Borders Retold

The entanglements between women’s bodies and the Cyprus’s Green Line

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative research project that takes as its starting point a knowledge gap found in the literature concerning the Green Line of the island of Cyprus. Although the aforementioned literature contextualizes the aftermath of the island’s division, the traumas and consequences of the division, as well as its effects on the construction of national and ethnic identities, it nevertheless leaves the materiality of bodies, which entangle with the Line unexamined. For this reason, the thesis aims to create a new way of thinking the entanglements between borders and bodies by suggesting a new theoretical framework that will take account of bodies when analyzing borders in general and the Green Line in particular. Drawing on theories of border feminism and new feminist materialism or corpomaterialist postconstructionism, I explore the entanglements between borders and bodies through the insights of eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews I conducted during March-April 2016. The thesis is informed by a feminist epistemology, which is deeply embodied and contextual, while it recognizes the partial perspective I, as a researcher, have towards my empirical material. For this reason, the determinative concepts that have assisted the development of this study are the following: accountability, situatedness, and self-reflexivity.

Keywords: border theory; bodies; bodily materiality; relationality; memory; intra-activity; orientations.
I would first like to deeply thank my wonderful informants, who participated in this research project and shared with me their thoughts and experiences without hesitation. Thanks for your time, energy, and willingness to help me out. Without you, the completion of this thesis would be impossible. Secondly, I want to warmly thank my thesis advisor Wera Grahn. Your assiduous readings of my thesis as well as your constructive feedback have contributed to the constant reworking and improvement of this project, while your encouragement helped me keep going. Lastly, I want to thank my dearest friends and family, who supported me throughout this long journey and believed in me. Our small talks were oftentimes stress-relieving and helped me continue with the project.

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INTRODUCTION

I was born and raised in Cyprus, an island country in the Eastern Mediterranean. I was born and raised in Nicosia the capital city of the island of Cyprus. I was born and raised in the southern part of a divided city, in the southern part of a divided country. I was attached the label of “Greek of Cyprus”, a label which was broadly used in the school system; a label which was overemphasizing my Greekness in terms of language, religion, culture, and historical continuity; a label which was highlighting my opposition to the “Others”, the “Turks of Cyprus”, who spoke a language and had a religion different from mine.

I would be going with my parents and sisters for a Sunday ice-cream at Ledras Street, a commercial street at the heart of the old city, but I would be forcibly stopped without being able to finish my walk. I would hold my mother’s hand tightly and I would hesitantly touch some old sandbags at the corner of the street. My ice-cream would be melting; drops of vanilla and strawberry would be touching the old sandbags. “Why can’t we finish our walk, mum? What is over there?” I would ask. She would simply answer that that was the Green Line dividing the island in two. Years later I would appreciate her being laconic.

The school system was doing its job “properly” following the doctrine of a singular, causative history of the country in order to legitimize the official master narratives which were always pointing out “our” victimization. “We” lost our homes, our people, our country. The Green Line was the result of a hurtful war that divided the island in two. “We” were living poda [over here] and “they” were living poji [over there]. That “poji” was stolen from us and only “we” were the rightful owners of that land. In the meantime, some more progressive teachers of history were talking about us being Greek-Cypriots and them being Turkish-Cypriots; we were all sharing an island in which we used to live peacefully together before disputes between the two communities erupted. For the first time, in a history education classroom, I was addressing issues that were surprisingly difficult and emotional. I consider those moments a wake-up call. Cypriotness, for the first time, caught my attention: I was
not a person hovering over different geographical locations without a sense of belonging anymore, but I was a Cypriot who happened to speak a linguistic variation of Greek and share some cultural characteristics with that country. The most important thing was that I had begun acknowledging the existence of the people who were living further than the limits of the Green Line as well as their equal share of pain and loss. The differences between “us” and “them” had started to shake.

During my sophomore year in high school, on the 23rd of April 2003, the Green Line partially opened. That was an iconic moment of Cyprus’s modern history. I was feeling people’s anxiety, impatience, and eagerness all over me. One night I overheard my mum’s call to her older sister. “Maro, we need to go poji [over there]; we have to visit our home; our mother didn’t make it; we need to do it for her”. A year later, my mum with her three daughters, my aunt with her two daughters, and my other aunt with her own two daughters—a bunch of women, some of whom had experienced the division, others were too young to remember it, while others were born years later—crossed the Ayios Dhometios checkpoint and drove all the way to their village. We were all really anxious. I remember myself being afraid scratching my knees silently. My mum and aunts were so excited; they were talking all the time moving their hands expressively up and down, trying to remember the location of every single lemon tree in their neighborhood. My cousins were constantly asking questions: “Do you remember aunty when you were coming all the way to our place to stay with my mother and us while daddy was working abroad?”; “They are children again” I would think. When we arrived at the village, we had to tightly hold my mum and aunts. Their bodies could not carry them anymore. Pain, joy, tears, memories were all coming together expressed through their embodied reactions; they were running, touching the trees, picking some flowers, laughing and crying loudly. That day was written indelibly on our very flesh. I came back home with many questions which years later I would be able to pose. From that moment on, I would cross the Line many more times to get to know the new world that was extending “over there”; I would participate in non-formal activist groups which were in favor of the solution of what has been called the Cyprus Problem and the reunification of the island; or, I would simply visit friends who were living on “the other side”.

Somehow, the Green Line or the buffer zone or the border or the dead zone (I use the four interchangeably) epitomizes the island’s ongoing, political situation as it is a tangible and visible space, which takes the shape of barbed wires, sandbags, checkpoints, armed guards and so on. As such, it affects the way I understand it each time I cross. I cannot separate the crossing from my bodily materiality. This means that every single time I cross I think through the body; I choose not to forget or transcend or keep my body unquestioned the moment I cross. My crossings are fleshy, material, worldly, and my body’s intensities are not separate from every other element composing the buffer zone.

Those scattered memories, those fragmented thoughts summarize my relation to the Line and the interest I have to explore it further through this research project. I do not have a stable relationship with it; I often hate it because it is reminiscent of traumas and unfulfilled potentials; other times I soothe myself because I understand that I am who I am due to its existence. Every important moment in my life (my relationship with my parents and friends, my sense of belonging, my activist roots, my school days) is somehow subtly connected to the existence of the Line. For this reason, I find really exciting this new journey of understanding and thinking the Line through the body as it provides new bases to rethink the relations and affects between borders and bodies.

**Background information: The story of a Line**

In the light of the aforementioned, my aim here is to give a brief yet concise outline of the stories surrounding the Line. I will not use the word History or the “language of patriotism” as Miranda Christou (2007) writes in order to describe the official historical narratives that passionately perpetuate a single vision of the nation while omitting its dark pages. Rather, I will trace the different stories that compose my personal account of history, which is partial as I was raised and schooled in the Greek-Cypriot community, and I wish that I will help the reader to understand the territorial space called the Green Line.

The year 1960 marked the independence of Cyprus after a long period of British colonization that began in 1878 and resulted in the Republic of Cyprus that was
constituted by two major ethnic communities: the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots. Before that, between the years 1955-1959, when the anti-colonial struggle took place, inter-ethnic divides and disputes were crystallized among the two communities. The anti-colonial struggle was a highly nationalist struggle as independence was never the goal (Cockburn 2004; Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz 2006). On the contrary, EOKA [National Organization of Cypriot Fighters], a paramilitary group of right-wing Greek-Cypriots, was striving for enosis, the union of Cyprus with “motherland” Greece, and was violently rejecting any form of leftism. On the other end, Turkish-Cypriot nationalists wishing to counteract EOKA set up their own armed group called TMT [Turkish Resistance Organization]. Later TMT demanded taksim, the partition of the island and its union with “motherland” Turkey (Hadjipavlou 2010; Heraclides 2002; Kizilyurek 1999). As the disputes were shifting from anti-colonial to inter-communal, the colonial forces set in May 1956 the very first temporary boundary called the Mason-Dixon Line dividing the two communities with “barbed wire fencing and five checkpoints” (Calame and Charlesworth 2009:128) to prevent further clashes.

In December 1963, the Greek-Cypriot President, Makarios, proposed thirteen amendments to Cyprus’s constitution which were rejected by the Turkish-Cypriot vice-president, Fazıl Kücük (Tofallis 2010). This resulted in further destabilization and violence sprung up between the two communities initially in Nicosia. This led to a meeting between all stakeholders and the Green Line was created. The partition line that would divide Nicosia was incised on the capital’s map with a green wax pencil (Calame and Charlesworth 2009). In 1964 almost 20,000 Turkish-Cypriots, being the weaker party due to their numerical inferiority (Greek-Cypriots constituted 80 percent of the population, whereas Turkish-Cypriots 18 percent), fled their homes and gathered in “thirty-nine self-ruling enclaves” (Cockburn, 2004:55) suffering multiple consequences (Peristianis and Mavris 2011). That same year, the United Nations sent to the island armed forces to maintain peace. UNFICYP [United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus] is still on the island guarding the Green Line.

After the Turkish invasion of 1974 – as a response to the military junta in Greece which destabilized the political situation in Cyprus, as Greek-Cypriot pro-union paramilitary groups were spreading havoc across the island – Greek-Cypriots moved
unanimously to the south and Turkish-Cypriots to the north. The Green Line entered its third phase. Now, it was dividing the whole island and was fortified and heavily militarized in Nicosia. An about 180km-long buffer zone, a peculiar ethnopolitical border would divide the island in two (Christou and Spyrou 2014; Papadakis 2006).

In 2003, Turkish-Cypriot authorities partially opened the border; there was now permission to cross. Hundreds of thousands of Cypriots crossed to “the other side” (Hadjipavlou 2007). Despite the opening of the border and the multiplication of the checkpoints from which one can cross, the Line still divides the island. The Annan Plan, a plan revised by the UN for the solution of the Cyprus Problem, was rejected by Greek-Cypriots in 2004 (Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz 2006; Peristianis and Mavris 2011). Similarly, the negotiations for a settlement which started in 2014 and gave hope to people across the divide faltered in early July 2017, despite extensive grassroots mobilizations. The Green Line is still etched on the map.

Research aim and central questions

Border and borderlands studies\(^1\) is a novel field of inquiry to me. Although I have never embarked on mapping its theoretical underpinnings, I was always reading articles about one peculiar border, which is situated in Cyprus, that is, the Green Line mostly as part of my interest as a sociologist and activist. Two years ago, as part of the course *Historiographies of Intersectional Gender Studies*, I wrote an essay, in which I focused on Cypriot women’s depiction in the official history (Irakleous 2015). There, I argued about the one-dimensional representation of Cypriot women as grieving mother-heroines who “offered” their sons’ lives in return for their country. That was necessary for the legitimization of an uninterrupted historical narrative that

\(^1\) The very first academic interest in border and borderlands studies started in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, as the First World War resulted in a dramatic territorial realignment of Europe (Diener and Hagen 2010, 2012). In the early 1990s, following the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the creation of new nation-states, border and borderlands studies begun to develop rapidly as a field of inquiry. The decade is characterized by the antithesis between the discourses on globalization and on the crucial importance of borders as demarcating lines. Considering the significant changes in the world political map (i.e. supranational blocs like the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement) and the vast circulation of knowledge and information (cyberspace, information technologies), the former praises the emerging borderless world, noting at the same time the fading away of the nation-state (Castells 1996; Guéhenno 1995; Ohmae 1990, 1995), while the latter argues that borders are not merely passive territorial markers (Diener and Hagen 2012; Newman 2003, 2006). According to the scope of this research project, I will engage in conversation with the latter line of thought.
would boost the national collective fantasy. I also stressed the importance of a particular bi-communal, non-governmental, women’s organization, *Hands across the Divide*, which highlighted the absence of women as equal to men historical agents and members of the negotiation tables. Most importantly, I concluded that through this organization a significant change occurred. The informal, unofficial “memories of Cypriot women across the partition line gained importance and challenged a formulaic notion of history” (p.5-6) after the partial lifting of the Line in certain locations. That shift occurred because on the one hand, Cypriot women had situated themselves in terms of their multiple identities, and on the other hand, they had acknowledged their multiple locations, differences, and open traumas interrogating at the same time the very existence of boundaries (p.6). In that essay, I extensively engaged with Maria Hadjipavlou’s work (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007, 2010), a pioneer Greek-Cypriot scholar and activist who was/is largely writing on above issues from a feminist perspective. Her work motivated me to deepen my knowledge regarding those issues. From that point on, I decided to systematically study the intersection between women and the Green Line, and glue together the knowledge I had acquired so far. After all, that was a really interesting topic for my master’s thesis.

Having read the work of various Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot scholars, I had gradually realized that most of the literature concerning the Green Line focused on the aftermath of the division, its traumas and consequences, and its effects on the construction of national and ethnic identities. As such, I came across a knowledge gap that was somehow bothering me; I felt that something really important to me was missing there, namely, bodies. Since I deeply consider my bodily reactions each time I get close to the Line, I must say that I was surprised to see that those bodies were nearly nowhere. Even when gender was crossing the border, such as in the work of Maria Hadjipavlou, it was again conceptualized as a socio-cultural formation, a social construction. Moreover, the Line as a physical border was systematically conceptualized as the primary cause for the creation of mental borders, while identity formations and subject positions were understood as mere effects of the physical border. This structuralist understanding of the Line somehow echoed the Cartesian juxtaposition between mind/body and nature/culture, while the formative role of bodies in the production of knowledge remained unnoticed and untold (Grosz 1994). The absence of moments of entanglement between bodies and the Line brought to the
fore a wish to locate possible reasons to why that was happening. The next question that popped into my head was whether the omission of bodies was a common phenomenon in border and borderlands studies. Having these thoughts as my starting point and guiding principles, I tried to understand how borders and the entanglements between borders and bodies are regarded in the dominant literature of the field.

Therefore, being guided, on the one hand, by my so-far understanding of embodiment as a neglected area of concern and research in the local literature regarding the Green Line, and, on the other hand, by my belief that bodies are more than a “blank page for social inscriptions” (Haraway 1991:197), I have set as the overarching aim of this project to *create a new way of thinking the entanglements between borders and bodies by suggesting a new theoretical framework that will take account of bodies when analyzing borders in general and the Green Line in particular*. In order to better understand and contextualize borders in their entanglements with bodies, I have decided to explore this through the narratives of both Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot women situating thus the project in a Cypriot context. I have also decided to put the body in the frontline during most of the interview process and discover what happens when bodies entangle with borders, as well as how bodies could alter the ways borders are understood and negotiated. Therefore, my overarching research questions are as follow:

- *How do my informants initially understand the Green Line?*
- *How do they react when the body becomes an elemental part of the interview process?*
- *How do they talk about the moments during which their bodies meet the border?*
- *Which theoretical implications does this have?*

These questions are instructive of my wish to get to know how Cypriot women – as subjects located outside official history, as mere disarticulated recipients of action of the one and only talking male authority (Haraway 1992) – think about their embodied entanglements with the Line as their embodied reality is largely omitted in the literature concerning the Green Line.
Sketching my entering point: Positioning myself and situating the objects of knowledge

I was not always eager to do research about Cyprus. My partial perspective as a Greek-Cypriot woman who was enjoying all the privileges of living in the internationally recognized state of the Republic of Cyprus, that is, the southern part of the island had an effect upon me. I was too afraid not to be biased; too afraid to talk about the pain this ongoing situation engraved on me. It is quite discomforting and emotional to write about the Line. I have not experienced the trauma of the war, like my mother and her family had. But the wounds of the war were deeply rooted in people’s minds and affected equally the next generations. I was not only afraid because of the untold pain, but also because of the hatred I was sensing all over: the condemnation and demonization of the ‘other’; the old, male politicians who were giving burning patriotic speeches from a podium highlighting our infinite victimization; the school teachers who were pointing their finger at me scolding me not to forget a past I had never experienced. My deepest wish was to move far away from this place and cut the ties I had with it.

Years later, I realized that location is about vulnerability. Living in Cyprus and being a Greek-Cypriot means now that I have already embraced fear and pain. My geopolitical location informs every single sentence of this project. Adrienne Rich writes that “a place on a map is also a place in history” (1986:212); indeed, my geopolitical location is deeply affected by history. My location is breathing; is a living map; is deeply situated, and as such, my perspectives are deeply affected by this. The history of Cyprus is growing old along with me. For this reason, I cannot think the Line as a separate entity from my body. I walk to the Ledras/Lokmaci checkpoint. There are four olive trees there; each time I touch them. I wait in a queue looking at the people who are trivially talking; some of them look anxious, maybe it is their first time. I am the next person in line so I look for my ID; I am getting near the police officer and I force myself to smile (sometimes I genuinely smile); I greet the officer and give my ID. I am monitored; I look at the keyboard where the officer is typing the digits of my ID; with the right corner of my eye, I see the sandbags; weeds and wild flowers pop up between walls of barrels. As soon as I cross, I am not stiff anymore. I
walk at a fast pace. When I am checking out (from the “other side”), I slow my pace as I am getting ready for the whole procedure again. My body is rarely relaxed during those twenty meters. When I reach the checkpoint on “our side”, I push myself to speak loudly in Greek in order to confirm my ethnicity and avoid being controlled once more. Thinking through the body, thinking my bodily materiality when I cross allows for a different understanding of the Line; one that is deeply embodied and relational.

Reading the Line through the body discloses the connection I have with both objects of knowledge: the Line and the body. Haraway in an interview (2004:321-342) will describe the relation between the writing subject and the analytical object as cathectic, that is, a relation in which one invests and is emotionally dedicated to because it is tied to the body; this kind of relationship is binding and not innocent at all. For this reason, through this project, I realized that the bonding between me, the Line, and my crossing body comes from my specific location at this eastern corner of the Mediterranean and from the fragments of history with which I grew up. At this point, it is important to situate not myself only but also the objects of knowledge which I extensively discuss in this project. Since I have already situated the Green Line, I will continue with the body giving a brief definition of what I mean when I use it in the text. My definition of the body is largely informed by the theoretical insights of new feminist materialism or corpomaterialist postconstructionism. Hence, I understand the body, not as a static or passive entity that supposedly functions as a mere product of discursive practices with no capacities of acting back. Rather, the body is the junction of both the material and the discursive as their interrelation renders the body an active agent on its own terms able to generate meaning. The body as a “material-semiotic actor” (Haraway 1991:200) breaks down the binary way of thinking in terms of either/or that is so well imprinted on the western philosophical canon, in which the material facets of the body can be entirely controlled and measured through the gaze of the objective knower.

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2 Nina Lykke defines (corpomaterialist) postconstructionism as a group of feminist theories that engage anew with theories regarding sexual difference, bodily materialities, biology, and the agency of matter. She writes that these theories “theorize bodily materialities, including sexual ones, and give attention to the relationships between subject and embodiment as well as between discourse and materiality” (2010:204).
The body as “material-discursive” (Barad 2003:822) slips off of social constructivist and postmodernist readings that conceptualize language, the social, and the psychic as “the sole sources of the constitution of [bodies], nature, society, and reality” (Alaimo and Hekman 2008:2). All in all, through my experiences and perceptions, I understand bodies as entering points to the world, as processes of becoming, as matter influencing other matter/bodies when they meet. Or as Rosi Braidotti simply puts it: the body is “endowed with the capacity to affect and be affected, to interrelate” (2002:99).

Outline of the thesis

My research project is composed of five different chapters. In this first chapter, Introduction, I have presented the overarching aims and research questions that guided me throughout the research. The second chapter is about the epistemological, methodological, and ethical considerations I had when I was conducting my research project. In that chapter, I come to terms with and try to be accountable for my very own decisions. In the third chapter, A theoretical mapping, I engage with different theoretical schools that assist my reading of the Line. I examine the main argumentative lines of border theory, while I use the insights of new feminist materialism or corpomatereal postconstructionism to foster a different reading of the Line that will take account of bodies. The fourth chapter is the most extensive one as it engages with the analysis of the research data. The chapter is composed of two different parts, in which I follow my informants’ initial thoughts about the Line and, later, their insights about the entanglements between the Line and their bodies. In the last chapter, Concluding remarks, I summarize my main research findings and come to terms with the project’s possible limitations.

DOING RESEARCH: METHODOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL CHOICES

This chapter is about the ‘doing’ of my research project, about the choices and decisions I have had to take during the project, or even before the project started. The
doing of my project signifies its process-like character: it is always developing and growing; it has a life of its own because I myself cannot oftentimes handle it, or to put it differently, the original plans I have can easily fade away. Of course, the latter does not minimize the need to be as aware as possible that I, as the researcher, can control and exercise power over my informants and data interpretation (Ramazanoğlou and Holland 2002:160). Of course, this is a crucial point that needs further elaboration as it shows the importance of research ethics that will concern me at all stages of this chapter. Gayle Letherby, in her monograph Feminist research in theory and practice (2003), writes that “[…] throughout the research process the choices that researchers make, the practicalities that need to be considered when doing research and the process of actually doing the research are all likely to affect not only the dynamics of particular research relationships and the research process, but also the research ‘products’” (p.100). For this reason, in this chapter, I will account for the choices I have made during the project, the influences of these choices on the interpretation of data, and also for my ethical responsibilities, considerations, and implications. All in all, the three keywords which are determinative for the development of this chapter are the following: accountability, situatedness, and self-reflexivity.

**Epistemological guiding lines**

My thesis has grown out of two different, yet interrelated, feminist epistemological frameworks: on the one hand, *situated knowledges* and *politics of location* articulated by Donna Haraway (1991) and Adrienne Rich (1986) respectively, is an epistemological framework that has breathed life to the project. On the other hand, Karen Barad’s *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* (2007) as a neologism that exemplifies the inseparability of ethics, epistemology, and ontology guides my insistence on the notions of responsibility and accountability that I, as a researcher, should have. Here, I will briefly discuss how these epistemological lines are related to my project.

Lots of questions and thoughts were popping into my head as soon as I began this research journey. As I have already mentioned, I grew up in the southern part of

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3 Fragments of Adrienne Rich’s conceptualization of politics of location can be traced back to the work of black feminists, such as the Combahee River Collective (1983[1977]), bell hooks (1981), and Audre Lorde (1984), as well as Chicana feminists, e.g. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983[1981]).
Nicosia, Cyprus and I was raised to believe that I am strongly affiliated to an ethnicity, that of Greek-Cypriot, which is opposed to a different ethnicity that dwells across the division Line, that of Turkish-Cypriot. During my early 20s, I was able to negotiate quite some of the contradictions that my ethnic identity was carrying mostly through my readings and participation in activist groups. Yet, when I decided to look closer at the Green Line and its entanglements with women’s bodies, I was afraid that biases and/or lack of objectivity would affect my interview processes and research outcomes as I would engage in conversation with women from both communities. My greatest fear was to ask the “wrong” questions possibly affected by the blurring lines that exist between historical fiction and truth as it is the case in many situations where people get stigmatized by past traumas that did not have the chance to talk through, for they were living apart for years and years. However, I somehow managed to boil my anxiety down to one thing: being situated all the way through.

Situated knowledges and politics of location compose an epistemological framework that suggests that knowledge production can never be transcendental or value-neutral or detached from our bodies (Lykke 2010:210-211). In her iconic essay, “Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective” (1991), Donna Haraway clearly argues for a feminist knowledge production that is embodied and able to name the place from which it comes. This kind of epistemology conceptualizes feminist objectivity as being partial, liminal, historically and spatiotemporally specific. As she puts it (p.195):

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. Only the god-trick is forbidden.

It is evident that the god-trick, which is the look from above and nowhere, the disembodied voice that its knowledge claims are universal, achronic, and atemporal, is an easy way out from the responsibilities rooted in the location one inhabits. Similarly, Adrienne Rich’s politics of location (1986) brings to the fore the
importance of naming the place we are coming from; of recognizing our very location – a location which starts from the body; she argues that “[t]o write my body plunges me into lived experience, particularity” (p.215). This epistemological framework that binds together location, embodiment, time, space, and history interweaves with my research aim as I try to locate the affects produced by the entanglements between the Green Line and my informants’ bodies – bodies which are self-reflective and capable of producing knowledge.

Writing the I will be part and parcel of the thesis as I largely account for my location – it is part of who I am as a woman, an activist, a Cypriot living close to the Line, a feminist researcher. It took some time to reconcile with my partial perspective because I wanted to do justice to every single element that is composing this project. Yet, this is quite unattainable. The contradictions and fears I sense due to my specific location suggest a different kind of engagement with my research material and research process (Haraway 1991:208) that accounts for what I have taken for granted so far. Laurel Richardson argues that “[q]ualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak” because “they don’t have to try to play God” (2000:928); nevertheless, it is quite difficult to think and talk through the body because it invites the acceptance of vulnerability that comes with the specificity of my location; yet, this could assist a critical self-reflection of all the processes concerning this research project.

Besides situated knowledges and politics of location, I use Karen Barad’s ethico-onto-epistem-ology (2007:185) as an epistemological framework that glues together matter, materialization processes, meaning, and ethics in the production of knowledge. The underpinnings of ethico-onto-epistem-ology are to be found in Barad’s agential realism⁴ account, in which intra-activity⁵ plays a crucial role. Intra-actions suggest that all phenomena (i.e. body and mind; matter and meaning) and all apparatuses of

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⁴ Ethico-onto-epistem-ology is elemental in understanding Barad’s creative ontological universe, namely, agential realism, which reads the materiality of phenomena such as bodies from the beginning. Agential realism indicates an ontological physical thereness, in which materialization processes do not merely tackle issues of how multiple regulatory practices (or apparatuses) come to matter, but rather how matter comes to matter (2007).

⁵ The term intra-activity has been coined by feminist theorist/philosopher Karen Barad. In her reading of physicist Niel Bohr’s new epistemological framework concerning scientific knowledge, Barad writes that all phenomena, that is particular materialized/materializing relationships, are physical-conceptual intra-actions because intra-actions “signify the inseparability of “objects” and “agencies of observation” (in contrast to “interaction,” which reinscribes the contested dichotomy)” (1998:96; emphasis in the original).
knowledge production (i.e. epistemology, ethics, ontology) are not separable, but rather relational, connecting, entangled entities. This is really important from the perspective of knowledge production as it suggests that the intra-actions between the researcher and her research process (be it informants, data, outcomes, and so on) are not in a relation of externality. As she writes: “We are not outside observers of the world. Neither are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather, we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity” (2007:184). As a result, as a researcher, I do not acquire an “exterior observational point” (p.184) that will guarantee an objective gaze towards my material. Rather, my objectivity comes from my agential separability (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:69), that is, from the processes of differentiation that do not separate me from the other side of the agential cut – e.g. my informants, my material, my analysis – but rather they create connections and relations with the other side(s) for which I, as a researcher, am responsible and accountable. So, objectivity is strongly attached to ethics; it is “a matter of accountability for what materializes, for what comes to be. It matters which cuts are enacted: different cuts enact different materialized becomings”, Barad writes (2007:361). Against this backdrop, the decisions I take create different agential cuts because I actively participate in the process of shaping these cuts, but I am also shaped through these. The different kinds of embodied entanglements (between myself and my informants; myself and the Line; myself and my analysis) for which I am responsible entail, as Barad notes, “an embodied sensibility” (p.391) that renders me able to be ethically responsive throughout the thesis.

The informants

My epistemological input informs most of the methodological choices I have taken. From the very beginning of this feminist research project, “the methodological action” started (Ramazanoğlou and Holland 2002:145) because the decisions regarding the topic, the research questions, the analytical clusters, but most importantly the informants that breathed life into and co-produced this project constituted a methodological strategy. Upon my decision to do a small-scale qualitative research project about the affects and entanglements created between the Cyprus’s Green Line and bodies, I had to start looking for my informants. From the very beginning, I faced perplexities as lots of questions followed the initial decisions: Who are the
informants? Are they members of the Greek- or Turkish-Cypriot ethnic community? Does it matter the kind of sexed bodies they have? Do they need to live close to the Line for a detailed account of its affects? What age do they have? Do they have to be old enough to have experienced the war? Do they have to be people, who were forcibly displaced to the south or north? How am I supposed to get across to them? Is it necessarily bad to have a prior relationship with (some of) them? Is a possible friendship between me and an informant going to affect the interview process and material? These questions exemplify the intentionality behind, at least the initial, decisions of my research project. As a researcher, I am not innocent; my choices mirror my partial perspective; they mirror the cuts that have been created all those years due to the relationships I have with my body, the Line, the island. Here, I will give a brief account of the reasons I chose the specific informants.

My informants are only women. I deliberately chose only women because a possible thinking through the body (of women) could dissolve well-established binarisms between mind and body, according to which women’s bodies are strictly associated with the passion of the body in contradistinction to the superiority of the logos of the mind that is associated with the masculine. Being in accordance with the feminism of sexual difference, I chose women because their female, sexed bodies challenge generalizations that identify “the thinking subject with the universal” and, by extension, the masculine (Braidotti 2002:26). My informants are who they are because they have thinking bodies. My informants are only Cypriot women because, as subjects of history, they were cast off; they were invisible; they were absent from the decision-making processes. Although their personal stories and memories gained importance, their “experiences, local knowledge and insights have not adequately been included” in the official history or in peace negotiation tables (Hadjipavlou 2010:10). I also chose women of different age groups because it was important to listen to the thoughts of women with different experiences. Some of them are women who have experienced the creation of the Line; others are women who were mere toddlers when the war and the island’s division occurred; others are women who have not themselves experienced the past but grew up with narratives of that past. My informants come from the two main ethnic communities of the island, namely, they are Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. I chose to unfold the personal stories of women from both ethnic communities because each community and its members have
experienced the Line and its history in different ways. I was also curious to see whether there are differences or similarities in the way these women understand the Line and its entanglements with their bodies due to their different ethnic belonging. Women from both communities allow the emergence of multiple voices, instead of a one-sided, monophonic narrative (as it is the case with the official narratives across the divide). Maria Hadjipavlou, in her most recent book (2010), writes that “[i]n conflict cultures there is a tendency to homogenize communities, to fail to acknowledge their complexity and, thus, to prolong misperceptions, stereotypes and misunderstandings” (p.8). As such, selecting women from both communities constitutes an effort to avoid homogenizing, essentializing, and favoring one group’s opinions over the other. Moreover, my informants are activists. I chose activist women because they somehow escaped representationalist politics, which is endemic in Cyprus, through their struggles for a better future and their “untraditional” lifestyle. Their participation in activist formal and non-formal groups (ranging from liberal to socialist and anarchist groups) comes from the desire to fight against the existence of the border and the continuation of the island’s division. I found this element important because their political volition signifies that they already have a relation to the Line, which could be altered if they start talking about the Line through their bodies.

Besides, politics begins with our desires, Braidotti writes (2002:41), and desires are deeply embodied.

The next challenging step was to get access to them. Using a purposive sampling technique, I started emailing people, who had the characteristics I was looking for: they were (Greek- and Turkish-) Cypriot activist – not necessarily feminist – women of different age groups. I also started talking with friends about the idea I had for my project, and they suggested women, who could possibly participate in it. My own participation in different activist groups facilitated my efforts to find informants. However, I did not want to interview close friends of mine, because I was afraid that our intimate relationship would affect the whole process. That stage of the research process was the most stressful as I had to take into consideration the time restrictions I had, as well as the number of my informants. After I contacted approximately ten women via email or personal message on Facebook (in which I stated the topic of my thesis as well as my interest in listening to their opinions about the entanglements between their bodies and the Line), eight of them were willing to participate in the
project. Four Greek- and four Turkish-Cypriot activist women aged 26 to 58 years became my informants.

It is quite important to note here that my informants share with me some elements of my identity that determine who I am: a woman who has a body that is rooted in specific history, location, and language; an activist who struggles for the reunification of her homeland. The common ground we share is highly ethical as it signifies my intention to make myself, as the author, visible throughout the thesis, but, at the same time, does not mean that I always identify with my informants' insights. Besides, as Letherby highlights, “although many feminist researchers write about identification with respondents this should not be seen as a prerequisite to ‘good feminist research’” (2003:132).

The interview process: Entangled ethics

The empirical material of this project is derived from the eight in-depth interviews I conducted during March-April 2016. I asked my informants to choose themselves the place, in which the interview would take place as it was elemental to be a safe space. Four of them chose their own places and the remaining four asked me to meet in public spaces as it was more convenient for them. Half of the interviews (with the Greek-Cypriot informants) were conducted in my mother tongue, Greek-Cypriot, and the remaining four (with the Turkish-Cypriot informants) were conducted in English. Code switching was not really difficult to deal with because it is part of my everyday life as an activist, who is collaborating and trying to build bridges with fellow Turkish-Cypriot activists. As soon as I met my informants, I introduced myself (in three cases, I met the informant for the first time) and repeated the topic of my thesis. Then, I gave them a consent form which they read carefully and signed. In the consent form (see appendix I), I included their right to withdraw from the project at any time, and decline to answer whichever question they wished; I notified them that I will be using tape-recorder for the collection of my data and that I will send them the transcript of their interview as to confirm or clarify any points that they wished; and, finally, I confirmed that I would not be using their real names in my analysis. The consent form somehow echoes my ethical position and accountability towards my informants (Ramazanoğlou and Holland 2002) because, as I did not have the time to
earn their trust by other means, I chose to bestow on them some of the power dynamics that are present during an interview by using their right to not sign the form or withdraw from the whole process.

Tape-recording was something that worried me as I was not quite sure about my informants’ reaction to this. I was afraid that one could consider tape-recording as the ultimate exercise of power on my behalf. Using a tool that could listen to everything could make my informants feel uncomfortable to express their true opinions. In this case, self-censorship was looming over. For this reason, I was ready to take notes, if needed. Fortunately, no one of my informants felt this way and I proceeded with the interviews as planned. The interviews were semi-structured. I prepared beforehand an interview guide (see appendix II) that would assist me during the interviews. The interview guide included questions that would help me keep track of the topics I had in mind for discussion. In some cases, I did not follow the guide to the letter because my informants raised lots of other topics/issues, and I would engage in a conversation about the issues they wanted to discuss. I was already aware that the relationship between a researcher and her informants is quite complex, changing, fluid, and as Letherby notes, “always jointly constructed” (2003:116), so I was trying to abide by research ethics, particularly regarding the relationship between me and my informants. During the interviews, I tried not to intervene while my informants were talking because a possible interruption could create tension and render me a person, who does not respect her informant and who possibly believes that what she has to say is the absolute truth against which any other belief is judged. I also did not express my opinion regarding the matters we were discussing. Although I could identify myself with some of these matters, an “unexpected” opinion of mine during the interview could shake the balance of power between us resulting in distrust and insecurity. However, in quite some cases, my informants were really interested in what I had to say about the issues we were discussing urging me to express my opinion on the matter. During those moments, I was really careful and cautious of what I was saying because I did not want to say too much and control my informants’ thoughts, as well as the discussion that would follow. Of course, it is not always manageable to be constantly self-conscious about the extent of your involvement as a researcher but, in my case, I deliberately held myself back during some instances,
which I will describe below, that admittedly were the most difficult to deal with during the interviews.

Firstly, there were moments during which some of my informants would ask me back (right after my question or in the middle of their answer) “what do you mean?” or “is that what you are asking?” or “I am not sure if I have answered to what you have been asking”. It was really tempting to simply explain what I meant, but I stopped myself there. Although it was quite easy to say a few keywords that would “help” my informant to understand what I meant, I knew that my own insight on the matter could affect my informants’ initial thoughts, and as a result, they would simply tell me what I wanted to hear. Gayle Letherby has located this issue that can largely affect the interview process, the relationship between researcher and informant, as well as the empirical data, and highlighted the importance of acknowledging that being overly helpful during the interview “may reflect on our own needs [as researchers] rather than those of respondents” (p.127). In my case, I tried to resolve this issue (although, during my first interview, when my informant asked me what I meant, I froze, staring at her for a couple of awkward moments before realizing what I was doing) by not giving clear-cut or detailed explanations of what I meant but rather rephrasing the question and motivating them to just answer as they felt like.

Secondly, I feel that the most difficult moments to handle were the moments full of emotion. When there was silence, I had to listen to what was not being said; when there was anger, I had to stay calm; when there were tears, I had to remind myself that I needed to keep track of the interview. It felt like my identity as a researcher was colliding with my identity as a person, who understands, is being touched by, and identifies herself with those emotions. The management of my own emotions was challenging also. On the one hand, I did not want to completely disguise them but on the other hand, I knew that I needed to control them. At the end, I chose to not position myself as the “other”, who simply listens and is emotionally disengaged; I chose to say “I understand” or “take your time”, to hold her hand and wholeheartedly smile at her or laugh when she was laughing. During those moments, I could recognize myself in my informants; thus, my decision to be self-reflective regarding those emotional moments throughout the analysis of my data was etched in my mind.
All in all, the interview process exemplifies both the commitment and responsibility I have towards my informants, whom I deeply thank for their time and energy during the interviews. For this reason, I consider all eight of them as co-creators of this study as their inputs were the basis upon which this thesis was developed. As a novel researcher, trying to constantly be self-aware of and avoid every single ethical slip is rarely achievable. However, having that in mind, I tried to stay accountable, responsible, and situated to the fullest extent possible.

Pluralism of methods: Articulation of bodies and thematic analysis

After conducting all interviews, I had nearly 120 pages of empirical data. Data analysis is a process, as Ramazanoğlou and Holland argue, “of envisaging patterns, making sense, giving shape and bringing your quantities of material under control” (2002:160). It took me some time to feel comfortable enough to approach my material as I was not sure of how to provide an in-depth understanding of my informants’ inputs regarding the Green Line. After spending days reading and re-reading my material, I decided to approach my material following Nina Lykke’s insight regarding pluralism of methods (2010:160-161). Lykke argues that pluralism in the choice of methods is unavoidable when a feminist researcher understands all the constituent parts of her research project as being interconnected. As such, pluralism in epistemologies and ethical considerations leads to the pluralism of methods with which one approaches her material. I personally understand pluralism of methods as an open approach that gives me the freedom I need to express and convey my informants’ and my own interpretation of all the relations discussed in this study.

One of the methods that guide my analytical strategy is the articulation of bodies. Haraway writes that articulation is “always a non-innocent, contestable practice […] Articulation is work, and it may fail” (1992:314). The practice of articulation then has as its effects both language and bodies, while it spatializes and historicizes those elements that constitute the material-semiotic nodes of bodies. Using articulation of bodies is like listening to a choir where each voice is distinctively heard. Bodies have voices – my informants’ voices, and these bodily rooted voices are built around articulation and not representation as their transformative potentials render them visible. Articulated bodies put together risky things and uncover the overlapping
social nature of meaning. As such, the method of sketching the articulation of bodies will assist a different reading of the Green Line; a reading that will foster an understanding of the border in terms of a situated and embodied positionality.

Articulation of bodies can be a chaotic method as it is overtly open-ended and unorthodox. In other words, following the bodily fragments of my informants’ inputs can be difficult to manage if structure (in the body of the text, as well as in the body of my thought) is absent. Considering the organizing of the ways bodies are articulated is elemental for making sense of my material. Thus, I will combine this method with a different, yet interrelated, method, that of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a prominent method in qualitative research. Being able to thematize (to cluster) meanings (Holloway and Todres 2003) is considered an important skill that every qualitative researcher should acquire. It allows great flexibility and describes in detail the topics a researcher chooses to highlight (Boyatzis 1998). The latter is quite important as it signifies the partial perspective of me as a researcher, who chooses which topics to engage with, select, and analyze. In the case of my study, I started identifying possible themes after reading my material many times. I kept notes on the side of my transcripts and then I was able to name the patterns, which were occurring in most of my interviews. I then put all the different patterns under some overarching themes that could explain best the main research aims and questions of my thesis. Again, the selection of topics with which I engaged in a conversation is not an innocent practice but it reflects my very own partiality, reflexivity, and accountability towards my informants, my readers, and myself.

To summarize, this chapter is a brief account of all the choices I have taken during this research project: my epistemological, methodological, and ethical choices. These choices recognize that the production of knowledge cannot escape partiality as it is always context- and location-specific. But, also, these choices (my informants, my analytical strategy, even my autobiographical bits) are not innocent at all as they signify the multiple relations (the agential cuts) I have with every single stage of the research process. These choices also exemplify the length and depth of my involvement. All in all, this chapter cannot be seen separately from the next chapter, in which I sketch the multiple theories I use as to critically engage with my material.
A THEORETICAL MAPPING

My theoretical framework follows multiple trajectories. It can be used as a map; a map that, following Deleuze and Guattari, is “open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (2005[1987]:12). This mapping practice is questioning fixity, and questioning fixity enables thinking about the theory itself in a cartographical way (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012) that fosters both a theoretical and political reading of the present (Braidotti 2002). Given this particular way of theorizing in bits and pieces, I have chosen to fragmentarily engage with border theory as it is articulated both in the interdisciplinary field of border and borderlands studies6 and Chicana feminism, and with corpomaterialist postconstructionism or new feminist materialism. These lines of thought constitute the main theoretical approaches to my research project.

Upon my decision to get a deeper understanding of the bodily affects of Cyprus’s Green Line (or of what happens when borders and bodies meet), I had to come to terms with a hitherto unknown field of studies, namely border and borderlands studies. Having read different articles regarding the Green Line for various courses during my studies, I located a knowledge gap that breathed life to this research project. In other words, I realized that in the literature I had read so far, bodies were rarely discussed or contextualized, particularly in their entanglements with the Line. Having this pre-understanding, I took as my starting point the exploration of the ways, in which borders and the entanglements between bodies and borders are regarded in that novel field of studies. Then, I decided to suggest a new theoretical cartography that could introduce the body as part and parcel of understanding borders in general and the Green Line in particular. As such, in my literature review (the first part of the present chapter), I will engage in a dialogue with different bits of theorizing prominent in the field of border and borderlands studies, while later in the chapter, I will sketch the main theoretical clusters which inform a new, different reading of the Line.

6 It was not until 1980 that border scholars highlighted the necessity of interdisciplinarity, starting from the recognition that only multiple disciplinary perspectives can do justice to the perplexity of international borders (Newman 2011; Paasi 2005, 2011; Tripathi 2015; Wastl-Walter 2011).
Previous research: Borders and their entanglements with bodies

Much of the literature in border and borderlands studies, a field in which research regarding the Cyprus’s Green Line has been extensively conducted, follows a dualist structure when it theorizes borders and their affects. For this reason, my literature review will focus on the ways border theory has been permeated by this conceptual distinction. I will also try to understand how the entanglements between bodies and borders are regarded in the field.

Based on my readings, I realized that conventional border theory follows a conceptual distinction between physical and mental/cultural borders when theorizing borderlands\(^7\) and their affects. In other words, borders are conceptualized either as physical, spatial barriers whose primary function is to differentiate places (Diener and Hagen 2010:4) or as cultural, symbolic boundaries of belonging and/or exclusion, which are oftentimes spatially expressed, such as ethnic neighborhoods, gendered spaces, religious gatherings (Paasi 2003, 2005, 2011). The latter is also a critical component of identity formation, since living in the borderlands or crossing borders becomes a significant identity marker, as Spyrou and Christou note (2014:4), while the former emphasizes border regions (especially the iconic U.S.-Mexico border region) and their material conditions, such as economic development, trade, trafficking, history, violence, and immigration (Peña 2007; Segura and Zavella 2007; Téllez 2008).

This distinction is being articulated and described under many different names\(^8\) as various schools of thought have influenced and altered it in many ways. However, despite the changes occurring from time to time, this distinction keeps affecting the literature of the field. To be more specific about it:

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\(^7\) Elenes (2011) discusses the semantic differences between borderlands and borders arguing that borderlands both as lands immediately adjacent to international boundaries and as metaphorical divides among social groups are not to be confused with border regions because they also speak “for different types of boundaries along multiple identity markers such as race, class, gender and sexuality” (p.37).

\(^8\) This conceptual distinction underpins much of border theory and it is expressed in different ways: as material and non-material (Wastl-Walter 2011); as material and conceptual (Ó-Tuathail and Dalby 1998); as physical and mental (Rumford 2006); as formal and informal (Diener and Hagen 2010); as literal and metaphorical/cultural (Spyrou and Christou 2014), to name a few.
On the one hand, much discussion among border scholars deals with borders’ physicality and material exteriority. Many border scholars have acknowledged that borders are not natural barriers, but artificial, human-made ones, which are socially constructed and best articulated in terms of territoriosity, power, securitization, legal obligations, and so on (Donnan and Wilson 1999, 2010; Wilson and Donnan 1998, 2005). Borders’ materiality maintains a conceptual toolbox that is being employed for regulatory practices, from the precise placement of permanent demarcation lines to the regulation of movement. The physical existence of borders, which can be manifested in multiple ways (mountain ranges, lakes, lines on a map, brick walls, barbed wires and sandbags, armed border guards, etc.), is used by territorial regimes to function as mechanisms of social control, creating and sustaining unequal power relations between “us” and “them” (Brunet-Jailly 2013:30-31; Lagendijk, Arts and van Houtum 2009:3-10; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007:x).

On the other hand, research in borderland regions highlights the other end of the aforementioned conceptual division: the non-material, the symbolic, and the cultural which is often the result, the effect of the physical existence of borders and which generates a multifarious literature regarding narratives of otherness, belongingness, and the construction of the self (Donnan 2005; Flynn 1997; Flynn 2015; Martinez 1994; Prokkola 2009; Roets, Reinaart and van Hove 2008; van Houtum 2000). Given that, borders appear to be much more than merely physical and territorial manifestations since they entrench and ultimately determine performances of culture, gender, ethnicity, and class as it is exemplified by many border scholars (Soguk 2007). As such, physical borders regularly appear to be the cause which determines cultural borders.

Recent developments in the field highlight the interplay between material/physical and mental/cultural borders which in turn brings forward interesting lines of thought regarding borders’ permeability and contingency. Borders are more than physical entities and van Houtum goes as far as to describe them as verbs. As he states: “[t]he border makes and is made […] a border is a verb” (2011:51). Bordering, thus, is a dynamic relationship between making and unmaking the border, attained through acts of identification with, negotiation of, and resistance to the border. It is important to note that this interplay between physical and mental borders is understood in terms of
a causal relationship, in which the physical border is the leading cause that results or effectuates the mental border.

Overall, border scholars argue that both the material and the symbolic facets of theorizing borders and borderlands are not contradictory, but rather co-constitutive to the extent that “both are products of cultural construction and negotiation” (Spyrou and Christou 2014:7; emphasis added). However, reading borders/borderlands as mere constructions result in the undertheorization of the materiality of bodies that are adjacent to borderlands and their entanglements with borders. Particularly, border scholars extensively analyze the ways borders materialize in everyday experiences of women and the ways identities are constructed ranging from issues such as women’s migration across international borders (Cohen 2010; Luibheid 2002; Maia 2010; Morokvasic 2004) and women’s exploitation in the maquiladora industry (Elenes 2011; Vila 2005), to issues concerning women’s experiences of living in violent borderlands (like India-Pakistan or Israel-Palestine) or crossing territorial and metaphorical borders (Banerjee and Choudhury 2012; Begum 2012; Castañeda 2003; Shirazi, Duncan and Freehling-Burton 2015; Wind 2015). However, although the aforementioned covers a considerable part of border and borderlands studies, the body and its materiality as sine qua non elements of theorizing borderlands’ affects are absent. The entanglements between bodies and borders are to be found nearly nowhere because bodies are primarily conceptualized as passive surfaces upon which discourses and identity constructions are imposed. This brings to mind the Cartesian dualism between mind and body according to which the mind, that is, consciousness, intelligence, and selfhood, is positioned outside the corporeal body which in turn is simply considered as passive, inert; as a body-machine, property of an autonomous subject (Grosz 1994; Shildrick 1994). Following this, material bodies tangled between material and symbolic borders fail to be theorized. The material body as an excessive force and constituent part of a subjectivity that merges corporeality, emotion, mind, and desire together, is reduced to a “blank page for social inscriptions” (Haraway 1991:197).

The local literature regarding the Green Line faithfully follows the theoretical developments of conventional border theory. The distinction between physical and mental borders is clearly mirrored in the majority of essays and studies about
Cyprus’s Green Line. Most research about the Green Line is conducted within the general framework of nationalism and ethnonational identity formation (Bryant 2004; Constantinou and Papadakis 2001; Papadakis 1998, 2005, 2006; Kizilyurek 1999), since, as Peristianis and Mavris note, the process of division in Cyprus follows ethnic lines, “leading to the erection of boundaries around, and between, the two communities” (2011:165). Throughout the history of Cyprus, the hardening of ethnic boundaries led to territorial boundaries, to the extent that the border “seems to have been a central part of the discourses through which the states on both sides were sustained” (Demetriou 2007:993). Moreover, scholarship about the Green Line focuses extensively on the discursive construction of national identity. It is argued that national identity generates historical continuity and a sense of belonging and rootedness to people living in spatially bounded territories. The Line sparks discussions of who “we” are and who the “others” are (Peristianis 2000) since its heavily militarized physicality prohibited any contact between the two communities from 1974 to 2003. At the same time, heightened inter-ethnic stereotypes highlight the centrality of definitions of the self and the other (Christou and Spyrou 2012, 2014; Hadjipavlou 2003; Spyrou 2006). After the opening of the Line in 2003, there have been multiple publications that again focus on the cultural and symbolic facets of the Green Line. The crossings of the border here function both as a reminder of a cultural trauma (Roudometof and Christou 2011) with multiple socio-psychological consequences (Hadjipavlou 2004a, 2007) and as an act of undermining hegemonic depictions of the other. For example, Şahin’s analysis on the discursive construction of a Turkish-Cypriot national identity by mainstream newspapers concludes that after the opening of the borders, the image of the other “was transformed from their being the ‘evil’ ones into ordinary people like ‘us’” (2011:594), while in some cases a national “we” was constructed as cultural similarities were set against cultural differences.

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9 Although there are many schools of thought concerning nationalism, it is not my intention to discuss them here. It must be noted that most essays cited above follow Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (2012 [1983]), as well as Anderson’s (2006 [1983]) definitions of nationalism. The former argue that the supposed continuity between nationalism, national symbols, the nation-state and the past is heavily fictitious since their construction rests on a single historical narrative. The latter argues that the nation is an “imagined community” whose constructiveness derives from the way in which it is imagined. Thus, nationalism is a way “of interpreting and understanding the world that is continuously reproduced by the ‘members’ of a nation” (Efthymiou 2014: 36).
Besides above symbolic articulations of the Green Line, its physical existence and impact on everyday life are also being discussed by Cypriot scholars, following again the logic between cause and effect. Although the Green Line constitutes a particular ethnopolitical border, it is not internationally recognized as such, but it is rather regarded as a ceasefire zone dividing the two ethnic communities (Peristianis and Mavris 2011:151). The implications of the Green Line are greatly marked in spatial terms, since only the southern part of the island (mainly populated by Greek-Cypriots) is officially recognized as a state, i.e. the Republic of Cyprus, whereas the northern part’s legal status/statehood is still pending (Akgün 2010; Özdeşer 2002), a fact which has extensively affected Turkish-Cypriots’ material lives (trading bans, non-recognition of educational institutions, economic regression), since they increasingly rely on Turkey’s help for their survival (Arslan and Güven 2007; Guven-Lisaniler and Ugural 2000; Katircioğlu 2010). After the opening of the first border (the Ledra Palace checkpoint), scholars, following the international literature, dealt with the Line’s physical existence in new ways: its former impermeability gave way to concepts of negotiation, contestation, manipulation, subversion (Demetriou and Vlachos 2007; Dikomitis 2012). Crossing the Line was considered a ritual of resistance, but again contesting the Line remained a symbolic ritual with no bodily affects. The materiality of a highly political action became a mere symbol.

It seems that the distinction between the physical Line and the cultural/mental boundaries it creates (particularly in terms of identity construction and differentiation) follows again the logic of causation. As such, mental borders are systematically conceptualized as mere effects of physical borders, while physical borders are being understood as the primary cause of mental borders. There is no space for theorizing the moments of interrelation and this mechanical causality ostracizes bodies from the realm of subjectivity.

Similarly, the literature addressing the effects of the Green Line from a feminist perspective is quite scarce, as Cypriot women’s voices have gained little space in the dominant literature on the Cyprus problem in general and on the effects of the Line in particular. This literature primarily focuses on Cypriot women’s lives and experiences and how they differ from those of men, as well as on how different forms of femininity and masculinity have been molded due to the inter-ethnic conflict (Anthias
The distinction between physical and mental borders is reiterated in many studies that adopt gendered lenses to analyze the conflict. Both Maria Hadjipavlou (2010) and Cynthia Cockburn (2004) are concerned with how the divisive Line creates, sustains, and perpetuates binaries between “us” and “them.” Using a standpoint epistemology, their work focuses on the gendered aspects of the Cyprus ethnonational conflict, discussing both the symbolic and the physical presence of borders in Cypriot women’s daily life. Their focus though is on the internal demarcation lines the border creates and how such lines shape women’s gendered and ethnic identities. In their discussion, they highlight the differences between the two communities such as language, religion and “national” belonging. Yet, the body once again remains unwritten and silent when above literature showcases the affects of the Green Line. When Cockburn writes about the body (2004:129-135), she mainly refers to the symbolic border that separates Cypriot women from “the other” that is, men. Cockburn discusses women’s bodies as tools of the patriarchal institutions, within a discourse on sexuality, but she does not discuss bodies as active, participative agents. Although she writes that “being a symbol never bodes well for the flesh and blood woman” (2004:116), what this literature generally fails to do is to open up a space where matter matters; a space where physical exteriority and discursive constructions are not opposed to each other, but rather they incorporate material bodies as inextricably linked to gendered lives and actions creating thus the conditions for a new kind of coexistence.

In this part, I have tried to sketch the ways borders are regarded in the field of border and borderlands studies, but also to highlight the undertheorizing, or absence, of bodies. Through this extensive literature review, I want to point out some issues that I find interesting to briefly recap. First, it seems that the cultural turn in humanities and social sciences affects the way borders are theorized and much attention is placed on the social and discursive characteristics of borders. As such, the affects around borderlands are mainly regarded as the end result of social and discursive constructions, while, as shown above, identity formations (e.g. gender, ethnicity, 10 For a concise yet instructive discussion of the constituent elements of standpoint epistemology, see Lykke (2010:129-130).
nationality) are explained either through social constructivist or postmodernist lenses that constitute language, discourse, the social, and the psychic as the underpinnings of understanding life around and at the borders, at the expense of corporeal bodies which are kept invisible and unexamined. This seems to be common ground on the field because the body is never conceptualized as agentic. Besides, Elizabeth Grosz notes that traditionally “the humanities and social sciences reduce the body to a fundamental continuity with brute, inorganic matter” (1994:8). Secondly, there is a predominant discourse regarding the causative relationship between material and symbolic borders, such that (women’s) bodies stay invisible; they are nowhere. In other words, the physical exteriority of borders is the sole cause that leads to internal, symbolic divisive lines that shape the gendered, ethnic, national identities of the people who live close to borders. This echoes the reductive Cartesian dualist thinking as the interrelation between the two ends is denied or simply stays unexplained (Grosz 1994), such that the entanglements between bodies and borders fail to be theorized, while at the same time, bodies as the amalgam of the relational characteristics that could break the binary down stay inert, simply instrumental. All in all, the absence of bodies in the international and local literature regarding borders seems to be the result of transcendental and humanist binary thinking that favors mind over body. As such, bodies are kept strictly separate from mind and consciousness with no opportunity of coming together because they are conceived as stable and unchangeable entities, unable to foster (social/historical/political) transformation. In the following part of this theoretical mapping, I will engage with theories that can assist a reading of both borders and the Line this time through the body.

Theoretical points of departure or when the body enters the scene

As already mentioned, corporeal bodies that affect and are affected by geopolitical borders are not discussed by border theory. Therefore, the reality of borders in its entanglements with (women’s) embodied realities omits an elemental factor: the body. What comes next is to suggest a theoretical framework that will take account of that bodily absence and make use of theories that are anything but disembodied. Hence, I will try to re-read borders (including the Green Line) through the prism of two different schools of thought: border feminism and new feminist materialism or corpomaterialist postconstructionism. I am mostly concerned to map the ways bodies
are oriented using these theoretical lenses, for “theory is bodily, and theory is literal. Theory is not about matters distant from the lived body” as Donna Haraway notes (1992:299).

Living in the borderlands: Bodily fragments in Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands

Emerging in the 1980s, ‘border feminism’ was a term coined by Sonia Saldívar-Hull (1991) in an attempt to pinpoint a specific type of Chicana feminism; namely, that which got started across the U.S.-Mexico border region and redirected feminist theory with its situated perspectives. As Stefanie Kron writes (2011:106), border feminism was strongly influenced by the theoretical and epistemological insights of Gloria Anzaldúa’s 1987 book Borderlands/La frontera: the new mestiza. Anzaldúa conceptualizes the U.S.-Mexico border as a transit zone, a confrontational space, a source of intense pain, and an open wound, while the borderlands which are created around the border constitute “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.” (2012[1987]:25). Border feminist theory acknowledges that living in the borderlands means embracing the multiple historical, sexual, ethnic, and class differences women have (Alarcón 1990; Hurtado 2003; Saldívar-Hull 1991). Given that, the liminal space, which Anzaldúa theorizes in her conceptualization of the borderlands, it is a space where ‘the new mestiza’ dwells – a kind of border woman, who is able to negotiate her inner conflicts and contradictions, generated by her diverse cultural settings (Blanco 1991; Henríquez Betancor 2012; Naples 2008, 2010).

However, when theorizing life in the borderlands, Anzaldúa assigns to those who inhabit the borderlands and live in the intersections between genders, sexualities, languages, cultures, ethnicities, and nations (Sandoval 1998:359) a corporeal dimension. They “shiver” and their shoulders are “hunched, barely keeping the panic below the surface of the skin” (Anzaldúa 2012[1987]:42). The body here is not a passive surface; it is rather an extension of a historically and geopolitically situated

11 ‘Border feminism’ is also in dialogue with post-colonial/Third World and transnational feminisms but their main epistemological assumptions on decolonizing feminist theorizing through “the building of an ethics of crossing cultural, sexual, national, class, and racial borders” (Mohanty 2003:10) and building disciplinary and activist alliances through “crossing and transcending ethnic and national boundaries and borders” (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002:340) are out of the scope of this research project.
subjectivity that is so wisely called “home”. This home is not a mere social and/or logocentric construction, but a place of fear that “permeates every sinew and cartilage” (p.43) in the body. This new subjectivity articulated in the new mestiza consciousness enables corporeally abjected voices to be heard. Those voices break down the normative binaries between mind and body, for they scream out loud that “every cell in our bodies, every bone and bird and worm has spirit in it” (p.58). Afterall, the body is smart as it “reacts equally viscerally to events from the imagination as it does to “real” events” (p.60).

These bits of bodily materiality scattered over Borderlands are oftentimes neglected when Anzaldúa’s work is analyzed. Anzaldúa’s borderlands are both theorized as geopolitical spaces where female historical presence has been reclaimed (Saldivar-Hull 2000:59-75) and as a metaphor for hybrid-like understandings of Chicana feminist identity and subjectivity; one that creates a different conceptual framework, a perspective from the cracks, a negotiation between multiple identity formations (Elenes 2011; Keating 2006). This kind of borderland reading is reflected in the work of Chicana feminists such as Norma Alarcón, Aída Hurtado, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, AnaLouise Keating, Cynthia Bejarano, Eliana Rivero, Sonia Saldivar-Hull, Eden Torres and many more, who write Chicanas into the field of history and understand identities as contextual, non-essentialist, situated, multiple, contingent and non-linear.

Although these Chicana feminist scholars write extensively on the new identity politics found in Anzaldúa’s work and on the ways her work allows for multiple belongings and alliances, locates the narratives of oppression in their intersections, and disrupts any account of identity or experience as exclusive or separable (Martinez 2000; Moraga 1983; Moya 1997; Saldivar-Hull 1991), they nevertheless do not systematically refer to or contextualize those parts where Anzaldúa implicitly locates the new mestiza consciousness within the body. For example, when María Henríquez Betancor (2012:42-43) analyzes the third and fourth essay in Borderlands, she focuses on the cultural inheritance and indigenous identity of the new mestiza by interpreting the figure of Coatlicue, the serpent goddess, as a transformative symbol that disrupts original myths of femininity and as a state (of mind) that inhabits the third space where crossings occur. However, this analysis lacks those fragments in which
Anzaldúa traces the Coatlicue state back to her own corporeal reality. As Anzaldúa puts it, “Forty years it’s taken me to enter into the Serpent, to acknowledge that I have a body, that I am a body and to assimilate the animal body, the animal soul” (2012[1987]:48). In that sense, the personal history of the new mestiza is rooted in her bodily materiality because only when she acknowledges her embodied reality is possible to face her fears, process her painful experiences, and rupture archetypical myths; the Coatlicue state then is not a mere symbol, but a way of being. Therefore, bodies in Borderlands, although fragmentary, are ‘relational bodies’ – self-reflective and fluid bodies, which create synergies with multiple elements that constitute a hybrid-like subjectivity, such as identity markers, experiences, emotions, desires, and material matters. Relational bodies will be part of my analytical strategy, because in their intersection with geopolitical borders propose a new kind of understanding of the bodily rooted self and alter the ways borders and borderlands could be read: the mediating and mediated relational bodies, as integral parts of “natural/social embodiment” (Haraway 1992:310), suggest that physical borders and symbolic crossings do not have a simplistic, causal relationship.

To summarize, living in the borderlands means that one’s own embodied positionality and corporeal historicity should be acknowledged. As Anzaldúa’s work indirectly clarifies, the confrontational and undetermined space that borderlands constitute can only be negotiated through a bodily rooted self whose singularity can be traced back to its entanglements with other bodies and histories.

When bodies kick back: New feminist materialism and corpomaterialist postconstructionism

Bodies are matter and material bodies materialize in our day-to-day experiences in multiple ways. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost in their introduction to New Materialisms (2010) point out that each time we think about matter, we simultaneously distance ourselves from it, and a space of immaterial things emerges that describes in a merely socio-psychological, logocentric way our bodies’ entanglements with the world around us (p.2). That is also the case, as already mentioned, with the literature concerning borders and the Green Line. Much has been written about subjectivities, values, emotions, consciousness, meaning, and so on but
nothing reflects the ways bodies transform and are transformed by the existence of the
Line as a phenomenon that inhabits space and time, history and memory reflecting
simultaneously bodies’ spatiotemporal characteristics. As Rosi Braidotti writes,
bodies are situated within a temporal and spatial environment that “involves a
commonly shared memory and sense of the past that continue to affect the present and
will carry on into the future” (2006:150).

Both new feminist materialism and corpomaterialist postconstructionism are
ontological, epistemological, and theoretical frameworks that claim materiality (and
especially the materiality of bodies) as a prerequisite for understanding different ways
of being. Postconstructionism is an umbrella term coined by Nina Lykke (2010) for
theoretical endeavors, which call for “non-deterministic and non-essentialist
conceptualizations of prediscursive facticities of bodily materialities” (p.108). In this
way, bodily materiality is being reclaimed not as a mere discursive construction (as
feminist post/structuralist and deconstructionist approaches suggest) but rather as a
prediscursive facticity that engages in a dialogue with the aforementioned approaches
in a way that pushes beyond the limits between discourse/materiality nexus
reclaiming the agency bodies have (Lykke 2013).

Postconstructionism is considered a nodal point that maps genealogies of
contemporary feminist theorizing that are articulated by feminist philosophers and
theoreticians such as Elizabeth Grosz, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway,
Anne Fausto-Sterling, Stacy Alaimo, Susan Hekman, and many more, while it
converges with strands that are linked to new feminist materialism. New feminist
materialism offers new understandings of the body, which differ “from the more
linguistically oriented branch of poststructuralism that relies on semiotics,
psychoanalysis and deconstruction,” as Elizabeth Wingrove writes (2016:461). New
feminist materialist theories theorize bodies as part of a new metaphysics that is
multidirectional; bodies get a new sense of orientation that moves beyond or cuts
across the representation/materiality dichotomy affirming matter’s active role in
“shaping” discourses and language’s living force (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012).
This understanding gives new nuances to relational bodies as non-static enacting a
constant doing.
Hence, through the prism of both new feminist materialism and postconstructionism, bodies are re-read as material-semiotic, (Haraway 1991) material-discursive, (Barad 2003) or simply vital (Fraser, Kember and Lury 2005); they are much more than passive matter. Matter is not simply “spoken about” or “spoken with,” but rather it speaks in itself; “flesh reads” (Kirby 1997:126-127) such that it is compelling us to understand bodies as unpredictable, uncontrollable, productive, surprising, agential, and active (Grosz 1994). Bodies are contradictive; they seemingly are a codification of our memories upon which “social and affective forces” interplay – as Braidotti writes: the body is “a surface of intensities” (2002:21). In conceptualizing bodies this way, teleological and linear structures of cause and effect appear far more complex. When thinking of the existence of borders (e.g. the Green Line) in causal terms, then bodies at the intersections of those borders stay inert, empty of their (trans)formative capacities; when knowledge production of and at the borders is seen as purely conceptual, then its materiality formed by the intra-action between bodies and borders becomes obscure.

Karen Barad’s intra-action (2001, 2003) exemplifies that all phenomena such as mind and body are not separable, fixed or bounded entities, but always already relational and mutually transformative intra-active processes. Intra-activity implies that the humanist distinction between the material and semiotic or the biological and sociocultural cannot be maintained because our material-discursive intra-actions reformulate and reconstitute the reality we live in (1998:104). Thinking about the borders through the body in an “enfleshed” and not in a “flight away” from it manner (Braidotti 2002:5), signifies a confrontational attitude towards boundaries and limitations. Conceiving material bodies “as possessing [their] own modes of self-transformation, self-organization, and directedness” (Coole and Frost 2010:10) strengthens their relational characteristics: bodies are neither solid nor self-identical; the synergies they build with their surrounding matter affirm their continuous metamorphosis (Braidotti 2002).
Using feminist neomaterialist lenses, relational bodies are forces that stress constant and dynamic processes of materialization,\(^{12}\) which in turn emphasize the relational facet of our very subjectivity. This new subjectivity is always embodied and embedded, non-linear and non-unitary, while it reconfigures and redefines political practice (Braidotti 2006). Relational subjectivity is also affective and genuinely challenges transcendental humanist assumptions that describe subjects as always already masculinist, autonomous, rational, self-sufficient, stable, omniscient, and omnipotent (Just 2008). Relational subjectivity inter-connects with multiple elements, animate and inanimate, that differentiate our subject positions, which are not simply structurally constituted but corporeally as well – what Braidotti puts as “the bodily structure of subjectivity” or the “radical immanence” of bodies (2002:20). Similarly, Elizabeth Grosz suggests that this crisis of rationality depicts the shortcomings of the western philosophical canon, which privileges mind over body. Feminist politics and analysis of subjectivity should refigure the body and its sexual specificities, as they are theorized in sexual difference theory since corporeality is the very “stuff” of subjectivity (1994:iix). These mere discursive and sociocultural understandings of the body inhibit its transformative potentials, which are rooted in its “biological accounts” (1995:31); corporeality could be used as a framework for different understandings of notions such as memory, consciousness, and agency because it shifts, remaps the very conception of subjectivity – this time “in terms of the primacy of corporeality” (1994:viii). As Grosz notes, there is no body as such: “there are only bodies” (p.19; emphasis in the original) and their specificities such as ethnicity, gender/sex, class, age, and so on, are corporeally marked; understanding their affirmative multiplicity the western ideal of a single human body could be challenged.

In relation to the purpose of this research project, relational bodies and, by extension, relational subjectivities disrupt any monosemous linear readings of borders in general and the Green Line in particular, suggesting at the same time a new kind of interpreting materiality as co-constitutive rather than merely additive element; materiality is an “actant” that entails identity and history in itself. This shift also enables the development of a better account of women’s lives and futures, as well as

\(^{12}\) Karen Barad when writing about Judith Butler’s critique of constructivism, notes that notwithstanding Butler’s reworking of the notion of matter as a process of materialization, she, however “reinscribes matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than as an active agent participating in the very process of materialization” (2003:821).
better politics, as Wingrove suggests (2016:461). The entanglements between materiality and women’s politics will also be part of my analysis since the politics at the border are not mere discursive constructions, but rather material ones as the embodied and embedded presence of women at the border suggests a different reading of the political claims around borders.

The last facet of new feminist materialism I want to draw attention to is its preference to some phenomenological accounts of embodiment, which will be part of my analysis in the next chapter. Feminist approaches to (existential) phenomenology, articulated among others by Sara Ahmed, Iris Marion Young, and Diana Coole, highlight the agentic capacities of bodies, which in turn are considered self-transformative and interdependent. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theorizing of consciousness as always already embodied and situated, Young argues that the body as lived corporeality, as an acting and experiencing body-in-situation becomes twisted together with its sociocultural milieu and historicity (2005:16). These phenomenologically situated bodies again are relational, since their entanglements dissolve a binary logic between nature and culture, or, equally, between sex and gender. Similarly, Diana Coole (2010:102) reading along the phenomenological inputs of Merleau-Ponty subverts objective and commonsensical notions of space, as she describes the lived body as a corporeal space, which in turn is lived spatiality.

Sara Ahmed also discusses space. She writes extensively on orientations, on queer orientations in particularly, and highlights the importance of directions towards an object. Given the phenomenological emphasis on the intentional directedness of consciousness towards objects and the repetition of actions which affect the shaping of bodies, Ahmed insists that objects and bodies co-inhabit space; they could never be the same with and without each other, since the object being touched by the body, and vice versa, leaves its traces on the skin (2006a, 2006b). The “nearness” of objects affects “what bodies can do” (2006a:552) as the bodily horizon, namely the bodily boundaries/limits that exemplify what is reachable and not, is shaped by histories. For Ahmed, orientations take up both space and time – they are spatiotemporal and in dialogue with the past, present, and future. As she puts it: “[e]ven when orientations seem to be about which way we are facing in the present, they also point us toward the future” (p.554). As such, bodies have spatial but also temporal elements that
respond to the ongoing transformations of their milieu. This relates to Barad’s conceptualization of *spacetime*. As she argues, the past, present, and future are in an indeterminate relationship as “past” is anything but static and “future” is not what will simply unfold (Dolphins and van der Tuin 2012:66). As in Ahmed’s universe, past, present, and future are inextricably connected to each other. Hence, both space and time are full of possibilities; nevertheless, this indeterminate spacetime has its “gravitational points” (Coole 2010:106), namely, bodies. Spatiotemporal bodies are again relational; they shift, fold, and unfold. Flesh is now “productive and emergent yet contingent” (p.108). Reading against the grain of différance, as the eternal deferral of meaning, spatiotemporal bodies are the generative nodes where meaning and matter meet.

To summarize, all those facets of new feminist materialism and postconstructionism illustrate that bodies’ materiality is elemental to breaking down well-known dichotomies between culture and nature, representation and materiality, symbolicity and physicality. Therefore, the linear relation between cause and effect appears much more complex when bodies’ unpredictable and productive capacities are taken into consideration. All in all, in this chapter, I have tried to sketch the most important theoretical nodes that I will later use in my analysis. The lengthy literature review aims at contextualizing the absences of bodies in the field of border and borderlands studies, and the new theoretical framework I suggest, that of new feminist materialism and postconstructionism, tries to deepen the analyses around the entanglements between borders and bodies. In the next chapter, I will attempt an analysis that will shed some light to the bodily affects of the Green Line.

**ANALYSIS**

One of the initial motivations behind my research project has been the understanding of the absence and non-theorizing of material bodies (particularly women’s bodies) in the field of border and borderlands studies. Being able to contextualize that absence did not change the fact that bodies were still nowhere. The excessive meanings tangled between the intersections of physical and mental borders remained
undertheorized. Material bodies as excessive forces and constituent parts of a subjectivity that merges corporeality, emotion, mind, and desire together, were reduced to a “blank page for social inscriptions” (Haraway 1991:197). My journey began the moment I tried to read the Green Line through some bodily lenses. Bodies were probably the missing link to a deeper understanding of the politics of borders in general and the Green Line in particular.

The next thing I remember is me crossing the Ledra Street checkpoint and taking the bus to Famagusta, a coastal city in northern Cyprus, for my first interview. In a minibus full of people, I was skimming through the interview guide for the hundredth time. I was worried not to intervene, stop my informant while talking, impose my opinions or guide the conversation. This process happened seven more times with me driving around the city to meet my informants and still reading the interview guide. The feeling of nervousness was always there. Finally, having gathered data from all eight qualitative interviews, I could identify some thematic patterns, as I will show below, which helped me to contextualize my research questions and initiate a conversation for a new understanding of borders as well as the Line; an understanding that takes into account what happens when bodies and borders meet.

All in all, my analytical strategy goes under two main captions: *initial conceptualizations of the Green Line* and *the bodily affects of the Green Line*. In the first part, I will briefly discuss my informants’ initial conceptualizations regarding borders in general and the Green Line in particular. This section of my analysis engages with the literature I have already discussed in the previous research chapter, as well as with some facets of border feminism, and summarizes somehow my initial agony to understand and contextualize the absence of bodies in the discourses around borders. This part includes two different thematic clusters that revolve around the well-known opposition between mental and physical borders.

In the second part, I will extensively discuss the ways in which my informants understand anew the Green Line, this time in its entanglements with their bodily reality. This part is composed of three different yet tightly interwoven themes, which are related to those facets of new feminist materialism or corpomaterialist postconstructionism that underline the relational capacities of bodies; capacities that
could transform beliefs and attitudes we (myself, my informants, and the readers) have had so far. There is also a significant and rather obvious difference between the two parts as the second is much lengthier than the first. I decided to structure my analysis like that because I felt the need to give as much space as possible to the innumerable potentialities of bodies, but also because there were many insights from my informants regarding bodily affects, despite the perplexed feelings they had when the body entered the scene.

What is a border? Initial conceptualizations of the Green Line

The absence of physical bodies in the theorizing of borders was the first thing that shocked me upon my decision to have a closer look at the Cyprus’s Green Line. Having located that omission, I decided to put bodies to the frontline of my analysis. I was not sure whether my informants would be eager to discuss their bodily realities, but I was willing to take on that risk. When I was writing my interview guide, bodies were at the center of my attention. However, at the end, I realized that I had to give more space to my informants to speak their minds and articulate their opinions about the Green Line; besides, all eight of them were activists and they had much to say. For this reason, this first half of the interview process is focused on my informants’ initial memories and thoughts regarding the Line (and borders in general). After many readings of the interviews, I was able to identify two main thematic clusters, which describe my informants’ initial thoughts regarding the Line: the first is dealing with the physicality of the Line while the second with its symbolic, non-material consequences.

The Line as a physical barrier: The politics of the border

At the beginning, I engaged with my informants in a conversation about how they conceptualize the Line’s physical reality and effects as its exteriority is an obvious thing; besides, it extends over 180km long buffer zone with checkpoints, barbed wires, sandbags, and armed people. Some of my informants perceive the physical existence of the border as being anything but mere demarcating lines and passive territorial markers. They rather understand it as an artificially constructed location
where power relations are negotiated and diffused across both sides of the divide. For Özge, a 55-year-old Turkish-Cypriot psychology researcher, the Line is a political symbol that assigns power to the hegemonic elite of both communities. As she states:

I think it [the border] is a political symbol … telling that we [the political elites] have the power and we close people inside. You cannot cross; they cannot cross. So, it was more of a political power game and it continued until 2003 and then partially, I even wrote that in one of my articles, partially they opened the kanjeli [barricade] to say ok we are letting you as much as we want to let you cross.

(Özge, 55 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Özge strongly believes that the physical existence of the Line is a permanent reminder of the micro-politics of the border because, as she says, the Line reminds you “that you’re not free and you’re in a conflict region”. This echoes insights of conventional border theory, which links the physical borders to the politics and power relations around or at the borders. In a similar vein, the Line’s geopolitical milieu brings to the fore issues around the nature of the modern nation-state, sovereignty, territoriality, and security (Altink and Weedon 2010; Diener and Hagen 2012). Özge will continue: “There are too many actors; actors in the sense that they are playing their games showing that they want to do something for the country but meanwhile … [silence]”. Özge understands these issues as political power games that create, sustain, and perpetuate unequal power relations, while her silence even before finishing her sentence shows her frustration about the continuation of this power game.

Similarly, Eleni, a 35-year-old, Greek-Cypriot pro-unification activist and schoolteacher, although she believes that borders are fluid processes with meaning-making capacities – a belief that echoes van Houtum’s (2011) understanding of borders as verbal processes with permeable and malleable characteristics – she, however, affirms that their physical exteriority is sometimes too difficult not to be taken into consideration as it is a reminder of the politics around borders. As she admits:

Look, borders can be fluid but, unfortunately, I can’t always define them because some borders are defined by objective circumstances. They are defined top-
down, let’s say, so I have to handle them accordingly. The Green Line is this kind of border. It’s a divisive line drawn by others for specific reasons and I have to live along and fight against this border. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Here Eleni underlines, as Özge does, the politics around the Line. The Line is a human-made border and result of a specific history between the two communities. This history led to territorial boundaries secluding the two communities, as local scholars write (Demetriou 2007; Papadakis 2005; Peristianis & Mavris 2011). Again the Line operates as a mechanism of territoriality, security and social control. More than that, the physical existence of and the politics around the Line give birth to something new: Eleni learns how to live along and fight against the Line. She believes that the physical existence of the Line shaped her own political consciousness. Activists, like Eleni and Özge, relate their political beliefs and actions against the border to its physical existence, and this makes sense to the extent that the Line and its politics are visible to people (checkpoints, the UN, police, sandbags). As such, the formation and identification of the self as a political being, who is able to understand and criticize the politics around the border, interplay with the external characteristics of that very border. This is evident in the literature of the field as border scholars, like Wilson and Donnan (2012), write extensively on how physical borders interrelate with understandings of identity, territory, and the state but also with personal or group identifications.

All in all, the politics around the border was the most prominent topic when talking with my informants, in general terms, about the Green Line as a physical barrier. What initiated a long discussion though was the theme of the internalization of the physical border, which resulted in mental demarcation lines. This issue will be briefly discussed below.

The mental border: A subjectivation process

As mentioned in the literature review, border theory follows a specific pattern when conceptualizing borders, borderlands, and their affects. The geophysical existence of borders is in a causative relationship with mentally internalized boundaries. This conceptual distinction that ultimately leaves the body untold and unwritten permeates
the narrative of some of my informants. According to Özge, there is no significance in
the physical borders, since the mental borders that people build are far more
dangerous than the physical ones. Similarly, Maria, a 58-year-old Greek Cypriot
office manager born and raised in South Africa and an equal rights activist during the
so-called Soweto Uprising in 1976, distinguishes between physical borders that create
real limitations like the telephone, since “if you wish to call someone in Kyrenia, you
have to get a Turkish SIM card or if you travel to Istanbul, you cannot make a call to
the south part of the island”, and mental borders which include fears and ideas, since
“your perception of things stops you from doing things”. As Maria puts it:

I think this unnatural border that’s being created has created a mental border as
well and will take a while to fade because it is more powerful than the physical
border. Because thoughts include fears, and even if the barbed wires are taken
down who is to say that there isn’t a Turk there, I am giving you a crazy
example, or who can reassure me that he will not attack me. It will take time for
this memory to vanish, to diminish, and to become distant. I believe that my
generation will never live without fear. (Maria, 58 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Both Özge and Maria are feeling that the mental borders are the effect of the physical
divisive line adopting thus a causal link of explaining what is a border and what does
the Line bring about. The fear, agony, and angst they both feel are attributed to the
mental facet of the border, although this feeling is being stimulated by the existence
of the physical border. It is also interesting that Maria’s narrative implicitly affirms
that the symbolic boundaries (fears), which are also spatially expressed (the Green
Line that separates the two ethnic communities) create divisive lines between
“insiders” and “outsiders”. The Turk in Maria’s quote is presented as the “other” who
is threatening “me”/“us”, namely, that safe space people call home, which has
multiple expressions; it is homeland, ethnic origin, gender, religion, language.

The fear that Maria and Özge have somehow comes to justify the existent causative
relationship between physical and mental borders, which is commonplace in border
theory. As such, the territorial regimes close to border regions create and extenuate
internal borders that divide the two communities into “us” and “them”; into “ours”
and “yours”. Many local scholars who write about the Line discuss the demonization
of the “other” as a consequence of the internalization of the divisive Line (Peristianis 2000; Şahin 2011) which results in the discursive construction of the self and the other; of who “we” are and who the “others” are (Hadjipavlou 2003; Spyrou 2006).

On a similar note, Katerina, a 45-year-old Greek-Cypriot activist fighting for the demilitarization of the island and married to a Turkish-Cypriot activist, believes that mental borders, as effects of physical borders, are far more important. As she puts it:

Physical borders might be taken down but if we don’t work on borders we have inside us and in our minds, we did nothing, because those are the ones which must be taken down. In my opinion, mental borders are the most important (although this doesn’t mean that you minimize or exclude physical borders) because if you delete them from your mind, you can work harder to take down the physical borders (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Katerina experiences the border and its effects on a daily basis due to her marriage to a Turkish-Cypriot man and as a result, she needs to cross the Line on a daily basis and face the difficulties that come with this, such as people’s or the police’s hostility. As such, she feels that the symbolic boundaries or “the non-definite borders” the Green Line has generated, such as the ethnic or religious borders, are far more “intense rather than a divisive line”. For her, those mental boundaries are more important than the physical one because if people manage to delete them from their heads then the Line as a physical barrier can easily be taken down.

Accordingly, Selin, a 31-year-old, Turkish-Cypriot activist, and independent researcher conceptualizes mental borders as politically more important than physical borders. As she puts it:

For me the border is symbolic, it’s more mental than physical. As I have already said, I personally live my life as it doesn’t exist. Of course, I show my ID [when she wants to cross] but I don’t make a thing out of it because I don’t want to be affected because that would create the actual border. So borders are mostly in people’s minds for me. (Selin, 31 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)
Selin chooses a life where the physical border does not exist indicating that only by accepting the existence of the physical border the actual border can be created. For Selin, an activist who is constantly trying to build bridges between the grassroots of both communities, the mental borders are the only real barrier between the two communities and one way of bringing down those mental borders is to neglect their physicality through the act of crossing.

It seems that mental borders are also perceived as more important for both Selin and Katerina because, as in the case of Maria and Özge, the boundaries in people’s minds – effects of the physical existence of the Line – are much more difficult to be left behind. These mental borders are a significant part of a subjectivation process, that is, a process of the construction of the self as a (national/political) subject. The mental borders and their consequences shape to some extent my informants’ subjectivity as they grew up in a divided society where the sense of belonging goes hand in hand with centralized definitions of the self and the other (Christou and Spyrou 2012, 2014). As political activists, my informants have negotiated those impermeable definitions and reconstructed their subjectivity by highlighting the importance of the elimination of mental borders. That elimination works here as the cause that could effectuate the elimination of physical borders.

Living in the borderlands then is a constituent part of the subjectivation process. Niki, a 47-year-old political activist and schoolteacher expresses the difficulties she faced while growing up in a place defined by the existence of the Line. As she notes:

While growing up, you felt like constantly being in a grey zone, which you could neither name nor situate yourself in nor define yourself, nor speak about the “Other” […] this [the physical existence of the border] contributed to intensifying a sense of bewilderment, which basically was a bewilderment based on a lack of self-determination. This lack of self-determination had multiple expressions. It was a lack of self-determination as a woman; a lack of self-determination as a family and an individual, for I had an apolitical family while I wanted to be more political. We lost the place from where we came from, so I couldn’t return back there, you know … erm … I had a family which was rarely and nostalgically talking about a thing I couldn’t … [silence] So, different layers
of bewilderment and weakness prevent me from saying ok, I will stay here, I will
find my place either politically or personally. (Niki, 47 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Niki perceives this constant state of confrontation as something chaotic that piles
layers of perplexity and inability to situating oneself. This is related somehow to the
third space that is part of the theorizing of border feminism in general and the Chicana
feminism in particular. This third space that is created between cultures and social
systems, as Cantú and Hurtado argue, denotes a space of indecision, collective
memory, and multiple identities (2012:6-7). But, the immanent hybridity of that space
that is never safe is quite difficult to be negotiated, especially when people like Niki,
who is in the middle of and scarred by an unresolved political situation, wish for some
clear-cut understandings of subject positions. Eleni also tries to understand the
perplexity created in Cyprus borderlands in order to explain the importance of mental
borders in the becoming of a Cypriot subject. As she says:

[the Line] brought along many more divisions in our minds; it has set many
boundaries; it has created many demarcations on many levels […] growing up in
this society which was defined by this dominant border, we learned to divide our
life into many more levels. We got used to the notion of division lines. Divisive
lines are really familiar in our heads such that we easily accept the existence of
boundaries. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Eleni argues that the physical existence of the Line has created multiple boundaries in
our minds because it has dominated Cypriot society and people’s lives for so many
years so that people have become familiar with setting boundaries between
themselves and the others. That binary thinking is part of the ways we understand our
own subjectivity, as Eleni says. It seems then that Gloria Anzaldúa’s new mestiza
consciousness (2012[1987]:99-113), namely, a consciousness of the borderlands that
breaks dual thinking down and enables the crossing into a space of endless
possibilities, is not always part of the way people understand, negotiate, and articulate
border life as Niki and Eleni indicate.

To summarize, mental borders are considered much more important and dangerous
than physical borders because of the anxiety they create to people living in the
borderlands. That anxiety overwhelms my informants as they try to understand and reconstruct their subjectivity by surpassing the effects of mental borders.

In this first analytical cluster, my informants following the dominant way of reading the Green Line, have a perspective that echoes a humanist understanding of either/or that is applied mostly in linear conditions of causality between cause and effect. On the one hand, they only stay on the political power that saturates the Line when discussing its physical existence. On the other hand, they see mental borders as being the consequence of the physical border, whose importance is considered less than the importance of mental borders. I am not trying here to cancel or criticize my informants’ initial readings of the Line as they make sense to the extent that political actions and discourses about the border were constantly stressing these issues. However, when they articulate their thoughts on the matter, the body again is absent. It is like their bodies did not participate in all the processes that defined who they are as (political) subjects of Cyprus’s history. This first reading of the Line then misses out the role the body could play as an equal actor, or rather, as a merger of action within political encounters. For this reason, the rest of my analysis will focus on the reactions of my informants when they were asked to think through their bodies and explain what happens when their bodies entangle with the Line.

**The bodily affects of the Green Line: When matter matters**

It is not an easy task to undermine or subvert dominant narratives regarding borders. Discourses of the sort (even in their postmodern reading that engages with the fluidity of borders and the hybridity of identities) fail to acknowledge the complex mattering processes that affect our bodies and our subjectivities alike. My informants partake in this relational materialization process that could overturn prior classifications of what the Green Line actually is or how it can be conceptualized but is not always a joyful experience. For example, Ayşe, a 40-year-old Turkish-Cypriot actress and drama teacher reacted to my insistence on the bodily affects of the Line:

> I don’t allow myself to be physically challenged by the physical [existence] of the border dealing thus mostly with the people than the brick, the wire, and the sandbags, and whatever, but of course … you’re gonna make me now start
feeling the border that I’ve tried to leave behind … [silence] (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Ayşe was quite upset when I started asking about her bodily reactions to the Line. She left behind everything that could bodily unsettle her when getting close to the border. For this reason, she chose to deal mostly with people, rather than the Line or better with all the elements that constitute the Line. Her silence at the end shows that having to come to terms with the ways your body reacts to all that the Line signifies is not an easy task whatsoever. Ayşe’s reaction makes sense as long as bodies and their reactions to the border are to be found nowhere in discourses regarding the Line. For this reason, bodies are elemental part of my research aim, and Ayşe’s initial uneasiness shows that a discussion about bodily affects is necessary because, while we are at ease when we talk about identities, subjectivities, emotions, mental boundaries, and so on, we tend to dodge when the body enters the scene.

This part mostly deals with the ways bodies react to and are affected by the Green Line. I will first examine how bodies – my informants’ bodies – are getting entangled with their bodily memories. I will then talk about the Line as an affective space towards which bodies orient themselves. Lastly, I will briefly exemplify the relational capacities of bodies highlighting at the same time some intra-active moments between bodies and borders.

Memories matter: The embodied remembering

After finishing the first part of the interviews that mostly dealt with the different ways my informants perceived the Line, I decided to start asking openly about their bodies and their bodies’ reactions to every single thing that was occurring near the border. My insistence was not always met with success. I still remember the reaction of Özge, my first informant, when I pointed out my intention to continue to the second part of the interview by asking about the entanglements of (her) body and the Line. “I don’t understand; what do you mean?” she said. That very moment I questioned my own project; I felt disoriented, shocked. Honestly, what the hell do I mean? It took me a moment or two to recollect my thoughts. It was when I started asking about her/their memories; her/their embodied remembrance.
As you, the reader, may already suspect, the answers I got back were lengthy, scattered, disunited, fragmented, but, above all, truthfully personalized and enfleshed. This makes sense though. The affects of the Line are not simply parts of the present. The Line extends over a specific location, which in turn inhabits space and time and as such it inhabits history and memory as well. What I found really inspiring was a sentence I read by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands; in this sentence, Mortimer-Sandilands mentions that memories are never simply residents of our minds, but rather memories reside “in the complex interrelations among bodies, minds, and landscapes” (2008:279). The borders that divide the island of Cyprus in two make an intriguing landscape called the dead zone which is nothing but dead as bodies, which carry fathomless memories and stories cross every day. The memories of my informants are echoing the (past, present, even future) realities of their bodies; bodies which are, as Braidotti writes, “living recording device[s]” with their very own memory-system (2006:97).

Niki was four years old when the Turkish army invaded Cyprus. While she is trying to explain the different feelings the Line gives her, a memory from her childhood pops up:

[I felt] Defeated, defeated because, at a very basic level, I had lost every single chance of living. We had a home in Kyrenia, the sea was all over. Kyrenia was the place I was going to when I was young and I was doing whatever I wanted. Ok? And with that situation [the war], everybody came here [to the southern part of Cyprus]; my whole family came here and they were all trying to find their feet. So in a way when they say, as part of a different narrative though, that we lost a paradise, I had lost this paradise myself as well. We came here and everything was very difficult; we didn’t have food; we didn’t have this and that; there was the rationing of food, but we were good compared to others. So, this was an apparent defeat, real … (Niki, 46 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Niki has experienced firsthand the hardships of the war. Her first memories are anything but joyful or carefree. The situation she describes above brings to mind
tears, agony, and fear. Similar is the way Katerina recalls and describes her childhood memories, although she simply talks about a single day in her life:

I was born in ’71 … in fact my first memories, very vague because I was 3 years old, but that feeling of memory, were memories of the tanks on Makarios Avenue because my godmother’s house was on the first side street of Makarios Avenue, so when they were passing, I remember the view from the windows, and the sound, probably it is because [silence] when you hear the narrative of the family so many times and the experience, you wonder if it is your memory or if it is your experience or if it is because of the memory which is described by others. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Both memories are deeply enfleshed as they entail motion, sounds, and emotions. Niki cannot forget the forced displacement she and her family experienced, the food scarcity at the refugee camp she was living, the anger for the paradise she lost. Katerina cannot forget the image and sound of the tanks that were passing by in front of her. These moments were intense for me as well. I had to stay calm while watching Niki being really upset. I had to stay quiet when Katerina’s silence was clamoring. Both memories carry a heavy load, a burden that is actualized due to the existence of the border. In this case, the Line – a 180 kilometers long buffer zone – constitutes a location where affectivity and memory play a crucial role as it is a reminder of the past, which continues to affect the present but also triggers future events. A Deleuzian reading of location is realized by Rosi Braidotti (2002, 2006), in which she points out that a location “is an embedded and embodied memory” (2006:29). This kind of location entails both spatial and temporal sites, as mentioned above, which have the capacity to co-produce the subjects. In the light of this, the Green Line is not merely a divisive line or inanimate matter. On the contrary, it interrelates with the bodies that share a memory with it. I would say it is a non-breathing body, which interconnects with other living memories.

One would argue that the embodied memories of Katerina and Niki being full of pain and agony are nothing but traumatic. They are traumatic, indeed. But what I found really interesting when I was reading, again and again, their interviews is the fact that there was no resentment. On the contrary, Niki and Katerina’s interconnectedness
with the Line modified their initial bitterness. Katerina’s personal history narrated through extensive flashbacks clarifies my argument:

We left, I took them [her parents] home and then I said to myself, fuck it, enough is enough, enough of looking at Pentadaktylos as a screensaver on the computer, being two-dimensional, let’s make it three-dimensional, I remember making this thought and I went alone. I crossed, I went and found the building, I took photos and from then on, I went regularly, alone too. I wanted to go on my own, and although the next day we went with friends, for me the first crossing was very determinative. […] After this transition and my involvement in various bi-communal events, we met with Suleyman in 2004 […] OK, we had a lot of reaction from the family from both sides, but it was the persistence and the normalisation of human behaviour and the relationships and communication […] which helped not only us and our parents but the outer circle which was a lot more negative. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Katerina was able to overcome her very first traumatic memories about “the other side” by daring to challenge both the official master narratives and her own biases towards the “others”. Katerina’s decision to cross the border and get involved with actions against the partition led to her meeting her future husband, a person who belongs to the “other” community; a Turkish-Cypriot political activist. This somehow brings to mind the concept of accountability. Braidotti wrote in *Metamorphoses* that memory and narratives are linked to the practice of accountability \(^{13}\) (2002:24). I would argue here that being accountable for your very own embodied and embedded location means dealing with your very own (traumatic or not) memories and narratives. Accountability means that you are willing to create relations with things that hurt you the most; then, as Katerina did, one can work “against the grain of the dominant representations of subjectivity” (Braidotti, 2006:29). As such, Katerina was able to overcome the hegemonic narratives and the demonization of “others” due to her interrelation with the Line actualized in her decision to say “*fuck it, I will cross*”.

Embodied remembering, or remembering through the body, is elemental for a new conceptualization of the borders in general and the Green Line in particular because

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\(^{13}\) Although the concept of accountability has earlier been used by Dona Haraway to highlighting its relation to situated knowledges (1991), here I follow Braidotti’s insight as she clearly relates the practice of being accountable to the paths of memory.
this kind of memory exemplifies bodies’ capacities to affect and be affected, as Braidotti would argue. The relations bodies create with their surroundings are mediated by their enfleshed memories, and this suggests that these very bodies, amalgams of bits and pieces, flesh and narratives, matter and history, are living moving memories able to change due to the encounter with other bodies and forces (Braidotti, 2002:111). Affectivity and interconnectedness are deeply embodied. This kind of embodied memory is related to the Deleuzian subject, as Braidotti writes (2002:75, 2006:151). Memory, in that sense, brings to the surface a subject’s resources; her affects, her cognitions, her relations. These resources constitute the subject as an entity that lasts because the subject can sustain changes and transformations.

Maria grew up in South Africa. Her memories are again blending: her childhood memories are blending with the narratives of her mother. Pain is subtle this time. Her uncle was a missing person, but she did not experience firsthand the drama of the war. In the quote below, Maria remembers the visit of another uncle, brother of her missing uncle. Maria’s memory exemplifies that change and transformation can be complex, possible, and productive:

Some years ago an uncle who was a missing person was found and his brother goes to the occupied side [katechómena] every now and then. He’s trying to find his brother again … I don’t know [...] I was supposed to go somewhere with X but at the end couldn’t make it and this uncle told me “let’s go together as I have a car”. I was thinking what I shall do because I know him very well and he is a mumbler [a person who speaks softly and indistinctly]. He took me to his home in Gialousa, he showed me the house [where they grew up] which I remember huge, but it’s tiny; the outdoor wood-fired oven in which my aunt was baking was not there anymore. He walked me through my mother’s youth and while I thought that that day would be difficult [because of him], it was a healing day instead. He showed me where they were playing; he told me stories about his missing brother, his grandfather, my mother […] he filled some memory gaps I had because my mother never told me everything or I never thought of asking her when she was still alive. It’s wonderful that I went back in time and the memories are still there; [it’s wonderful] that sense of warmth I felt in me. Borders can’t kill memories, they can physically on occasions stop you but
memories are stronger than borders. And I believe that we all need to start telling more stories because storytelling is healing. You remember the good things, what brought you close to other people, what completes you. (Maria, 58 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Maria’s memories are transformed because of her uncle’s narrative of his own memories. Remembrance can be embodied and has the capacities to heal people. For this reason, enfleshed memories are complex and productive as well because they entangle and interact with and through other entities: be it people or inanimate matter, such as the Line. Memories and storytelling, as Maria argues, are part of the complex interconnectedness bodies have with the Line, and they can transform strong-headed ideas, beliefs, or opinions people had so far. Maria comes to realize that her mumbler uncle is not simply a mumbler because he connects her with her own past. As such, she becomes able to realize that her memories are strong enough to take down the walls of division. It seems that bodies as living memories extend over time and space as well, and they can “inhabit different time-zones simultaneously”, Braidotti writes (2002:33). These different clocks people acquire (Maria’s memories cover a specific spacetime continuum which is enhanced and enlarged due to her uncle’s memories) dissolve boundaries that have been sealed by the western humanist philosophical canon that perceives space and time, and, by extension, the subject as being linear, evolutionary, unified, and self-fulfilled. However, the subject through its diffused embodied memories and the different clocks it acquires throughout its life can break the boundaries of a supposedly singular and stable self. A self that can be deconstructed and reconstructed anew not as a mere logocentric construction, but rather as a living organism that interrelates with various elements around it. For this reason, embodied memories show that the self is not a static or fixed entity, but rather fluid, mobile units always in process – processing the pains, the traumas, the joys.

Coming to terms with your enfleshed memories requires a memory which is not bounded by hate, fear, pain, hurt, and resentment. Özge remembers herself back in 1964, a year after Turkish-Cypriots were forced to live in enclaves, “I was a kid”, she says. “I remember when we were trying to go from Lefkoşa [Nicosia] to Larnaca and we had to stop several times. There were barricades everywhere”. This memory of being forced to stop and controlled leaves painful marks on a person. I could possibly
understand, had Özge left with resentment towards the people who made herself and her family feel humiliated in their own country. However, this is not the case for Özge as her activist past for the island’s reunification shows. Here, she remembers some of those activist moments:

You know, even in the 1990s when we were crossing because we had to go to bi-communal meetings, they [UNFICYP - the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus] were taking us from the borders by bus with the UN escorting us - ok? - for security reasons, because we were Turkish-Cypriots and blah blah blah. I, maybe this is my personality, never gave a credit that UN is escorting us and now we are safe and we are all together; safe of what? Even when we were finishing the meeting, I was not returning back to the safety of going back home escorted by the UN. I was finding friends and going outside the circle that we had to stay in [drawing an imaginary circle on the table]. I was visiting places I knew in my childhood. I was trying to go and find new friends, my old friends, and late in the evening, I was crossing by myself. (Özge, 55 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Özge’s memories are somehow freed from the pain she experienced in the past since she chooses to not let resentment nailed her down. As a child, she experienced the ethnic division deep in her bones as she was living in the enclaves with her family, and their movements were controlled. But as an adult, she chooses to actively engage in bi-communal activist groups and break the imaginary safety zone offered by the UN to the Turkish-Cypriots. By breaking this, she also chooses to come to terms with the traumatic experiences of her past; she wanders on her own trying to reconnect with old friends. This is extremely important to the extent that pain and trauma cannot simply be vanished into thin air, but in some extraordinary moments, as in the case of Özge, they can be transformed into something different. In other words, these moments constitute my informant’s “ethical position of productivity” (Braidotti, 2006:153), that is, the choice of being active (despite past traumas). Anger, fear, hurt are not merely erased from Özge’s memory banks, but rather they are transformed into an ethical attitude towards life, which mandates her being out and about, being engaged in everyday practices which aim to stop the continuation of the island’s partition and being productive as a political activist.
Similarly, Eleni shares a memory from when teachers across the divide had a picnic together on the mountain of Pentadactylos, which is situated in the northern part of Cyprus; a memory which latently exemplifies what I am arguing about:

There is a village there, in which they [the officials] relocated the wives of the people who survived the massacre in the villages of Aloa-Santalari. There is also an enormous cemetery there full of dead people, the murdered people of those villages. You often feel moved; the mood gets heavy […] This place has a history and sometimes it’s not hidden because there are the cemeteries, the flags, the military but most of the time, it [this history] is hidden underneath the ground. For example, you can pick up a rock and find underneath a human bone; at some places, I still feel like this. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

When Eleni remembers the above, her body is slightly shaking, “Look! This story is still giving me goosebumps”, she says. Her body actively entangles with and relates to this memory. The embodied memory here does not stop Eleni from being active, but rather it works as a productive force towards bi-communal claims. Braidotti’s ethical position of productivity is in conversation with the practices of those teachers, who choose not to surrender to the hegemonic, formal educational system on both sides of the island that overemphasizes people’s “Turkish-ness” and “Greek-ness” respectively. On the contrary, they choose to face history and visit those villages, where the smell of dead people is still there. They acquire an ethical stance which motivates future actions against the official status quo by remembering that pain and hurt are still residing in these villages.

This kind of memories, like Özge and Eleni’s, which are embodied, embedded, and enfleshed, counteracts historical master narratives that, in the case of the Republic of Cyprus at least, represent the history they advocate for as the sole truth and measure of objectivity. The motto that is used (in the southern part) since when I remember myself is “I do not forget and I struggle”. This fictitious uninterrupted narrative aims to strengthen collective fantasy against the common enemy, and it supposedly determines fact from fiction and truth from myth (Papadakis 1998). Embodied memories can never be part of the official history; they are too dangerous. Rather, they are part of a minoritarian memory, as Deleuze and Guattari note when arguing
about the process of becoming (2005[1987]). Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between the majoritarian and the minoritarian as the latter entails innumerable potentialities, while the first refers to a homogeneous system that could never transform to a becoming; as they write “there is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian” (p.106). For this reason, embodied memory is a minoritarian memory, because it is autonomous, deterritorializing, and active.

Embodied memory could never coincide with the narrative about a single History, in which the question is to know how “to win or obtain a majority” (p.292). Minoritarian memory is tied to the body and above all is resisting. Resisting to the official memory bank means that one cannot be absolute about the imaginary linearity of master narratives. This results to the deterritorialization of the subject “from a unified and centralized location” (Braidotti, 2006:167) to a location which is messy. Ayşe through one of her memories shows this messiness of the subject position. Here, she strongly remembers the reaction of her brother-in-law when they first crossed the Line and visited the village he was born. His reaction left her open-mouthed in astonishment:

I remember my brother-in-law, he wanted to go to his street and find his house, typical Cypriot, so we walked and I remember this strange feeling when I saw him, like, it’s as if he’s walking in his street the same age that he left. Even when he was remembering, he said something funny and when I rephrase it and said it to him he laughed, he couldn’t believe that he said it like that. He said something “oh, this is the house of the aunty with the cats”. The way he said it was very childish, how he would say it when he was five or six. And I found it very [silence] He was saying, this was here and that was there, the house, the fountain whatever, and I stopped looking at him, said “shit, it’s like he’s six!” That was a very strange moment. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Ayşe’s brother-in-law reconstructs his memories physically, in an embodied way, as he runs like a child around the village square and adopts a child’s language. His reaction leaves Ayşe in awe because she cannot explain this kind of behavior. But that man’s reactions merge together memories of his (possibly lost) childhood as well as bodily fragments, and their entanglements somehow unfold the messiness of a
subject’s position. When pain is too much, it can suppress memories so when someone is trying to recollect those memories things turn both messy and intensive because they are closely related to one’s bodily realities. Ayşe’s brother-in-law challenges the notion of a bounded, singular, stable self through his embodied memories. He also exemplifies that subjecthood is constituted in bits and pieces; it is decentered; it is deeply embodied; it is above all messy because subjecthood has a body that remembers, and jumps around and speaks unrecognized hyphenated languages. Becoming is messiness as minoritarian memory is because it is closely related to traumas.

Ayşe also shares with me a memory from the time she was participating in a theatrical performance. In this play, the actors were supposed to create a language that was neither Turkish nor Greek or English. She describes a scene from this performance; a really intensive scene as she admits:

So as people in the story, at one point, we were leaving our land and we were packing. I remember there was one of the female actresses, erm, Andri. Her character and her family were leaving first and I was a single woman, I was actually the cleaner, a laundry girl of the mahallah [neighborhood]. I didn’t have a family. And I see them packing and walking out of this place which is a beautiful location, it’s in the buffer zone where we performed behind the Greek-Cypriot checkpoint that was created to be like a neighborhood that we were living […] I am packing my things and I suppose to have eye contact before leaving and she waves back. I still get goosebumps and teary because it wasn’t a performance anymore and I remember we cried and cried and cried backstage not in the performance anymore. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Memories then were acted out in this play; they were performed. The trauma, in this case, back down a bit. Being able to remember with your whole body exemplifies all the possible futures out there. Myself being an activist as well, I understand embodied memories as a political project that opens up doors to future unexpected possibilities, creativity, and imagination. Being able to remember and cry for what happened, like Ayşe and her fellow actress did, creates contact moments which create in turn holes on the wall. Remembering then transforms itself to re-membering, that is, remembering with “every sinew and cartilage” of your body as Anzaldúa writes
with every single member of your body. Ayşe here re-members that performance and she still gets goosebumps; she still gets teary. The embodied consciousness of the new mestiza is exemplified here: Ayşe and Andri are those border women who have processed their pains, conflicts, and contradictions which have been engendered by their history and (geopolitical) location as Naples (2008, 2010) and Saldívar-Hull (2000) would argue. The performance inside the buffer zone is not a performance anymore as they continue crying backstage. Rather, through this performance, they reclaim that space as well as their female historical presence not through the structures of language (they speak an unrecognized language), but rather through their bodies: they look at each other, they wave at each other, they embrace each other. The personal histories of these new mestizas are rooted in their very bodies; they re-member through their bodies. This kind of re-membering takes time and effort. Anzaldúa writes that it took her forty years to acknowledge that she has a body, that she is a body (2012[1987]:48). Similarly, Ayşe and Andri (and all of my informants for that matter) are acting through the body and not through the structures of language; they can possibly face their fears and process their painful experiences through their embodied performance. Re-membering then works somehow against the dominant memory system that is legitimized by the official History, which calls for a unified, causative, linear narrative. Rather, re-membering goes hand in hand with what Antonia Castañeda calls historia (2003). Historia in that sense is a multiplicity of stories that are threaded “within, between, underneath, around, inside, and outside” (p.xii) borderlands. This kind of historia does not coincide with the official, historical master narratives which foster a single, linear, and causative story. Rather, historia re-members and re-pieces the physical body, which is gendered, ethnic, classed, sexual, and aged, in order to explain the micro- and macropolitics of the borderlands, the area around the Line in the case of Cyprus.

Hatice, a 26-year-old queer activist and Ph.D. candidate in Gender Studies, understands that her memories are closely related to the borderlands; these memories compose her historia because every single part of her body intertwines with the border; “I have experienced it [the border] physically” she will say “living in the city and being born to a place really close to the border. I remember seeing Turkish soldiers and their guns, but I was like ‘that’s normal’ ‘that’s what happens everywhere’ ‘this is how the life is’”. As she was growing up though, it was revealed
that this is not the case. Historia as a kind of counter-history reveals the complex nature of the borderlands. In the borderlands, the historia of bodies make visible all that official History is trying to obliterate. Hatice starts to feel deeply in her body the politics surrounding the Line:

I don’t know; I still very much feel [stressed] because the bodily desire is kept under surveillance and it’s pretty obvious and then sometimes our movement is stopped there at the border totally randomly […] the police in the south stopped us and one of us didn’t have the Republic of Cyprus ID and they said they have the authority to do this because they think it’s a threat to the national security. She was also the most gender-bending person of the group so that was something that was also bothering […] so it’s like the protesting queer body is the top threat to the national security. (Hatice, 26 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Hatice talks about the power dynamics at the border in a completely different way from my informants’ accounts of the same topic in the first part of this chapter. Here, the affects of power are deeply embodied, contrary to the conceptualization of power as merely symbolical, imaginary that is assigned to the elite. The bodies of Hatice and her friends (and not merely the subjects as if subjects do not have a body) are being monitored by power structures at the border. Desires are being monitored and are perceived as threatening (or not) as Hatice says. Now, trying to understand Hatice’s memory, the concept of historia assists an alternative reading; historia reveals the multiple stories happening at the borderlands and tries to explain what happened and why, as Castañeda argues. The bodies that cross each day are not simply physical entities, but rather they carry multiple identities, for physical bodies are simultaneously historical, social, cultural, and political. This new framework of understanding the stories around the border fosters a perspective from the cracks (Elenes 2011); unlike the distorted lens that officialdom supports, the perspective from the cracks theorizes the borderlands as a location, a geopolitical space, in which silenced stories are made visible and women’s active presence at the border is being reclaimed.

To summarize, embodied memories play a crucial role in understanding deeper the Cyprus’ borderlands because they interrelate with the physical border exemplifying at
the same time the capacities of bodies to affect and be affected. All the constituent elements of memories I have talked about show that when bodies become part and parcel of reading borders, then multiple understandings come to the surface showing their complexity and permeability.

**Orientations matter: The Line as affective space**

In Nicosia, the buffer zone is at the heart of the old city, the most vivid part of the town. Each day thousands of people, locals and tourists alike, cross the checkpoints. One would argue that the characterization of the buffer zone as a no man’s land is at the least ridiculous, for the Line is a constituent element of Nicosia’s vivacity. When I was asking my informants about the ways the border affected their embodied realities, one recurring topic over the whole interview process was the Line as space towards which they found themselves being oriented to. In other words, my informants were tending to orient themselves towards the buffer zone for either meeting with friends and having a coffee or reclaiming their right to a city and a country without borders.

The first thing that pops into Selin’s head, when discussing the Line and her activist past, is the Occupy the Buffer Zone (henceforth, OBZ) movement in 2011\(^{14}\); a movement clearly related to the buffer zone as a physical space which was occupied by protesters in an attempt to reclaim the specific space. As Selin indicates:

> It was the time when the whole Occupy movement was going around the world and it was a call for global occupation in every big city in the world and we said ok; let’s make an event for that. I knew some friends at Kala Kathoumena [a coffee shop located at the heart of the city] – it’s an important space for me in that sense and I made a lot of friends through this space – and we said let’s do

\(^{14}\) OBZ was a local movement which took place when the whole Occupy movement was going around the world. Since October 2011, the OBZ movement had started and the “occupation” of the buffer zone lasted for a couple of months, until April 2012, when the police raided in the buffer zone and violently stopped the “occupation”. As people from OBZ wrote on their web page, “we have occupied the space of the buffer zone to express with our presence our mutual desire for reunification and to stand in solidarity with the wave of unrest which has come as a response to the failings of the global systemic paradigm. We want to promote understanding of the local problem within this global context and in this way show how the Cyprus Problem is but one of the many symptoms of an unhealthy system. In this way, we have reclaimed the space of the buffer zone to create events (screenings, talks etc.) and media of these events, which relate to the system as a whole and its numerous and diverse consequences” (Occupy Buffer Zone 2014).
something, so we met at Eleftheria’s Square on the 15th of October 2011. It wasn’t very crowded, it was fifty people maybe, but we all were sharing a similar passion and it was a great crowd in that sense. So we marched to the buffer zone and decided to have weekly meetings; for three weeks we met every Saturday and after that we said why don’t we stay for a night [laughing] and see what happens; then it kicked off, the occupation started […] We were getting inside the buildings for the first time and discovering little things like a paper from ’74 for instance. Those moments were unbelievable, ecstatic almost, like slaps on my face making me happy on the one side and making me miserable on the other… (Selin, 31 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

For Selin, this experience was a school as she admits because OBZ “was a truly radical way of protesting”. People were “living the solution” as both Selin and Eleni told in their interviews. The collective decision of those activists to “occupy” a space in which they were not allowed to enter exemplified the way they were imagining living the solution. It is really interesting that living the solution by means of reclaiming/occupying the Line was expressed as an orientation of towardness to the Line. This is instructive to the extent that it involves a specific orientation towards an object, the buffer zone, which brings to the surface a multiplicity of affects and emotions. For Selin, for example, being able for the first time to get inside old buildings that are located in the forbidden zone was truly emotional because by discovering things about the past (tokens of the island’s history) somehow the story was falling into place and was becoming whole. However, the Line does not simply cause these emotions. In other words, the causal relationship between the border and people’s feelings fails to acknowledge that emotions are both bodily rooted and attached to space as well.

Sara Ahmed (2004) following a phenomenological line of thought writes about the affective economy of emotions mentioning that “emotions are relational” and “feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation” (p.8). This is elemental for my point, since relationality as a concept which breaks down dichotomies binding together matter and meaning, bodies and emotions, has also spatial connotations. Spaces and the orientations towards or away from spaces intersect with emotional orientations as well, as emotions involve a direction towards spaces/objects to which they are attached.
The OBZ movement with its move towards the buffer zone moved my informants. The repetition of the word “move” is clearly intentional because that which emotionally moves us is also that which “hold us in place, or gives us as dwelling place” (p.11). Also, words do not simply express societal and logocentric structures, but rather are closely tied to bodies; bodies which orient themselves towards objects/spaces generating affects limited to the specific space.

As Hatice also told me, OBZ “was a very high point in the lives of many activists because [...] this time resistance bought our bodies [...] those bodies were claiming rights to space”. Here the resistance Hatice is talking about is neither a typical political manifestation nor a temporary expression of disagreement to the status quo, but rather a radically different experience necessitated by the existence of the Line. In other words, the divisive Line took the activists in a certain direction and that specific direction was able to redefine their subjectivity; this time as a political subjectivity that is embodied. As such, bodies which actively participated in the occupation of the Line produced an embodied political subjectivity. Orientations then are central to the ways we form and frame our subjectivities, as Ahmed argues (2006a) because they signify that our subjectivities are “always worldly, situated, and embodied” (p.544).

The shape the Line takes echoes a non-breathing, inanimate object-body around which bodies are being oriented. Bodies; my informants’ bodies; my own body would not be the same without the Line. Likewise, the Line would not be an affective space without the orientations of human bodies towards it. Objects and bodies co-inhabit space; they could never be the same with and without each other, as the object being touched by the body, and vice versa, leaves its traces on the skin, as Sara Ahmed argues (2006a; 2006b). Eleni also remembers herself being oriented towards the Line when a grassroots political protest against the political situation in the island was taking place a decade ago. As she told me:

I remember the first time we entered the dead zone in Ledras Street; it was after the opening of the checkpoints, but it was the first time we burst into the buffer zone [without following the official procedure, i.e. showing ID or passport] sitting there and dancing. I remember that that moment I felt that we truly won
something as activists; we were able to give a different meaning to our struggles […] we found a place where we could meet at the same time despite the fact that we were coming from two different directions. It didn’t matter from which direction you were coming; we were not either here or there, but we were at that place together, and we can indeed be together. [The bodies of people that day] overthrew the division, because they were together in a common space; they transformed a neutral space to a common space. The buffer zone stopped being dead, neutral, not walked upon, because you and the other could walk upon it and like that the buffer zone can eventually be the single space where you can meet and actually be with others without the need of being either here or there.

(Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Eleni mentions something important for us understanding this repetition of orienting oneself towards the buffer zone. The Line, this liminal/transitional space between the two parts of the island, is not merely a dead space, but rather a space in which people that are active against the status quo can fill-up with meaning. The buffer zone is being subverted as a supposedly empty space, as people from both communities fill this space up in physical terms. The protesting bodies being physically there, in the buffer zone, create a shared space as Eleni says, and this shared, common space breaks down existing dichotomies that only keep people apart, divided. This echoes Anzaldúa’s borderlands in which the new mestiza, the amalgam woman, dwells (2012[1987]). A woman, like Eleni and the other activists who occupied the Line, whose marked corporeality opens the way for a new subjectivity to emerge; a subjectivity that merges together bodies, internal conflicts, and external contradictions.

Now, by co-inhabiting the buffer zone, the protesters – including my own self – engaged in a moment of entanglement and destabilization of the dominant nationalist narratives that were/are arguing against the possibility of co-existence between the two communities. When Ahmed writes about orientations, she clearly mentions that by co-inhabiting space, “the boundary between the co-inhabitants of space does not hold” (2006a:551) as both bodies and objects take a different shape “through being oriented toward each other” (p.552). In other words, the sharing of space alters the dynamics of bodies and objects (the buffer zone in this case as an object-body) alike and creates an open potentiality, as well as different possibilities for alternative
futures, which new orientations bring forth. Let me better explain this by recounting a personal experience concerning the Line. It was Saturday the 4th of February 2017. I was marching with people from both communities protesting against militarism and demanding the demilitarization of the island. As we were directing ourselves in the narrow streets of Nicosia, we suddenly stopped in front of a gated part of the buffer zone, in which no one had a permission to enter as there were no checkpoints there, but solely UN soldiers. I remember myself shouting at the top of my lungs “No armies, no nations, we want reunification!” A moment later, some friends took out from their backpacks large pliers with which they cut the chains of the gate. In the blink of an eye, nearly a hundred bodies stormed towards an open space never seen or sensed before. I cannot find an appropriate word to express that moment. I was overwhelmed; my tears were running on their own; I could not control my running body, my shouts, my tears. Those bodies filled up that space. There was music. People were dancing and hugging each other. The UN soldiers stood poised facing us, but they could do nothing. It was too late, I thought, as the previously empty space was now full not only with physical bodies but with possibilities as well. It took me some time to write this down; to clear my mind as I found myself for once more orienting my body towards the Line, in order to politically manifest something very important. Orientations do not only take up space, but they also take up time. The moment we broke the chain and entered the buffer zone, an alternative future unfolded. Being oriented towards the Line at that specific moment in the present time meant also that we were orienting ourselves towards the future, as we came across a moment of entanglement in which numerous possibilities for the future time were taking shape (Barad in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012; Coole 2010). Ahmed writes that “the hope of changing directions is always that we do not know where some paths may take us” (2006a:554); the moment we entered that gated area we took the risk of changing directions hoping that this change can alter our present. The new orientations could make new futures possible. For this reason, orientations do not concern fixed dividing lines between “present” and “future” or “self” and “other”, but they always involve risks, possibilities, and potentialities that go hand in hand with the affects created at a certain space. These affects are nothing but entanglements, which signify irreducible relations (Barad, 2012:46) and open futures.
Another moment of new orientation (or disorientation) is recounted by Niki. Niki remembers her participation in what is being called “The Women’s Marches”\footnote{The Women’s Marches counts four different marches of mostly Greek-Cypriot women against the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus. The first one took place in 1975, a year after the Turkish invasion, and the UN soldiers stopped the protest. This paved the way for “The Women Return” movement. The next two took place in 1987 when women for the first time crossed the Green Line at a time when there were no checkpoints, and the last one took place in 1989 when women crossed the Line again and some of them were arrested by the Turkish authorities (Demetriou 2012).} in 1987:

Let me take you back in time. To the women’s marches that took place before 2004. I’d participated in two. There you would clearly have an embodied reaction to what was happening there, because it was the first time that people were massively going in the dead zone and we were only women, ok? […] that moment was really strong. In a way, it was really powerful as well. You know, hundreds of women were bursting into the buffer zone overstaying their welcome. It was such a powerful moment. I couldn’t understand it in terms of words, but it was awesome. Also, the feeling of the soldiers was really bodily intense. There were only men around us. The UN soldiers were behind us and the Turkish soldiers were in front of us […] there was an enormous power game symbolically but in physical terms as well, about who is going to take up more space. So we were pushing a bit further and a bit furtherer; we were pushing our butt a bit further and further. (Niki, 47 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Niki raises here lots of issues that need to be discussed, but I will stay focused on the issue of disorientation, the disturbance that that moment created. It was the first time, as Niki says, that Greek-Cypriots were challenging the de facto division of the island by entering a prohibited area – the dead zone, and for Niki, this thing was strong and powerful. The most important for her, and for me as well, was that those Cypriots were not males but women only; women of all ages and of different political affiliations (“there were groups with highly nationalist claims and others not”, Niki says). Those women took the risk and changed their directions – they were not stopped by the boundaries the Line had set, but rather they entered a space which was out of reach, and also highly militarized and male-dominated. That disorientation now exemplifies also a change in the way (Greek-Cypriot) women were represented so far by the official historical narratives and representational politics. For the first time, those women were not simply grieving mothers with natural peace-loving
tendencies\textsuperscript{16}, but rather political beings, whose presence there, inside the buffer zone, subverted the established norm which claims that women have no (political) voices and take up less space. In other words, that occurrence was subversive because the bodies of those women claimed a space, which they were not supposed to inhabit since the buffer zone as space was solely extending the form of some other bodies: the bodies of the Turkish- and UN-soldiers. Ahmed writes on this arguing that “bodies can take up spaces that do not extend their shape” (2006b:61) by reorienting themselves; thus, they acquire new shapes and new orientations. In other words, in Niki’s story just as in mine, the buffer zone is a space that does not withstand protesting bodies or bodies which have no permission to enter. The shape of those bodies cannot fit the UN-controlled measurements of the buffer zone. However, bodies have the exceptional quality of being surprising, and so they can acquire new shapes if they simply change their directions. The new directions create new shapes and new shapes destroy NO-ENTRY signs. For this reason, those women in Niki’s story by reaching what was not expected and by occupying a new space in which they were not allowed to establish their physical presence before, they clearly disturbed the order of things, but they also planted the seeds of hope for something new; for new directions to emerge; for new bodies to fill up spaces that were not intended to inhabit. That is how alternative future works: it takes up time and space; it involves shoves and tears; and it entails “painstaking labor for bodies to inhabit spaces” (2006b:63) that were not supposed to have access to.

All those possibilities – the open future, the new orientations, the circulating affects – and all those entanglements are genuinely transformative. This is a keyword for me and for the way I understand the Line, because that space, the buffer zone, does now follow the Cartesian accounts of matter, which conceptualizes geography merely as a grid, a framework, and network that form a series of straight lines, squares, and rectangles. Rather, the buffer zone is a fluid space full of “curves and labyrinths”, as Diana Coole writes (2010:94) when arguing about the inertia of matter in the Cartesian oeuvre. And as such, it forms a space full of vitality and affects.

\textsuperscript{16} Maria Hadjipavlou (2004b, 2006) writes extensively on the established representations of Cypriot women from both communities indicating that Cypriot women are rarely seen as political beings. They are rather seen as mothers (of the nation) who offered their sons for their country as well as driven by peace-loving tendencies in contradistinction to men’s war-loving tendencies.
Personally, I cannot think of the buffer zone as a no-man’s-land or a dead entity, because it is composed and surrounded by many non-human bodies, such as buildings, flora, and fauna\(^{17}\). Niki was laughing while saying that “the buffer zone is nothing but dead; it is full of natural life. There are species which thrive in there but you cannot find them anywhere else in Cyprus. I find this outstanding. We have been hoodwinked [by the buffer zone], right?” Her laughter was contagious and I thought to myself ‘it has tricked us indeed’. But what astonished me the most was Ayşe’s answer to whether the buffer zone could be conceptualized as something alive. And I say that because, when Ayşe and I first started talking about the entanglements of her body with the Line, she stared at me and after a minute or two said that “I don’t allow myself to be physically challenged by the physical [existence] of the border”. But later in the interview, she somehow found herself in a position to rethink her emotional and corporeal detachment towards the Line. As she put it:

[...] even that entity [the Home for Cooperation\(^{18}\)] within the buffer zone has given a life [...] it’s a body that breathes life to the buffer zone. I can say my perception of the buffer zone has changed drastically. Before it was even kind of spooky to cross with all these abandoned buildings, with the sandbags still on the windows, the holes and I feel very sad about the houses; I know it’s just a space but I feel sad for some of the buildings that lost their life, the heart, the soul of the family that was living before, although I contradict myself with this, because I also have a strong feeling that is just a house [...] before I used to think that it’s very scary even to cross, the quicker you cross the better, like lifeless, even frozen in time, there’s the essence of the war still existing in that space, but it has drastically changed and I feel the Home for Cooperation has a very strong influence in lots of people’s experience of the buffer zone. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

\(^{17}\) Although the examination of the buffer zone as a socio-ecological zone is out of the scope of my research project, I found really interesting the essays of Constantinou and Effychiou (2014), and Grichting (2013) respectively, in which they both argue that the limited human activity in the buffer zone not only allowed the preservation of natural landscapes and biodiversity, but it also functioned as a bridge between the two communities for ecological claims and a common sustainable future.

\(^{18}\) The Home for Cooperation (H4C) is a community center situated in the UN-controlled area of Ledra Palace checkpoint in Nicosia’s buffer zone. It was established in May 2011 after the initiative of an inter-communal Non-Governmental Organization, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR). Having received financial support from the European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants, the AHDR continued the project with the renovation of a deserted building in the heart of Ledra Palace’s buffer zone. Now, the H4C as an inter-communal center provides opportunities to educators, activists, and NGOs alike for implementing different inter-communal projects (Epaminondas, Koumantari, Michail, Pittaou and Urfali 2011).
What Ayşe highlights is the fact that a place (the Home for Cooperation) situated within a different space (the buffer zone) has the capacities to change the way one perceives the Line, even the way she personally perceived the Line. At the beginning, Ayşe was not eager to change the perspective she had regarding the Line. For her, the Line was solely a divisive boundary which was even spooky to cross. However, during the interview, we talked about the entanglements of her body with the Line – the affects that were created the moment she was walking to cross – and that frozen-in-time space was transformed somehow to a different thing. The empty, abandoned spaces were not merely scary, but they were transformed into homes in which families were once living. That shift in the way she understood the Line, was fostered by the existence of a different space that popped into her head: the Home for Cooperation. That space, as she says, has given a life to the zone, the dead zone, because people from different communities could come together at the Home, and attend all of its events.

Maria, another informant, also told me: “I believe that the dead zone is not dead now because what you see around you [we had the interview at the café in the Home for Cooperation] is good for us because it gives us space to unite, stand together for the better”. Both Maria and Ayşe sensed that a change is possible due to the existence of the Home within the buffer zone because it attracted people from both communities – like themselves – whose goal was to minimize the distance, get to know the “other”, and build the basis for a common future.

In this case, the different bodies within the buffer zone – be it the building of the Home for Cooperation or the human lived bodies which cross or meet up at the buffer zone – assist the change of my informants’ understanding of the Line because those bodies by being oriented towards the Line introduce new affects into that space from within it. The change Maria and Ayşe talks about as well as the activists who come together in the Line signify that the buffer zone is not a fully structured, determinable, and calculable space, but rather it is an affective space, in which those bodies I have mentioned above move around and pave the way for new affects to emerge. The Euclidian geometry fails to perfectly measure the Line’s dimensions because, when all those bodies move around in space, they inhabit, as Coole writes, a milieu which is
ambiguous and indeterminate (2010:104). This milieu does not coincide with the Cartesian flat space but rather affects the ways the human bodies come to perceive their relation to the space they (temporarily or not) inhabit. For this reason, the milieu of the buffer zone played a catalytic role to Ayşe’s change of mindset. Orientations then towards affective spaces such as the Line necessitate the existence of bodies (human and non-human alike) which carry a history and a context; they are in a situation and have a location; and they establish a relation to space and objects around them (Grosz 1994:86).

To summarize, orientations towards the Line are very important for a nuanced understanding of the Line as lots of affective moments are created when women orient themselves towards the Line. These affective moments create in turn new possibilities while new directions emerge; new bodies fill up spaces that were not intended to inhabit and transformative entanglements become part of a different understanding of the Line, in which space does not have specific coordinates, but rather acquires strange shapes and undeterminable dimensions.

**Entanglements matter: Relational bodies and intra-active moments**

Although the previous two analytical clusters exemplify in many ways the multiple entanglements between borders and bodies, as well as the relational capacities of bodies, I think it is important to devote a briefer part of my analysis on specific instances articulated by my informants, which highlight the relationality and intra-activity of matter and meaning, of bodies and borders. The act of crossing or coming against a wall mobilizes complex entanglements; multiple discourses interrelate with the materiality of the outside (Braidotti 2006). Both borders and bodies are matter, and as such, they are not mere “individually articulated or static” entities (Barad 2003:821). When the body appeared in the interview process, the bodies of my informants started to react. I have already sketched in my theory chapter what a relational body is and what it can do. But how are these relational bodies articulated by my informants?

When I started asking about how contacts with the Line affected my informants’ bodily materiality in relation to the external stimuli, I received quite interesting
answers concerning the memory of their bodies. For example, when the first checkpoint opened in April 2003, Ayşe intensively remembers her crossing in bodily terms. As she puts it:

When we crossed the first time, [we were] waiting in the checkpoint for one hour, two hours, squashed, sweating. It’s actually this week [when the border first opened], the 23rd of April... (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Regarding the same moment, Katerina has a completely different memory, which is entangled once again with her body. When she was asked how the first time she crossed felt in her body, Katerina noted that:

Walking through Ledra Palace, where there is a bigger space, particularly this time of the year, with the flowers, it reminds me of when they [the borders] first opened, I have that feeling of freedom and many times you will see me walking like this [opens her arms] or perhaps the way that I somatize it, shows that the border must go away and that is why I cross, so that it goes away. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Having to think through her body, Ayşe describes how it felt to be waiting for hours to cross the first time: it was squasy and sweaty. These words carry a completely different meaning as they are deeply embodied. Similarly, Katerina describes her first crossing in an embodied way: she opens her arms to tell me about her excitement and vivid pictures of the surrounding nature suddenly pop into her head; the blossoming flowers are connotatively related to her sense of freedom. Both Ayşe and Katerina exemplify that border crossings create synergies with their bodies, the external elements, and nature. The visual images that Katerina and Ayşe described do not fit into a binary thinking, but rather they exemplify the entanglements between borders and bodies. These visual images bring in mind Haraway’s insights about vision (1991). She claims that vision can be used to eschew binary oppositions and recenter its embodied nature reclaiming thus the sensory system that, as she writes, “has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere” (p.188). As such, the images described by Katerina and Ayşe show that borders and bodies constitute material-semiotic (Haraway 1991:200) and/or material-discursive (Barad 2003:109) nodes, which are always embedded in their milieu; in history, culture, and time. Haraway’s figuration of generative nodes is helpful here
because it suggests that bodies and the limits they have (just like the boundaries borders create) are both material and semiotic, and they produce meanings as well as matter for they cannot be confined into the simplistic explanatory schema of either/or (p.200-201). The moments I am crossing to the other side of the Line or approaching the checkpoints to cross are full of meaning. I open my bag to take my ID out; I greet the police officer; I am monitored; I see the sandbags with the right corner of my eye; I touch weeds and flowers anarchically popping up between walls of barrels. The macro- and micro-politics at the border are never simply discursive constructions (as the initial conceptualizations of my informants suggest) that exercise power over me, but rather, they are deeply embodied and relational as they constitute both ethical and political practices, which cannot be disengaged from the body. Contextualizing my embodied, situated self is part and parcel of producing a corporeal theory of and at the borders.

Having in mind the aforementioned, I understand that bodies deeply affect and are affected by the contacts and entanglements with the Line. Selin similarly tries to describe some of these intra-active moments adopting a political lens. As she says:

[…] it’s a hustle, it’s an extra job to cross for a hundred meters away; for a coffee, you have to be checked, monitored and questioned, and your bag is controlled. It’s a tense situation and I think it reflects on the body as well. I don’t see people smiling on the queue there. I’m really stressed and worried and bothered by it... (Selin, 31 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Selin shares a lot of my thoughts the moment she is about to cross. Every single element composing the buffer zone cannot be separated from the intensities of Selin’s body. She wants to have a coffee to the “other side” but she has to be ready to be checked and controlled and this stresses her body out. For this reason, she sometimes decides not to cross as it is a hustle. This decision though, just as the decision to cross, constitute an absolute political practice which accounts for how her body reacts to the real material consequences and power structures that force her to be in a constant state of readiness; her body always needs to be prepared to cross. In this case, the discursive facets of the border (the procedure that one has to follow; the policing of the checkpoints; the control of one’s movements) and the embodied materiality of both the Line as an object-body and the human bodies that wait in line to cross
interrelate and intra-act. This intra-action between the material and semiotic is indicative for the very constitution of bodies because bodies, or better bodies’ reactions to certain power structures as in the case of Selin, reflect the political stances of those bodies, while at the same time, political decisions can be traced and scripted onto those material bodies (Alaimo and Hekman 2008).

It seems that the Line constitutes a different, diverse body that carries multiple meanings, and it changes shapes or transforms when (women’s) bodies intertwine with it following those bodies’ intensities: it could be hostile, repressive, sedative but liberating and resistant as well. Eleni describes in an enlightening way how this co-shaping between borders and bodies can take place. The first time she, as a teenager, got near the border:

[…] you were feeling that this space was not for you; that you couldn’t belong here obviously because you were a woman and all around you there was army and soldiers. This played a crucial role to how I felt because you were feeling that they [the soldiers] will see and harass you, and all this kind of stuff. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

But years later, when she was by the border, a few months after the first opening, she felt “extremely happy since crossing was a liberating experience”, although, as she says, “each time I pass by military camps my body tenses up because they are huge with enormous flags”. The moment Eleni faces the border synergies and affective beginnings are created. Different times in history, a different morphology of the border – no barrels, or sandbags, or barbed wires blocking her way. Eleni’s body reacts differently and, as Haraway argues, lived bodies “invite a different kind of engagement and intervention” (1992:298) each time they come across the border. Eleni’s encounters with the border create what Haraway, adopting James Clifford’s term, calls contact zones (2008:216-217). Contact zones already entail action as they do not begin creating relations the minute of contact solely, but rather they are already constituted relationally. In the case of Eleni, her bodily reactions to the Line are an amalgam of relations with many elements that compose the border: discourses, bodies, and non-organic matter. Her teenage self does not shape a relation to the border the minute of contact only, but on the contrary, that relation comes of both discourses regarding the “other” and physical reaction to the militarized milieu around
the border. Those “beings-in-encounter” (Haraway 2008:5) co-shape and transform Eleni’s relation to the border in multiple ways as it is obvious by the altered reaction of her adult self. Relationality changes any fixed probabilities, any conceptual schemas.

Contact zones bring to mind Barad’s concept of intra-action, which I will use below. This concept, like contact zones, functions as an explanatory schema to what could possibly happen when people cross a border. Intra-action, like contact zones, works relationally as it suggests that mutual transformations happen to phenomena/entities when clashing against each other, unlike inter-action, which indicates sets of fixed entities unable to be affected by each other (Lykke 2010). When Ayşe describes a moment of a real clash between herself and a police officer at the Ledra Street/Lokmaci checkpoint, it is obvious that intra-active entanglements take place in that specific moment between every single entity composing the picture:

[…] So, I got frustrated and, my bad, I raised my voice saying ‘what’s the problem; why are you creating problems?’ and she said ‘don’t you speak to me like that’. At that point I got very angry, bang on the glass and I said ‘look I’m giving up crossing so give me back my fucking ID’. I shouted and I walked from Ledra Palace to Ledra Street, crossed, did the reading, but then when I tried to cross again I was blacklisted and I couldn’t cross […] I couldn’t cross and I never felt so claustrophobic, so trapped, so angry. That’s when I felt the border, I felt stacked and squashed and that’s when I felt the officials, the power, the authority, the hypocrisy, the anger, rage. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Ayşe got infuriated because all the micro-processes that were happening the moment she tried to cross maximize the affects of power, the affects of the Line. The intra-active entanglements between the police officer, Ayşe, her extended hand that bangs on the checkpoint glass, and the dividing Line constitute a materialization process, as Barad would argue, in which subjects and objects emerge as parts of a process of mattering. Both Ayşe and the Line are not limited or bounded in themselves, but rather they always are in the making, in a relationship of constant becoming. It is evident then that through these iterative intra-actions, the bodies are not either material/natural or discursive/cultural, but rather material-discursive, naturalcultural,
as they do not exist outside of “time, history, or culture.” (Barad 1998:109) but rather, they are deeply affected by their embodied positionality. Ayşe intra-acts with the discourses of and the bodies around the border, for when she bangs the glass, that very moment in time, gets deeply affected by every single element composing the milieu of the Line. That same action; that intra-active moment works equally as a contact zone because new relations are generated which transform the already existing ones, and “change the subject – all the subjects – in surprising ways” (Haraway 2008:219). The intra-activity of mattering is a synergy that links together all seemingly separate bodies: human and non-human; organic and inorganic. As Barad writes, “[m]atter is a dynamic intra-active becoming that never sits still – an ongoing reconfiguring that exceeds any linear conception of dynamics in which effect follows cause end-on-end” (2007:170).

Conceptualizing the bodies that cross the Line as relational negates and reverses the simplistic causal relationship that is attributed to physical and mental borders alike as relational bodies are both transmitters and receivers of every particle that saturates them. Hatice gives a completely different reading of the border, as soon as she starts thinking about how her body is in a constant and co-constitutive relationship with the Green Line. As she argues:

I also find it interesting that I couldn’t move away from the neighborhood where I grew up. I was born by the border and my family moved a bit further away and the place that they moved to felt so unreal. I felt like I need to be around that border […] I mean, it’s definitely confusing, mentally and physically as well, because I remember either walking very slow because of this confusion or walking very fast because I needed to get over it. So, there is no normal pace there I think. (Hatice, 26 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Hatice feels deeply in her body the complexity of living in a place that is simultaneously liminal and open-ended, frozen in time and immeasurably fluid, such that the tempo of her walk changes following the reactions she has vis-à-vis the environment and the narratives surrounding her. Hatice’s walk exemplifies the way bodies are articulated; that is, the way bodies engage with and materialize in their day-to-day experiences all those elements, bits and pieces, which root the subtended by history, space, and time self (Haraway 1992). As in the case of Hatice, her growing
up in the borderlands clarifies that her personal history is rooted in her bodily materiality as Anzaldúa would suggest (2012[1987]). Hatice’s indecision to move away from the borderlands region and her confusing walk when crossing the Line show her deeply embodied subjectivity which is also defined by her location close to the Line in that specific time in history. Hatice’s reaction uncovers the relational quality of the embodied self since her body – all my informants’ bodies for that matter – breaks down the mind/body dichotomy. Her body is not simply an external envelope to an all-knowing, secure interiority, but rather her body participates equally to the discursive elements of the Line: she is reluctant to move away from the confrontational spaces around the Line; she can decide on the speed of her pace. Hatice’s body is “an organ of physical and psychical interchange” as Shildrick writes (2001:171). Everything comes together to affirm her body’s importance in understanding the multiple narratives about borders in general and the Green Line in particular. The complex materiality of the buffer zone intersects with one’s capacity to feel and sense, but this very process is not a mere symptom or effect, as the semiotic, logocentric frame would suggest, but rather this process, this perplexed intersection between the buffer zone and the multiple narratives inhabiting that space entangle themselves with the relational body: that body which, when it reaches a limit, will react somatically, as Braidotti argues (2006:159). You could fall ill, feel anxiety or fear, feel empowered or resistant. Niki says that: “although there is the discourse that whenever you cross, you recreate the border, for my part, crossing the border was and still is an act of resistance”. Niki’s resisting body is not passive, but rather affective. It physically and reflectively intra-acts to the complex narratives about and around the Line.

Niki’s resisting body is related to a greater or lesser extent to her activist self. All my informants for that matter are activists who struggle among other things to shift Cypriot people’s imaginary as to what Cyprus could be without the Line. All of them have participated/participate in inter- and intra-communal activist groups, which undermine the divisive power of the Line. A specific graffiti near a Greek-Cypriot guard house says “Break down the Wall”; indeed, on the agenda of most activist groups is the dismantling of the Green Line. However, when my informants started realizing and actively talking about their bodies as elemental part of conceptualizing
the Line, some of them credited the Line to be the starting point of their activism. As Hatice says:

I think it makes us who we are, it defines us in very unpredictable ways, we all might need psychoanalysis because of this […] I mean, we developed so many sorts of resisting and we won some of them. So, the disappearing [of the Line] is also the disappearance of our acts of resistance. [silence] (Hatice, 26 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Hatice’s silence made me shiver as it was really intense. The moment she admits that her resistance as an activist was shaped around the border is also very important for me as an activist. It seems unimaginable to her being an activist without the border. As she indicates, the Line defines her in many, unpredictable ways, but along her embodied positionality, it also defines the politics around the border. Here, discourses about the Line form Hatice as a subject and vice versa. Similarly, Eleni says that “the demarcation line basically politicized me … it was the reason I became an activist and it was predominant part to my activist actions for a long time”. They both admit that the Line keeps shaping who they are as women activists. This exemplifies what I have mentioned above: these intra-active processes between physical bodies and the Line led to the emersion of subjects and objects. On the one hand, the divisions the Line generated triggered protesting bodies, and on the other hand, these bodies are entangled in mattering processes with that Line they are protesting against. The reconfiguration of matter is of utmost importance, as matter is not a mere end product, but rather “an active factor in further materializations” (Barad 2003:810).

If I were to better understand the entanglements between my own activist body and the Line, I would argue that intra-actions between our bodies and the Line suggest that “materiality is discursive […] just as discursive practices are always already material” (Barad, 2003:822). This is how matter and meaning are mutually articulated producing material phenomena that are always already material-discursive. In other words, my body cannot be seen separately from the border. The moment I cross, my body is also in an intra-active entanglement with the Line. So, the Cartesian juxtaposition between mind and body or, in the case of border studies, the distinction between physical borders and mental borders cannot be maintained, because bodies
already entail fragments, bits and pieces of discursive practices (which produce material phenomena themselves) and matter. Hence, women’s bodies; my informants’ bodies; my body is not “simply situated in, or located in, particular environments. Rather, “environments” and “bodies” are intra-actively co-constituted” (Barad 2007:170).

Reading the Green Line through the lens of intra-activity surely is a difficult thing to grasp, especially in a geopolitical space like Cyprus, where people are really used to think in binaries: us/them; south/north; Greeks/Turks; Orthodox/Muslims; women/men. In other words, people easily affirm the existence of binaries. When Barad notes that “what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:69), she indicates a differentiating ontology, in which differentiation is not a process of Othering, but rather a process (a materialization process), in which connections, entanglements, commitments, and relations are generated. Hence, dividing lines or binary sets can never be fixed or static (Barad 2012:46).

To summarize this part, relationality and intra-activity were the main thematic clusters of my analysis here. Relational and intra-active entanglements are difficult to be grasped, but they suggest a different understanding of our embodied reality; one that is equally affected by materiality and discursivity. This is really important to the extent that prior causative divisions between mental and physical borders can be re-negotiated and thought through a different prism that will include every single element composing the Green Line’s borderlands be it discourses, human bodies, and inanimate matter.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The starting point of this research project was to contextualize the absence of bodies in the literature regarding the Green Line that divides the island of Cyprus in two and to examine the ways bodies are regarded in the conventional literature in the field of border and borderlands studies. Being able to understand this corporeal absence paved
the way for a deeper wish that constituted the overarching aim of my study. In other words, my goal was to suggest a theoretical framework that could include the materiality of bodies when reading borders in general and the Green Line in particular. I tried to do this through an extensive review of the literature and also through eight in-depth interviews that I conducted with four Greek- and four Turkish-Cypriot activist women. This study was a really difficult but extremely interesting journey for me. I admit that I was not always eager to continue with this topic as it was so close to my heart that it sometimes felt burdensome me thinking and writing. I was always questioning my role as a researcher that is so close to the topic because I was afraid that my partial perspective could alter my informants’ interpretations of the topic. I think that this is the reason it took me so long to finalize it. The writing process was majestic but terrifying at the same time. It felt never-ending, ongoing; I was never quite sure where my analysis should stop. Through the narratives of my informants, I was telling a new story; a story that was relatable to me. Here, I will unfold for the last time the thread of this thesis, and pinpoint my main research findings engaging simultaneously in a discussion with my very own limitations.

**Pinpointing and discussing my main research findings**

Based on my pre-understanding regarding the non-inclusion of bodies when local scholars were writing and discussing about the Green Line in Cyprus, I started a journey, during which my point of departure was to examine whether this knowledge gap was common ground in the literature of the field in which the discussion about the Green Line was taking place, that is, the literature of border and borderlands studies. One of my very first research findings was that there was a prominent conceptual distinction between physical/material and mental/cultural borders in the literature of the field, which was basically echoing the humanist causative schema of either/or perpetuating thus a set of binaries. In other words, one was thinking about borders in a binary way, which was distinguishing between physical borders and mental borders; between material borders and symbolic borders; and ultimately between the self and the “other”. For this reason, this literature failed to recognize the crucial role material bodies could play for a deeper understanding of what happens when bodies cross a border; of what happens when bodies meet borders. As a result, this literature failed to conceptualize that space where matter and the materiality of
bodies could be inextricably linked both to the physical existence and discursive constructions of borders. Even when poststructuralist and deconstructionist readings of borders took place suggesting the interplay between physical and cultural borders, which led to understanding borders as processes, verbs, and products of negotiation (Spyrou and Christou 2014; van Houtum 2011), they scarcely gave voice to the bodies in general and women’s bodies in particular that were entangled in all these processes of crossing. Although borders were perceived as non-static and fluid through a postmodernist lens, yet their fluidity was interpreted as a mere cultural construction that could be absolutely explained through the realm of discursivity. The aftermath of the above conceptualization was that (women’s) bodies were nowhere to be found as if their crossings were not embodied, while borders were understood as part of a static and silent nature that was echoing the Cartesian juxtaposition between mind/body and culture/nature. As such, both bodies and nature were perceived to be inert, instrumental; they were to be understood as sheer exteriority as if matter was lacking agency or was remaining unaffected by its surroundings. This constructivist, logocentric understanding of borders was following a causative pattern to explain borders, which was obeying the Cartesian laws of cause and effect without taking into consideration the entanglements between borders and bodies.

Coming to terms with the above silencing of bodily materiality in the field of border and borderlands studies, I emphasized the importance for a new way of theorizing both bodies and borders. For this reason, the overarching goal of my research project was to suggest a new theoretical approach to think about the entanglements between borders and bodies. One important moment of my research was the insights of my informants when they were reminded that they own a body. In other words, when the materiality of bodies entered my interview process, I noticed that the initial perceptions of my informants regarding their relationship to the Green Line and the affects created around it somehow changed. Their initial understandings of the power dynamics that existed around the buffer zone or their initial conceptualization of the Green Line (and the division it created between the two ethnic communities) as the eminent cause, which decisively contributed to forming their subjectivity were entirely detached from their embodied reality. Against this backdrop, their thoughts regarding the above issues were broadly and deeply immaterial. Their participating bodies during the moments they were describing (the opening of the border; their
desire to fight against the border; the divisions the border fostered between “us” and “them”; its greater importance as a mental border that needs to be taken down; their unwillingness to be physically affected by the Line; its contribution to the formation of their identity, their subjecthood) stayed unrecognized. However, when the body entered the scene, my informants started to re-negotiate their initial thoughts. I do not claim that their thoughts were subverted, but rather they were re-negotiated. Insisting on how it felt to their bodies when they entangled with the Line, nuanced memories and stories were popping up. They were reminded that their bodies were composed of flesh, nerves, muscles, and bones (Fausto-Sterling 2000), and as such, they were equally, deeply affected when they came up against a wall, a checkpoint or a police officer.

My informants were deeply engaged in our conversation, while new discussions were sparked, which in turn helped me write the second part of my analysis. A deeply embodied remembering, a new sense of orientation, and the relational capacities of their bodies paved the way for a different account of the entanglements between borders and bodies, in which the materiality of bodies was largely considered. These new facets of understanding the Line are novel in the field of border and borderlands studies, just like my theoretical approach and analytical strategy was. My informants being able to think through their bodies allowed a different kind of relationship with the border to emerge; a relation that was not bounded by the prominent discourse regarding the Line, but rather it was tightly intra-acting with their embodied reality. Their memories and experiences were far more vivid and nuanced because they articulated the place from which they spoke. One of my informants, Eleni, said in an off-the-record discussion that “had you not put me in a position to think about my body’s reactions, I would have never remembered this particular incident”. This new kind of understanding, which was structured around my informants’ participatory, material bodies, summarizes my own contribution to the field, for a new approach and conceptualization of borders took place, which emphasized the important role of corporeal bodies in understanding borders in-depth.

Also, this new understanding led somehow to the crackling of the aforementioned binary/causal thinking that is so widespread in the field of border and borderlands studies. Here, taking as my starting point Karen Barad’s work (2003, 2007), I would
like to briefly discuss how the relational entanglements between borders and bodies can foster a different reading of the humanist understanding of causality that permeates most of the literature concerning borders (and the Green Line in particular). As Karen Barad suggests, intra-active entanglements put forward a new kind of causality. The ontological physical thereness of agential realism subverts the humanist linear pattern in which effect is the end product of cause. Barad writes that “agential realism clarifies the nature of the causal relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena” (2007:34). Causality in the humanist tradition refers to a concrete relation between independent entities, where a determinate cause is followed by a determinate effect with both being the end products of discursive acts. However, causality in Barad’s universe is not inherently determinate, but rather relational and processual as the seemingly separate entities “do not preexist their intra-action” (2007:175). In other words, thinking of the Green Line being in a causal intra-active relationship with bodies, suggests that this emerging relationship is always already entangled; causal intra-actions do not presume the “prior existence of independent entities/relata” (2003:815) as noted, but, on the contrary, they suggest that the phenomena produced do not preexist their relational entanglements (Haraway 2003:6). All the phenomena produced around and because of the Line are not bounded within themselves; the Line’s very existence as a divisive border is not the simplistic effect of the troubles between the two communities; the photographs of grieving mothers near the Ledra Palace checkpoint is not the mere effect of the death of their loved ones caused by the enemy, the Other; the huge signs and flags are not plainly the effect of a creeping nationalism. On the contrary, these causal relationships are part of prior phenomena; they are also part of the produced phenomena; they are always already entangled and relational; they intra-act with time, space, and bodies; they are “forever being reenfolded and reformed” (Barad 2007:177). Reframing causal relationships as intra-active could possibly help to transgress binarisms because they suggest, as noted, that every single element or phenomenon happening around borders does not subsist prior to its relatings. Bodies and borders, crossing bodies and the Line, bodies in pain, huge flags and barricades, turtles that swim to the forbidden zone, or hands secretly spraying the wall constitute this new causal relationality that exemplifies the ongoing relations between every constituent part of and around the border.
The last thing I want to draw the attention to is the fact that this new embodied understanding of the relations between borders and bodies I suggested allows a new kind of subjectivity to unfold. The three main analytical clusters of the second part of my analysis (which take into consideration the materialization processes and the importance of matter when remembering, orienting oneself, and being relationally entangled with every single element around you) somehow unsettle the metaphysics of individualism, according to which subjectivity consists of a singular, coherent inner self, who is “immaterial (disembodied), potentially omniscient, and legitimately omnipotent” (Coole 2010:95). The relational bodies in this thesis encapsulate the vision of a subjectivity that desires interconnections with (animate and inanimate) matters, and also includes “a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together” as Grosz writes (1993: 173). This is opposed to the normative western paradigm that attributes to the subject qualities such as rationality, stability, linearity and renders the mind its pinnacle. The embodied subjectivity I was latently arguing about in the second part of my analysis is a new kind of subjectivity that is not being theorized before in the field of border and borderlands studies. This new subjectivity is always in-process as it yearns for encounters and interrelations, as Braidotti argues (2002:99). As such, the entanglements between bodies and borders bring to the surface much more relational capacities of our subjectivity, which I made visible throughout my analysis: we are who we are because our memories entail sounds, motions, narratives; we are who we are because we abruptly orient ourselves towards places that we were not supposed to inhabit; we are who we are because we can affect and equally be affected – affectivity thus needs to be unfold; affect might not be equal, as Brian Massumi argues (in Deleuze and Guattari 2005[1987]:xvi), but it is mutual. Just like in the case of Cyprus’s Green Line, all entangled bodies (material and immaterial) affect and are affected by each other, although not with the same intensity. Against this backdrop, my new theoretical framework brought to the fore a new embodied subjectivity, which constitutes an always prod-active process, in which bodies (as active and agential objects of knowledge) can generate meaning, for “meaning and matter are irreducibly interwoven” (Coole 2010:101).

Coming to terms with limitations
Every project has its own limitations just like mine does. I can think of many ways, in which things could have been done better, but I wonder if this thought is of any use. From the very beginning, I had to come to terms with my project’s limitations and shortcomings. Things like time restrictions or the way I interviewed my informants or my own perspectives on the matters we were discussing could have been worked in a negative way. However, I quickly realized that there is not a single way (a right way) of doing a research project. All the limitations my project entails are part and parcel of it. While writing this thesis, I learned how to reconcile with the obstacles and shortcomings of my project. I understood that I was not simply sketching my informants’ opinions on a matter I lightly chose, but rather my informants and I co-created a project on a matter that was deeply affecting all of us. Their (and mine) partial perspectives gave voice to a topic that was rarely discussed in the literature. Or simply, it was not discussed under these terms.

I do not intend to argue that this kind of analysis regarding borders (and the Green Line) is more useful or important than the other analyses out there. I only want the present thesis to be perceived as a different story. A story which takes account of the things that could happen when our bodies entangle with borders; a story which talks non-innocently about the affective capacities of supposedly void spaces just like the buffer zone; a story which narrates a story within a story, for it re-members, goes back in spacetime to retrieve details from a rather hurtful past that continues to affect the present and mirrors instances of the future. This is a story which respects women’s bodies and their capacities of being always already situational and contextual. I tend to think in bodily terms as this thesis exemplifies. For this reason, I cannot stop defending a reading of the Line that is genuinely embodied and relational.
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APPENDIX I: Consent form

Dear Informant,

This research that you are willing to take part in is for my Master’s thesis.

Any information and accounts you might offer will be used only for the purposes of the aforementioned purpose.

Your participation to this research is voluntary and you may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used.

In signing this document, you accept that you have been informed and agree with all the above.

Thank you for your participation to this research.

Sincerely,

Theodora Irakleous

Signature

………………………
APPENDIX II: Interview guide

Questions for the semi-structured interviews

The questions will cover two broad themes:

1. Thinking about the Cyprus problem/the border/the Line/the dead zone

What is your name/age/occupation? Where have you been born? Did you/your family relocated after 1974?

Can you tell me how have you experienced the Cyprus history and the ethnic conflicts, especially as a woman?

Have you been active in any bi-communal initiatives and/or activist actions the years following the partition?

Are your life experiences and personal stories being affected/mingled/altered by the physical existence of the border? In what ways?

What kind of memories can you recall regarding the dead zone (history/biographical narratives) both as a woman and an activist? Do you have a specific story you would like to share with me about that?

What kind of feelings does the Line bring about?

2. Bodies & Borders

Can you tell me how it feels in your body when you are getting near the border? Have you ever thought about the entanglements between the buffer zone and your body?

Can you recall any bodily reactions to the borders (police, checkpoints, sandbags, barbed wires, barricades)?

How did your body react to the act of crossing (let’s say in 2003, when the first checkpoint opened with the permission to cross to the “other” side)?

How do you remember each time you have participated in a bi-communal initiative before and after the permission to cross? Do you have a memory of your body’s reaction? Do these memories differ?

In what ways could you imagine an eradication of the border? Is it a mere matter; a physical obstacle; an imposition? Do you think that being physically/materially present there [at the border] as an activist, you have been transformed? If yes, how?
APPENDIX III: Original quotes and English translation (when necessary) in the order they appear in text.

**Quote 1:** I think it [the border] is a political symbol … telling that we [the political elites] have the power and we close people inside. You cannot cross; they cannot cross. So, it was more of a political power game and it continued until 2003 and then partially, I even wrote that in one of my articles, partially they open the kanjeli [barricade] to say ok we are letting you as much as we want to let you cross (Özge, 55 years old, Turkish-Cypriot).

**Quote 2:** Κοίτα, εν ρευστά τα σύνορα αλλά δυστυχώς εν τα ορίζω εγώ πάντα γιατί κάποια ορίζονται που αντικειμενικές συνθήκες. Ας πούμε, ορίζονται που τα πάνω τζαι άρα εγώ πρέπει να τα χειριστώ. Τούτο εν ένα τέθκοιο σύνορο ας πούμε, η γραμμή ήταν ένα σύνορο που ορίστηκε που άλλους για συγκεκριμένους λόγους ήταν εγώ έπρεπε να ζησω με το τζαι μετά να το παλέψω τούτο σύνορο.

Look, borders can be fluid but, unfortunately, I can’t always define them because some borders are defined by objective circumstances. They are defined top-down, let’s say, so I have to handle them accordingly. The Green Line is this kind of border. It’s a divisive line drawn by others for specific reasons and I had to live along and fight against this border. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

**Quote 3:** Νομίζω this unnatural border that’s being created has created a mental border as well και θα πάρει λίγο χρόνο να φύγει αυτό γιατί είναι πιο ισχυρό από το physical. Because thoughts include fears, and even if the barbed wires are taken down who is to say that there isn’t a Turk there, I am giving you a crazy example, or who can reassure
me that he will not attack me. It will take time for this memory to vanish, to diminish, and to become distant. I believe that my generation will never live without fear (Maria, 58 years old, Greek-Cypriot).

**Quote 4:** Ναι μπορεί να φύει το physical border αλλά αν δεν δουλέψουμε εμείς στο πως αντιμετωπίζουμε τα borders μέσα μας τζια μες στο μυαλό μας που εν τζίνα που πρέπει να φύουν, εν εκάμαμεν τίποτε. Κατ’ εμένα το pio σημαντικό εν το mental border διότι εν σημαίνει ότι ελαχιστοποιείς ή αποκλείεις το physical border αλλά μπορείς να δουλέψεις για να φύει το physical border ύμα φύει το mental που το μυαλό σου.

Physical borders might be taken down but if we don’t work on borders we have inside us and in our minds, we did nothing, because those are the ones which must be taken down. In my opinion, mental borders are the most important –although this doesn’t mean that you minimize or exclude physical borders– because if you delete them from your mind, you can work harder to take down the physical borders (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot).

**Quote 5:** For me the border is symbolic, it’s more mental than physical. As I said personally I live my life as it doesn’t exist. Of course I show my ID [when she wants to cross] but I don’t make a thing out of it because I don’t want to be affected because that would create the actual border. So borders are mostly in people’s minds for me (Selin, 31 years old, Turkish-Cypriot).

**Quote 6:** ήσουν σε μια γκρίζα περιοχή συνέχεια που εν ήξερες με πώς να την ονομάσεις, πώς να βάλεις τον εαυτό σου μέσα, με ινταλως να καθοριστείς, με ινταλως να μιλήσεις για τους «άλλους» […] τούτο [the physical existence of the border] εσυνέβαλλε στην αύξηση τούτης απηχανίας που ήταν βασικά μια αμηχανία που την αδυναμία του αυτοκαθορισμού. Τζια τούτη η αδυναμία του αυτοκαθορισμού είστεν διάφορες εκφράσεις: ήταν αδυναμία αυτοκαθορισμού ως γενέκα, αδυναμία αυτοκαθορισμού ως οικογένεια τζια άτομο γιατί είγα μιαν οικογένεια απολιτικ τζώνταν γεγό ήθελα να είμαι πιο πολιτική, είχαμε χάσει το μέρος που τον οποίο ερκόμασταν άρα εν εμπορούσα να επιστρέψω, ξέρεις να αρπαχτώ που τζιαμέ … εεμ … είχα μιαν οικογένεια επίσης η οποία εμίλαν αραία και που με μια νοσταλγία για ένα πράμα το
While growing up, you felt like constantly being in a grey zone, which you could neither name nor situate yourself in nor define yourself, nor speak about the “Other” […] this [the physical existence of the border] contributed to intensifying a sense of bewilderment, which basically was a bewilderment based on a lack of self-determination. This lack of self-determination had multiple expressions. It was a lack of self-determination as a woman; a lack of self-determination as a family and an individual, for I had an apolitical family while I wanted to be more political. We lost the place from where we came from, so I couldn’t return back there, you know … erm … I had a family which was rarely and nostalgically talking about a thing I couldn’t … [silence] So, different layers of bewilderment and weakness prevent me from saying ok, I will stay here, I will find my place either politically or personally (Niki, 47 years old, Greek-Cypriot).

Quote 7: έφερεν μαζί του πολλούς άλλους διαχωρισμούς στο μυαλό μας, έβαλεν πολλά σύνορα, εδημιούργησεν πολλούς διαχωρισμούς σε πολλά επίπεδα […] εμειναμε να διαχωρίζουμε τζαι σε άλλα επίπεδα τη ζωή μας. Εσυνηθήσαμε την έννοια του συνόρου τζαι μες στο μυαλό μας το σύνορο, οπότε πολλά εύκολα δέχουμαι ότι υπάρχουν πολλά σύνορα.

[the Line] brought along many more divisions in our minds; it has set many boundaries; it has created many demarcations on many levels […] growing up in this society which was defined by this dominant border, we learned to divide our life into many more levels. We got used to the notion of division lines. Divisive lines are really familiar in our heads such that we easily accept the existence of boundaries. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Quote 8: I don’t allow myself to be physically challenged by the physical [existence] of the border dealing thus mostly with the people than the brick, the wire, and the sandbags, and whatever, but of course … you’re gonna make me now start feeling the border that I’ve tried to leave behind … [silence] (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)
Quote 9: Ματαίωση, ματαίωση διότι σε ένα πολλά βασικό επίπεδο έχασα ούλλες τις πιθανότητες ζωής. Είχαμε ένα σπίτι στην Κερύνεια, ήταν ούλλο θάλασσες, ήταν ο τόπος που επήλανα τζάι έκαμα ότι έθελα που ήμουν μποια. Νταξει; Τζαι με τζίνο ήταν ούλλοι ποδά, η οικογένεια τζάι ήταν σε μια κατάσταση που επροσπαθούσαν να βρουν τα πόθκια τους. Οπόταν με κάποιο τρόπο τούτο ούλλο που λαλούν, ντάξει μέσα σε ένα άλλο αφήγημα βέβαια, εχάσαμεν έναν παράδεισο, έχασα τον τζάι γω. Ήρταμεν τζάι ήταν ούλλα πάρα πολλά δύσκολα ας πούμε εν είχαμε φαΐ, εν είχαμε τζίνο, εν είχαμε τούτο, ήταν τα συσσίτια, τζάι μεις είμασταν καλά κόμα, ξέρεις, οπότε ήταν μια ματαίωση φανερή, δηλαδή πραγματική, τουτή.

[I felt] Defeated, defeated because, at a very basic level, I had lost every single chance of living. We had a home in Kyrenia, the sea was all over. Kyrenia was the place I was going to and I was doing whatever I wanted, when I was young. Ok? And with that situation [the war], everybody came here [to the southern part of Cyprus]; my whole family came here and they were all trying to find their feet. So in a way when they say, as part of a different narrative though, that we lost a paradise, I had lost this paradise myself as well. We came here and everything was very difficult; we didn’t have food; we didn’t have this and that; there was the rationing of food, but we were good compared to others. So, this was an apparent defeat, real … (Niki, 46 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Quote 10: εγεννήθηκα το '71 ... κατ’ ακρίβεια οι πρώτες μου αναμνήσεις, πολλά vague γιατί ήμουν 3 χρονών, αλλά τζίντο feeling ανάμνησης, ήταν τα τανκς στη Μακαρίου γιατί το σπίτι της νονάς μου ήταν στην πρώτη πάροδο της Μακαρίου, οπόταν που επερνούσαν θυμούμαι τη θέα που τα παράθυρα τζάι, τον ήχο, ισως εν τζάι [silence] άμα ακούσεις το narrative τόσες φορές της οικογένειας τζάι το βίωμα διερωτάσαι αν εν η δική σου ανάμνηση ή αν εν το δικό σου βίωμα ή αν ένει λόγω της ανάμνησης που την περιγραφή των άλλων.

I was born in ’71 … in fact my first memories, very vague because I was 3 years old, but that feeling of memory, were memories of the tanks on Makarios Avenue because my godmother’s house was on the first side street of Makarios Avenue, so when they were passing, I remember the view from the windows, and the sound, probably it is because [silence] when you hear the narrative of the family so many times and the experience, you wonder if it is your memory or if it is your experience or if it is
because of the memory which is described by others. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Quote 11: Εφύαμε, επήρα τους σπίτι τζαι ύστερα λαλώ, γαμώτο, κανει δηλαδή κανεί να θωρώ τζίντον Πενταδάχτυλο σαν screen saver στο computer τζαι να εν τζαι εν τζαι τζαι εν τζαι εν τζαι επή μόνη μου. Επέρασα, επή ήβρα το κτίριο, έφκαλα φωτογραφίες τζαι που τότε επήμανα τακτικά, τζαι μόνη μου. Ήθελά το να πάω μόνη μου παρόλο που την επόμενη μέρα επήμανε με παρέα αλλά ήταν πολλά καθοριστικό για μένα το πρώτο πέρασμα. … Μετά που τούτη τη μετάβαση τζαι την εμπλοκή μου σε διάφορα δικοινοτικά εγγυοποιήκαμε με τον Σουλεημάν το ’04 … Εντάζει, είχαμε αντίδραση πολλή που την οικογένεια τζαι από τις δύο πλευρές αλλά ήταν η επιμονή τζαι το normalization του human behavior τζαι relationships τζαι communication … που εβοήθησε οι μόνο εμός τζαι τους γονιούς μας αλλά τζαι τον πιο έξω κύκλο που ήταν πολλά πιο αρνητικός.

We left, I took them [her parents] home and then I said to myself, fuck it, enough is enough, enough of looking at Pentadaktylos as a screensaver on the computer, being two-dimensional, let’s make it three-dimensional, I remember making this thought and I went alone. I crossed, I went and found the building, I took photos and from then on, I went regularly, alone too. I wanted to go on my own, and although the next day we went with friends, for me the first crossing was very determinative. […] After this transition and my involvement in various bi-communal events, we met with Suleyman in ’04 […] OK, we had a lot of reaction from the family from both sides, but it was the persistence and the normalisation of human behavior and the relationships and communication […] which helped not only us and our parents but the outer circle which was a lot more negative. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Quote 12: Πριν μερικά χρόνια αυτός ο θείος που ήταν αγνοούμενος βρέθηκε και ο αδερφός του κάθε λίγο και λιγάκι πάει στα κατεχόμενα. He’s trying to find his brother again … δεν ξέρω […] ήρθε απ’ την Αγγλία και ήταν να πηγαίναμε κάπου με τη Χ. Στο τέλος δεν επήγαμε και μου λέει ο θείος, αφού έχω αυτοκίνητο έλα να πάμε together. Εγώ έλεγα τώρα τι θα κάνω γιατί τον ξέρω καλά και είναι mumbler. Με πήγε στο σπίτι του στη Γιαλούσα, μου είπε επίσημο ο θείος το σπίτι που εγώ το θυμάμαι τεράστιο
και είναι τοσοδούλι, δεν υπήρχε το φουρνάκι που η θεία μου έψηνε έξω. Με περπάτησε στα νιάτα της μάνας μου και ενώ νόμιζα ότι θα ήταν μια δύσκολη μέρα, it was a healing day instead. Μου έδειξε που παίζανε, μου έδειξε ιστορίες για τον αδελφό του τον αγνοούμενο, για τον παππού τους που τους έδειξε ιστορίες, μου έδειξε τι έκανε με τη μάνα μου […] μου γέμισε ορισμένα κενά απ' τη μαμά μου που δεν μου τα είχε πει όλα, κάποια ούτε καν μου πέρασαν απ' το μυαλό να ρωτήσω όταν ήμουν πιο μικρή και ήταν ζωντανή. Άπε πέρα τόσο όμορφα πράτα μπαίνα πισω και οι μνήμες ακόμα υπάρχουνε, αυτή η ζεστασιά που ένιωθα μέσα μου. Borders can’t kill memories, they can physically on occasions stop you but memories are stronger than borders. Και νομίζω ότι πρέπει όλοι να αρχίσουμε να λέμε πιο πολλές ιστορίες επειδή story-telling is healing, θυμάσαι τα καλά, τι σε φέρανε κοντά, σε ολοκληρώνει.

Some years ago an uncle who was a missing person was found and his brother goes to the occupied side [katechómena] every now and then. He’s trying to find his brother again … I don’t know […] I was supposed to go somewhere with X but at the end couldn’t make it and this uncle told me “let’s go together as I have a car”. I was thinking what I shall do because I know him very well and he is a mumbler. He took me to his home in Gialousa, he showed me the house [where they grew up] which I remember huge, but it’s tiny; the outdoor wood-fired oven in which my aunt was baking was not there anymore. He walked me through my mother’s youth and while I thought that that day would be difficult [because of him], it was a healing day instead. He showed me where they were playing; he told me stories about his missing brother, his grandfather, my mother […] he filled some memory gaps I had because my mother never told me everything or I never thought of asking her when she was still alive. It’s wonderful that I went back in time and the memories are still there; [it’s wonderful] that sense of warmth I felt in me. Borders can’t kill memories, they can physically on occasions stop you but memories are stronger than borders. And I believe that we all need to start telling more stories because story-telling is healing.

You remember the good things, what brought you close to other people, what completes you (Maria, 58 years old, Greek-Cypriot).

**Quote 13:** You know, even in the 1990s when we were crossing because we had to go to bi-communal meetings, they [UNFICYP - the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus] were taking us from the borders by bus with the UN escorting us -ok?- for security reasons, because we were Turkish-Cypriots and blah blah blah. I, maybe this
is my personality, never gave a credit that UN is escorting us and now we are safe and we are all together; safe of what? Even when we were finishing the meeting, I was not returning back to the safety of going back escorted by the UN. I was finding friends and going outside the circle that we had to stay in [drawing an imaginary circle on the table]. I was visiting places I knew in my childhood. I was trying to go and find new friends, my old friends, and late in the evening, I was crossing by myself. (Özge, 55 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

**Quote 14:** Έσιει τζαι ένα χωρκό τζιαμέ που εβάλαν τες γενέτζες που όσους εμείναν που τα χωρκά Αλόα-Σανταλάρη τζαι έσιει τζιαμέ ένα τεράστιο κοιμητήριο με τους νεκρούς, τους δολοφονηθέντες τούντων χωρκών. Νιώθεις συχνά να πιάννεσαι, εν βαρύ το κλίμα [...] Υπάρχει μια ιστορία σε τούντο τόπο τζαι κάποιες φορές εννεν καν χωσμένη γιατί εν τα κοιμητήρια, εν οι σημαίες, εν ο στρατός αλλά πολλές φορές εν τζαι χωσμένη μες στο χώμα. Ας πούμε, μπορείς να σηκώσεις μια πέτρα και να έβρεις κόκκαλο, σε κάποιους τόπους έτσι νιώθω ακόμα.

There is a village there where they [the officials] relocated the wives of the people who survived the massacre in the villages of Aloa-Santalari and there is an enormous cemetery there full of dead people, the murdered people of those villages. You often feel moved; the mood gets heavy [...] This place has a history and sometimes it’s not hidden because there are the cemeteries, the flags, the military, but most of the time, it’s hidden underneath the ground. For example, you can pick up a rock and find underneath a human bone; at some places, I still feel like this. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

**Quote 15:** I remember my brother-in-law, he wanted to go to his street and find his house, typical Cypriot, so we walked and I remember this strange feeling when I saw him, like, it’s as if he’s walking in his street the same age that he left. Even when he was remembering, he said something funny and when I rephrase it and said it to him he laughed, he couldn’t believe that he said it like that. He said something “oh, this is the house of the aunty with the cats”. The way he said it was very childish, how he would say it when he was five or six. And I found it very [silence] He was saying, this was here and that was there, the house, the fountain whatever, and I stopped looking at him, said “shit, it’s like he’s six!” That was a very strange moment. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)
Quote 16: So as people in the story, at one point, we were leaving our land and we were packing. I remember there was one of the female actresses, erm, Andri. Her character and her family were leaving first and I was a single woman, I was actually the cleaner, a laundry girl of the mahallah [neighborhood]. I didn’t have family. And I see them packing and walking out of this place which is a beautiful location, it’s in the buffer zone where we performed behind the Greek-Cypriot checkpoint that was created to be like a neighborhood that we were living […] I am packing my things and I suppose to have eye contact before leaving and she waves back. I still get goosebumps and teary because it wasn’t a performance anymore and I remember we cried and cried and cried backstage not in the performance anymore. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Quote 17: I don’t know; I still very much feel [stressed] because the bodily desire is kept under surveillance and it’s pretty obvious and then sometimes our movement is stopped there at the border totally randomly […] the police in the south stopped us and one of us didn’t have the Republic of Cyprus ID and they said they have the authority to do this because they think it’s a threat to the national security. She was also the most gender bending person of the group so that was something that was also bothering […] so it’s like the protesting queer body is the top threat to the national security. (Hatice, 26 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

Quote 18: It was the time when the whole Occupy movement was going around the world and it was a call for global occupation in every big city in the world and we said ok; let’s make an event for that. I knew some friends at Kala Kathoumena [a coffee shop located at the heart of the city] -it’s an important space for me in that sense and I made a lot of friends through this space- and we said let’s do something, so we met at Eleftheria’s Square on the 15th of October 2011. It wasn’t very crowded, it was 50 people maybe, but we all were sharing a similar passion and it was a great crowd in that sense. So we marched to the buffer zone and decided to have weekly meetings; for three weeks we met every Saturday and after that we said why don’t we stay for a night [laughing] and see what happens; then it kicked off, the occupation started […] We were getting inside the buildings for the first time and discovering little things like a paper from ’74 for instance. Those moments were unbelievable,
ecstatic almost, like slaps on my face making me happy on the one side and making me miserable on the other... (Selin, 31 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

**Quote 19:** Θυμούμαι ας πούμε την πρώτη φορά που εισήχθημε στη νεκρή ζώνη στη Λήδρας, ήταν μετά που ανοίχτηκαν τα οδοφράγματα αλλά ήταν η πρώτη φορά που εισήχθημε μέσα τζαί εκάστασιν τζαί εχόρευκασίν. Θυμούμαι τζιαμέ ότι ένωσα ότι όντως εκερδίσασιν κάτι ως ακτιβιστέσ τζαί ακτιβίστριεσ, ειμπορέσασιν να δώσουμε άλλη διάσταση [...] ήβραμεν ένα χώρο που μπορούμε να τζαί τζαι να ωλε θκυο κατευθύνσεις που ερκούμαστε να βρεθούμαστον τζαί να μεν είμαστε ούτε ποτζί ούτε ποδά, ότι είσασι τζιαμέ τζαί είσαι μαζί τζαί έν είσαι ούτε ποτζί η μιαν ούτε ποτζί η άλλη, μπορείς όντως να είσαι μαζί ας πούμε. Ναι, [τα σώματα] ανατρέψασιν το διαχωρισμό γιατί μπορείς να είσαι σε ένα χώρο κοινό εννοώ κάμμεις τον χώρο που ουδέτερο κοινό, σταματά να ένει η νεκρή ζώνη, η ουδέτερη που εν πατά κανένας, πατάς τζαί σε είσασιν ποτζί η είσασι μαζί με τον άλλο χωρίς να αναγκαστείς να είσαι είτε ποτζί είτε ποτζί.[Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot]

I remember the first time we entered the dead zone in Ledras Street; it was after the opening of the checkpoints, but it was the first time we burst into the buffer zone [without following the official procedure, i.e. showing ID or passport] sitting there and dancing. I remember that that moment I felt that we truly won something as activists; we were able to give a different meaning to our struggles [...] we found a place where we could meet at the same time despite the fact that we were coming from two different directions. It didn’t matter from which direction you were coming; we were not either here or there, but we were at that place together, and we can indeed be together. [The bodies of people that day] overthrew the division, because they were together in a common space; they transformed a neutral space to a common space. The buffer zone stopped being dead, neutral, not walked upon, because you and the other could walk upon it and like that the buffer zone can eventually be the single space where you can meet and actually be with others without the need of being either here or there (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot).

**Quote 20:** Να σε πάρω λίο πιο πίσω. Στις πορείες γυναικών που εγίνασιν πριν το ’04, ήμουν σε δύο που τζίνεσι. Τζιαμέ είσεσι σίουρα τεράστια σωματική αντίδραση σε τούντο πράμα γιατί ήταν η πρώτη φορά που εισήχθημε μαζικά κάποιοι μες στην νεκρή
Ζώνη τζαι είμασταν ούλλοι γενέτζες, εντάξει; [...] Ήταν πολλά δυνατό. Με κάποιο τρόπο τζαι πάρα πολλά powerful. Ξέρεις, εμπουκαρίσκαν εκατοντάδες γενέτζες τζαι επηένναν τζαι εκατσικώνουνταν μες στη νεκρή ζώνη. Ήταν πολλά powerful τούντο πράμα. Εν το εκαταλάβαινα έτσι, με όρους λέξεων αλλά σίουρα ήταν ένα ουάου αίσθημα. Επίσης ήταν πάρα πολλά όνεον σωματικά τζαι τούτη η αίσθηση τον στρατιωτών. Ήταν ούλλοι άντρες γυρώ μας. Που τη μιαν ήταν ΟΗΕδες πίσω μας τζαι μπροστά μας ήταν Τούρτζοι στρατιώτες ήταν ένα πραμα έτσι λιο [...] επαίζετουν ένα τεράστιο power game symbolically αλλά τζαι in physical terms για το ποιος εννα πιάσει παραπάνω τόπο. Τζαι εκουντούσαμε τζαι λίο πάρα τζει, τζαι εκουντιούμαστουν νάκκον πάρα τζει, εταράσσαμεν τον πισινό μας παρατζει λίον, λίον πάρα τζει, ξέρεις επαίζετουν τούντο πράμα συνέχεια, ώσπου κάποια στιγμή να αποχωρίσουμε ας πούμε.

Let me take you back in time. To the women’s marches that took place before 2004. I’d participated in two. There you would clearly have an embodied reaction to what was happening there, because it was the first time that people were massively going in the dead zone and we were only women, ok? [...] that moment was really strong. In a way, it was really powerful as well. You know, hundreds of women were bursting into the buffer zone overstaying their welcome. It was such a powerful moment. I couldn’t understand it in terms of words, but it was awesome. Also, the feeling of the soldiers was really bodily intense. There were only men around us. The UN soldiers were behind us and the Turkish soldiers were in front of us [...] there was an enormous power game symbolically but in physical terms as well, about who is going to take up more space. So we were pushing a bit further and a bit furtherer; we were pushing our butt a bit further and further (Niki, 47 years old, Greek-Cypriot).

Quote 21: [...] even that entity within the buffer zone has given a life [...] it’s a body that breathes life to the buffer zone. I can say my perception of the buffer zone has changed drastically like before it was even kind of spooky to cross with all these abandoned buildings, with the sandbags still on the windows, the holes and I feel very sad about the houses, I know it’s just a space but I feel for some of the buildings that lost their life, the heart, the soul of the family that was living before although I contradict myself with this because I also have a strong feeling that is just a house [...] before I used to think that it’s very scary even to cross, the quicker you cross the better like lifeless even frozen in time there’s the essence of the war still existing in
that space but it has drastically changed and I feel the H4C has a very strong in lots of people’s experience of the buffer zone. (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

**Quote 22:** When we crossed the first time, [we were] waiting in the checkpoint for one hour, two hours, squashed, sweating. It’s actually this week [when the border first opened], the 23rd of April… (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

**Quote 23:** περπατώντας το Λήδρα Πάλας που έχεις πιο μεγάλο space ιδίως έτσι καιρό που εν τζαι τα λουλούδια, θυμίζουν πολλά όπως όταν επροσονοίζαν, έχω τζίντο αίσθημα του freedom τζαι πολλές φορές εννα με δεις να περπατάτε έτσι [ανοίγει τα χέρια της] ή ίσως ο τρόπος που το σωματοποιού δείχνει ότι πρέπει να φύει τούτο τζαι γι ’αυτό πάω για να φύει. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

Walking through Ledra Palace, where there is a bigger space, particularly this time of the year, with the flowers, it reminds me of when they [the borders] first opened, I have that feeling of freedom and many times you will see me walking like this [opens her arms] or perhaps the way that I somatize it, shows that the border must go away and that is why I cross, so that it goes away. (Katerina, 45 years old, Greek-Cypriot)

**Quote 24:** […] it’s a hustle, it’s an extra job to cross for a hundred meters away; for a coffee you have to be checked, monitored and questioned and your bag is controlled. It’s a tense situation and I think it reflects on the body as well. I don’t see people smiling on the queue there. It’s really stressed and worried and bothered by it as well as people as the policemen. (Selin, 31 years old, Turkish-Cypriot)

**Quote 25:** […] ένιωθες ότι εννεν για σένα τούτη η περιοχή ότι εν ανήκεις τζιαμέ, τζαι προφανώς ως γυναίκα γιατί ήταν ο στρατός τζιαμέ, ήταν πάντα οι άντρες στρατιώτες. Έπαιξε τζαι τούτο ότι εννα σε δουν, τζαι εννα σε πειράξουν ήταν τζαι τούντα πράματα. […] you were feeling that this space was not for you; that you couldn’t belong here obviously because you were a woman and all around you there was army and soldiers. This played a crucial role to how I felt because you were feeling that they [the soldiers] will see and harass you, and all this kind of stuff. (Eleni, 35 years old, Greek-Cypriot)
**Quote 26:** […] So, I got frustrated and, my bad, I raised my voice saying ‘what’s the problem; why are you creating problems?’ and she said ‘don’t you speak to me like that’. At that point I got very angry, bang on the glass and I said ‘look I’m giving up crossing so give me back my fucking ID’. I shouted and I walked from Ledra Palace to Ledra Street, crossed, did the reading, but then when I tried to cross again I was blacklisted and I couldn’t cross […] I couldn’t cross and I never felt so claustrophobic, so trapped, so angry. That’s when I felt the border, I felt stacked and squashed and that’s when I felt the officials, the power, the authority, the hypocrisy, the anger, rage (Ayşe, 40 years old, Turkish-Cypriot).

**Quote 27:** I also find it interesting that I couldn’t move away from the neighborhood where I grew up. I was born by the border and my family moved a bit further away and the place that they moved felt so unreal. I felt like I need to be around that border […] I mean, it’s definitely confusing, mentally and physically as well, because I remember either walking very slow because of this confusion or walking very fast because I needed to get over it. So, there is no normal pace there I think (Hatice, 26 years old, Turkish-Cypriot).

**Quote 28:** I think it makes us who we are, it defines us in very unpredictable ways, we all might need psychoanalysis because of this […] I mean, we developed so many sorts of resisting and we won some of them. So, the disappearing [of the Line] is also the disappearance of our acts of resistance. I still don’t know of what we are resisting against but still [silence] (Hatice, 26 years old, Turkish-Cypriot).
Borders retold: The entanglements between women’s bodies and the Cyprus’s Green Line

Theodora Irakleous

Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative research project that takes as its starting point a knowledge gap found in the literature concerning the Green Line of the island of Cyprus. Although the aforementioned literature contextualizes the aftermath of the island’s division, the traumas and consequences of the division, as well as its effects on the construction of national and ethnic identities, it nevertheless leaves the materiality of bodies, which entangle with the Line unexamined. For this reason, the thesis aims to create a new way of thinking the entanglements between borders and bodies by suggesting a new theoretical framework that will take account of bodies when analyzing borders in general and the Green Line in particular. Drawing on theories of border feminism and new feminist materialism or corpomaterialist postconstructionism, I explore the entanglements between borders and bodies through the insights of eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews I conducted during March-April 2016. The thesis is informed by a feminist epistemology, which is deeply embodied and contextual, while it recognizes the partial perspective I, as a researcher, have towards my empirical material. For this reason, the determinative concepts that have assisted the development of this study are the following: accountability, situatedness, and self-reflexivity.

Keywords

Border theory; bodies; bodily materiality; relationality; memory; intra-activity; orientations.