and certainly un-cool) while makeup was wonderful. We had to wait for the time to come when we would take off the dress and yet 'forget' to take the makeup off, put on our jeans and hit the town streets and boys.

My great grandmother lived up to the age of ninety-four. She died when I was around nine. She always wore Konavle dress. There were a few different ones: the everyday one, the celebratory one, the summer one, the winter one. I was fascinated with the scarf-veil that seemed to stand so upright. I remember her telling me she was wearing a widow's dress. Her husband died when she was in her early forties. She never remarried. They had four daughters, one of whom is my grandmother. One of the daughters stayed to live with my great grandmother, she never married. She took care of her mother. Now she is in a nursing home; there is no one to take care of her. She never wore Konavle dress, or maybe only when she was a girl. The same goes for my grandmother. However, the oldest of the four daughters, the one who still lives in Konavle, wears Konavle dress. Her husband died when she was in her forties as well. She lives with her son and his family. She is ninety-four.

My Medea costume travelled all the way from Konavle where it was made by Tina Gverović and Ana Piplica. Tina travelled all the way to Britain in her Renault Clio. She was coming here anyway, it wasn't only for the costume, but I do like to give some significance to Medea costume travelling all the way from Konavle to Liverpool in a car. Tina is showing me the costume for the first time; I am trying it on for the first time. The feeling I come away with is one of empowerment. I am distancing myself from my male voice, my husband's prompting, and indulging in girly talk of dressing up, of feeling special and glamorous. I am breaking free from the text, overtaken by the situation. The situation is stronger than the text. I am within the situation and the situation is in control. I am part of the control.

### **Video practice seven: Reading a bed-time story**

The terror that exists in children's stories...

The fear that children image...

The nightmares that haunt night time bedrooms...

The resentful parents with the parents' anger...

The explanations that children offer to themselves...

Yesterday I realized that two tougher kids were bullying my Neal. Birthday party for Mascen. Two boys play in Mascen's cot. They pretend to be babies. My Neal is delighted with the idea and wants to join in. The boys don't let him. They transform themselves into hideous monsters and push him away, interrupt his determined climbing into the cot. He cries. They are empowered by his weakness and hurt him even more. They say he can't get in the cot. They hit him.

'Children are cruel.' resounds in my head as an explanation, while I try to deal with this terribly difficult situation.

'The kids who bully have problems themselves: they are bullied at home in some manner or another. They are victims.' resounds in my head, while I try to make Neal into a boy.

'You mustn't cry, Neal. You are not a little baby. If you cry they will hit you again.' Then it hits me: 'If they hit you again, you push them. And if they hit you again, you push them so hard they fall.'

What am I doing? I wish the world were populated by considerate children who don't hit nor push, but it's not.

'If they hit you again, you laugh at them. You point and laugh at them. But don't cry.'

I am so proud to be so clever.

'Laugh at them.'

Suddenly I understand why some parents decide to educate their kids at home. All will be fine by the time they are sixteen and ready to go into college. Then, all these 'sensitive and kind' children's attributes will pay off. My kids will have a wonderful personality then. I am not sure how they will cope until then though. Gabriel will be fine, he's younger and tougher.

I must make Neal into a 'Balkanac' – a male from the Balkans, from the peninsula where wars are frequent and where men are rough.

Reading fairy tales with wolves that eat children who pick flowers seems a bit out of fashion. We must invent new stories: some clever stuff that will make the kids into capable machines for social urban living and yet make them into sensitive, kind and compassionate adults. Could reading them *Medea* help?

### **Video practice eight: The theatrical act**

Acting it all out. It has been blocked. Directed and performed. Like ‘real theatre’. Like the idea of theatre.

The idea of an actress fighting with the idea of a mother.

Children are in the rehearsing space. I am in conflict with them. I want them out of the picture, out of the equation.

Then it struck me: it is so simple. They are here as children, they want me to be here as their mother.

I am here as an actress, as an artist. I happen to play *Medea*, just to spite them.

The expectations of Motherhood do not stand up to the expectations of the artistic. It is a conflict situation.

Forget fighting the situation. Bring them both together.

### **Video practice nine: Children’s bath**

It is a big event. The blue bath – that once belonged to Gary’s brother’s kids – is brought into the living room. Lots of towels everywhere. A little bit of Johnson’s baby bath in the water. ‘Actually, Boots baby bath is better, more sensitive.’ – I recall midwife saying. ‘There is no need for shampoo.’ – she added.

We check the temperature with our elbows, both of us, me and Gary.

The baby goes in.

Splashing sound.

We pour the dirty water down the drain. I think Gary does it.

### **Liverpool, January 2005**

*Medea/Mothers’ Clothes* took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2005 at 5pm in Teatro Guiñol, Santa Clara in Cuba. I arrived there with the Liverpool mothers’ clothes, *Medea*’s costume, washing line, pegs, baby bath shampoo, mothers’ slides, VHS NTSC of my audio-visual footage.

I used the big television set for my audio-visual projection. There are hardly any multimedia projectors in Cuba. Roxana, the festival organizer, told me she saw one once. Sound for the performance came from the television set.

Slide projector arrived from a nearby village. It had no remote control, and strangely enough it had a UK three pronged plug, so I needed to use my adapter (bought at Heathrow before the trip) to make it compatible with the American plug in the wall. I left the Heathrow adaptor with the slide projector, wondering how they used it before.

The washing basin was provided by Mari, an actress and mother of two boys from Santa Clara who did Jill Greenhalgh's workshop with me. It was red and small and it came from a local hospital. As a 'thank you' gesture I gave her my baby bath shampoo after the performance.

The costume (dress) I wore on the stage was provided by Giovanni, an actress and mother of two from Santa Clara. As a 'thank you' gesture I gave her my summer flowery H&M dress. She was thrilled.

Orlando, our host and incidentally one of the Che Guevara's guerrillas, provided me with the white sheet and, in addition, gave me some Cuban pegs that I can use in my future performances.

I performed in front of an audience that doesn't speak English. I used the newly acquired skills from Jill's workshop and the notion of 'un moment antes' within the staging. At the same time I tried to relax the audience into a reflective, meditative mode. I wanted them to have a break from the intensity of the festival. I felt the presence of Liverpool mothers strongly during the performance as they relaxed me, made me connect back to L17. I also concentrated on sharing the different uses of media within the performance, in full disclosure of their function, switching the slide projector, the TV set and VCR player on and off. I wanted to give a different kind of 'presence' – one that is engaging but also functional, and never illusionary.

I came and took a bow on stage in my wet costume because a technician persuaded me to do so. 'You may not show your face in England at the end of the show, but in Cuba you have to.' I followed his advice.

### **Liverpool, February 2006**

Think about how the project changed. Think about performing it at Carlisle on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2006. Think about how I owned the material, how the mothers are older now than in the photos, how I wore my Joan of Arc costume, because I liked it, because it wasn't scripted from above. Think about how I wave good-bye to mothers and the time when Neal and Gabi were three and one. Think about how the slide projector was semi-working but I made it ok. I put the slides at the beginning and suddenly there was a dialogue between Euripides' text and mothers' slides. Think about two lines of washing instead of one, because the space was too small. I am adapting to space rather than being a slave to my original concept.

I enjoyed doing *Medea/Mothers' Clothes*; in Carlisle it was a durational piece. I let it run.



*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* poster/programme

*Medea/Mothers' Clothes* DVDs

DVD 1:

- Performance, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool, 1 May 2004, 30 minutes
- Installation, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool, May 2004, 2 minutes
- Dress Rehearsal, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool, 29 April 2004, 30 minutes

DVD 2:

- Video footage for performance, 25 minutes
- Video footage for installation, 25 minutes

## Appendix B

### Supporting Material for *Magdalena Makeup*

Appendix B contains extracts from my performance journal, a couple of *Magdalena Makeup* Post Cards and a DVD, which is in four parts: the short documentation footage from the two live art events, a video film which was shown to Dubrovnik audiences, the video film which was shown to the Liverpool audiences and the video film tracking the movement of Magdalena Post Cards from Dubrovnik to Liverpool and vice versa.

#### Extracts from *Magdalena Makeup* Performance Journal

I am creating a transitional space between two places. I am making it all up.

#### **Transcript of my conversation with my mother, video recorded in January 2004, translated from Croatian**

I say: 'And now I am interested in Mary Magdalene. What do you know about Mary Magdalene that I was named after or rather why was my grandmother named after Mary Magdalene?'

My mother says: 'Your grandmother got her name after her auntie and one could make a movie about her. She was a legend, a beauty called Magdalena. She had songs sung about her.'

I ask: 'Where was she from?'

My mother answers 'From Župa' and starts telling me a story: 'She was happily engaged with her beloved and then one day as she was going back home from the town... That was not her usual day of going to town to sell. She usually went twice a week and this particular day was not her day. ...And so, as she was going back home she met this fiancé of hers, embracing another girl.'

'Why?'

My mother answers: 'I don't know' and continues: 'That is such a sad story. She passed them by without saying hello, and when she came down to Ploče, she died. Her heart broke and she died of sorrow.'

I cough and am amazed: 'She died on Ploče? It's not possible.'

My mother is determined: 'Yes, truly.'

'She died? How can you just die like that?'

'From the heart, from the great sorrow. Her heart broke from the sorrow.'

I am sceptical: 'How old was she?'

My mother answers: 'She was young, not even twenty.'

I ask: 'And how come she was named Magdalena?'

My mother says: 'I don't know that, I suppose after her grandmother.'

I say: 'And then my grandmother was named...'

My mother confirms: 'Yes, because she was famed for her beauty. She had songs sung about her.'

I ask: 'Who sang these songs?'

My mother says: 'The boys and girls from Župa. And there's a folk song "Almond's Branch" or something like that. I'll find it for you.'

I say: 'That would be great.'

My mother says: 'A lovely song' and continues: 'And then I found out where her grave was and every year at Halloween I take one flower and place it there.'

I ask: 'And where is this grave?'

She says: 'On Danče, in the corner.'

I am surprised: 'On Danče? How come they buried her there?'

My mother explains: 'Because there was so much sadness and sorrow that they didn't want to take her back to the village and he was so devastated because that affair with another girl was insignificant, he had nothing to do with that girl, was just walking with her embraced by accident and was taken aback when he saw her so he never said nothing. And he never married. That year there was no ball in Postranje.'

I say: 'I remember you telling me about it.'

### **Liverpool 3 July 2004**

The alabaster jar arrived today... all properly packed... and rather appropriate... the right size... Filmed its arrival and unpacking. I placed the alabaster jar next to the shopping... suddenly here we have some 'universal object' opposed to the banal bread and milk...

### **21 July 2004 21:10**

For the past few days I have been running around Liverpool searching for costume, wig and throw...

In Oxfam Super Savers on Bold Street I found a golden curtain that can be used as a throw, one sleek red dress, an Arabian looking number and a red top that is still awaiting matching skirt from Oxfam on Aigburth Rd (temporarily closed for painting). I bought a new Mermaid Red Wig from Lili Bizarre's Costumes Hire Outlet. Lili Bizarre is a chatty Liverpool lady with a small shop in Quiggins – a shopping centre that caters for vintage lovers and Goths. Well, Lili Bizarre has recently been asked to leave Quiggins and is in the process of moving all her merchandise to her new outlet on Hardman Street. I had followed the flyer/map they gave me in order to get to the right Hardman Street place. The shop is full of wigs!!!

I have been filming my gathering of costume and props.

I collected Liverpool postcards and asked my brother to buy some Dubrovnik postcards.

### **DUBROVNIK vs. LIVERPOOL**

I always have an alibi when I say 'This is my true home'. I have an Other one.

Dubrovnik carries its touristy penance, the memory of its summer brightness all throughout the year. Dubrovnik breathes with flocks of tourists that are dumped from boats. Dubrovnik is overpopulated with flowery and striped hats. Dubrovnik smells of sun lotion. Still, Dubrovnik is not your proper package tour holiday destination – it is classier than that. It makes residents of Dubrovnik live by classy thoughts, by Dubrovnik

Republic history, by dialect, by Stradun, by sea, by espressos, cappuccinos and cigarettes, by gossip. The Town Café waiters behave as if they were exiled South American dictators... and to what misfortune life has brought them!

Liverpool with docks and Beatles and bad 80s reputation and the new image as a culture city... Liverpool as re-inventing itself. Liverpool with great social housing and beautiful parks. Liverpool with its Scouse cheekiness and instant 'foreign' isolation. Liverpool with its shameful slave trade past and Tate and two cathedrals and football. I hate Liverpool city centre... I hate shopping... I hate Church Street – the Cathedral of Consumerism. Liverpool is so pretty... Liverpool away from its centre... Liverpool 17 as my new found home for the time being.

## **22 July 2004 Sveta Marija Magdalena - St. Mary Magdalene's Day** IMENDAN (NAME DAY)

Mama called me around nine in the morning (ten in Croatia) to wish me a happy name day: Saint Mary Magdalene's Day. As a child name day was something similar to but always less than a birthday. You would get some presents, but no cake with candles.

As I was named after my 'none' (paternal grandmother) on St. Mary Magdalene's day I used to visit her. She went blind with diabetes. 'Nono' (grandfather) used to cook, clean and shop. He never complained. On St Magdalene's Day he would buy me a massive chocolate bar, and Ivan, my brother, used to get a small one – not to feel left out.

My parents would always buy me something on St. Magdalene's Day and years later the presents turned into allowance to use my American Express Card on that day for something special. I remember buying a little green dress one year – must have been the last year before I had kids. Once you have kids, you become irrelevant in connection to birthdays and name days.

Today I dressed up especially for the occasion – in a sleek red dress I purchased from Oxfam Super Savers in Liverpool City Centre. It is getting hotter outside. I feel the pressure of St. Magdalene's Day. What am I supposed to do on this special day? I can make myself up as Mary Magdalene in Liverpool and take a boat ride across the Mersey. I can make myself up as Mary Magdalene in Dubrovnik and take a boat ride to Lokrum.

As for a special 'name day treat' we went to the Catholic Cathedral and lit a candle, I think I wished for this project to go well.

We also went to Urban Lounge Café on Smithdown Road and had café au lait with some cakes... children were playing up and down the stairs in the café. I didn't have to care; Gary was responsible for them. A treat for my name day. I vaguely remember Leonard Cohen's 'So Long Marianne'. As a child I recall a song 'Magdalena' by Oliver, a Croatian popular singer. My parents would play it and watch me being embarrassed. I guess they found it funny.

### **29 August 2004**

Watching my encounters on mini DV tape... I gather that the audience is much braver than me. Would I dare meet me, or other live artist/lunatic, doing something crazy, like anointing my feet? Somehow I feel lucky to have thought of this event so that I needn't be its audience member. As for me, it was work, hard work... and, for me, there was hardly any eroticism in it, no break at all. It was rather all about getting on with my work, working as an artist/performer, as Magda/Lena, keeping to the schedule...

### **3 September 2004**

No exchange was made. I purchased the alabaster jar for 350kn – about £30. She reckoned mine was alabaster but 'nešto zeleno' ruined it. 'Has there ever been a candle in it?' – she asked. 'No, I just kept the ointment in it to anoint people's feet.' She sniffed the jar. The shop owner's daughter lives in Paris, she married an Italian guy and they converse in Italian/French. He can't speak any Croatian. She was very impressed with Gary's Croatian, which is without an English accent. Some chitchat. Some guy who looks like he's from a Jules Verne novel or recent blockbuster '80 Days around the World' was in the shop. He was talking to her and observing some old watches. They spoke in English. The shop is full of useless things. The shop is expensive. I am happy to have got the alabaster jar. It's proper, it's a prop and later on I can donate it to Oxfam and let it join the flow... become part of the world... In a sense it would link my shots of Oxfam in Liverpool.

It's morning, nine fifteen.

The children have arrived from upstairs – they slept at the grandparents'.

Let me note what I need to write about:

The Gruda experience: the dress and throw, washing and hanging them

Ivan and his ex-girlfriend helping with the ointment for Liverpool

Driving through Postranje, myrtle found on the rocks

The other day my mother, Gary, the kids and I went to Gruda. Gruda is a village in the Konavle area – the most southern part of Croatia. My maternal grandmother and all her family come from the Gruda area. There's a massive empty house that belongs to my family in Gruda. Marija, my grandmother's sister, the owner of the house, doesn't live there any more. She is in the nursing home. She is in her eighties. She can't take care of herself; she hasn't got any children. She refuses to sell the house while still alive, but has agreed that the family can do with it what they like after her death. The house has been empty for a couple of years. She had a stroke. I went to search the house for some props for *Magdalena Makeup*. The house was so deserted; it smelled of old things and ghosts. Nela, my mother, stormed through it and found some useful dresses, a nightgown, scarves and knickers. I found old newspapers that reported Tito's death in 1980 and a bed cover that could be used in my performance as a throw with which I mark my space. I opened so many doors and expected to see something spooky.

My 'None' (paternal grandmother) and her auntie Magdalena after whom she was named were from Župa Dubrovačka. The other day we went to Mary Magdalene church which is situated in Župa Dubrovačka, just outside the city of Dubrovnik. A massive image of

Mary Magdalene at the altar... long wavy dark blond hair... She is all hair. I am desperately trying to get hold of such a wig in Dubrovnik and it seems impossible. Moreover, people do not seem to understand or want to understand that I need a wig from Dubrovnik, that I can't just buy it in Liverpool and trick the audiences... lie to them about bringing a bit of 'Other'.

A nun from Mary Magdalene church offered me, my mother, Gary and kids some refreshments. We had just arrived from the beach and were really thirsty and hungry. We drank some pineapple juice and ate lots of biscuits, a few pretzels too.

Later we drove through the actual village of Grbavac where my paternal grandmother and her auntie Magdalena were from. I was filming the journey. We stopped the car and I kept filming the houses and the landscape, the distant sea, the hills, the barren land, nothingness and destiny. My mother found some myrtle growing on the rock and picked it up. We will use it to make the ointment.

The other day my brother (landscape designer and manager of Dubrovnik arboretum) called me up and told me to meet him in town. He had a surprise for me. His ex-girlfriend Erna, now heavily pregnant and married to another guy, sent me some 'Gospino ulje' (Our Lady's oil), which is a combination of olive oil and Our Lady's grass – plant hailed for its miraculous properties that grows in the area. My brother told me its Latin name: hypericum perforatum. I have been advised to put thirty drops of Rosemary essential oil into the Our Lady's oil. I plan on adding some myrtle and bees wax and making an ointment together with my mother, the chemist. Should be fun... My brother just called and told me NOT to put in any myrtle in the Our Lady's oil, but only rosemary essential drops. That is his expert advice. I think I will obey his order.

The other day I read a local paper review of my 'live art event'. The report had me as a local makeup artist providing 'treatments' for the waiting crowd. The reporter never attended the session. There was no mention of my name. I enjoyed the ambiguity of the article. 'Unusual' and 'interesting' were the adjectives he used.

I decided to concentrate on the preparation of the Liverpool event.  
I've learnt that I learn as I go.

### **8 November 2004**

... As I was applying makeup and washing my face and reapplying makeup and washing my face anew for each new member of the audience, my eyes started to sting and tears welled up and my face felt sore... I was deliberately doing it... and all that makeup application and removal made me appear rather 'right for the part of a penitent whore' and yes, it worked but also on the other hand I kept on asking myself: 'Is this really worth it? Why am I being silly, physically hurting myself in order to fool the audience psychologically?'

...

The atmosphere was eerie. Some local teenage lads were smoking pot outside. People were coming one by one: Ilva, Fiona, Andrew, Ken, Anita, Amra. It was dark. The bell

sounded like an alarm. I kept thinking about these lads storming in and raping me, or even worse, nicking my laptop and camera.

...

While with Ken, just after Andrew, I kept thinking about what these lads must be thinking: a girl in a silky red dress lets one guy out and another one comes in... they just keep coming...

I started being elsewhere... outside with the doors and lads and pot...

It was here/now that mattered more than my performance and artwork.

### **9 November 2004**

...

Given the comfortable context, mothers from toddlers' group loved it. They found it rather sentimental (thanks to the story about my great, great auntie) and were happy to go with the flow of emotions. Three mothers brought in their kids. The kids relaxed me. Their presence seemed more important than mine. It was all without my self-imposed rules. It was simple and receptive. I had to hold a little two-month-old – in my character of Mary Magdalene – while his mum was putting her boots on. Anita, another mother, kept on talking to Rosie, her two-year-old daughter, during the video. She was explaining things to her. I was getting changed into Mary Magdalene and Rosie was transfixed by my wig. I couldn't resist the temptation of playing for her.

### **18 November 2004**

I am writing a paper 'Name Post Card Encounters Journey Home' – it is a part of my Ph.D. research. *Magdalena Makeup* project lives on through this paper, through my continuous thinking about it, through modifications in the future. My deadline for the paper is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, just six days before my thirtieth birthday. I need to get on with it really...

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2004, my thirtieth birthday, [www.magdalenamakeup.org](http://www.magdalenamakeup.org) will be completed. The web audience will be able to observe the past live audience's encounters. This website ([www.magdalenamakeup.org](http://www.magdalenamakeup.org)) is for me frozen in time. It is still 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2004 – my thirtieth birthday. It is me writing from the past into future. It is my Post Card.

I am in Barcelona. I am celebrating. Wish you were here...



*Magdalena Makeup* Post Cards

### *Magdalena Makeup DVD*

- ‘[www.magdalenamakeup.org](http://www.magdalenamakeup.org)’ - documentary footage of encounters between the performer and audiences in Liverpool and Dubrovnik. 1min 30 sec
- ‘magdalenamakeup for dubrovnik’ – video footage from Liverpool shown to audiences in Dubrovnik before the anointment of their feet. 10 min
- ‘magdalenamakeup for liverpool’ - video footage from Dubrovnik shown to audiences in Liverpool before the anointment of their feet. 10 min
- ‘magdalenamakeup postcards’ – video footage tracking all the Post Cards sent by the artist from Dubrovnik to Liverpool and vice versa. 7 min

## Appendix C

### Supporting Material for *Joan Trial*

Appendix C: Supporting Material for *Joan Trial* contains the performance text, a copy of the programme and two DVDs. The first DVD documents the rehearsal and the performance in the Nuffield Theatre. The second DVD contains video footage for the performance.

Performance Text for *Joan Trial*

#### AUDIENCE LIGHTS

#### BLACKOUT

**ALL THE STAGE LIGHTS ARE ON:**

**LAMP LIGHT**

**TWO FRONT LIGHTS**

**MICROPHONE LIGHT**

**SOLDIER'S JACKET LIGHT**

*Set: hanging lit lamp centre stage, an olive army parachute used as a video screen in the background for video projection, hanging microphone upstage right, trial box (lectern) upstage left, hanging soldier's jacket downstage left.*

*I enter 'from my image on parachute' and go to the microphone.*

*I raise my right hand. CUE TO PLAY DVD*

*The text is spoken into the microphone, with a sense of urgency.*

'I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.'

*Music. CUE TO FADE MICROPHONE LIGHT*

*I dance 'like a teenager', marking my space.*

*On screen: my marketing image.*

*Music/siren stops.*

*I am downstage right opposite the hanging soldier's uniform. I take it off the hanger.*

*On screen is a still of Joan of Arc.*

*My action: tying my hair, soldier's uniform around my waist.*

*Duration of my action: 1 minute 20 seconds*

I am a war child.

My uncle, a sea captain, called me off the Florida seas one October morning. He told me Dubrovnik, my hometown, had been bombed. I was a foreign exchange student in Bastrop, Louisiana at the time. This was 1991.

My mother and my brother were refugees in Germany.  
My Dad had to stay in Dubrovnik. Even though he was not in the army he was requested to protect the city with his hunting gun. He called me over the radio waves one day. He lived off the humanitarian food aid for 9 months. Tins and jars mostly. He grew fond of Robertson's Fine Cut Marmalade. I always remember to bring him some when I visit for Christmas.

*The video starts.*

*We see shots of Dubrovnik War, falling grenades, some footage of myself in a uniform around my Liverpool neighbourhood.*

*I am holding onto the jacket, smelling it, walking downstage right, finally, I throw it onto the lamp, making the lamp swing, letting the jacket fall.*

*The Dubrovnik War projection finishes.*

*On screen there's a Joan of Arc still.*

*I walk over to the trial stand.*

*As interrogation questions come up I enter the trial box, switch on the lectern light and answer live Gary's previously recorded questions about war and killing. I have my answers on sheets of paper placed on the trial box. I am putting on the jacket. I mostly read the answers except for the last two.*

**Did a voice order you to wear man's dress?**

The dress is a small matter.

**Does it seem to you that this command to take man's dress is a lawful one?**

I have always done everything at Our Lord's command.

**Have you done well to take man's dress?**

Everything I had done at Our Lord's command I consider well done.

**In this particular case of taking man's dress, do you consider you had done rightly?**

I hadn't done it without God's command.

**Who advised you to take male dress?**

I charge nobody, but it is absolutely essential for me to change my dress.

**Which do you prefer, your sword or your standard?**

My standard, forty times more.

**And?**

I bear my standard during an attack, in order to avoid killing anyone. I had never killed anyone at all.

**Have you not been a commander in war?**

Yes, in order to fight the English.

**In your childhood, did the voice tell you that the English should come into France?**

They were already here.

**Were you ever playing at fights between English and French with other children?**

*(looking up)* No, but I saw my villagers fighting and coming back wounded and bleeding.

**Do you not think that in taking male dress you have done wrong?**

No, it is for the great good of France.

*I switch off the lectern light.*

*(to technician)* Pause, please. **CUE TO PAUSE DVD.**

Good evening. I'd like to tell you a few things about the props and my performance. Lamp's £20 second hand from Liverpool, where I live. When I bought it, there was a violent fight in the store next door, two men, with faces covered in blood.

I swing it for theatrical effect.

The lectern's found on ebay, used to belong to a Mancunian band 'Dead Bodies'.

As for Joan of Arc trial transcripts I found them here at the Lancaster library, B floor, Purple Zone MSFD<T>. Gary, who is my husband and I recorded the interrogation sessions, so the voice you heard over the speakers and will hear again is his.

Parachute's £75, used as a screen for homemade videos with my children Neal and Gabriel, some stills and documentary war footage that you just saw from Dubrovnik, my hometown in Croatia. That was taken from 'War in Dubrovnik' DVD aimed to be sold to tourists.

The jacket's also from Liverpool, £9.99, and the trousers and the boots, all from Quiggins, alternative shopping centre for young anarchists, Goths and punks. I believe that Joan would love shopping there.

And the microphone belongs to the Nuffield Theatre. **CUE TO RESTART PLAYING DVD**

*Music. I dance (swirl around in circles) while on the screen Dubrovnik is being bombed. Music/siren stops.*

*On screen Joan of Arc still, she's on a horse amongst soldiers.*

*My action: leaning forwards, swinging from one side to another, like on a boat, untying my hair, unbuttoning the jacket, baring my shoulder.*

*Duration of my action: 2 minutes 13 seconds*

Sickening feeling in my stomach. Feeling guilty. I wasn't there when it all started.

On the boat from Rijeka to Dubrovnik. Twenty-two hour journey. Dad and I.

First time back home from the States. We didn't have a cabin. Twenty-two hours and nowhere to sleep. I was seventeen. It didn't matter. I could use a bench. The boat was full, full of people. No one seemed to have a cabin. This was when I first realized it was war.

Soldiers everywhere. In their uniforms. With guns. Lots of them. Lots of guns. I am seventeen, blond hair. They are talking to me. I am talking back to them. My Dad wasn't there. He must have been sleeping on a reclining seat, somewhere. And there was I talking to these soldiers. War was definitely on.

Then I ran into a friend, well not really a friend, more of an acquaintance, but when you run into someone you know from your own town in a strange space you two are like best friends.

He was also feeling guilty. He was maybe twenty-one. He was returning home from London, actually. He worked there as a waiter.

From the deck of the boat we were watching Dubrovnik getting bigger and bigger. We kept looking at each other and whispering, making sure no one heard us: 'It's not that bad. It doesn't look that bad.' Feeling guilty.

He wasn't there when it all started either. And you could tell. He didn't have a uniform on. He couldn't hide his absence from the war.

*The video starts.*

*We see me and my children's bus journey to school with some footage of me in a soldier's uniform in between.*

*I am slowly taking off one side of my uniform jacket. Each time there is some footage of me in the soldier's uniform, I stop for the duration of that footage.*

*The video finishes.*

*On screen: Joan statue on a horse.*

*As interrogation questions come up I enter the trial box and answer live Gary's previously recorded questions. I have my answers on sheets of paper placed on the trial box.*

**What is your name and surname?**

In my hometown, they call me Jeannette. I don't know my surname.

**Where were you baptised?**

In the church of Domremy.

**Who were your godfathers and godmothers?**

Agnes and Jeanne. My godfather is Jean Bavent. My mother says I have other godmothers and godfathers as well. (*looking up*) My mother taught me the Pater Noster, Ave Maria and Credo; only my mother taught me how to pray. (*look down again*)

**How old are you?**

Nineteen or thereabouts.

When I was thirteen, I received revelation from Our Lady. (*looking up*) The first time I was very afraid. The voice came at noon, on a summer's day, a fast day, I was in my father's garden, and the voice came from the church on my right side. The voice always had a light. The third time I knew it was the voice of an angel.

**Do you know whether you are in the grace of God?**

If I am not, may God put me there; if I am, may He keep me there.

*Music/Siren.*

*I dance while on the screen we have repeated footage of me and children walking, entering St Vincent de Paul school.*

*My marketing image.*

*Music/siren stops.*

*On screen Joan of Arc still – stained glass mirror.*

*Doing one prolonged movement from up down with arms like wings, leaving a trace, my head is covered by jacket.*

*Duration: 4 minutes 43 seconds*

As a child, I was often bored during Mass. I'd watch St Michael, the archangel, above the church altar.

He's fighting Lucifer. He's got his foot on Lucifer's head. And he's got a spear.  
This is Sveti Mihajlo church in Dubrovnik, Croatia.  
I imagine what it's like fighting with him - him an archangel, me one of his angels.  
Then I think about Lucifer, the fallen angel, the one that was loved by God the most.  
But let me stick with God's favourite: St Michael.

Left Left

Left Left Left

We are kneeling. It hurts. When will we stand up again?

Left Left

Left Left Left

Kneeling again. Soon is Our Father, the communion, the end.

Left Left

Left Left Left

Aged five, I was chosen to head the town procession for Tito, our beloved president. I was wearing the second T in his name T I T O. The red T was attached to my white top with some safety pins.

Left Left

Left Left Left

I wrote to Tito in hospital. I was six when he died. I was a member of young socialist Pioneers. I wore a red scarf and a blue hat with a red star. Yugoslavia dissolved before I was old enough to join the proper Communist party.

Left Left

Yugoslavia consisted of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia with its autonomous regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo, and finally, Bosnia & Herzegovina, which witnessed the bloodiest conflicts in the recent Yugoslav war.

Left Left Left

Bosnia & Herzegovina consists of three nationalities and three religions: Bosnian Muslims, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats.

*(slowly)* Left Left

Left Left Left

There is a little village in Bosnia and Herzegovina called Medjugorje.

Medjugorje is a holy site.

Apparently the Virgin Mary has been appearing there for the last twenty odd years.

Left ...

Dubrovnik, my hometown is three hours away, when travelling by car.

Dubrovnik, a famous medieval town, attracts tourists. Medjugorje attracts pilgrims. Often they are combined as a packaged tour: tourists become pilgrims and vice versa.

Left Left ...

The Virgin Mary has been around for some twenty odd years. From 'before the war'.

The holy children, who were only around ten when they first saw her, are now older than me, and I am thirty. Some of them don't see the Virgin Mary anymore.

Left Left

Left Left Left

*I lean on my left leg, pointing to the sky with my arms.*

Before the war, I wanted to be one of those children. I wanted to see things. Once, in Medjugorje, aged nine, with my Mum and grandparents, I saw signs. A sun that changes colour and a crucifix on the hill was slowly turning round and round.

I spent the day walking barefoot up the sacred hill.

One of the pilgrims called out: 'Look! Look at the colours on the asphalt!'

And another one said: 'Oh no, it's nothing. Only petrol spillage.'

We are all so hungry for miracles.

*Kneeling down, hands in prayer, slow movement into wings*

Andjele moj mali  
moj čuvaru blagi  
budi tebi hvala  
što me čuvas malu  
čuvaj me dok živim  
da ti ništa ne skrivim...

*The video starts.*

*We see an angel – one of street acts in Barcelona.*

*I am teaching children how to pray, reading them a bedtime story.*

*I continue the prayer, arms like wings, I eventually drop them on the floor.*

*The video finishes.*

*On screen: stills of St Michael.*

*As interrogation questions come up I enter the trial box and answer live Gary's previously recorded questions about the angel and his looks. I have my answers on sheets of paper placed on the trial box.*

**How do you pray?** *(still looking for papers, so gaze not fixed on the lectern)*

MOST SWEET LORD, IN HONOUR OF THY HOLY PASSION, I BESEECH THEE, IF THOU LOVEST ME, TO REVEAL UNTO ME WHAT I SHOULD ANSWER TO THESE CHURCHMEN. I WELL KNOW, AS TO MY DRESS, BY WHOSE COMMAND I TOOK IT, BUT I KNOW NOT HOW I SHOULD LEAVE IT OFF. WHEREFORE MAY IT PLEASE THEE TO INFORM ME. *(look down)*

**Which was the first voice that came to you when you were thirteen?**

Saint Michael with angels from heaven.

**Did you see Saint Michael and the angels corporeally and in reality?**

*(looking up)* I saw them with my bodily eyes, as well as I am seeing you.

**What form was Saint Michael in?**

I won't answer you this. Little children say that people are often hanged for telling the truth. *(look down)*

**What doctrine did he teach you?**

He told me that I am a good child. He told me that God will help me. He told me to help the King of France. He told me of the misery that was in the kingdom of France.

**How did you know it was Saint Michael?**

*(looking up)* He speaks like an angel. He was an angel.

**How do you know the language of angels?**

I believed it and desired to believe it.



Can the voice see? Has it got eyes?

You may not know that. Little children say that people are often hanged for telling the truth. (*look down*)

Have you often spoken with Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret since last Tuesday?

Yes.

Do the saints always appear in the same dress?

Their heads are always richly crowned.

How do you know whether it is a man or woman that appears?

(*looking up all the way to the end*) I know their voices.

What part of them can you see?

The face.

Do they have hair?

Of course

Is there anything between their crowns and their hair?

No.

Is their hair long and hung down?

I don't know. I also don't know if they have arms and legs, but they speak most excellently and beautifully; I understand them perfectly.

How can they speak, when they have no body?

God only knows.

Their voice is lovely, sweet and low in tone. They speak in French.

Does Saint Margaret speak English?

Why should she speak English? She is not on the side of the English.

Do Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret hate the English?

They love what Our Lord loves, and hate what God hates.

Does God hate the English?

I don't know. They will be driven out of France, except for those who die there. They must return to their own country of England.

*Music/siren.*

*I dance to the footage of the Barcelona angel. I make a circle marching like a soldier: Left, Left, Left, Left, Left...*

*I enter the trial box. I stand still, jacket over my head, back facing the audience.*

*Gary's previously recorded voice over the video footage of me in soldier's uniform.*

You, Jeanne, have said that from the age of thirteen you have had revelations and apparitions of angels, of Saint Catherine and of Saint Margaret, and that you have frequently seen them with your bodily eyes; and that they have spoken to you.

On this first point the clerks of the University of Paris have considered the form of the said revelations and apparitions and the purpose and matter of the things revealed, and the condition of the person. Taking all these things into consideration, they have said and declared that all the afore-mentioned things are lies, untrue, pernicious and evil; and that all such revelations are superstitious, and proceed from evil and devilish spirits.

You have said that you recognized the angels and the saints by the good advice, and the comfort and teaching that they gave you. And you also believe that it was Saint Michael

who appeared to you; and you declare that their deeds and words are good; and that you believe this as firmly as you believe the Faith of Jesus Christ.

As for this Article, the clerks say that such things are not sufficient to [enable you to] recognize these angels and saints; that you believed too lightly and affirmed your belief too rashly; and that inasmuch as you make a comparison saying you believe these things as firmly as you believe in the Faith of Jesus Christ, you err in the faith.

You have said that, by God's command, you have continually worn man's dress, wearing the short robe, doublet, and hose attached by points; that you have also worn your hair short, cut en rond above your ears, with nothing left that could show you to be a woman; you have been frequently admonished to leave it off, which you have refused to do, saying that you would rather die than leave it off, save by God's command.

As for these points, the clerks say that you blaspheme God in his sacraments; that you transgress divine law, the Holy Scriptures and the canon law; you hold the Faith doubtfully and wrongly; you boast vainly; you are suspect of idolatry; and you condemn yourself in being unwilling to wear customary clothing of your sex, and following the custom of the Gentiles and the heathen.

You have said that you are well assured that God loves certain others living more than yourself, and that you know this by revelation from these saints, who speak in the French language; and not in English, because they are not of their party. And that, ever since you learned that the voices were on your king's side, you have not loved the Burgundians.

As for this Article, the clerks say that this is a rash presumption and assertion, blasphemy against the saints, and transgression of God's commandment to love one's neighbour.

*The video finishes. On screen Neal holding an angel.*

*I take off my jacket and hold it with my hand.*

*Speech directed to the audience, like in the very beginning.*

*Different stills of Joan of Arc during my Slovak monologue.*

Joan of Arc: the angels, the saints, the voices, the bells (*swing the lamp*), and the war, of course.

So, Joan is a French heroine, fifteenth century France, thirteen-year-old, hears these voices, St Michael to start with, the archangel. She cuts her hair, puts on a soldier's uniform, gets a horse, a sword, meets a king, crowns the king, hundred year war, English in France, she's fighting, winning, being a hero, a soldier, a commander in war. Refusing to listen to all but God.

But, that's a bit dodgy. Who is this God of hers? Is he really on her side, on the side of the French, the peasants, the poor? How can God take sides? And she dares guide us in his name?

George Bernard Shaw wrote a play about her: *Saint Joan*. See, G. B. Shaw was a frequent guest to Dubrovnik. A tourist. In his words: 'If you are looking for paradise on earth, come to Dubrovnik.'

I'll do you a monologue from *Saint Joan*, in Slovak, I was trained there. Slovak is similar to Czech which is similar to Croatian – one of those Slav languages and this is probably a bad translation, but I am sure you wouldn't mind. Bear with me.

*I drop the jacket on the floor. Joan images.*

Prečo ma nenávidia všetci tí dvorania, rytieri a cirkevní hodnostári? Čo som im urobila? Ved' som pre seba nežiadala nič len, aby moja dedina nemusela platiť dane, lebo my si nemôžeme dovoliť platiť vojnové dane. Priniesla som im šťastie a víťazstvo. Napravovala som veci, keď stvárali všeliaké hlúposti. Dala som korunovať Karola a urobila som z neho skutočného kráľa. Všetky pocty, ktoré udeľuje, prináležia im. Prečo ma teda nemajú radi?

Viem, že svet je príliš skazený. Keď so mnou neurobia koniec goddamovia a Burgund'anie, urobia to Francúzi.

Keby nebolo tých hlasov, ktoré počujem, stratila by som odvahu a vzdala sa všetkého. Preto som sa po korunovácii utiahla osamote sa pomodliť.

Tie hlasy počujem v dunení zvonov.

Nie dnes, keď zvonili všetky zvonky. To nebolo nič, iba prázdne rinčanie. Ale tu, v tomto kúte, kam zostupuje z neba hlahol zvonov a kde sa zachvieva ich ozvena, alebo na poliach, kam z diaľky v tichosti vidieckej krajiny doliehajú ich zvuky, tam počujem svoje hlasy.

Ticho! "Die-t'a bo-žie". Keď bude pol, povedia: "Od-váž-ne vpred". O tri štvrté zasa: "Po-mô-žem ti". Ale keď bijú celú hodinu a keď sa veľký zvon rozozvučí: "Boh-chráň - Francúz-sko", vtedy mi svätá Margaréta a svätá Katarína a niekedy aj svätý Michal povedia veci, o ktorých som nemala ani tušenia.

Šťastie! Boh za nás bojoval a vy to nazývate šťastím! Chcete prestať, keď Angličania sú doteraz na posvätnnej pôde drahého Francúzska?

See, I don't like her. She deserved to burn. I'd burn her.

*I swing the lamp.*

Dearest Joan, you are sweet and radical, but you deserve to burn. And I'd burn you again... well I'd at least refer you to the proper medical authorities.

You're one in a line of perpetrators of truth, God and freedom. You create war with your stubbornness, your determination and your mission. You shake hands with gods and kings. You are inconsiderate. You are blind. You deserve to burn and die.

*I throw the papers on the floor.*

Too much of a mission, really.

*The video on screen: Dubrovnik ruins and refugees.*

*I go behind the microphone. CUE FOR LIGHT ON THE MICROPHONE*

*Gary's previously recorded voice, my speech is spoken into the microphone.*

**In the name of the Lord, Amen**

**We, Pierre, by Divine pity, humble Bishop of Beauvais, and We, Brother Jean le Maître, deputy of the Inquisitor of the Faith, judges competent in this matter,**

And I, Lena Šimić, in my own name, born a Yugoslav, since the war a Croatian, soon to become British, raised a Catholic, with reservations about religion and the existence of God, with two young sons, one attending St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School,

the other to start in a couple of years time, in my role as a mother, an artist, a performer, a researcher, a scholar, a foreigner, a critic competent in this matter.

Since you, Jeanne, called the Pucelle, have been found by Us relapsed into divers errors and crimes of schism, idolatry, invocation of devils, and various other wickednesses, And since for these reasons by just judgement We have found you so to be,

And since you Joan played the war game seriously, claiming to be guided by God, persuading the masses by letting them believe in your encounters with saints and angels, charming them with your charisma, mercilessly leading them on to blood and violence.

Nevertheless, since the Church never closes her arms to those who would return to her, We did believe that, with full understanding and unfeigned faith, you had left all the errors which you had renounced, as is stated in a schedule signed by your own hand.

Nevertheless, I embarked on this performance journey 'Joan Trial' to give you a fair chance of living up to the childhood heroine that you once were to me.

None the less time and again you have relapsed, as a dog that returns to its vomit, as We do state with great sorrow.

Therefore We declare that you have again incurred the Sentence of excommunication which you formerly incurred, and are again fallen into your previous error, for which reasons We now declare you to be a heretic.

I am letting go of you. I am no longer impressed with your energy, beauty, determination and mission. I am keeping my hair long. I reject you. You are no longer mine.

And by this Sentence, seated upon Our tribunal of justice, as it is herein written, We do cast you forth and reject you from the communion of Church as an infected limb, and hand you over to secular justice, praying the same to treat you with kindness and humanity in respect of your life and your limbs.

I reject you. You are no longer mine. **CUE TO FADE WITH MICROPHONE LIGHT**

*I fold the jacket and place it downstage centre.*

*I pick the papers up and arrange them on the top of the folded jacket.*

*Duration: 1minute 56*

After the Sentence was read, the bishop, the Inquisitor, and many of the judges went away, leaving Jeanne upon the scaffold.

Then the Bailli of Rouen, an Englishman, who was there, without any legal formality and without reading any Sentence against her, ordered that she should be taken to the place where she was to be burned.

When Jeanne heard this order given, she began to weep and lament in such a way that all the people present were themselves moved to tears.

The said Bailli immediately ordered that the fire should be lighted, which was done.

And she was there burnt and martyred tragically, an act of unparalleled cruelty.

And many, both noble and peasant, murmured greatly against the English.

*I reach into my pocket for some matches. I light a candle.*

*The footage of me and children in Dubrovnik having a coffee, in between tourists.*

*Bells/Siren. I exit the stage, go behind the parachute.*

*The video projection finishes. The DVD title menu comes up again.*

*The end.*

**BLACKOUT**

*If applause, I come to take a bow.*

**HOUSE LIGHTS**

*Joan Trial* programme

*Joan Trial* DVDs

DVD 1:

- Performance, Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster, 18 October 2005, 45 minutes
- Dress Rehearsal, Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster, 18 October 2005, 45 minutes

DVD 2:

- Video footage for performance, 40 minutes

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