

Placed, displaced, and replaced: an exploration into a hybrid South African identity.

by

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Abstract

This study explores my experiences as a displaced person through processes of immigration that contributed to my hybrid identity. I narrate my experiences as a white, South African, Afrikaans-speaking woman who was affected by my journey to Australia, from which I returned only a year later. This study presents personal experiences and narratives that are vested in a body of ceramic work as my area of practice, which are imaginative interpretations of these experiences. The theoretical text supports this body of practice by also referencing three artists, namely Leora Farber, David Hicks, and James Marshall, as artists who also concern themselves with notions of liminality and displacement.

There are insecurities that I grapple with in this study, which are unfamiliarity, personal loss and separation, alienation, and uncertainty. I attempt to rationalise experiences within the liminal that sways and influences an identity, through a disruptive and traumatic space. Visually representing these experiences in my practice and theoretically exploring embodied experiences summarise this study on the construction of my fluid identity.

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Chapter one

1.0 Introduction

Migration is a process of moving from the known to the unknown, both physically and emotionally, and often such movement simultaneously instils feelings of anxiety at being displaced as well as a spirit of adventure. Migration is thus registered as displacement which creates a change in personal identity, as one is forced to engage with the idea of ‘newness’ and ways of fitting in. This study explores the phenomenon of displacement as a contributor to a hybrid identity; I narrate my personal experiences as a white, South African, Afrikaans-speaking woman affected by immigrating to Australia only to return a year later. These experiences serve as content for both my ceramic practice and written research on the effects of displacement and human behaviour.

Identity is central to this study and remains a complex notion that can be viewed from different perspectives. For this reason, I will approach identity from the perspective of how *my* identity was reformed when I was confronted with a change of scenery or a traumatic event. The practice of migration out of Africa is an activity that can be traced back thousands of years to a need for greener pastures, however, the process of this journey remains challenging when displacement occurs. John Samuel, Enver Motala and Salim Vally ([Sa]:4) cite South Africa as an excellent example of human displacement in their reference to the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck (Dutch colonial administrator) from the Netherlands to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. Van Riebeeck’s arrival opened a door to European¹ settlement in South Africa and an opportunity for Europeans to trade for goods. South African historians recognise this settlement in the Cape as the beginning of displacement for both Europeans and the indigenous African people (McKenna 2011:22; Henrard 1996:493).

European settlers soon realised that a sharp contrast existed between the lifestyle in Europe and Africa, which encouraged Europeans to replicate a familiarity with their European homeland within their new African surroundings, creating a hybrid space. The familiarity

¹ Refers to the settlers in South Africa, who originated from Europe and brought with their characteristics of the continent.

sought was the introduction of rules and governance that safeguarded Europeans amongst themselves as well as from the indigenous African people. The ripple effects of the introduction of rules changed the lifestyle trajectory of all indigenous people in South Africa, as people's movement was restricted, specific areas for living were established, amongst others, and European governance was further secured.

European settlers from the Netherlands who were of the Christian faith created a sub-culture group, the Afrikaners, who eventually governed South Africa from 1948 to 1994. During this period of governance, the ideology of apartheid was established (Oliver & Oliver 2017:2) and Black Africans specifically bore the brunt of extremely restrictive rules. Their experiences included displacement, they were compelled to learn and speak an alien language and practice Christianity (a European faith), and they were forced off their land and lost their rights to practice their indigenous religious and value systems (DeJesus 2018:79; Oliver & Oliver 2017:1; McKenna 2011:162; Thompson 2001:32; Samual, Motala & Vally [Sa]:92).

The advent of the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa created a renewed reality of displacement for Europeans who had settled in South Africa (Thompson 2001:256). The change in governance from a minority white population group to a majority Black population group created a sense of fear amongst white South Africans, who had enjoyed a life of freedom and plenitude during apartheid. Post-1994, many white South African families felt concerned about their sudden 'non-place' in this country, their job security, and the economic recession, which contributed to increased emigration out of South Africa (Thompson 2001:267).

Leonard Thompson's (2001:267) concerns listed above also encapsulate my insecurities that I grappled with in this study. I present the term *placed* to indicate my original space of safety, a safety that was determined by familiarity with people and my environment. When *displaced*, there are personal coping mechanisms that influence a new identity creation and the trauma of separation initiates moments of apprehension, angst, fear, and vulnerability that revitalise personal displacement, which is often seen as a liminal space. Pierre-Carl Link and Davide Torrente (2016:63) claim that memories, familiar objects, and people serve as stabilisers while in a liminal state. Personally, when I emigrated, my 'non-presence' within my new environment

was highlighted as a liminal space, an ‘in-betweenness’ that Homi Bhabha (1994:103) refers to as an ambiguous space that is “interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative”.

Within visual arts practices, liminality is an area of research that has been the focus of many artists, and this study focuses on three of them. I refer to the South African artist Leora Farber, who works with concepts of displacement and her hybrid identity as a second-generation person of Jewish descent (Farber 2008). Farber’s (2005) performed photographic series is written about in her publication *Dis-Location/Re-Location: ‘Implanting Africa’*. The series depicts the use of grafting (the process of merging two plants into one) as a visual expression and it serves as a comment on hybridity. Each element Farber uses in her work is intentional, such as threads that connect to femininity, skin to political connotations, and plants to the new environment that all serve as metaphors that indicate her hybrid identity (Farber 2008:10; Leora Farber 2006:[Sp]; Farber 2005:[Sp]; Smith 2002:[Sp]; Farber [Sa]).

I reference David Hicks’s (American) works in the medium of ceramics which create visual representations of liminal spaces (Clarke 2017:[Sp]), and American ceramist James Marshall’s works with experiences of transformation² that take place during a liminal state (Abatemarco 2017:[Sp]; Thompson 2007:35). Citing these artists demonstrates that this study is not isolated and that artists have grappled with ideas about identity and representations of liminal space both nationally and internationally. For my research practice, I will produce a body of sculptural ceramic works that speak to themes of displacement, liminality, and hybrid identity. The art practices of Davis Hicks and James Marshall are explored and discussed in this study, as both artists create ceramic works that deal with liminality. Hicks focuses on liminality as a process part of all life cycles (see Figure 1) and Marshall explores the energy within a liminal state by visualising these as shapes and colours (see Figure 2). And, Leora Farber’s artworks portray a very physical approach to the questioning of her hybrid identity seen in her performative photography series (see Figure 3).

² Transformation: Refers to physical, spiritual, or emotional changes that take place.



Figure 1: David Hicks, *Dark Fruit*, 2017, ceramic, rope, and metal, 48 x 38 x 23 cm, Mindy Soloman Gallery, Miami (Clarke 2017).



Figure 2: James Marshall, *RED #387*, 2014, glazed ceramic 33 x 37 x 6.5 cm, William Campbell Contemporary Art, Fort Worth (Clarke 2014).



Figure 3: Leora Farber, *Aloerosa: Transplant*, 2006-7, archival pigment printing on soft texture fine art paper 315g, 135.8 x 102 cm, Ed1/9, photograph by Michael Meyersfeld (Farber 2008).

My creative practice is ceramic sculpture, and the use of clay allows me to form and shape a personal visual representation of transformation (see Figure 4). Ceramic as a medium strengthens when fired (Tite 2008:216) and clay as a medium allows unlimited possibilities in shapes and unique transformations (Pitelka 2016:23). A characteristic of clay is that it retains its memory of the way it was shaped and sometimes under pressure, for example, when being fired at a high temperature, it can change shape rendering it ‘uncontrollable’ as a medium (Tite 2008:219).



Figure 4: Viola Greyling, *Collapse I*, 2021, glazed ceramic, 42 x 22 x 12 cm, Pretoria (courtesy of the artist).

I intend to create an exhibition of ceramic work that visually captures the essence of displacement, liminality, and hybrid identity. My choice of medium (clay) is intentional, as it lends itself to being malleable, fragile, and independent. Clay can be seen as a metaphor for myself as it lends itself to the idea of uncontrollability, shaping, and re-shaping. The creative practice documentation will be captured through an artist's book, written text, and photographic evidence are ways of collecting data in a practice-based research study (Candy & Edmonds 2018:65; Yee 2010:3; Niedderer & Roworth-Strokes 2007:13; Candy 2006:3).

1.1 Background to the study

The change in political governments in 1994 resulted in feelings of angst by many white, mainly Afrikaans-speaking, South Africans who felt displaced. Between 2002 and 2017, approximately 62 000 white South Africans left the country in search of religious, political, and financial

stability (Head 2019). The immigration of my family to Australia in 2009 resulted in me harbouring feelings of not belonging, fear, and experiences of isolation. Fortunately, according to Chris Kanellopoulou (2017:12), these feelings are 'normal' owing to feelings of a loss of familiar spaces. The reason for these experiences is that familiarity with spaces, people and objects create a stable identity (Sokolowski 2000:4) and a process of immigration renders these unstable. When displacement occurs, a person's identity continuously interacts with their surroundings, meaning that identity is constantly transforming as it registers new and unfamiliar things (Link & Torrente 2016:62; Wagner 2016:242; Bhabha 1994). In *Identity, youth and crisis*, Erik Erikson (1968:92) claimed that when the absence of someone (or something) occurs, it reshuffles or influences the development of an identity, which, as Iden (2018:[Sp]) states, can lead to a displaced or hybrid identity.

The separation from family members and leaving places of safety can contribute to experiences of depression, trauma, alienation, and thus influence identity formation (Lacapra 2016:391; Link & Torrente 2016:63). When a hybrid identity is in formation, different identities are visible, as one must reassemble one's memories and belongings that often come from traumatic experiences (Bachelard 1994:5; Bhabha 1994:63; Alsop 2002:35). The term 'hybridity' is not a new concept, as it has been used throughout history to define the merger of different cultures, races, languages, and even plants (Young 1995:5). According to Young (1995: 5), the term 'hybridity' came from the merger of two plant or animal species, and it was also used to describe the mixture of human races. The use of plants as a visual representation of hybridity is explored by Leora Farber (see chapter 3). In the twentieth century, the term 'hybridity' became the central word in cultural mixture discussions (Young 1995:6) but will not be the focus of this study.

One of my experiences while living in Australia was alienation, as I was deeply aware of being an Afrikaans-speaking South African amongst English-speaking Australians. My extreme discomfort encouraged me to return a year later to South Africa, a familiar place. Upon my return, I realised that everything that was once familiar had changed, including facets of myself. Dominick Lacapra (2016:384) states that traumatic memories and experiences are important to explore and document since both are part of an individual's history. It is these moments of

experience, that are central to this study, the interaction with personal past and present experiences becomes a fertile space for investigation – a space that is constantly in a state of flux and contributes towards a hybrid identity formation.

The research area identified for this study is the liminal space that one occupies when one's familiarity with a place is disrupted. It is the content that 'exists' within liminal spaces that sways and influences personal identity. These are of interest to me as they are embodied experiences that redefine the structuring of one's identity. Visually representing disruptive embodied identity-forming experiences in my practice and theoretically exploring embodied experiences describe this study.

The methods used in this study are practice-based and art-based research, as both are alternative platforms for knowledge-building about human experiences. This research process has provided me with some understanding of my emotions, and I experienced an internal dialogue with myself, which are both represented in a reflexive journal that documents the processes undertaken during my artmaking. My art practice allows for the conscious and unconscious retelling of stories through reflection. Reflexive writing and visual practice become the instruments used to interpret knowledge about trauma, fear, and displacement. The importance of this study is that sharing personal experiences becomes part of a larger research narrative, as promoted by Leigh Berger (2001:509) who contends that "Thinking, writing, and rewriting all lead [her] to new understandings of [her] experiences ... [and] access new perceptions and worldviews". This process allows me to perceive my narrations of being in a liminal state through visual representations of artworks.

1.2 Central argument

Literature on visual research indicates that a link between hybrid identity and liminality has not yet been explored substantially. Academic and non-academic publications separate the research areas of displacement, hybridity and transformation of identity during a liminal state. Authors who predominantly indicate a link between displacement and hybridity, for example, are Chris Kanellopoulou (2017), Lucille Korwin-Kossakowski (2011), Erik Erikson (1968), and Homi Bhabha (1994). I argue that the link between these three areas of study needs to be addressed as they feed on each other.

There is a limited amount of practice-based research documentation of the transformation that occurs within a liminal space that creates a hybrid identity when a person is displaced. Artists, such as David Hicks and James Marshall, have created artworks on liminality, whereas others have made artworks about displacement and liminality, for example, Leora Farber. This research seeks to address the previously mentioned fragmented literature and the identified gaps therein.

In this study, I argue that hybridity based on displacement is the result of a liminal space that reshapes identity within that space. For this reason, this research will be led by three questions: What are the contributing factors to a hybrid identity? Can the documenting of liminal space through reflexivity contribute to an understanding of the transpiring experiences during displacement? How can the materiality of ceramics be used for a generation of new information responding to liminality? These questions will be explored in both my theoretical and practical investigations.

1.2 Aims and objectives

This study explores the 'established' hybrid identity formed when an individual is displaced. In support of this research, Leora Farber (practising South African artist), James Marshall, and David Hicks (American ceramicists), who explored displaced identities and liminality in their practice, will be discussed. The first objective is to render the phenomenon of human experiences and personal narratives into a documentable process that highlights concepts of displacement, liminality, hybridity, and identity. The documentation of human experiences is important because it serves as a form of new knowledge (Wagner 2016:238, Pradl 1984:3), and adds new perspectives regarding the lived experience (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio 2019:92). The second objective is to create a body of ceramic artworks that visually capture personal narratives that translate the idea of hybridity and liminal space. The exhibition of these works will be hosted at the University of Pretoria, Javett-UP Student Gallery. The Gallery itself is not a conventional space, as the floors are cement and there are concrete pillars throughout the venue that affects the view. The ceiling is low with metal tracks for cabling that create an industrial feel. These factors reflect an alien space within which I install my work.

1.3 Methodology

This study will take a qualitative approach by exploring and describing connected themes to understand a displaced identity. Academic sources such as books and journals, and non-academic sources such as visual platforms (blogs, exhibition catalogues, websites, and social media pages) will be used to investigate completed research exploring concepts of displacement, hybrid identity, and liminality. Hermeneutic phenomenology as a framework focuses on the simplest way to explore, interpret, document, and understand lived experiences (Kagimu 2019:[Sp]). I investigate Heidegger's belief in documenting how the world influences an individual's narratives and identities by exploring past experiences and their influences (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio 2019:94). Therefore, narratology as a method will also be used as a tool to capture the stories of human experiences, with a focus on my narrative as data for this study (Amerian & Jofi 2015:187; Landa & Onega 2014:4; Meister 2011:[Sp]).

This study will analyse artists' artmaking connected to notions of displacement, liminality, identity, and hybridity. Artists who have worked with these themes but not discussed in detail in this study are South African artist William Kentridge, who often uses flowing water depicted in blue in his charcoal video drawings to represent liminal states (Wasterveld 2010:28) and Lucille Korwin-Kossakowski (2011:2), who uses mandalas as a healing tool and believes that displacement is a process that deliberately disrupts and complicates perceptions. In *Dis-Location/Re-location: A case study of a practice-led research visual arts project*, Leora Farber (2008) recites her identity and geographic displacement. Farber (2008:7) writes that adapting to a new environment requires a reassessment of personal and shared Eurocentric morals, values, and ideologies embedded in her as a displaced person. This study looks specifically at the artists Leora Farber, David Hicks, and James Marshall's responses to notions of liminality and hybridity.

Data as evidence in a reflective journal will be collected throughout my creative practice and will respond to my narratives of experiences that will serve as knowledge generation (Brophy 2007:150; Glen, McDonagh, Sullivan, Roche & Morgan 2012:10). In art-based research, there is space for data to be "discovered, gathered, examined, explored, and understood" as knowledge (Marshall & D'Adamo 2011:14). The use of the arts as a form of knowledge

generation brings new views, creative problem-solving, and personal processes that can be included in the research (Van der Vaart, Van Hoven & Huigen 2018:[Sp]; Marshall & D'Adamo 2011:12; Finley 2008:71). Art-based research has a broad scope when addressing research on emotions and the phenomenon of human experiences, used as data in the research (Van der Vaart, Van Hoven & Huigen 2018:[Sp]; Marshall & D'Adamo 2011:12; Rolling 2010:103; Finley 2008:75; McNiff 2007:30).

Chapter two

2.0 Literature review

This study considers ideas on what contributes to the construction of a hybrid identity during and after displacement, as well as experiences within a liminal space. Pieter Kok, Derik Gelderblom, John Oucho and Johan van Zyl (2006:4) claim that there are possibly three reasons why people migrate – labour migration (lower skill level), refugee crisis (forced migration) and permanent migration (higher skill level). The most noticeable immigration out of South Africa took place during the 1960s and in 1994 (Wasserman 2017:18; Evason 2015:[Sp]). The South African ‘brain drain’ is cited in many texts as a reason for permanent migration (Halm 2019:31; Brink 2012:14; Kok, Gelderblom, Oucho & Van Zyl 2006:8; Bhorat, Meyer & Mlatsheni 2002:2; Mattes, Crush & Richmond 2000:3). The unemployment statistics and income inequality also contributed to South Africans immigrating to Australia, where they believe they will have a better chance of job security and higher incomes (Wasserman 2017:23; Evason 2015:[Sp]). Another reason why (white) South African families moved to Australia is the comparable culture, language and weather similarities (Wasserman 2017:18; Evason 2015:[Sp]).

A reason for the lack of information on South African migrants’ experiences in Australia, according to Romy Wasserman (2017:24), is that South African migrants made no demands on their new country, drawing little attention to themselves compared to forcibly displaced people, such as refugees. In Charis Kanellopoulou’s (2017:12) *Displacement as a state of mind*, she claims that migrants are often overpowered and overwhelmed by the feelings of loss. Wasserman’s (2017:24-25) research statistics show that many individuals within the South African migrant groups found it difficult to adapt, while most classify themselves as South African-Australians and live with a hybrid identity. In *Revisiting the debate on people, place, identity and displacement*, Gaim Kibreab (1999:384) wrote that belonging is a human need, which is why many people construct their identity around their environment.

Literature publications on traumatic experiences during or after displacement are based on refugee experiences (Nickerson, Liddell, Asnaani, Carlsson, Fazel, Knaevelsrud, Morina, Neuner, Newnham & Rasmussen [Sa]; Makoni 2016:[Sp]; Schmidt, Kravic & Ehler 2008:269)

and not traumatic experiences within family migration or the effects of migration on families, and particularly children. It is reported that many refugees experience post-traumatic stress that could lead to depression (Schmidt, Kravic & Ehlert 2008:274; Ergun, Çakici & Çakici 2008:24; Aydin 2017:125).

An identity is not fixed and can continuously be shaped and reshaped throughout life (Aydin 2017:126). It is possible for this reason that it is difficult to immediately assess what to take with and what to leave behind from a previously established identity in the construction process of a new one (Van Halen, Bosma & Van der Meulen 2020:172; Wagner 2016:241). John Di Stefano (2002:40) indicates that a migrant is a liminal being who never truly arrives at one destination or completely leaves the other – the reason for instability in many migrant lives.

Erik Erikson (1968:92) claims that identity formation transpires when one learns to interact socially and develop skills. He further states that identity grows around the things one is surrounded by, such as culture, environment, and status (Erikson 1968:138). It can be argued that a displaced person forms various coexistent identities to cope with changing surroundings (Bolatagici 2004:77; Di Stefano 2002:40). Disruptions or absences occur that influence an identity when one is relocated and forced to restart the process of identity (re)formation (Milligan 2003:382).

In *Trends in and manifestations of hybridity*, Hussein Mollanazar and Fatemeh Parham (2009:29) state that hybridity exists owing to the continuous shift between stable and changing situations that realise an unknown space where hybridity is born. Similar sentiments are echoed in *Claiming the (n)either/(n)or of 'third space': (Re)presenting hybrid identity and the embodiment of mixed race*, where Torika Bolatagici (2004:7) refers to hybridity as the formation of a new identity structure. In *Hybridity: Forms and figures in literature and the visual arts*, Vanessa Guignery (2011) defines hybridity as either intentional hybridity (when two things are placed next to each other) or unintentional hybridity (when two things merge). In *The location of culture*, Bhabha (1994:113-114) promotes the term hybridity as the ongoing struggle of two cultures that will never see only one image but will always be split between the two. Bhabha (1994:37) refers to a "third space" when a hybrid identity is formed as to highlight

that a hybrid identity is a new positive outcome. This “third space” connects to the idea of hybridity being formed within a liminal space, a space not here nor there (Young 1995:21).

Arnold Van Gennep is recognised as a seminal author on liminality. In *The rites of passage* (1960), he divides liminality into pre-liminal, mid-liminal, and post-liminal phases. The three phases are what Van Gennep (2004:11) calls the rites of separation, transitional, and incorporation. Many texts on liminality reference van Gennep’s breakdown of liminalities, such as Paul Stenner (2019), Nic Beech (2010:287), Caryl Sibbett (2004:2) and Catherine Smith (2001:[Sp]) when exploring the transformation in identity during a liminal state.

Importantly, Victor Turner (1969) revived the ideals of the term liminality in his book *The ritual process. Structure and anti-structure*, which focuses on the in-between state of the liminal experience. Turner (1969:167) describes liminality as a state or period where one is removed from their current place and placed in a space where things can be examined or analysed. During this state, one is in between the rules and conventions of the society or culture where the re-structuring of hierarchies can take place (Turner 1969:95). Hierarchies of power, cultural, or even personal, belief structures are in question. Everyone’s life experiences influence their liminal processes, which makes it unique to each person (Turner 1969:97).

Liminality can be envisaged as a fluid transitional space as it is situated between the ‘pre-liminal’ stage of separation and the ‘post-liminal’ stage of incorporation. In *‘Betwixt and between’ worlds: Spatial and temporal liminality in video art-music*, Holly Rogers (2013:528) writes about liminality as a process of self-realisation and refers to liminality as a crossroad or borderline. A displaced person is continuously at a crossroads with no sense of belonging, where the stability and routine of the person are altered (Beech 2010:13; Ratiani 2012:1-2).

In *The basic problems in phenomenology*, Martin Heidegger (1988:166) encourages individuals to interact with their surrounding world in his ‘being-in-the-world’ theory that connects with ideas on the human experience. In *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and a phenomenological philosophy*, Edmund Husserl (1983:139) sees phenomenology as the study of human experiences and focuses on eidetic memories that will contribute to a displaced person’s recollection of the past. Importantly, Husserl (1983:94) states that an individual has many sides to their identity that influence their experiences.

One recognises oneself through identity and narrates a personal story to document personal life experiences (Wagner 2016:238). Narratives can be a tool for communication between individuals and groups of people (Miettinen, Sarantou & Akimenko 2018:[Sp]). Brophy (2007:150) states in *Evidence based library and information practice*, that through narratives we gain a better understanding, and that throughout history, narratives have been told in verbal, written, and visual forms. Erikson (1968:138) contends that we grow our identity around the things we are surrounded by, such as culture, environment, occupation, and status. According to Sonn, Ivey, Baker and Meyer (2017) displaced migrants build their identity around their history as an individual or a community. When displaced, one longs for the previous connections with people, places, everyday familiarities, and routines that formed one's life.

When removed from areas of familiarity, the familiar remains part of the identity. When placed in the new environment, one starts to realise factors of what made one's home a home, such as the relationship with community members and local customs or traditions, for example (Sonn, Ivey, Baker & Meyer 2017:48). Annika Lems (2016:315) writes of the overwhelming newness when a displaced person sees, smells, hears, and interacts with their new environment. The overwhelming feeling often leaves the displaced person feeling alienated, disorientated, and confused (Lems 2016:316). The reason is that displacement causes unfamiliarity and uncertainty (Gatrell, Sanyal & Boccagni 2019), with different effects on the identity of the displaced (Hall 2016:5).

Studies by Wasserman (2017:25) and Sonn, Ivey, Baker, and Meyer (2017) concur that many individuals within the South African migrant community in Australia live with a hybrid identity, as they classify themselves as South African-Australians. According to Louise Silberling (2003:146), displacement (individually or as a community) is about the experience of replacement with the limited choices they have once displaced. Silberling (2003:153) sees a displaced person's identity as a constantly changing structure that gives the displaced the power to reconstruct their narrative to find a new sense of belonging.

For the displaced there are concerns about their ethnic traditions which are rooted in a specific place, and if they are removed from that place, one should ask, how does that influence their cultural identity? Silberling (2003:153) questions how identity can remain the same if a fixed

identity is rooted in the stability of the place known as home. The new physical place one is unrooted in also removes one from the spiritual, emotional, and social connections that were once fixed (Silberling 2003:153). Seteney Shami (2009:148) stresses the importance of knowing that the process of displacement can be ongoing over a length of time and individuals can be replaced and displaced again within that time. Shami (2009) believes that displacement stays a part of one's identity and the history of displacement highlights elements that one can create an identity around.

Sonn, Ivey, Baker and Meyer (2017:49) maintain that a displaced person's identity formation is ongoing and that the person experiences an in-between-ness when searching for belonging or identity. An identity is not fixed and can continuously be shaped and reshaped throughout one's life (Aydin 2017:126; Umut 2008). Nostalgia plays a big role in identity continuity and remembering positive connections to one's past self (Sonn, Ivey, Baker & Meyer 2017:44). As a coping mechanism, displaced people therefore use nostalgia to remember their past as a means to preserve that part of their identity (Milligan 2003:381). It can thus be argued that a displaced person forms various coexistent identities to cope with changing surroundings (Boltagici 2004:77; Di Stefano 2002:40). However, Aydin (2017:131) argues that once the trauma is experienced, one's identity can lose track of its previous self. In critical spaces or situations, an identity can take on the external influences that are cast by the environment and the community – a process used by a person to stabilise their identity (Beech 2010:289).

Yehouda Shenhav (2011) asserts that communicating in the same language evokes belonging among people, as language is part of what allows an identity to communicate and since it indicates whom we can trust. According to David Ip (2009), it is more probable that migrants have multiple or hybrid identities that are formed by merging the transition from one to the other. From this merger, hybrid identities are shaped by migrants, who experience personal anxieties through the back-and-forth process of identities being constructed (Ip 2009:164; Mollanazar & Parham 2009:29). Often, migrants visit their original homes and are confronted by the definition of 'home', since both places that the migrant occupies are in flux (Ip 2009:175).

Liminality within identity transformation can be classified as a 'reflecting' process where others' perspective of oneself is questioned (Rogers 2013:528; Beech 2010:290). Alternatively, the identity can transform through 'experimenting' during a liminal stage. Beech (2010:290) thus explores the possibility of 'recognition' when the identity gets transformed by what others project onto it. Through experiences in uncontrolled phases of liminality, it will disturb daily routines (Hansen 2011:47). Catherine Smith (2001:[Sp]) refers to liminality as a transforming stage or identity during a 'third space', an in-between space. According to Smith (2001:[Sp]), the liminal state enhances communication between the two sides rather than placing them on opposite ends.

This chapter surveyed different texts on hybridity, identity, displacement, and the way liminality is experienced personally. Displacement is prominent in this study and is looked at, from the perspective of myself, a willing migrant. Being displaced leaves the identity in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable place where one's surroundings are absorbed within the identity space. Hybridity can therefore form in many ways, either by moving between stable and changing places as Mollanazar and Parham (2009:29) contend, or it is seen as the middle point where a new identity can form, as theorised by Bolatagici (2004:7). This study sees a hybrid identity as the formation of a new identity that is caused by constant replacement. In identity re-formation, identity will keep some original elements of place and merge them with its new environment. The experiences that take place during the liminal stage form part of the displaced narrative. The narrative helps to recollect and make sense of what they have been through so that they can start to merge into the new environment and settle.

Chapter Three

3.0 Artists working with liminality and displacement

Living life either as a migrant or immigrant means that one lives in-between binaries. The space between these binaries is a designated grey area that comes with the challenge of constantly being in search of a point of belonging. When I immigrated, belonging became a major part of my search for a new 'touch base' or 'home' as some would call it. Since I have lived in different countries, houses and environments, I found that what I desire is to feel that I belong in the space I live in. During the search for belonging, both as a migrant and immigrant, moving through a liminal state automatically transforms and shapes one's identity physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

This study focuses on liminality, as it is the between space or phase in destinations or points of living. As in my art practice and the artists discussed in this study, the exploration will be on experiences of transforming identity and displaced experiences that take place within liminality. The exploration of the liminal state allows one to document and reflect on the displaced person's traumas as a means to start demystifying these experiences and stabilise one's identity. This is necessary as traumatic experience renders one confused and socially conscious of being an 'other'. According to Nic Beech (2010:285), identity remains in a state of flux within the liminal state, as the identity is not present in either the past or current self, or the past or present location.

The liminal state can be a long, constant experience that is often unwanted and catches one off guard as you are not ready for change. Periods of the transition almost feel like a stretched-out yet disorientated numbness, leaving the migrant living in between the past and present place (Ip 2009:166). Erikson (1968) posits that identity is influenced by one's surroundings, which affects personal identity. Personal identity is the focus of what one thinks of oneself instead of society's perception of you (Fearon 1999:2). It is for this reason that I look at the personal transformation that takes place as well as the works of other artists exploring the theme of displacement and hybridity.

This chapter explores the works of three artists, namely Leora Farber, David Hicks, and James Marshall. Leora Farber's artworks portray a very physical approach to the questioning of her hybrid identity in her performances. In her performance series, available as photo stills, she performs the sewing of local plants onto her skin. Farber's skin symbolises her identity as a Jewish female that is altered or transformed physically by her new environment. The focus on these artists and their works lend itself to explorations in hybrid identity formations when displaced. This is of interest to this study, as such matters are visible or translated in their works as visual depictions of events that hover in a liminal space that leads to a better understanding of traumatic experiences.

3.1 Leora Farber

Leora Farber's experiences of being a white South African female, and a third-generation migrant, relates to the experiences I felt when I first immigrated with my parents. What interests me are Farber's narratives on the experiences that affected female immigrants, and their feelings of alienation and displacement. In Farber's work, she narrates the displacement experienced by three significant Jewish descendent women: Bertha Marks (Anglo-Jewish), Farber's mother Freda, and her narrative.

Farber was inspired by Bertha Marks, who had left the industrial town of Sheffield in England once married to Sammy Marks (entrepreneur and successful businessman) to reside in South Africa (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:119; Faber 2014:73; Murray 2008:[Sp]). It was Farber's visualisation of Marks' attempt to overcome her feelings of alienation that intrigued my interest in understanding personal experiences during displacement. Faber finds inspiration in her mother's (Freda) experiences as a child of first-generation immigrants from Eastern Europe to South Africa (Faber 2014:73). Through narrative and memory, Farber stitched together their disjointed displaced identities and different relationships with place in her artworks (Farber 2014:74).

Analysing Farber's art for this study serves as an exploration of a hybrid identity, specifically her series *Dis-Location/Re-Location*, in which Farber's body becomes the visual representation of her search for identity within her displaced heritage (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:111; Neluheni 2008:[Sp]). Farber's performance artworks are meant to keep the viewer as both an

onlooker and an outsider and to keep the viewer wanting to understand what she is experiencing, to demonstrate the isolation Marks felt in her new 'home' (Allara 2008:56). For Marks, South Africa was her new home, a place where she now 'belongs' (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:119). Home is the place where one is rooted, and moving away from that can influence one's identity severely in a negative manner.

For the displaced, the concept of 'home' is a contradicting spatial experience since they remember their past home while re-establishing a new one (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:112). This places a displaced person in an in-between space and longing for what they had, as they cannot fully immerse themselves into their new 'home' since a part of them is still at their previous 'home'. The result of this state of flux is that the physical self begins to reassemble how it functions in its new environment and, in so doing, a hybrid identity emerges as one forms your identity around the environment and objects you are surrounded by (Erikson 1968:92).

Farber's series titled *Dis-Location/Re-Location* was partly performed at the Sammy Marks Museum (Pretoria) and documented through video and photographs (Allara 2008:53; Ellis 2012:124). The series was recorded and documented for preservation so that Farber's concept is captured in time and place (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:119). By preserving Farber's artwork, it can be kept as an exploration point in history to refer to the analysing of a hybrid identity (Foster 2004:4).

In the *Dis-Location/Re-Location* series' artwork called *A Room of Her Own* (Figure 5), Farber recreated Marks' room found in their Transvaal house (Farber 2014:75; Ellis 2012:131). During Farber's performances, she impersonates Marks and her narrative. Central to the performance is the creation of a Victorian-era styled room in which Farber occupies herself with embroidery – a feminine pastime. Farber subverts this pastime by sewing fresh aloe leaves into her skin around an embroidered English rose (Figure 6) (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:120; Allara 2008:54; Ellis 2012:132). Farber's act combines the past and the present environment by using a specific plant (aloe) found in arid regions in South Africa. Farber focuses on the merging of two places, as she is combining English conventions with the South African environment indicated in her use of the rose and aloe (Allara 2008:54).

The hybrid identity is experienced by Farber stitching an aloe (new African home) onto her colonial heritage (rose) to find her place (Farber 2014:76). The plants reference their dissimilarities – the aloe is a desert plant that has a hard exterior and needs little water to survive in contrast to the rose, which needs to be pruned annually to ensure blooms and has a stem of thorns and hardy leaves to protect the soft and fragile flower petals. The grafting of aloe and a rose as symbols of different cultures suggests new emerging hybrid identity formations (Allara 2008:55) and is also a visual depiction of the merger of soft and rough textures, geometrical and organic shapes, and warm and cold colours (Ellis 2012:132).



Figure 5: Leora Farber, *A Room of Her Own: Generation*, 2006-7, archival pigment printing on soft textured Fine Art paper, 100 x 133.2 cm, editioned 1/9 (Allara 2008:52).

In the grafting of the aloe (foreign culture), the tender skin allows the plant to grow under it and expand through the body (Farber 2014:76). The hard exterior of the aloe in contrast to the skin, enhances the painfulness of the merging process with the new as it grows to become part of Farber's newly formed identity (Farber 2014:76). Farber's use of an embroidered rose (symbolic of an English garden) represents a lost heritage associated with a former lifestyle

enjoyed by Marks and a preserved version of this past. The rose as embroidered also represents acts of domesticity and womanly activities apart from a colonial heritage (Goosen & Swanepoel 2015:120; Ellis 2012:131). Stitching becomes Farber's way of communicating and references Derrida's "pointure-practices" that align with the idea of prickling, or the connection to a seamstress that binds with thread (Farber 2014:73,85). In Farber's stitching of the plants to her skin, she visually depicts a hybrid identity and the process of merging into a new environment.



Figure 6: Leora Farber, *A Room of Her Own*, 2006, performance still, photographs by Michael Meyersfeld (Farber 2014:77).

In *A Room of Her Own* (Figures 5 and 6), Farber's recreation of Mark's room becomes a transformational (liminal) space where the outcome of both Farber's and Mark's identities are unpredictable (Allara 2008:55). Beech's (2010:287) view on a liminal state is that "one's identity can change or transform because it is a space between past and present". Goosen and Swanepoel (2015:113) further mention that the identification process of moving through the

liminal and transforming is a “continuous” process of change where trauma, confusion, and anxiety can be experienced as the transformation of one’s identity takes place.

Apart from the embroidered roses, Farber also makes use of relief wax versions of the rose in her performance. These wax roses, which eventually melt, are attached to the wall, and some then drop to the floor, indicating that the time of a previous culture and era has passed (Farber 2014:79). The melted roses reveal the two-dimensional wallpaper, which has been altered as some roses are replaced by images of aloes (Allara 2008:54; Neluheni 2008:[Sp]; Ellis 2012:132; Farber 2014:79). The change in environment is referenced by soundtracks of a classical piano with a voice-over of Farber reading Bertha Marks’ letters to her husband, followed by Freda Farber’s narrative of leaving Latvia and her childhood experiences in South Africa and finally, sirens, taxis hooting, ringing phones, and other familiar South African sounds that indicate Leora Farber’s stay in South Africa (Farber 2014:78; Neluheni 2008:[Sp]).

In reading Farber’s work, the relief of cutting and adding to the skin becomes a crutch for the emotional pain experienced by the immigrant, an indication of change and hardship. The constant process of sewing becomes a search to understand the trauma experienced and a process of physical mending. Farber (2014:86) explains that the cutting of the skin represents the overpowering emotions of feeling alienated or not belonging and my interpretation is that the alien skin surfaces that Farber creates become a visual expression of her emotions.



Figure 7: Leora Farber, *Ties That Bind Her: Preservation*, 2006-2007, archival pigment printing on soft textured Fine Art paper, 315 g, editioned 1/9, 100 x 133.2 cm, photograph by Michael Meyersfeld (Farber 2013:65).

Ties That Bind Her (2006-2007) (Figure 7) are performed in Marks' room where Farber presses cameos into her chest. Neluheni (2008:[Sp]) contends that Farber's performance depicts Marks as a hostage in her room, her corset, her new home, and her circumstances of isolation. The work concludes with Farber being taken over by the (indigenous) aloe plants, a full submerging of herself into the new surroundings.

3.2 David Hicks

David Hicks is an American ceramicist who creates multiple shapes that he compiles into liminal depictions. In Hicks's exhibition *A Taste for Plums* at Mindy Solomon Gallery in 2019, the works mesmerise the viewer with the combination of shapes and colours used. His works interest the viewer as the objects traverse between the recognisable and the abstract (Solomon 2019:[Sp]). Hicks is inspired by his direct surroundings and constantly looks for his definition of beauty in

interesting shapes that he mimics while on his daily travels (Jones 2017:[Sp]; Shea 2018:[Sp]; Solomon 2019:[Sp]; Talasek 2021:[Sp]). These shapes include his inspiration from the landscape surrounding him, to his studio space; he creates sculptural shapes that appear to be frozen in a liminal state. Hicks sees the home as his place of safety and belonging and the travel route that he takes is the liminal passage where anything can happen or change. This journey is important in his ideation processes.



Figure 8: David Hicks, *Char Trimmings*, 2017, ceramic, rope, and metal, 50.8 x 25.4 x 15.24 cm (Olson 2017).

In Hicks's works, he portrays his "detachment from the natural world" (Mora 2018:[Sp]). To feel closer to nature, Hicks constructs his fixation with natural shapes to fill the void of viewing nature from a distance or from inside his car. This need to explore and experience nature is what keeps Hicks inspired to create (Mora 2018:[Sp]). Hicks depicts the captured in-moment ceramic forms by creating either a welded steel framework (seen in Figure 9), or he suspends the pieces (as shown in Figure 8) using different kinds of fibre (Talasek 2021:[Sp]).

For *Construction (Rose)* (Figure 9), Hicks created natural shapes that are held up by a steel framework. Talasek (2021:[Sp]) observes that Hicks uses the contrast of the migrant workers implementing the industrial agricultural systems and the production of the crops surrounding his home with the crops themselves. The steel framework is a representation of the workers' hands moving and growing the crops that are suggested in his works (Talasek 2021:[Sp]). The hands of the agricultural workers are the structure that builds the system of food supply.



Figure 9: David Hicks, *Construction (Rose)*, 2016, ceramic and stainless steel (Talasek 2021).

The repetition of steelwork indicates the increase in the industrial agricultural field and the increase in migrant workers. Hicks sees the existence of humans in the cycle of agriculture where the ground is fertilised and used to grow crops, and the constant cycle places humans in an ever-moving process through phases and time that could be experienced as liminal periods (Talasek 2021:[Sp]; Shea 2018:[Sp]; Solomon 2017:[Sp]).

As seen in Figure 9, *Construction (Rose)*, the ceramic shapes are placed towards the top of the steel structure to indicate direction. Together, this placement creates a larger rose construction. Hicks creates his interpretation of a rose to relay his concept of natural forms

captured in a moment of transformation. Hicks's combination of shapes placed together, and forms bent at an angle, gives the illusion of movement although they are fixed in place. Hicks's experiences in the liminal allow him to understand himself (Solomon 2017:[Sp]), and his interesting, almost recognisable, shapes indicate an organic form captured in a moment of transformation, and serve as an example of a visual depiction of liminality. In response to Farber's and Hicks's works, Farber's melting wax roses changed before the viewers' eyes as they fall to the floor and in her sewing performances, the audience saw the merging of plant matter taking place. Hicks, in contrast, captures the moment of organic matter that is constantly transforming, because they are growing until they decay.



Figure 10: David Hicks, *Arrangement (Golden)*, 2014, 21 x 16 x 14 in, ceramic, gold, steel (Talasek 2021).

In Figure 10, *Arrangement (Golden)*, Hicks creates his sculptural forms by hand with terracotta clay that is coated with glaze and copper lustre, which creates a smooth up and down motion when installed, imitating a wave (Talasek 2021:[Sp]). In his work are different textures, sizes, shapes and colours present, and some of the shapes might look like stylised organic forms. However, each installation is very complex and carefully planned out as Hicks places each

shape selectively. The artwork itself becomes a liminal space; each piece a liminal body that is suspended in time (Sey 2011:8). With Hicks's installations of many pieces placed together is a stronger representation of liminality than when only one of the pieces are displayed by itself. Hicks's ceramic sculptures represent the liminal space between us and nature (Jones 2017:[Sp]).



Figure 11: David Hicks, *Pale Harvest*, 2016, 23 x 20 x 9 cm, ceramic and stainless steel (Talasek 2021).

I enjoy Hicks's depictions of natural elements around him in his sculptural ceramic pieces because I connect them to the different environments of an immigrant's experiences, as is evident in Figure 11, *Pale Harvest* (2016). When someone is re-placed, their direct surroundings change and natural elements like flowers and seeds look different. Hicks's works can stand on their own or as a series, since they are all inspired by the same environment. The shapes are similarly made – just as any ceramicist has a specific touch, the clay seems to form and bend similarly when it is in his hands, just like everyone's penmanship is unique. This makes David Hicks's clay sculptures true to him.

Hicks uses multiple colours to glaze and finish off his works, from earthy colours to gold, indicating the transformation that is experienced during liminality. He uses the contrast of the organic ceramic shapes with the steel structure or ropes to direct the focal point to the ceramic shapes. The textural and colour difference between the stand and the ceramics adds to the opposing sides before and after a liminal state, making the artwork the representation of the middle point – the liminal space. Although the steel structure or ropes are present in most of his works, he does have artworks that stand alone. However, Hicks's main focus is on him being in a liminal state between manmade objects and structures, and nature (Jones 2017:[Sp]).

3.3 James Marshall

James Marshall is another example of an American ceramicist who deals with the theme of liminality. In Marshall's approach, he represents liminality as a solid, recreated, and transforming shape, which is completely different from Hicks's. Hicks, in contrast, creates multiple smaller pieces to create one larger artwork. Marshall also focuses on the use of colour extensively and depicts specific elements of liminality as certain colours.

There are many different clays, all with different colour pigments and elasticity components, and ceramists would use different clay bodies for different projects. For example, sometimes one needs firmer clay to support the shape. Marshall spent over a year getting his clay body to support his shapes, and once he reduced the cracking and breakage with temperature changes, he had interesting ceramic shapes. His shapes are smooth and clean, which allows him to play around with bright colours to portray transformation and energy (Thomson 2007:36). The colour and type of glazes Marshall uses gives the viewer a new perspective on what is experienced during liminality. Marshall's shapes are intentionally created to be unrecognisable, so one cannot associate the shape with a known experience, feeling, or memory you have had before (Thomson 2007:37).



Figure 12: James Marshall, *Liminal Object #201*, 2007, glazed ceramic, 73.5 x 68.5 x 10.5 cm (Thomson 2007:37).

Marshall experiences stages of in-betweenness during meditation sessions that greatly influence him. In an interview with Donna Thomson, published in an article titled *James Marshall The Liminal Object* (2007), Marshall spoke of his liminal journey. The focus of the interview was ‘what is a liminal object?’ and Marshall’s journey within liminality. In the interview, Marshall stated that he sees liminality as the turning point for where growth or change can take place, an open space, an energetic space where something new can come out of (Thomson 2007:35). This is echoed by James Sey (2011:6), who declares that transformation happens during liminality because normal rules and systems do not exist during liminality.

Personally, as an artist, I have always thought of liminality as a vast, open, dark, and mysterious space. This is where Marshall’s depiction of the liminal also started. Marshall used black, as he understood liminality to be a void, and only then did he further explore the transformation during liminality in vibrant and warm colours (Figure 12). Garth Clark (2014:[Sp]) claims that Marshall’s exhibition titled *The Endurance of Form* (2014) was a return to his creating shapes

in variations of black. Marshall's exhibition (2014) used two different black glazes, which creates a push-pull effect on the surface (Clark 2014:[Sp]). When two glazes overlap on a ceramic piece, there can be numerous outcomes. In this case, the two types of black glazes Marshall used compliments each other, as they did not completely pull away nor create a melted runny look. The complemented result of the glazes is what Clark (2014:[Sp]) calls a 'push-pull effect', as the glaze during the firing pushed and pulled on the surface of the clay in a balanced fashion.

In Figure 8, *BLACK #396*, the line where the two black glazes merge creates another effect where the glaze surfaces glow and interact with one another (Clark 2014:[Sp]). The line, for me, represents the space where two identities meet, start to communicate, and merge. The line is another representation of the liminal stage, just as the whole shape is a representation of the liminal. Marshall used two of the same colour glazes but different types of glazes so, when fired, the merger of the glazes can be seen. This was a deliberate choice of visibly merging the glazes, as Marshall could then present the merger of two sides or stages with each other.



Figure 13: James Marshall, *BLACK #396*, 2014, glazed ceramic, 84 x 96.5 x 15 cm (Clark 2014).

Marshall went through a stage of exploring the transformation that happens during liminality using bright, warm colours (Thomson 2007:37). Thomson (2007:35) comments that once she looked at Marshall's piece, she was drawn in by the colour and the natural elements that were involved in the creation of the shape captured at a moment in time. Clark (2014:[Sp]) quotes Marshall that says he creates "Where colour, energy, light and form merge into one". Marshall's shapes are not meant to be an identifiable form, which opens any viewer's mind to the narrative they want to impose onto it; rather, Marshall uses colour to express the energy experienced during liminality.

Marshall started by exploring liminal shapes in black glazes and over the years explored the shapes in all the bright and warm colours as he showed the energy of transformation during a liminal stage. For Marshall's exhibition in 2014, he went full circle as he returned to his all-black liminal objects. Clark (2014:[Sp]) observes the irony of his completing the cycle of liminality by returning to creating his shapes with black glazes (Figures 13 and 14). The idea of liminality as a state one moves through, the transformation and changes experienced, are still depicted in Marshall's continuous exploration of liminality through shape and colour. Marshall returns to using black as his main colour for his shapes, indicating the continuity of a never-ending search to understand and explore the liminal state.



Figure 14: James Marshall, *BLACK #399*, 2014, glazed ceramic, 84 x 96.5 x 15 cm (Clark 2014).

Marshall invites the viewer to look at his work with an open mind, forgetting the principles of art, the elements of colour, or the ideas one has about the shapes of sculptures. Marshall challenges the viewer to look at his art in this way so that they can experience the liminal space his artworks represent (Thomson 2007:38). Thus, Marshall invites the viewer to spend time with his work so that they can understand the essence of what the works portray. When Marshall creates art, he stays within the liminal. As Thomson (2007:39) notes, as soon as one starts to define it, one moves your attention out of the liminal stage. Marshall's artworks are not narratives, but rather, he creates shapes that influence the space and energy of the room they are placed in (Thomson 2007:40).

Marshall is so immersed in his process of creating an object that when he sees the shape again after some time has passed, he is surprised by the way it makes him feel (Thomson 2007:40). I have, as Marshall, also experienced moving away from this liminal state during which I create and thereafter experienced the liminal shape. The shape is forever trapped between the beginning and never reaching the end, a forever in-between space.

To consolidate the three artists discussed in this chapter, there are a few similarities and differences when looking at their practices. For this study's exploration of what forms a hybrid identity or displacement, I find Farber's work relates best to these two concepts. Farber expresses her heritage and current living environment by merging native plants with her skin: her skin connects to her family who migrated to South Africa where she currently lives. Farber understands and explores her hybrid identity through these artworks, where she took her introspection into the public realm. Presenting her introspection in a public space allowed Farber to manifest her hybrid self through others' perspectives, using them as witnesses for her self-exploration manifested. Farber's plant sewing performance was her journey toward self-actualisation, and her journey is a liminal space that the viewers became a part of.

Marshall's 2014 works, although no sources indicate this, I argue, can also be seen as hybrid pieces. Marshall used two different black glazes to complete his works – the two blacks are the same colour when applied, but after firing visually perform differently. In all his 2014 black liminal shapes there is a visible line dividing the two colours or sides of the shape, where the colours meet. One can see the tension in the glazes as they push and pull each other (Clark 2014:[Sp]). The merging line is not simply representing the liminal space, but can also portray the line between two identities of a person. The pushing and pulling of the glazes symbolise that when the two sides of a person meet, it is not smooth, but a journey that is often filled with tension.

Throughout Marshall's career, he uses many colours to represent different parts of liminality. As he goes through stages of exploring the liminal, he creates accordingly. At the beginning of Marshall's career, he thought of liminality as a vast open nothingness and tried to visualise it with black glazes. As he started exploring more of the liminal, he fixated on the energy that is present in a liminal space and visually expressed it by using warm vibrant colours, such as yellows, oranges, and reds. Marshall's artmaking accomplished a 'full circle', as he produced sculptures in black glazes post-2014, since the black glazes represent the energy that he sought in his works.

Hicks and Farber use organic imitations to explain and express their concepts. Farber combines something from the natural world – the aloe – and a handmade object – an embroidery rose –

whereas Hicks's forms are only inspired by organic matter when he creates his versions of natural forms. Both Farber and Hicks use the natural element from specific environments. Farber uses two very different plants that represent different environments to state her narrative and find her place. But Hicks's search for placement happens when he changes the organic shape to create his version of natural objects.

Farber's performance piece is a completely different approach that is only made permanent by its documentation. Hicks's ceramic sculptures, in contrast, are permanent structures which are fastened in time and fill out the space they occupy. Hicks, like Marshall, also uses colour to bring out his liminal ceramic sculptures, but instead of creating one large unrecognisable shape, he creates many organic-inspired shapes. Hicks is directly inspired by his environment and focuses on the liminal state one experiences when travelling from place to place. Hicks, like Marshall and Farber, uses his art to explore the concept of liminality. Through the process of creating and documenting, they can understand the experiences in a liminal space, and for Farber, a hybrid identity and displacement.

Chapter four

I critique my creative practice processes as well as the artwork shape, colour, and symbolism in this chapter. During the exploration of the theme of displacement leading to a hybrid identity, the artworks went through their liminal stages as they were created. From raw clay, to a few firings, some artworks ended up in the final stage of the ceramic medium with glaze, and some remained in the in-between state of bisque-ware.

4.1 Confronting myself within the liminal

In my research practice, clay as a medium is used to express sculptural ceramic forms that depict my experiences of being displaced and finding myself in a liminal space. Clay is a fascinating medium to use as it is pliable, one can manipulate the medium to a specific limit, and one can experiment with surface textures.

I wanted to manipulate the clay to create in-between shapes, but the result was that the weight needed for the upper body of my forms, or the curves, was not possible with normal buy-of-the-rack clay. To enhance the strength and elasticity of the clay, I recycled the normal clay and added paper to it. The reason for this additive is that the fibre in the paper allows the clay to be strengthened and so I could create curves with minimal surface cracks. I found that the best paper additive to use is one that can easily break down, such as cheap toilet paper. The paper is broken into smaller sections in a separate bowl, and then hot water is added to the paper so that the paper breaks down easily. When mixing the clay, the broken-down paper mush is added to the fluid clay mixture.

During my search within my practice, I found it best to hand-build the clay objects as opposed to throwing shapes on the wheel. The reason is that wheelwork is often too controlled and the forms I wanted to create should represent the liminal state of a displaced person who is transforming. I needed to be intuitive and respond to the medium and emerging forms with confidence. Making it possible to 'trap' the liminal image into a visual object in this way, I can archive my experiences in in a physical object. As Charles Merewether (2006:14) contends, archiving indicates survival or that one will overcome set circumstances. Archiving is for those

who do not speak out about what they have been through and to celebrate those who gave hope for a better future (Merewether 2006:14).

The wrapping and shaping of clay slabs create a skin-like feel to the work. Interestingly, clay also has a 'mind of its own' or a memory of what it has been through (similar to humans). When working with clay, twisting, and turning, it can move and twist further than intended in the high temperatures of the kiln or when drying, before firing. Clay has this ability to absorb everything it 'touches' as it holds imprints on its surface that can be read as keeping a memory of the environment.

In Figure 21, *Shedding I*, the texture created on the clay surface is a form of literally picking up ground prints of the house floor that I lived in. This house is very significant to my life's journey as it is the place where I have stayed the longest. The only reason for my leaving was that the owners of the house as well as my beloved mother passed away and I was forced to vacate the premises. This artwork represents a documentation of that environment. The pieces are shaped in twists and turns, as I had to let go of all my memories vested in time and move on to a new place. Taking floor or ground prints was the only way to document my experiences – both physical and emotional. Furthermore, the clay, once placed in the kiln, has no guarantee of how it will come out. As a ceramist, one can do a test of bisque pieces and clay, but in the end, you have little control over the outcome of the final piece.



Figure 15: Viola Greyling, *Test pieces to indicate change before and after firing*, 2021 (courtesy of the artist).

This study's creative practice is coloured in different ways by the ceramic medium, some by glazing or oxides, and some just kept as bisque-ware. The bisque-ware pieces, seen in Figure 31, *Merging*, places the medium in a stage of liminality, as the medium is not yet sealed by a glaze or greenware (dried clay before the first firing). Leaving the piece as bisque, in the medium's in-between stage, adds to the conceptual view. Some works are left just with oxide and are then fired at the temperature of glaze-ware, which is called 'vitrifying' the clay. The oxide or underglaze (ceramic paint) is burnt into the clay body as a permanent stain. Figure 16, *Suspending*, furthers the idea of liminality, as the works remain unsealed (without a glaze) yet reached temperatures of glaze firing, thus moving back into an in-between state.



Figure 16: Viola Greyling, *Suspending*, 2022, earthenware, oxide, and underglaze, 65 x 105 x 35 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Some of my works were inspired by the shapes of stalagmites and stalactites, which connects to ideas of the transformation of (my) identity. The inspiration stems from the fact that stalagmites and stalactites are forms that continue to grow, retaining the idea of a constant

identity transformation as it grows. Some stalagmites and stalactites form alongside each other, and some are separated, as in Figure 16, *Suspending*. The spaces in between the stalactites become just as active as the stalactite shapes themselves, as they can represent the prolonged time that passes during a liminal state. Each stalactite is a part of the identity, as some parts have grown more than others.

These are, furthermore, isolated forms in nature, separated from the comfort of the sun. I use this as a metaphor to inform my experiences of feeling cold, uncomfortable, and unfamiliar in my new environment. Within this new environment, the displaced start to transform out of necessity and throughout this state remain fragile and exposed. The isolation is present in Figure 16, *Suspending*, as they hang alone and separated from each other, and through relocation, parts of themselves become separated.

4.2 Visualised liminal experiences

In my opinion, the sense of displacement because of the fast pace of globalisation is easily relatable to many people. In my artworks, the feelings of dislocation, constant replacement, and the search for belonging, are portrayed through various ceramic objects that reflect my state of mind and being. By forming and pressing textures into the clay sculptures, the reshaped objects create disjointed multidimensional layers that represent changes in my identity. My artworks are a personal reflection and exploration of often complicated and confusing states, and responses that I am unable to express verbally or confront.

Through my search for stability and belonging, I felt that the medium of clay was most conducive, as it is perfect for capturing the indentations of textures, such as packaging materials and different environment surfaces, because pressing these into clay preserves the imprint forever. This manner of documentation adds to this study's focus on being in a liminal state, as the abstract sculptural forms are representations of neither arriving nor leaving a place of familiarity. The sculptures explore the search within the liminal, the in-between space where the displaced constantly move within.

I draw similarities between Leora Farber's work and my experiences that influence my art practice. My narrative of displacement is of immigrating to Australia with my family, which

influenced us in different ways. My mother, sister and I returned to South Africa, splitting up our family. After my sister finished high school, she moved back to Australia to live with my father, and I did the same a year later. After living with my sister and father for about a year, I returned to South Africa permanently. My family members had different ideas on migration, not realising the consequences of this life-changing move. Being the youngest, I was greatly influenced by my surroundings and people, especially close family members; this study allows me to thoroughly explore and express my narrative in a visual form.

For this study's practical component, the surfaces of clay were used to explore transformations of my identity. Allusion to the skin can be seen in my works, sculptures that are shaped and formed like skin, that curves and folds. The titles, such as *Shedding I* (Figure 21), also suggest that of skin and the human condition. Hicks, who works with the theme of liminality, curates his artworks by placing many pieces together or representing singular works. I find his installations of many pieces placed together a stronger representation of liminality than when only one of his pieces, indicating displacement, are exhibited. In my practice, I find inspiration in smaller elements displayed together to represent the transformation that happens within a liminal state. Smaller pieces placed together show the fragmentation for me that happens during a liminal state.

I enjoy Hicks's depictions of natural elements around him in his sculptural ceramic pieces because I connect them to the different environments of an immigrant's experiences. When someone is in another environmental setting, one's direct surroundings will change and natural elements like flowers and seeds will look different. I think it is wonderful that Hicks documents his direct surroundings, and, in this study, I explore the different organic elements of the environments I experienced. I include Jacaranda seeds in organic shapes, as this tree is a popular tree in Australia and Pretoria, South Africa, my birth town. The Jacaranda tree's flowers are purple and often stain the street or vehicles with its colour, it is for this reason that I used purple as stains in *Disjoined Heritage I* (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Viola Greyling, *Disjoined Heritage I*, 2022, earthenware and glaze, 10 x 70 x 100 cm (courtesy of the artist).

I view the Jacaranda seed or pod as a shape that represents both South Africa and Australia (Figures 17 and 18). It also connects to Pretoria as the purple city because of the many streets that have Jacaranda trees with purple flowers strewn on them like a carpet. In *Disjoined Heritage I* (Figure 17), the Jacaranda-like forms are only stained with purple colour as the seeds become a metaphor for my identity stained with both places. Although the tree lives in both countries, its surroundings are vastly different and so I used different variations of purple on the seeds. A seed pod has many connotations, as it represents the bearer of new life. The Jacaranda seed pod opens in different ways when the tree is busy blooming. The pod houses

the seed and so represents a house-like structure or environment in my practice. Since my identity is built around different 'homes' in different locations, the use of the seed and the hard-shell covering protecting the seed within, becomes a legitimate metaphor for my life.

Disjoined Heritage III (Figure 18) has a larger Jacaranda seed pod with smaller pods inside instead of seeds. The boat-like shape of this seed pod creates a sense of relocation of smaller elements, which are kept safe by the larger pod. The smaller pods are aspects of what a 'home' represents as objects of familiarity to my displaced and changing identity. Through the process of relocation, I tried to keep pieces of what I think 'home' means to me. The *Disjoined Heritage III* piece is in blue-green and not in purple, connecting it to a boat-like shape of migrating across the ocean.



Figure 18: Viola Greyling, *Disjoined Heritage III*, 2021, earthenware, oxide and glaze, 17 x 68 x 35 cm (courtesy of the artist).

In this study, I had to step away from controlling the outcome of my practice, although everything about the ceramic medium is usually precise and controlled (as seen in Figure 19). Thomson (2007:39) notes that as soon as one starts to define your practice, you move it out of the liminal stage. The lack of control allowed intuitive responses to formulate the outcome

of the ceramic works. James Marshall, the third artist I reflected on, approaches his creative process, of 'staying within the question' that keeps him inspired (Thomson 2007:38). Thomson (2007:40) further explains that the viewer is expected to spend time with Marshall's work so that it is understood that Marshall's intention is not to narrate but rather to create shapes that influence the space and energy of the room they are placed in. In my practice, I depict personal traumatic experiences of displacement envisaged as shaped ceramic objects, and the ceramic product itself is fragile – another metaphor for my life.



Figure 19: Viola Greyling, *Slump*, 2020, earthenware and glaze, 26 x 26 x 28 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Figure 19, *Slump*, was created with two separate ceramic shapes that accidentally collapsed on top of each other owing to a weight imbalance. The idea of a part of oneself falling or collapsing on top of the core structured identity appealed to me as this captured how I felt. From this study it is apparent that identity continues to grow and transform and in *Slump*, this idea is visualised. The idea of challenges that are often bigger than oneself is represented in this form, where the form collapses onto itself.

Like Marshall's practice, I create fully within a 'zone' of the creative process – all I think about is the shape, the texture, the forming, the colour, and the possible outcome that is never really what was expected. Ceramic work is unpredictable when exposed to the heat in a kiln. Once it comes out of the kiln, it is never what you expected, and you adapt to the object in its new interpretation however slight it may be. The new artwork that I make emerges from the kiln and is a representation of the new identity, experience, emotion, or physical environment that realises itself within the liminal space.

The pieces created for this study were exhibited in a space that is not a usual museum, nor a traditional 'white cube' gallery. The works, being made of ceramic, were not presented in a craft setting but in a gallery setting. It is a modern, concrete space with a lot of natural light that shows the exposed pipes instead of a sealed ceiling. The space is the student gallery of the University of Pretoria. The setting becomes an in-between space where the artworks are searching for where they belong; they are pulled between the craft notion of the medium and Fine Art sculptural forms that are presented on plinths.

The black and white plinths were spaciouly placed throughout the exhibition. The area between each artwork creates another form of liminal space, where the viewer gets a chance to digest, but not forget, what they have just seen before viewing the next piece. All the artworks were created in similar colour groups that were spread out through the gallery space. This was done to create a cohesive depiction of displacement and a hybrid identity being explored through liminality. I will elaborate on this aspect of the exhibition in more detail later though. When entering the space, the viewer sees different colours popping up through the entire gallery right up to the back. There was variation in the shapes that were displayed on different heights – from hanging from the ceiling to very low plinths. All the works were lifted off the ground to elevate them and displace them from the ground or wall.

4.3 Creative Process

In Figure 20, *Constantly*, the use of packaging material pressed into the clay body was used to indicate the constant shedding that occurs during travel. It represents the wrapping and unwrapping of worldly goods that one packs and surrounds oneself with – familiar items. The intention of wrapping is not only to preserve the objects but to also ensure their safety upon

arrival. The art piece *Constantly* is wrapped around itself leaving the viewer uncertain as to whether the item is being wrapped or unwrapped. As the displaced person lives in a constant search for a 'place' or 'home', they pack up and pack out their belongings frequently.

Through this process of wrapping and unwrapping, package materials are gathered and over time leave an imprint on one's identity. The imprint becomes part of the displaced identity as an aesthetic item of adornment. For *Constantly*, the package materials are pressed into the 'human' skin like wrapping sheets or strips of discarded tape. Ironically, the clay body 'remembers' the textures and touches that affected it, just like the displaced remember their personal experiences. The slices of wrapping are likened to skin removed from fish, another symbol of water, journey, and migration patterns.



Figure 20: Viola Greyling, *Constantly*, 2021, earthenware, oxide, and glaze, 40 x 76 x 83 cm (courtesy of the artist).

In Figure 21, *Shedding I*, Figure 22, *Shedding III*, and Figure 23, *Shedding IV*, the idea of shedding is even more apparent than in Figure 20, *Constantly*, as the clay slabs are more fragmented because of the way they were created. *Shedding I* references my stay at Mastiff Street (Pretoria) and in order to capture the essence of my stay, the raw clay slabs were thrown

impulsively onto the ground in different sections of the house's garden and driveway. The outside textures of the house made indents into the clay. By creating this work in this impulsive and intuitive manner, I was able to document that space. It captured a space in a specific time and my interactions with the material and place that still held my energy. The process of capturing my time spent in specific places was cathartic for me, as the act of physically throwing clay onto the floor served as a pressure release for my emotions. The capture of emotions of the past as memories, and my present reaction to these spaces with my memories, was similar to sand in a bottle of water being shaken.



Figure 21: Viola Greyling, *Shedding I*, 2021, ceramic, 25 x 140 x 70 cm (courtesy of the artist).

I used the same cathartic process of imprinting clay as I did in *Shedding I* for other artworks. I felt it necessary to document my time as a student, so *Shedding IV* (Figure 23) was made at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) where I studied. Figure 23 was created by capturing the impressions of the ground outside the Ceramic Studio at TUT, as that is the space where I spent most of my time since my return from Australia. *Shedding IV* is visualised as suspended, as it indicates the development of the liminal stage throughout my journey in searching for a place.

Shedding III (Figure 22) was also created with slabs of clay, but not thrown on the ground to document a specific area. Rather, the curled shapes in *Shedding III* indicate a contraction and

release within the forms that capture my emotions. The insides of some forms are coloured, indicating changes starting to happen during the shedding process. In some areas, the colouration is more visible while in others, one can see a crack of colour announcing itself.

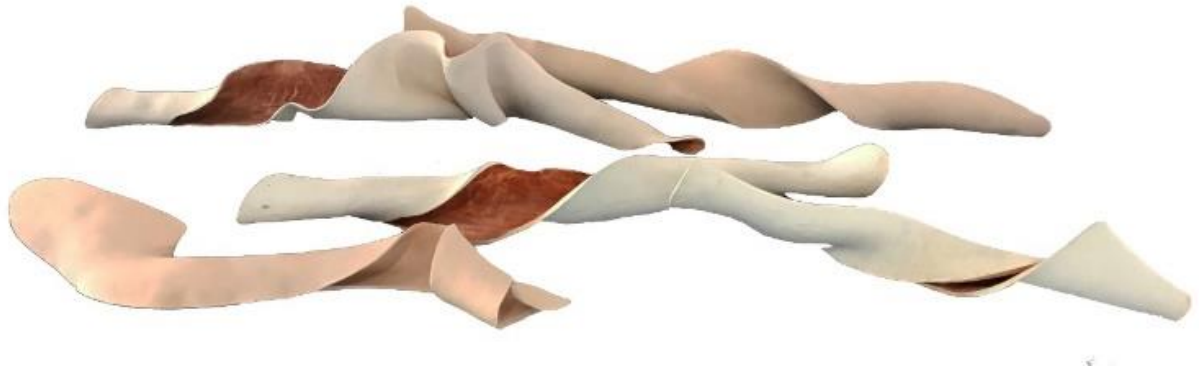


Figure 22: Viola Greyling, *Shedding III*, 2021, earthenware and oxide, 18 x 140 x 70 cm (courtesy of the artist).



Figure 23: Viola Greyling, *Shedding IV*, 2022, earthenware and oxide, 120 x 40 x 40 cm (courtesy of the artist).

4.4 Displacement, migration, and familiarity

My creative practices for this study started with the exploration of shapes that have boat-like forms (see Figures 24 and 25). The boat represents the travelling between countries, experiences and environments. *Voyage I and Voyage II* are paused in the middle of their to-and-fro movements, poised in an in-between moment.



Figure 24: Viola Greyling, *Voyage I*, 2020, earthenware and glaze, 18 x 38 x 20 cm (courtesy of the artist).



Figure 25: Viola Greyling, *Voyage II*, 2020, earthenware and glaze, 20 x 48 x 23 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Voyage I (Figure 24) is in white, as the journey can be like a long vast space that seems to never end, and *Voyage II* (Figure 25) in a blue-green ocean-like colour, connecting it to migration – green for the land and blue for the sky and water. During a voyage, many emotions can be experienced as the journey evolves. In both *Voyage I* and *Voyage II*, the wave-like folds can be

a representation of the many positive and negative emotions a willing migrant experiences during their journey of relocation.

Figure 26, *Collapse II*, suggests by its title that the person is defeated at this point and the form reveals itself as collapsing onto itself. The use of a dark green glaze indicates the deep emotional pain experienced while being influenced and transformed by the displaced new surroundings. This piece can represent emotions experienced during the journey of relocation, or it shows the changes that happen to a displaced identity. The form was created by a slab of clay that was reshaped, twisted, and turned.



Figure 26: Viola Greyling, *Collapse II*, 2020, earthenware and glaze, 8 x 62 x 20 cm (courtesy of the artist).

The continued moving back and forth filled my life with packaging materials, such as bubble wrap, tape, and boxes. The imprints of these materials are pressed into the clay as it is a constant of my moving around, physically living in-between two places. In my practice, I utilised different packaging materials that are pressed into the clay. The effect of the packaging

material stands out from the clay slab or clay shape as textured surfaces, inviting a tactile presence to my works. As I press the different textures into the clay body, it captures the wrapping or unwrapping of the process of relocation. The texture indentations represent a state in time which is forever standing still, in-between going and coming.

Some of the pieces made for this study are made with paper clay and others with O-mix, which both give an off-white colour clay body. To get the shape of the liminal objects, as in Figure 27 called *Baggage*, I used papers that belonged to my mother that she had kept when she moved to and from Australia. These papers are very personal, since she passed away in 2021. I crunched up the papers and stuffed them inside the clay slabs to maintain the shape. This act of crunching is an emotional reaction to the loss that I experienced on both a physical and emotional level. When the piece was bisque fired, the papers inside were burned away, emitting a great deal of smoke that escaped from the bunghole of the kiln (an opening on the top or at the side of the kiln to let excess moisture out when firing; see Figure 28). Using my mother's papers makes her part of this work and study that will exist for a long time. The use of her papers further allows me to recycle some of the amassed papers that are left after my relocation from the home I shared with my mother.



Figure 27: Viola Greyling, *Baggage*, 2022, ceramic, 20 x 35 x 23 cm (courtesy of the artist).



Figure 28: *Open bunghole during a firing*, 2021 (courtesy of the artists).

The artworks created represent the experiences of the in-between space, as well as the returning to the original place of my birth. The hand marks and scratches on the works are intended to portray the search for stability within the state of being in flux. The work portrays the difficult terrain of processing the complete shifts between personalities and environments. The works are intentionally awkward-looking to capture the moments of the challenging experiences of relocating physically, emotionally, and mentally.

The work represents the feeling of floating with nothing to stabilise me during the experiences of migrating. When there is nothing to hold on to, and I am just existing, there are moments when it feels like there is no identity present and one becomes like a ‘nothing’ – a vast open space not connected to anything (see Figure 29, *Prolonged*). You are neither here nor there, you are in-between. These works are my searching processes of looking for a way to stabilise myself. The liminal space becomes a searching ground to constantly look for ways to stabilise me throughout this entire period of personal turmoil.



Figure 29: Viola Greyling, *Prolonged*, 2022, earthenware, 3 x 340 x 25 cm (courtesy of the artist).

The artworks are not consistent in size, texture, colour, or form. Some of the ceramic pieces are longer or shorter, indicating the experience of time passing, some times feeling longer than other times. The works are the process of what I experience in this state of being. The longer work *Prolonged*, (Figure 29) shows how stretched out time can feel while in a liminal state. There are cuts or ruptures in the continuous shape to indicate change or hurdles that the person faces. There are also smaller or shorter artworks indicating the identity being at the beginning of the threshold, only starting to move into a state of transformation.

Through this process of finding stability, my personality kept changing to accommodate change. The pressed markings on the works are also hand marks that represent me and are made with my hands. In this way I embody the clay infusing my skin cells, and body odour into the clay. The markings recite my angst, feelings of restlessness, and uncertainty within the experience, as seen in Figure 30, *Alteration*, where the shape has uncontrolled sharp edges emerging while the stalagmite transforms and develops its shape.

Present in *Alteration* are many layers of colour, with a white-green underlayer. I painted yellow and red lines in the middle layer with a top layer of a speckle black-blue glaze. The intentional many layers of colour are the depiction of the stages of relocating. During the process of relocation, there are good and bad moments experienced. It has both the exciting aspect of experiencing something new and the realisation of this having to be your new surroundings that make one anxious.



Figure 30: Viola Greyling, *Alteration*, 2022, earthenware, oxide, and glaze, 43 x 10 x 11 cm (courtesy of the artist).

When the experience of newness is overwhelming, one can react in any way with no major control over one's emotions, because it is a new experience that you have not dealt with, or because the newness may evoke extreme emotions. These are depicted in Figure 30, *Alteration*, with its sharp extensions. When moved to a new physical space, one has preconceived ideas of how this situation of relocation was supposed to be, which creates restlessness within the individual. Accumulated baggage becomes a new part of the displaced reality, memories of the past mixed in with the influences of the experiences of the new surroundings.

The restlessness or transformation of the displaced identity is depicted in some of the works as twists and turns captured as it unfolds, exposing the private unfolding in a public space. In the liminal space, the impact of all that is yet to come, all that has been left behind, and all that one carries with and within, is depicted in my creative practice as a hybrid identity through the placement of surface textures. The texture and smooth areas on a sculpture indicate the coming together of two identities. Some textures indicate femininity, with the use of lace

motifs, and others travel, such as packaging materials. The textured inside and smooth outside of Figure 31, *Merging*, show the two sides of a hybrid identity forming. Both connect to the same identity but acknowledge both perspectives. When a hybrid identity is not always stable, it can materialise, friction initiating the unravelling of certain parts of oneself.



Figure 31: Viola Greyling, *Merging*, 2022, ceramics, 61 x 12 x 13 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Every time that I was re-placed in a new environment, I felt more fragmented, which is indicated in the lines on some of the works. The lines created on the side of the shapes overlap with each other to indicate the journey that has been experienced and that I am still experiencing. The line overlaps, as seen in Figure 32, *Family III*, because it is in a constant search for where to go and what to do, and what separates this from that. When creating the lines on the work, I needed to experience the processes of my journey to find my way to a form of stability and assurance.

In *Family III* (Figure 32), the placement of the shapes is relevant to the figures or people they represent. This artwork depicts my family and is based on many of my relationships with them, where I identify with the lone standing figure. The shape that represents me has journey lines on each side of the shape and has been stained darker than the other shapes, separating us even though we stand together. All three figures face different directions, indicating a divergence in opinion and outlook. The staining and repetitive lines of scarring are also part of the process of searching for stability. The artwork's folds, stains, and lines capture the past while in the process of seizing moments of change within their direct surroundings.



Figure 32: Viola Greyling, *Family III*, 2022, ceramics, 34 x 19 x 13 cm (courtesy of the artist).

4.5 Personal memory and collective history

As a migrant I often longed for everyday familiarities, and so when displaced, I tried to latch onto my former South African history and environment. The reason is that the sense of belonging one feels in familiar surroundings remains part of one's identity even when you are removed from it (Sonn, Ivey, Baker & Meyer 2017:47). In adapting to your new surroundings, one is placed in an in-between space where you are never fully present in either the old or new environment. Goosen and Swanepoel (2015:113) state that the first or second generation of willing migrants form their identities in both environments, merging the new space with their familiar space. This will influence the identity of the migrant and will lead to the migrant's identity moving through a liminal stage as it transforms, trying to make sense of what was and where they are now.

In Figure 33, *Separation I*, and Figure 34, *Separation II*, I visualise a hybrid individual's identity being separated from its original self and transforming into its 'new' self. The dripping or running of the coloured glaze indicates the transformation that transpires. It suggests a shape that is melting by the application of the glaze, as it is running down while the shape is growing. The combination of the down and up action places the shape in a constant liminal space, moving in both directions, almost tearing itself apart, but also morphing into something new.

Both Figures 33 and 34 depict hybrid identities at two separate points; although they have two ends, they are connected by one structure. The bottom part of the shape is the willing migrant's first identity that was shaped around their upbringing and origin, that splits between what they have known and what they are experiencing in their new environment. In *Separation I*, the form appears to separate as one is unsure of whether to reject the past completely while unable to adapt to a new environment.



Figure 33: Viola Greyling, *Separation I*, 2022, earthenware and glaze, 40 x 34 x 13 cm (courtesy of the artist).



Figure 34: Viola Greyling, *Separation II*, 2022, ceramics, 50 x 42 x 12cm (courtesy of the artist).

In *Separation II*, the figure's points also move away from each other, but each point looks like a completely different journey. The point on the left has a line indicating a separation, as it depicts the identity one feels in foreign surroundings. The point on the right has a squeezed-in

section, almost as if this part of the identity is being suffocated. During the journey or migration, the identity can feel like its past self is struggling to come through in its new surroundings.

In Figure 35, *Alienation*, there are indications of a search suggested in the shape of the artwork. Along both sides of the shape, there are indents from the bottom to the tip of the piece. These indents were made continuously as the search for stability happened. The indents represent the displaced identity looking back while moving forward, creating a liminal stage where the identity is changing. This identity is busy transforming into a hybrid one, as it cannot let go of its past but is growing in its new environment.



Figure 35: Viola Greyling, *Alienation*, 2022, ceramics, 63 x 34 x 7 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Longing II (Figure 36) relates to *Collapse II* (Figure 26) as visual depictions of the emotions experienced. The shape of *Longing II* is a portrayal of a stalagmite as it is melting. The idea of

melting emotionally, sinking into the liminal to be reformed into a new shape – a new identity – is what I longed for. As *Longing II* melts, it creates droplets and begins to form a new stalactite.



Figure 36: Viola Greyling, *Longing II*, 2022, earthenware, oxide, and glaze, 35 x 35 x 26 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Home I (Figure 37) has a different connection for the displaced. *Home I* is created by family members and familiar surroundings where one feels ‘placed’. I held on to familiar objects to remind myself of a place where I felt safe. Familiar objects are transported to the new environment where they keep their memory of the past but are now surrounded by new elements.



Figure 37: Viola Greyling, *Home I*, 2022, ceramics, 14 x 35 x 26 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Family I (Figure 38) are three figures that are separated from each other, which shows the different identities' experiences of displacement. *Family I* shows my perspective of my family, as I am representing myself and my parents. The shape slightly away from the other two represents two different people – my father and myself. The work can be read as me moving back to South Africa to live with my mother and my father remaining in Australia, or it can be interpreted that I am the figure separate from the other two figures that represent my sister and my father, who are living in Australia. The individuals are denoted by different yellow stripes on the body, and the same colour used on all three shapes references the same family.



Figure 38: Viola Greyling, *Family I*, 2022, ceramics, 64 x 26 x 35 cm (courtesy of the artist).

4.6 Colour

Within this study's creative practice, the use of colour is intentionally chosen to highlight the liminal state of my experiences. During a liminal state, bright, warm colours can represent the forming of something new or the movement towards a space. Cool or cold colours are also present during a liminal state, and in this body of work represent hardships and loss.



Figure 39: Viola Greyling, *Life Marker*, 2022, earthenware and glaze, 81 x 12 x 8 cm (courtesy of the artist).

The use of purple is very significant to my narrative, as my sister and I were named after variations of purple. My name is Viola, after violet, a darker and rich purple, and my sister, Lila, after lilac, a softer and more playful purple. The glazes chosen for *Evolving* (Figure 40) have both variations of the purple colours with a division made by another coloured glaze. The division is symbolic of the different sides of an identity merging or connecting, and when that happens there is tension present. This tension is visually depicted by the glazes overlapping and pulling from each other.



Figure 40: Viola Greyling, *Evolving*, 2022, ceramic, 42 x 65 x 40 cm (courtesy of the artist).

The purples that my sister and I were named after is another significant use of colour in this study, as we were both named after different shades of the same colour. We also made different decisions in our lives; my sister is currently living in Australia, and I am in South Africa. The piece *Longing Aspiration* (Figure 41) was reglazed from a bright yellow to dark green and some parts of the yellow come through to show a past self. Colours such as yellow can denote energy, but when the viewer sees a lot of yellow together, it can be overwhelming (Gremillion 2019:[Sp]), which is one of the reasons why *Longing Aspiration* was reglazed.



Figure 41: Viola Greyling, *Longing Aspiration*, 2022, ceramic, 75 x 25 x 25 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Just like yellow, red can evoke strong feelings. In this study, the use of red is a focus point of extreme emotion. Depending on the piece, the red colour that is added to it can be interpreted differently. As seen in *Evolving* (Figure 40), a small part of the artwork is red, hiding the intense emotion that is expressed at that point in the journey. Orange, which is associated with vibrantly and peace (Gremillion 2019:[Sp]), relates to the transformation of the self, but from a positive perspective in this body of work. As seen in Figure 42, *Parting II*, there are two pieces placed close to each other because they are representing two parts of the displaced identity that are reconnecting. During the process of relocation, there were moments when I felt split into two and I lived separated lives – one in my place of origin and one in my new environment.



Figure 42: Viola Greyling, *Parting II*, 2022, ceramics, 25 x 31 x 25 cm (courtesy of the artist).

The colour blue can have a calming effect on the viewer, but can come across as cold when many blues are used. When combining blue and yellow, green is created, which indicates growth and a new start. This sentiment is present in works such as *Longing Aspiration* (Figure 41) and *Parting I* (Figure 43). In the two artworks, there are two parts that show change and growth through a solid green and textured green application. Colour was also used to indicate hybrid experiences (as seen in *Longing Aspiration*), where the yellow colour shines through as a layer at the bottom and the top layer is green – an indication of two places.



Figure 43: Viola Greyling, *Parting I*, 2022, ceramics, 46 x 50 x 26 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Figure 44, *Journey Marker I*, is another point on this voyage of life and experiences and is based on the idea of rock piles that have been created by humankind for many years as landmarks. The rock piles would be placed in a specific location to indicate a piece of land or show direction. My *Journey Marker I*, however, consists of ceramic objects with surface textures of packaging materials. The markers are stacked on top of each other and decorated in this fashion, as my journey markers are usually points of departure or arrival where belongings had to be protected.



Figure 44: Viola Greyling, *Journey Marker I*, 2021, earthenware, oxide, and underglaze, 70 x 50 x 50 cm (courtesy of the artist).

The idea of stalagmite and stalactite areas of growth was also an inspiration to me. Often the rock-like growths have earthy warm colours even though the temperature of the area of growth could be cold, inspiring cold colours in my practice as well as in the shapes of the objects. As seen in Figure 45, *Isolation*, the artwork is in shades of orange to represent change, but also connects to the idea of a stalagmite being isolated in a cave where the orange is an over-personification of the rock formation. The orange becomes a statement, a focal point, to show the stalagmite is changing. *Isolation* has pinched sections towards the top as the form goes through difficult stages on this journey, represented by darker shades of orange.

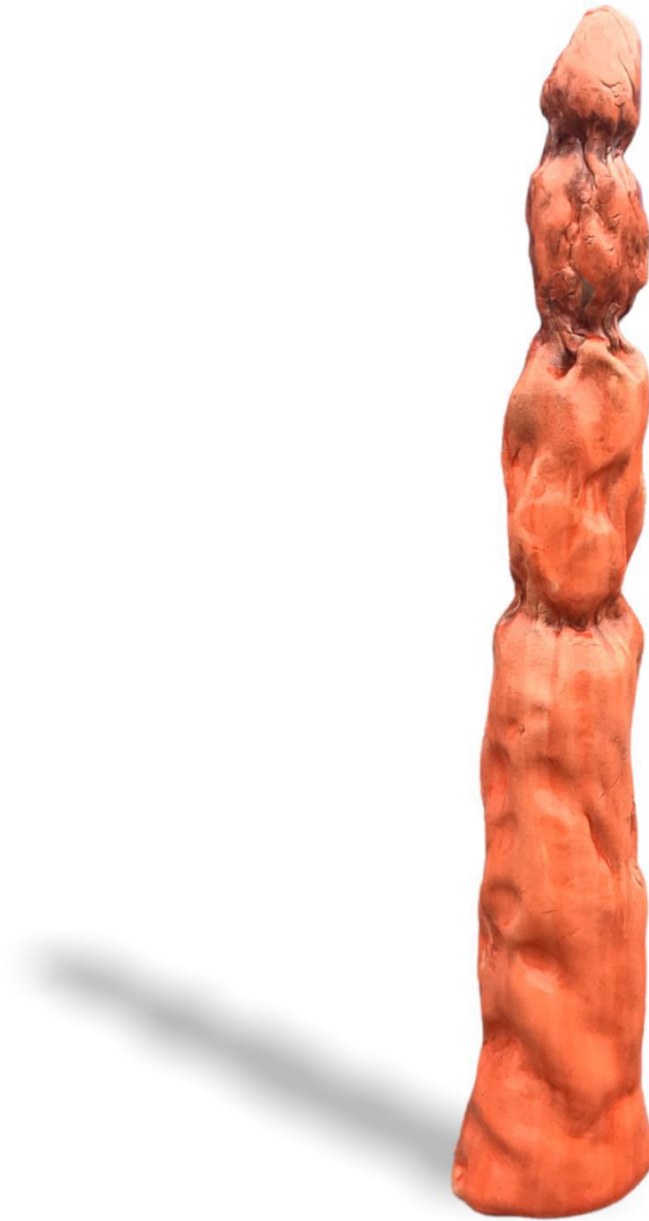


Figure 45: Viola Greyling, *Isolation*, 2022, earthenware, oxide, and glaze, 70 x 12 x 11 cm (courtesy of the artist).

Through this chapter's exploration it is clear that my creative practice is strongly linked to the themes of displacement, a hybrid identity, and liminality. The artworks represent, in either their finish, colour or shape, an element of liminality. As seen in *Journey Marker I* (Figure 44), the finish of the piece has not been glazed, leaving the clay exposed and in-between its raw and glazed form. Multiple examples, such as *Isolation* (Figure 45) or *Family I* (Figure 38), use

colours from the secondary colour pallet or in-between colours. Through the mimicking of organic shapes, such as stalagmites, the representation of an ever-transforming identity is depicted.

The identity that is represented by the artworks created shows moments of trauma, release, and growth through the texture and shaping of the forms. Referring to *Separation II* (Figure 34), the growth of two different sides is depicted as a displaced identity torn between its past and present selves. Pieces like *Separation II* or even *Parting I* (Figure 43) show the two sides of the hybrid identity that is forming and are in conversation with each other. The constant presence of transformation is visible through this body of work.

Chapter five

5.0 Conclusion

This study was an exploration of my narrative and experiences of being displaced, and how these experiences influenced my identity as a white South African woman. In my practice, I addressed these experiences as visualised ceramic objects that symbolise me in a liminal space. Bringing past and present together in a new environment influenced my displaced identity to create a hybrid one that is still recreating itself and can be seen as vulnerable. It can also happen that the displaced create a hybrid identity to cope with their different surroundings (Bolatagici 2004:77; Di Stefano 2002:40; Turner 1969), and this is indeed my experience.

The documentation during a liminal state helped me, the displaced, to understand the experiences I went through. These experiences are the factors that contribute to the formation of my (hybrid) identity. The hybrid identity was created to cope with the continuously changing surroundings. These experiences link to the themes of displacement, hybridity, and liminality, and this was explored in both the theoretical and practical investigations of this study.

In support of me presenting my liminal experiences, national and international artists were investigated to analyse their explorations of the same ideas. South African artist Leora Farber, and international artists James Marshall and David Hicks, were chosen to gather knowledge about how a visual artist connects and expresses notions of displacement, hybrid identity and liminality. Farber's approach is from her heritage narrative and her artwork is a physical expression of hybridity as she stitched aloe plants onto her skin. Farber also combines the aloe leaves with an embroidered English rose, a clear indication of the harsh African environment in contrast to the European lifestyle.

I considered the practices of Hicks and Marshall, both ceramists, who create sculptural ceramic shapes that express their experiences of liminality. Hicks's inspiration lies within his direct surroundings as he imitates natural elements from his environment that are either suspended or supported by a steel structure. Hicks uses his display to further emphasise the liminal state and his colour use is more of an aesthetic focus. Hicks sometimes uses a double-glazing technique where one layers glaze to get different outcomes, resulting in the glaze changing

colour or bubbling. Marshall's liminal visual expressions are large unrecognisable shapes inspired by periods of meditation. Marshall's work focuses on colour intensively as a representative of liminality. Although other visual artists have produced works on the themes explored in this study, my creative practice adds new knowledge to the visual arts industry as it looks at the visualised, tangible experiences during a liminal state that affects identity.

The argument that my research proposes is that liminality, hybrid identity, and displacement are factors affecting each other. This notion is not often represented within ceramic practice. My study intended to narrate my personal experiences within this practice to tangibly proclaim the traumatic experiences of displacement that applies to many individuals. I aimed to render this phenomenon of the human condition by adding new perspectives to the lived experience.

My method was to initially discuss three artists who have explored similar representations of displacement, each using a different approach. It is important to document world experiences, as it demonstrates how we are affected as human beings. My area of practice has been documented in detail by narrating the process of making my own clay body, as well as the processes of documenting personal spaces and memories. My study has drawn together three areas of investigation, namely displacement, liminality, and hybridity in a practice-based research approach. This research and practice respond to human interactions with environments that affect us in ways that are not easily digested or addressed.

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