

Olas de Otro Mar: Reenacting, Renarrating and Ruminating Dance in Quito-Ecuador (1997-
2024)

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Abstract

Olas de otro mar investigates embodied memory and transmissions in the field of dance in Quito-Ecuador (1997-2024). Navigating between the fields of performance studies and dance studies, I engage in an in-depth, oral history work with dancers who founded the all-women contemporary dance festival *No mas Luna en el Agua* NMLA in Quito (1997-2011). I intend to map out the processes through which they paved their way as women dance artists within a weightily patriarchal environment. NMLA was created by the female members of Frente de Danza Independiente dance collective, Marcela Correa, Irina Pontón, Carolina Vásconez, Mónica Thiel, Cecilia Andrade, and Josie Cáceres in 1997. The festival allowed the group of women to establish a space of creative solidarity and to blur boundaries between art and life. The project deployed a practice-based methodology for reenacting dance pieces performed at their festival, collectively conceived with a group of the original creators.

Through revisiting their dances together, we deploy a feminist approach of revisioning and re-narrating the works to be able to see them and reassess them from different vantage points. My objective is to examine the influences and contributions of the group, tracing the connections of the works to their broader contexts, institutional, local, and global against the grain of patriarchal and colonial determinations. The dissertation elaborates on the practice-based work, tracing each of the dances' reenactment journey, in conversation with archival materials and interviews on local dance histories and relevant decolonial and feminist concepts and methodologies. The revisited works are *Histeria Blanca* (1999) by Irina Pontón, *La Huesudita* (2001) by Carolina Vásconez, *Más Adentro* (2002) by Marcela Correa, *27 Minutos* (2004) by Josie Cáceres.

The project's focus on embodied modes of memory and oral histories contributes to much needed conversations around memory, visibility and prevalent, often overlapping

dynamics of colonial and patriarchal mandates in the field of dance in Ecuador, from a situated, embodied standpoint. It also generates knowledge around the politics of memory of ‘minor’, often overlooked dance histories and their social contexts.

Dedication

To my parents, Martha and Luis for their loving and never-ending dedication and support.

To my grandmother Celia.

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Chapter One: Introduction

No más Luna en el Agua: Notes on a process of gathering (her)stories

This project investigates embodied transmissions and memory in the field of dance in Quito-Ecuador (1997-2023). Through in-depth work with dancers of the second generation of the dance collective Frente de Danza Independiente FDI, I intend to map out processes through which local concert dance practices have become territorialized along and against dominant, Western-based, concert dance narratives. I look at issues of self-representation and self-narration within the group while also considering the role of peer artists, dance education and dance institutions in the construction of this memory.

Frente de Danza Independiente is a dance collective founded in Quito in 1984 by dancers Wilson Pico, Klever Viera, Susana Reyes, and María Luisa Gonzales, Marcela Correa, Pablo Cornejo, Luana Choez, and others. It was an initiative of Wilson Pico to create a guild of independent dance artists (Salguero, 104) to defend their interests against the grain of government funded Institutions (Compañía Nacional de Danza, and Instituto Nacional de Danza). The constitution of FDI was initially malleable, and it didn't immediately become a set group of people. Even though it became a place of passage for many of these aforementioned artists, soon both Wilson Pico and Klever Viera became its leading figures. The group emerged as a left aligned, independent collective that engaged in experimenting with the dance form away from the state institution's pressures. Later on, a second-generation arises with dancers Terry Araujo, Carolina Vásconez, Mónica Thiel, Irina Ponton, Cecilia Andrade, Marcela Correa and Ernesto Ortiz, initially participating as both students and dancers in the works of Wilson Pico and Klever Viera and progressively starting to create their own works. The six women of this generation (Marcela Correa, Carolina Váscones, Josie Cáceres, Cecilia Andrade, Mónica Thiel, Irina Pontón) created and established the experimental – initially only

female – dance festival *No mas Luna en el Agua* (No More Moon in the Water) (1997-2011). Although the founding generation has been written about by critics and authors such as Natasha Salguero (2007), Susana Mariño and Mayra Aguirre (1993), Fabian Barba (2017), the second generation has been less noticed. There are no public archives around the work of FDI¹. Furthermore, part of the NMLA archive material was lost when the group left the collective. I argue that the contributions of the second generation to dance experimentation and pedagogies constitute a crucial link in order to reflect on the transmissions of dance knowledge from the FDI founders to younger generations of dancers. Within the second generation, I consider the tenacity of the group of women to establish themselves as women artists within a weightily patriarchal environment is worth elaborating on. The group of women felt generally thwarted in their creative impulses, so they need to create a space of their own to make space their choreographic voices. This initial urge to work amongst peers prompted both NMLA and their careers. (Transcripts, April 24th 2019, Donoso). My objective is to examine the influences and contributions of this group of women, tracing the connections of their works to their broader contexts (institutional, local, global).

The aim to situate the reflection around dance practices and memory in the Americas and specifically in Ecuador comes from an effort to challenge Western-based narratives of concert dance as universal categories. These narratives are frequently based on the linearity and progression from ballet to modern to contemporary forms, and the intelligibility of these forms is regularly emblemized through choreographers, critics, works, and practices coming from Europe and the United States. Previous writing and approaches to Ecuadorian dance have

¹ According to current FDI member Terry Araujo, there are stored archival materials of the collective. However, there is not an archive at the moment. (Interview, November 1st 2023).

been fashioned mostly through comparing local practices to globally known dance narratives and figures as though the local history had to be assimilated into the dominating, Western canon. However, there is an inherent tension in comparing these dominant frameworks to local dance phenomena; although they may be readily available and operative, these categories (modern and contemporary) may not be entirely explicative to address the cultural inheritances and contextual forces that have come to inhabit these dancing bodies. Yet the tendency to solely employ the already knowable (Western, modern) dance aesthetics onto any dance phenomenon does operate as a colonial gesture that ends up determining the visibility and circulation of other dance histories at a global scale.

Both as a researcher and as part of the local dance community, I ask: How can we create a framework through which we can look at the collective's history in light of these colonial dynamics? How can we enable ways of making visible these dance practices in their own terms while recognizing the power asymmetries of the different narratives? This project incorporates practice-based methodologies, archival research, and interviews. Throughout the process, I have worked in close collaboration with members of the FDI collective, specifically of the NMLA creators, in order to give form to the research.

By locating the discussion in and from Ecuador, I adhere to a relatively recent Performance Studies development known as the Hemispheric Turn (Diana Taylor (2003), Heather Davis-Fisch (2012), Laura Levin (2017), Marlis Schweizer (2020), Dylan Robinson (2020). This turn acknowledges the shared histories of colonization and violence across the Americas. It also addresses the resulting structural violence implied in utilizing Western categories and methods as the sole means to approach local histories in the Americas.

I engage with decolonial and feminist approaches for revisioning and re-narrating these danced histories, to be able to see them under a different light, or as Xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah)

scholar Dylan Robinson suggests to “listen differently” to those stories, (2020, 37-38). These approaches led us to question linear understandings of time, and to move away from a narrative of “progress”. A narrative of progress tends to create single stories of heroes moving forward in permanent advancement, obviating the conditions and processes which made their achievements possible as well as overlooking the pitfalls they encountered along the way. Linear time also precludes other directions in which our stories may move: backwards, sideways, in spirals, through stillness, constantly restarting, etc. Recognizing multiple stories and different directions in narratives is a crucial aspect of this project, as Walter Mignolo advises, single, unifying narratives tend to become certainties and to obliterate the complex realities we live in: “The power of a single story is that it can make us believe that the world is as the story tells it, without questioning the authors who are constructing the narrative. It is the kind of story that transcends the status of 'fictional narrative' and becomes ontology – or 'reality' in common parlance.” (2013,1).

I am joining decolonial and Feminist theorists (Walter Mignolo, Rita Segato, Lucrecia Masson, Aníbal Quijano) and anticolonial thinking (Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui) both of which endeavor to listen closely local voices in order to counter the erasure of memories and histories that is structural to a global/colonial imagination. Decolonial and anticolonial thinking are both movements conceived in Latin America to account for the prevalence of colonial rhetoric and dynamics in the region. Yet they have divergences in relation to how they have become academicized; decolonial thought is more well known in academic circles while anticolonial thought (mostly represented by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui) emphasizes the connection of her writing to her embeddedness in Aymara indigenous communities.

In my approach to concert dance in Ecuador, I am committed to avoid partaking in the aforementioned logics of violence and erasure of enforcing Western dance canons. I will

primarily focus on the history of the No Mas Luna en el Agua (No More Moon in the Water) contemporary dance festival created by the group of women of the FDI collective in 1997. By looking at the creative practices, influences, contributions, and survival strategies of this group, I intend to trace the inter-subjective and institutional networks that contribute to self-narration and self-representation. I emphasize embodied modalities of memory in order to foreground the lived, shared aspects of a memory still in construction and the connective tissue of this memory gathered by members of the collective themselves.

Since writing about Ecuadorian concert dance history is a developing field, the project's focus on embodied modes of memory and oral histories will contribute to much needed discussions around memory, visibility and prevalent, often overlapping dynamics of colonial and patriarchal mandates in the field of dance in Ecuador, from a situated, embodied standpoint. It generates knowledge around the politics of memory of 'minor', often overlooked dance histories and their social contexts. Last but not least, it aims to generate necessary dialogue between dancers, scholars and cultural institutions in Ecuador and elsewhere.

In this introductory chapter, I offer a description of methodological aspects of the research, some of them co-developed with the members of the collective I worked with. I also guide the reader through important concepts and events that shaped the methodological lens and the research trajectory. From there, I lay out contemporary discussions and ideas that formed our approach to dance reenactments, a central, practice-based methodology developed throughout the project. I conclude with a summary of the remaining chapters in this dissertation, each of which focuses on a specific process of revisiting four dances that are pivotal to the work of these women choreographers and were performed at the NMLA festival: *Histeria Blanca* (1999), *La Huesudita* (2001), *Más Adentro* (2002), *27 Minutos* (2004).

Methodology and Research Trajectory

This study follows a series of recent projects in Latin America that aim to create a democratic, self-assessed cartography of concert dance in the region. This is the case of *El Libro de la Danza Uruguaya*² (The Book of Uruguayan Dance) (2015), *Cartografía Crítica de la Danza Moderna y Contemporánea en el Ecuador* (Critical Cartography of Modern and Contemporary Dance in Ecuador) (2015), *El Libro de la Danza Chilena* (The Book of Chilean Dance) (2018), *Revelando el Movimiento: Historias de Danza Moderna y Contemporánea en el Perú* (Revealing Movement: Histories of Modern and Contemporary Dance in Peru) (2020). All these publications, albeit through different tactics and approaches, express a manifest interest in addressing Latin American dance histories while bringing up issues of situatedness and territory, beyond the need to endorse a preconceived notion of nationhood. Another important aspect of the projects is its emphasis on gathering as many and as diverse voices as possible. Having collaborated in the conception of *Cartografía Crítica...* in Ecuador in 2013-2015, I felt the need to continue the work by taking up a specific case study to further investigating local voices and concerns.

From 1999 to 2003, I was a student of the newly founded FDI school and witnessed first-hand the vitality of the festival. Returning to memories of my initial years in dance at FDI and with the NMLA group also became a way to acknowledge my own dance history, which was inescapably not only my own. After the gradual disbandment of the FDI collective since

² Both *El Libro de la Danza Uruguaya* and *El libro de la Danza Chilena* were inspired by *The Book of Swedish Dance History* (2009), initiated by Swedish choreographer Marten Spamberg. In an effort to be democratic and inclusive, the book included contributions of everyone who was interested, with no assigned author, no editorial team, no publisher, no proofreaders. The Uruguayan and Chilean versions are fertile appropriations of this undertaking.

2004 and the last edition of NMLA in 2011, I dreaded that the memory of the festival and its creators was vanishing, and I wondered about its significance and contributions to the independent dance community in Quito and beyond. The project of reenacting some of its creators' works aimed to engage with the festival's embodied, living history and its reverberations in the present day. Since graduating from FDI in 2003, I had been in close contact with the NMLA founders, and we had been colleagues in several instances, performing, co-organizing, or teaching for one another's projects. Our collegial familiarity seemed like an appropriate ground for establishing a collaborative, practice-based work. However, it would take a few years for me to conceive a project and to develop a lens through which I could approach their work. Creating this lens was a gradual and ongoing process that made me question my own assumptions and unacknowledged preconceptions.

Recalibrating the gaze

In 2010, after finishing my MFA in dance at University of Illinois in the US, I came back to live in Ecuador. I had spent four years in an environment in which dance practices, although encouraging experimentation, were constantly acknowledging and still relating to legacies from previous generations. Many of the teachers I studied with had had training in major modern dance traditions such as those carried forward by Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, Alvin Nikolais as well as in different Afro Caribbean dance techniques. The program did not follow a specific tradition but proposed an array of physical practices that produced an extended conversation with the group of teacher's preferences and fields of expertise. In this environment, a dance culture (US modern and contemporary dance) was constantly being re-narrated and recreated through physical practices, videos, readings and even gossip. Upon my return to Quito and reencountering the local community, I started to wonder what were the terms and the instances in which this dance community could not only be narrated in the third

person but narrate its own dance history which, in contrast to my recent experience in the US, seemed unaccounted for.

In 2013, while working as a collaborator in the project for the book *Critical Cartography of Modern and Contemporary Dance in Ecuador*, subsequently published in 2015. I designed and conducted interviews with dancers and choreographers, interested in how they talked about their own work, and tried to trace the networks to which they were connected. I invited the dancers to talk about their own artistic trajectories, their influences, and the ways in which they would categorize their own work. Since one of the concerns of the project were the categories of modern and contemporary dance and what they meant in the context of Ecuadorian dance, one of the questions specifically asked how they distinguished between modern and contemporary dance.

Interestingly, during many of the interviews, I perceived unexpressed discomfort with this question. When this question came up, many of the interviewees were unsure and doubtful of how to answer, filling the live interviews with gaps and silences. Sometimes their definitions became puzzling, especially when they felt prompted to give definitions of what modern or contemporary meant. However, they kept attempting to account for a distinction between the two. Though initially it seemed to me like there was a difficulty on the side of the interviewees to account for their own practices, I carried a discomfort with me, pondering why the general atmosphere of the interviews had become so rarified.

During my first year in the PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies at York University in Canada in 2018, I decided to re-visit those interviews in order to make sense of what seemed a blurry aspect of that publication process. With time and perspective, I came to realize that the doubtfulness and gaps were symptoms of a struggle of the interviewees at relating with the categories of modern and contemporary dance. Although these two dance categories may seem

commonsensical and are regularly used by dance practitioners in Quito, when it came to relating these terms to their own work, ascribing to them didn't seem so easy, both categories remained, to a great extent, alien and confining. And although there was a genuine willingness from the dancers to work through those concepts, it seemed to me that a few previous explanations had been missing: What did I mean by those categories (modern and contemporary dance)? Did they invoke a time frame, or an aesthetic framework? Was contemporary more highly valued since it seemed newer than modern? Was the interview a sort of quiz about globalized dance history?

Seen from today, the absences in the dancers' narrations during the interviews seem to account for the particular modes in which a Western centered, globally circulating concert dance history meets this local dance history. I realized I was myself enacting an imperative of immediately equating local practices to concepts and categories developed mostly through and in dialogue with European and US dance vocabularies. In other words, I was asking the interviewees to tell their own story through a language created elsewhere, thus, the encounter between the two dance histories seemed highly asymmetrical. As dance scholar Ananya Chatterjea (2020) points out in relation to this power asymmetry, when dance artists from black, brown, or Indigenous communities in the global South and north attempt to locate their line of work within the category of contemporary dance, they are faced with the very complex and unresolved nature of the definition even in dominant geographies where the narrative would appear to be more stable:

Inevitably, their work is gridded with lines of power that must be navigated for the sake of survival, but these contestations, contradictions, unresolved differences seldom get air to breathe out their lives. Very often, the complex dynamics in the global field of Contemporary Dance are all but flattened out in the discourse about it. Moreover,

despite the assertions of many stakeholders in the field about what constitutes contemporaneity in dance, there are many different, sometimes antithetical, ways in which this category is constructed, even across Europe and North America, which comprises the largest, most prestigious and resourced fora as the global stage for contemporary dance. (1)

Perhaps the discomfort I sensed in the interviews I had devised was a sign of the smothering, overpowering presence of these categories and the lack of air they offer especially for non-centered dance histories. As Andre Lepecki explains, the whole of the colonial project of Western modernity can be thought in terms of choreography, a prescriptive imagination that has abstracted its own choreography (its gestures, steps, inflexions, temporalities, etc.) from its grounding, and is always already occupying other geographies and temporalities. The West: “imagines its topography as already abstracted from its grounding on a land previously occupied by other human bodies, other life forms, filled with other dynamics, gestures, steps, and temporalities” (2016, 14-17).

To acknowledge and to counter the unstated structural violence I had deployed in the conception of my interviews, I strived to recalibrate my approach before undertaking a new research project. I wondered about the ecology of dance in Ecuador, and how to start listening to it without the need to immediately enforce an external framework. I digressed from categorizing and started to ask questions about more immediate, closer references by emphasizing the self-narratives of the dancers. By foregrounding a shared history of familiarity with a group I had been a student of and a colleague later, it seemed apt to create a ground from which we could, collectively, perceive and imagine other lineages than prescribed by Western based imaginaries, as well as to start to name our stories differently as a progressive effect of focusing on self-narratives. Following performance theorist Joseph Roach, I considered the

reconstituted NMLA dances to be “mnemonic reserves” (1996, 26). By working through our micro narratives, we became more attuned to the interconnection of the dances to our own lives, the processes of emancipation they have afforded, and the conceivably unacknowledged thought processes that were revealed by looking back at them. The connective tissues that bring together the story of NMLA as a significant memory from my training years and my own artistic and research trajectories created a reflective surface in which we could, as feminist anthropologist Rita Segato proposes, start to “listen to the questions that come to us from the vicinity from where we think” (*Contrapedagogías*, 34). As she elucidates, certain geopolitical spaces – mostly in the global north – tend to be the producers of theoretical categories while other spaces become only consumers of those categories. Western developed dance categories may well be the conquering heroes of dance narratives, yet us – dance makers from the margins – still have other danced stories to gather. Throughout the text, I have intentionally left those categories undefined, to better listen to their usage in the Ecuadorian context. This decision may engender later a more situated and nuanced understanding of the terms we use to define dances. Notwithstanding my interest in devising a situated approach, I also have to acknowledge that my own positionality as a researcher has been shaped by my own trajectories across the U.S. Canada, Belgium and Ecuador.

Movement as positionality

My position as ethnographer is a result of multiple movements across different sets of borders: generational, geographical, aesthetic, disciplinary and linguistic. I am a queer man and a dancer myself; I come from a mestizo family from the city; I lived and trained in Ecuador initially; I studied dance/choreography in the U.S.; developed artistic and artistic research projects in Belgium; and deployed my PhD research in Canada. I trained my thinking-doing in these different countries, different languages, and different technical, theoretical and

methodological frames. While living abroad, I also spent a considerable amount of time working in Ecuador. I maintained working and personal relations with the NMLA group and other dance colleagues and institutions, through teaching assignments, workshops, research projects and friendships.

These manifold comings and goings engendered within me the possibility to see Ecuador from different standpoints – including an insider’s as well as an outsider’s point of view – and a positionality that is both in constant movement and in a constant state of translation. This constant need for translation has been for the most part, an embodied strategy to get by amid my many relocations. My position as insider / outsider in *Olas de otro mar* has forced me look more closely into all the translative work I had come to naturalize. Since the ethnographic approach sprung from my concern with narratives and self-narration, it unfolded by proposing narrative devices to shed light into the stories of the NMLA works, their creators and their lived environments. My intention was to follow the paths of the narrations of the dancers and to develop the theoretical analysis from those narrations and reflections. In the process, I came across the many layers of translation required for those stories to appear within the dissertation: from Spanish to English, from lay language and artistic practice to academic writing, from embodied knowledge to methodological procedures, from constant flux to seemingly fixed arguments. Consequently, I realize there are impending risks in my position. Translating their words implies bringing readers closer to their lived realities, yet it may also entail approximating their words to a comprehensible ‘global’ academic language and thus possibly participating in their misrepresentation, or even replicating colonial gestures. A strategy to lessen these risks was to continually bring the writing back to the group, “tell the story back to them” and listening to the ripples it caused and the conversations – or possible disagreements – it incited. I wanted to make sure the relationship is one of exchange by offering the group other ways of seeing and addressing their own work. I realize it may take time for

this project to become a conversation between its participants, their peers, scholars, institutions and other spheres and geographies. However, I am certain that this is a much-needed attempt to create dialogue and participation between different frameworks, geographies, and historiographies. Another strategy was to think of our conversations as an overarching dramaturgy for the dissertation. The conversations and interviews that appear throughout the text have been edited for clarity and conciseness, yet in general terms, the flow of the argumentation respected the topics, concerns and the reflective looking back our dialogues afforded. On occasions, I have pointed out instances where language differences contributed to better understand the complexities and nuances at work within the discursive fabric we created.

The position of insider / outsider I am describing also moves between artistic practice and theoretical analysis. Chilean artist and scholar María José Contreras describes this position as that of a reflective practitioner: a function that is “capable both of devising performance materialities and offering conceptualizations about them.” (2021, 154). The reflective practitioner can also be seen as a constant translator between different modalities of thought and action. It becomes necessary at this point to further describe my relation to what I have been calling practice-based work, or artistic research.

Artistic Research and Research-Creation

My approach to practice-based work came predominantly from my work as associate researcher at *apass* (Advanced Performance and Scenography Studies) in Brussels in 2020-2021. During this year I developed ethnographic and storytelling approaches by experimenting with film, writing and performance tools. *Apass* is a postgraduate research platform that allows its participants to develop research tools, methodologies, and communicational strategies from each artist’s own practice and in their own terms. While *apass* does not conclusively define

and prescribe what artistic research is and does, the constant unfolding of questions about the practices, their goals and repercussions, and peer and external feedback, end up shaping both the developed tools and the participant's decision-making. Not upholding a stable definition of artistic research keeps the work alive and permanently engaging with that uncertainty. According to *apass'* *raison d'être*, this inclusive approach to research "creates a poli-vocal platform of definitions and is a statement towards a different conception of institutions: away from essentialist claims and towards a more politicised platform of engagement with a certain discipline." (*apass* website). Hence, my goal of deploying an artistic research approach in *Olas de otro mar* was to develop specific tools for and with the project's relational conditions: creating space for voicing, reflecting and revisiting women's stories in dance in Ecuador. The reenactment methodology was established in a processual manner and in dialogue with the group.

My use of the terms practice-based or artistic research accounts for my familiarity with its use in *apass* and in Belgium, though I am aware that in the context of Canada, it is more common to speak of research-creation. This relatively recent approach to research has been elaborated on by authors such as Erin Manning (2016), Natalie Loveless (2020) or Sarah E Truman (2021). I also have to recognize the influence of two significant promoters of research-creation in the region: the Hemispheric Encounters partnership at York University, a network that fosters research-creation projects bringing together the arts, academia and activism across the Americas and for which I work as collaborator, and the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at New York University. These instances were informative for my work given their Hemispheric approach and the wide range of projects they host and nurture, which are always already engaged with issues of decoloniality, feminism, ecology, memory and archives, oralities, and other relevant questions.

Revisiting NMLA

As noted earlier, *Olas de otro mar* proposes collectively revisiting a series of dances that were originally shown in the initially an all-women dance festival No Mas Luna en el Agua (NMLA) in Quito, Ecuador between 1997 and 2011. NMLA was created to showcase the choreographic ventures of the group of women of the collective Frente de Danza Independiente (FDI). The focus of NMLA was to promote creative and pedagogical exchange and experimentation, and to foster connectivity within the local dance community. The table below is a chronology of the research trajectory followed by a detailed description and analysis of the methodological choices.

Table 1: Chronology

Dates	Type of work	Participants
April 24-27 2019	Workshop <i>Dar cuerpo a la memoria, recordar desde los cuerpos</i> (Giving body to memory, remembering through bodies). Universidad San Francisco, Quito.	Researchers / Leaders: Fabian Barba, Bertha Diaz, Esteban Donoso Participants: NMLA founders: Mónica Thiel, Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón, Marcela Correa, Josie Cáceres + a group of local dancers from different generations.
September 2021- June 2022	Documentary Sessions (Bi-weekly, via Zoom, 2 hours each)	Researcher: Esteban Donoso Participants: Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón, Marcela Correa, Josie Cáceres.
August 2022- May 2023	- Establishment of Reenactment Process - Collective Rehearsals - Work-in-Progress Showing at Casa Malayerba.	Researcher: Esteban Donoso Collaborative work with participants: Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón, Marcela Correa, Josie Cáceres.

	- Interviews (1-2 hours)	Interviewees: Ernesto Ortiza, Cecilia Andrade, Paula Retore Genoveva Mora.
May 2023- January 2024	- Interviews (1-2 hours) - Collective and Individual Rehearsals (weekly in-person sessions of 2-3hours) - Performances January 26-28 2024 at Casa Malayerba	Interviewee: Terry Araujo Collaborative work with participants: Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón, Marcela Correa, Josie Cáceres.

Revisiting NMLA started in April 2019 during a three-day workshop called *Dar cuerpo a la memoria, recordar desde los cuerpos* (Giving body to memory, remembering through bodies) co-directed by artists/researchers Fabian Barba, Bertha Díaz and myself at Universidad San Francisco de Quito as part of the event *Jornadas de Pensamiento/Acción* (Thinking/Doing Sessions). It was the first time we gathered most of the group of NMLA creators (Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón, Mónica Thiel, Marcela Correa, Josie Cáceres, Cecilia Andrade was invited but did not express interest in attending) to voice their stories amongst a group of dancers from different generations. During the three days we held conversations about the creation of the festival and engaged in a performative exercise of embodied memory. We focused on the initial moments of creating NMLA in 1997 and worked with a class diary from that time written by Carolina Vásconez. The diary was a valuable document through which we could both reconstruct and reanimate their initial training meetings prior to the creation of the festival. The goal of the workshop was two-fold: firstly, to aim to recreate the context in which the diary appeared via collective narration of the group of NMLA creators, since the diary was truly a “mnemonic reserve” of the moment they started to teach classes to each other; secondly, to reactivate the document in the present by asking each of the participants in the workshop to perform a section of the diary following their own interpretation of the movement directions. A remarkable amount of information emerged about each of our training histories, generational shifts, and similarities and about the paradoxical nature of writing as a way of recording movement.

In September 2021, I picked up the work without Bertha Diaz and Fabian Barba to continue the process of memory-making we had started. I invited the festival founders to work with me as collaborators, to embark on a process of creating a memory of the festival. At this moment, Mónica Thiel declined my invitation since she is no longer working in dance. Cecilia Andrade was not available but agreed to being interviewed. Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón,

Marcela Correa, and Josie Caceres kindly and wholeheartedly accepted. The premise we worked under was creating a memory of their festival and to wonder: What is that memory today? And what are the material supports of this memory? The work we undertook then consisted initially of bi-weekly group Zoom sessions – I was living in Belgium at the time – during nine months, and it aimed to investigate what archives and memory-aids were available from the NMLA history. In order to piece these memories together, I also conducted single interviews with the other festival organizers, Monica Thiel, Cecilia Andrade, and Paula Rettore, other FDI members Ernesto Ortiz and Terry Araujo and dance critic Genoveva Mora and reviewed published interviews with FDI initial directors Klever Viera and Wilson Pico.

During the initial bi-weekly meetings, I proposed for each of us to take turns presenting and going through different objects that held a relation to the festival and/or to the works they had presented there. We used these objects as prompts to ponder on the interconnections between their life and work and my own memory of what I knew of the festival and their work. Each session, each of us presented each of the objects/documents and narrated the stories attached to them. The series of materials – including photographs, pieces of music, costumes, props, pieces of diaries, and oral accounts – started to create a path that directed our attention to individual and collective memory networks. Before engaging in any decisions about what our work would result in, the sessions for presenting materials unraveled an entanglement of creative ideas, affective relations, life circumstances and internal processes, made available by the collection of miscellaneous materials.

Regarding collective memory networks, memory studies scholar Marianne Hirsch proposes the term “post-memory” to refer to the aftereffects of Holocaust survivor memory in the subsequent family generation. She describes the ambivalent function of family photographs in representing at the same time the impossibility to access the previous generation’s traumatic

experiences, and the possibility to create a link to those experiences. The photograph reveals as much as it conceals or falsifies: “it hovers between life and death” (1993, 7). The connective function of the photograph lies on the fact that it is always partial, incomplete in relation to its lived context. Thus, it incites in onlookers a desire to see what is beyond the photograph. To explain this intermediary function, Hirsch brings in Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire*: in-between places of negotiation between lived experience and memory-aid, life, and death, individual and collective, morphing and fixated, and other seemingly opposing terms (8). Similarly, Hirsch positions post-memory as a threshold concept between memory and history, since it extends into both and at the same time it does not aim to go beyond either of them: “Post-memory, in my reading, has certainly not taken us beyond memory, but is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Post-memory should reflect back on memory revealing it as equally constructed, equally mediated by the processes of narration and imagination.” (8).

The objects/documents in our initial procedure became indeed thresholds between memory and history, fashioned and mediated by our narration of them, or the narration of our lives through them, revealing the dance works not as facts, but precisely “constructed and mediated” by our processual narration of the archival materials. I found myself in a position of creating a post-memory, given my personal connection to that memory and my engagement in constructing a narrative about our process together. A story is always susceptible to being retold and thus, morphing into something else. As Miren Llona suggests (2012), memory can only materialize through deploying and versioning narratives and thus can always rematerialize differently within a different set of relations (16-17). It was our particular encounter that generated this version of the narratives we started to deploy, an encounter prompted by my admiration to the connective work these group of women have endeavored to and the depth of their ability to assess their own life and work.

Once we had assembled and generated an enmeshment of different materials, I wondered where to go next. Initially my idea was to use our transcribed conversations as a script for a performance in which we would read and perform ourselves, inspired by Yvonne Rainer's 1972 film *Lives of Performers* in which a group of dancers read a collectively written script narrating a torrid love triangle in combination with archive material from their lives as dancers. The film insightfully explores the cultural determinations of affective relationships and their torments, regularly thought of as solely personal and private. The project of working with our conversation transcripts proved to be impossible when I realized the issues aroused in the conversations were still sensitive not only for the group but for other members of the collective – love affairs within the collective, unresolved quarrels between them, and so forth. I soon realized that undertaking a project of that nature was just not their desire; it seemed foreign and not approachable from their previous experiences as performers. Following our subsequent conversations, I started to grasp that they wanted to be on stage as dancers, spending time with their own dance history. I started to conceive a way to make the dances they performed at NMLA the *lieux de mémoire* through which our interconnections could be both anchored and worked through. This time they expressed unfettered interest in going in that direction. My work then became about devising an approach and a methodology for reenacting the dances.

From August 2022 I was able to join the group in person. We started to meet weekly and to fully engage in the reenactment process, which I describe in detail in the coming section. From here on, the work began to feel more like rehearsals, sharing feedback about each of the approaches, the progress of the works and the choices each of us started to make. Our endeavors started to feel more collaborative and more collectively guided than the previous roundtable, documentary kind of work. At the end of this period of work, we had a work-in-progress showing of the works for friends and colleagues in May 2023 in Casa Malayerba.



Figure 1 Photo from the workshop “Dar cuerpo a la memoria, recordar desde los cuerpos”.

Universidad San Francisco de Quito, April 24th-27th 2019. Participants are in the process of learning a movement sequence from Carolina Vásquez’s class diary from 1997, which they will perform individually later on. From right to left: Marcela Correa, Juan Fernando León, Vanesa Torres, Esteban Donoso, Bertha Díaz, Fabian Barba, Natalia Buñay, Flor Gomez, Paul Rey, Mónica Thiel, Paulina Peñaherrera, Irina Pontón, Viviana Sanchez.



Figure 2 Photo sample. Materials Irina Pontón.

Compiled during our initial working sessions on September 25th 2021 on Zoom, collection of costumes narrating her own dancing history.

To delineate our approach to revisiting the NMLA works, my first consideration was the distinction between reconstruction and reenactment. Although both deal with dance works of the past, Belgian dance theorist Timmy de Laet (2013) asserts, reconstructions aim to create a faithful reproduction of a piece at the time when it was created, whereas reenactments deal with past dance works always with a reflective, critical distance (138). Reconstruction is traditionally concerned with developing tools for bringing a dance back in a complete manner. It focuses largely on dance writing and notation systems, and how to fill in the archival gaps proper to accessing a past work. As Mark Franko describes, reconstruction remains a core discipline in as much as it provides methodological tools for decoding and interpreting dance knowledge. However, the notion of reenactment challenges traditional approaches to reconstruction by expanding the modes in which one can present and stage the reconstructive outcomes and by inquiring about the relation of the dance work to the present. (2017, 9). Thus, there may be distinctions and overlaps between both approaches, but perhaps the best way to define their scope is: “reconstruction as methodology of recovery and reenactment as dramaturgy of presentation.” (9).

Dance reenactments have raised important questions about both the politics of movement and the politics of memory. Authors like Hal Foster and Ramsay Burt’s describe the way reenactments and archival material function as devices that resist controlling structures, institutions, and memory regimes. Foster advances a sort of reparative function of the archive in relation to memory and trauma, while Burt distinguishes between reactive and active modes of using reenactments to resist institutional and representational controls (qtd in Lepecki, 2017, 118-119). For Randy Martin, the recent turn towards performance reenactments holds a key function to problematize temporalities, since although they seemingly move

towards the past, they express a concern with questions about the present and more importantly about the future (2017, 249).

In *The Body as an Archive* (2017), Andre Lepecki starts by emphasizing the “radical incompleteness” (115) of works of art, this incompleteness is a force that propels them into other possible iterations, which become ways of actualizing unexpressed potentials. While he agrees with the criticality dance reenactments can afford as either a reparative or resistant devices in the views of both Foster and Burt, he nonetheless objects to the function of the archive as “domiciliation”, a notion significantly brought forward by Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever* when he discusses the double function of the archive as a shelter for memory, but also, what shelters itself from memory (1998, 2). For Lepecki, the constitution of an archive as domiciliation performs a closure in itself, since it is the erection of the archive itself that enacts either reparation or resistance, and it becomes a stand-in for that operation (118).

In contrast, he coins the notion of *will to archive* as a “specifically choreographic” (118) maneuver deployed by recent live performance makers that enact a “capacity to identify in a past work still non-exhausted creative fields” (120). This possibility to reactivate virtual potentialities already imbedded in the work changes the whole dynamic of how the archive functions: since there is no erection of an archive, no fixed instantiation of the looking back to the past to be sent to the future. There is, rather, an activation of the past in which the body becomes a catalyst of that activation without becoming an “hermetic container of the past” (132). The works that he analyses – Julie Tolentino, Martin Nachbar, and Xavier LeRoy – expose the hermetic container by openly reflecting and commenting on the archival operations they employ and the limitations these operations involve. The effect of this approach is the transformation of the original work via the appearance and concomitant transformation of the singular archiving body. Through analysing these works, Lepecki advocates for a particular

modality of archive: “archives as systems of metabolic transformation, always necessarily de-individualized” (132). The effect of this de-individualization is paradoxical; although the instantiation of potentialities and the catalyst of transformation is always a singular human body, due to the permanent transformation of both the archiving body and the archived work, we never arrive to a certain or generalizable notion of what an archive or a re-enactment are: “Every will to archive in dance must lead to a will to re-enact dances. Such an indissociable link means that each “will” acts upon the other to redefine what is understood by “archiving” and what is understood by “reenacting”. This redefining action is carried out through a common articulator: the dancer’s body” (120).

By placing the body at the center of the archival operation and the singularity of each archival operation, Lepecki seems to agree with Derrida’s conceptualization of the archive, since for him, a general definition of archive escapes us: “Well, concerning the archive, Freud never managed to form anything that deserves to be called a concept. Neither have we, by the way. We have no concept, only an impression, a series of impressions associated with a word” (29). There is no general concept of the archive, which means we do not know – conclusively – what an archive is, and as Derrida notes, it is this very feature that allows us to continue to question and investigate the archive as a place of inscription, memory, and transformation.

Similarly, Giulia Palladini and Mateo Pustianaz propose their book itself, *Lexicon for an Affective Archive* (2016), as an affective archive. In a similar line as Derrida, they tell us in the introduction that an affective archive is not a concept, rather: “affective archive names for us a horizon, a limit, a possibility always ready to be enacted in every archive.” The book is also not a collection of archives but “a praxis striving towards, as well as working for, an affective archive” (12). These propositions foreground the archive as a practice and a process produced by a force, a pulse, and a direction. The figure of the horizon as being a possibility at

the same time as a limit attracts other liminalities and paradoxes around the practice of archiving: material and immaterial, and conservation and transformation, terror and delight. The deliberate inclusion of affect in what is regularly thought as cold, solid material implies for the authors a non-decidability as to the directions and trajectories of transformation the book may take.

Undecidability and affective connections were guiding principles for our reenacting approach. Although the initial invitation was mine, the work became immediately collaborative and developed through listening to the groups' needs. Since much of the literature about reenactments comes from Europe – US dance scenes, it was essential to ascertain this undecidability not to have a preconceived image of a result or product and to create freedom of action. It was important to un-domiciliate the important critical work of reenactments from the specific geopolitical space of Europe and the US and to test its grounding in Quito in 2021-2024. A significant reference for our work was Ecuadorian dancer and scholar Fabian Barba's work and writing (2017) around his reenactment of German choreographer Mary Wigman's solos (2013). Although working within the European contemporary dance scene, he meticulously traces connections between German Expressionist Dance, *Ausdrucksanz*, and his early training in Quito with FDI co-leading figure Klever Viera and also analyses Wilson Pico's aesthetic universe. His work has been an inspiration and a major basis for the work I undertook.

The proposition I came to formulate was to re-enact NMLA works using as sources all the materials we had been gathering and generating: objects, costumes, photos, videos and oral accounts and movement directions of the creators, as well as our own spectatorial memory of the pieces. I became a participant in the procedure since one of my works as a choreographer was presented in NMLA in 2011.

For our work, I took Lepecki's concept of the de-individualization to mean that the dance exists beyond the originating body, in its passage onto another body. Thus, each piece would be reconstructed by someone in the group who didn't create the work. This approach would help us gain some reflective distance on each of the pieces and allow us to gain insight of the metabolic process of re corporealization. The method for choosing the dances was decided collectively. We created a chance procedure with small papers to see who would reenact who's work. Once we had the person whose work we would engage with, each of us choose two or three dances of their repertoire, and had the other person pick one of those dances. We selected pieces we had seen or knew something about, out of curiosity and an interest to bring them back. Unintendedly, the pieces became sort of a gift from the choreographer to the reenactor, chosen by an interest for the non-exhausted potentials of the work. We worked with the dances *La Huesudita* (2001) by Carolina Vásconez, *Histeria Blanca* (1999) by Irina Pontón, *Más Adentro* (2002) by Marcela Correa, *27 Minutos* (2004), and *Esteban Baila* (2008) by Esteban Donoso.

Each of the reenactments was accompanied by a witness from the group: an inside/outside presence in charge of making notes, asking questions, and become an outside eye for later staging decisions. Thus, for each piece there were three roles: a choreographer, a reenactor, and a witness. These roles were rotative, which meant that we all had a different role in each of the five reenactment processes. As German dance theorist Susanne Foellmer notes, the role of the witness is always already a "performative act" since its presence as an interlocutor has the effect of turning memory into testimony." (2017, 274). However, she is suspicious of the understanding the witness as a "recording device", which would mean they hold an objective perspective. Her analysis of the work of the witness in dance reenactments reveal that its function is contingent to its position in relation to the dance work – having danced it themselves or spectating it – its relation to the choreographer, etc. in which case they become

another recreator, one that sanctions all the inherent limitations to witnessing (282). My interest in the figure of the witness lay precisely in the possibility for them to become a not-necessarily-reliable carrier of the dances, in addition to the dancing bodies, thus adding the perspective of someone who has seen the dance from its “original” version to becoming its reenactment twenty something years later. The role of the witness was not entirely prescribed beforehand but was rather a necessary presence that acquired consistency as we went.

To continue with the description of overarching ideas that fed our methodology, I followed Argentinian activist and multiformat researcher Lucrecia Masson (2022) and her writing about ruminating. Recalling her childhood experiences in rural Argentina, she offers the relationship of cows to their surroundings as a model for thinking and writing. Ruminating is a thinking/writing process that is slow and unrefined; it entails a circularity and spending time with its environments with no immediate goal in sight. It interacts with what is around rather than with a straight line, a direction, or with an idea of progress (7). We made decisions as a group along the way, and reenacting the pieces was a result of our spending time and listening to one another. It had an intuitive drive, a constant presence, and an emphasis on doing. Yet, its relation to narrating came through exercising versions of the same stories, which is what I have been calling re-narrating. In Masson’s spatialization of the stomach of the cow, the second stomach called *Reticule* is a network that can contain nourishment yet not encompass everything; it is a place of passage between two other stomachs. The reticule renders an important part of ruminating, which is the possibility to be overflowed: “not knowing how to name but continuing to ruminate” (15). In our process, ruminating allowed for a seemingly repetitive overflow of stories, that helped to trace the paths these dances have transited, enmeshed with the stories of our bodies in the metabolic fashion Lepecki also describes. The back and forth between revisiting and re-versioning the dances and the continual narrating and naming led me to understand our process as a *danced rumination*. The processual

rematerialization of the works in the other's bodies was a way of acknowledging the entanglement of the dances with their surroundings and to see both the dances and our interconnected lives from different temporal vantage points, through the eyes of the others – the reenactor, the witness, and the rest of the group.

As a first step in our ruminating procedure, I asked each of us to present our work in our own way, laying out any archival materials we had, telling the story of the dance and our relation to it. The idea was for us to find our own way to put them “on the table” so that it could be accessible to the reenactor / ruminator, while allowing the choreographer to find her way back into the dance before transmitting it. From here on, each of the reenactment trios – choreographer, ruminator, witness – took up making decisions on each of the danced ruminations. However, we functioned very much as a group so there were always other presences supporting all the processes.

Each rumination outspread from our collection of objects, materials, and stories, and continued its way into its new embodiment. The works will be performed in Quito in Casa Malayerba, an emblematic cultural house/theatre in the city, in January 2024. Each dance will be performed in a room of the house, in a sequence that ends in the theatre. At the end of each performance there will be a conversation with the audience, which will be limited to thirty people per night. The conversation with the audience will be an informal briefing about the previous live of the dances. Each dance will be narrated by the witness; an unreliable narrator who has nonetheless been there throughout. The archive remains metabolically morphing in the bodies of the witnesses, who become carriers of memory and mediators to the audience members. The space of the house is very resonant with the works given the associations of household work to the initial moment of the NMLA festival, and their early training meetings

where art and life blended. This process is described in more detail in the upcoming historical context section.

In the coming chapter, within a decolonial enquiry, I attempt to locate the cultural and historical context in which independent dance developed in Quito since the 1970s, in order to better situate the conditions that informed the emergence of NMLA. I focus on how Ecuadorian dancing bodies have come to bear different markings in relation to dominant concert dance histories, from which the most relevant is perhaps that of “ugly bodies” – bodies that do not match the image of white European dancing bodies, the term will be explained in more detail further on –. My aim is to trace the underlying local imaginaries that shaped ideas of making dance and to consider their possible consequences in how concert dance – dance made for the stage – unfolded. During our work of ruminating on the NMLA dances these aforementioned imaginaries reappear, inciting pertinent discussions and elaborations on how local imaginaries around dancing bodies become inherited.

In the subsequent chapters, I analyze four of the five danced ruminations we created. Given the time frame and context in which they were choreographed (1999-2004), they are the most relevant to the goal of looking at the influences, contributions, and survival strategies of the group, by tracing the connections of the works to their broader contexts (institutional, local, global). Chapter three examines the process of bringing back the piece *La Huesudita* by Carolina Vásconez. I devise a feminist reading of *La Huesudita* through following our meanderings at revisiting this dance and its relation to visibility and temporality. I argue that the piece’s struggles with its own appearance are reflective of structural blind spots in the local community related to dance criticism, records, and archives. However, *La Huesudita* also performs a survival that is revealing of these group of women’s persistence towards achieving artistic visibility and autonomy.

Chapter four looks at the piece *Histeria Blanca* (2002) by Irina Pontón, moving within a liminality between shared life stories and personal and collective performance histories as. Ruminating on ghost and presences of loved ones as well as our dancing ghosts and their imprints in our bodies. I follow the path of the reenactment process to ponder about the powers of the body to connect with the webs of specters we are intertwined with, and their material and immaterial entanglements.

In Chapter five, I look at the processes of ruminating on the pieces *27 Minutos* (2004) by Josie Cáceres and *Más Adentro* (Further Deeper Inside) (2003) by Marcela Correa. Both works create a space for the choreographers for elaborating on issues of authority, power and self-authorization. Through listening to the imbrications of the dances with their personal and artistic trajectories, I examine their dance making as an instance where the pedagogical, the political and the poetical crisscross.

In the concluding section, I report on the public performances of *Olas de otro mar* in January 2024 in Quito, attending to spectators and critic's reponses, while looking back at core issues of the project: time, ghosts, archives, and witnessing.

In the annex, I include fragments of working diaries, notes and scrips from the myself and the group during the reenactment procedure in their original language. I aim to offer a glimpse of the kind of materials we generated, as well as their dialogical relationship.

The process of returning to these dance works reactivated a sense of connective, lively interactions amongst peers, as well as an acquired capacity to assess our lived trajectories with a calm, discerning distance. Writing these chapters in a moment in-between the reconstitution of the dances and the performance of our newly devised ruminations has accentuated a disorienting, spiraling sense of time, our work entailed not only moving backwards or forwards

but both at the same time. Looking at the unruly mesh of interconnections between narratives, lives, affects, aesthetics, self-assessments, multi-authored writings, objects, and bodily-sensory flashes, I acknowledge all the things these danced have achieved, afforded, magnetized, cleansed, transformed, and made visible. My intention has been throughout to make justice to the overwhelming richness and complexity of these danced (our)stories.

Chapter Two: Concert dance in Ecuador, colonial hierarchies and body markers

In 1994, sociologists and dance historians Susana Mariño and Mayra Aguirre published the first book on Ecuadorian concert dance, *Danzahistoria: apuntes sobre la danza contemporánea y el ballet en el Ecuador*. They trace the establishment of Ballet in Ecuador since the 1930s and the inherent difficulties this establishment entailed. Later in the book, they also look at other types of concert dance like modern and contemporary which start to appear since the 1970s in Quito. The main goal for this first mapping of concert dance in Ecuador is to signal the main actors at “incorporating the elements of the universal language of dance to the particular conditions of our society” (13). This general framing of the book is representative of how Western-developed concert dance forms (ballet, modern and contemporary dance) have become “the universal language of dance”, whereas local dance expressions are made visible in as much as they incorporate the elements of this “universal” dance into the particular context. Indigenous forms of dance are not accounted for since they hold a different relationship to the broader cultural landscape – be it ritual, ceremony, etc. Unless they appear in the form of Folklore, in which case they inevitably enter the logics of concert dance. In the gesture of the book of looking at those incorporations, there is an implicit assumption that those dance forms need to be incorporated. The book becomes an effort of enforcing those dance categories to the particular context. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, for Andre Lepecki, the whole of the colonial project of Western modern imagination can be thought in terms of choreography (2006, 14)., through what he later will call “choreopolice” or the need to enforce preestablished conducts and movements (2017, 17).

Within this global, Western-centric imagination, a dance that proposes itself as universal is always already erasing other forms of dance and becomes a mirror to which other forms have to be constantly measured against, regardless of their actual grounding, their own

genealogies, or the affective connective tissues that support them. And the result of the implicit comparison of other dance cultures to Western concert forms – that have in fact, become quite developed and sophisticated – often ends up being hierarchical because the universal (Western) language of dance is usually seen as ideal, more developed, and desirable. In the particular case of Ecuadorian dance, it ends up appearing as inevitably defective or underdeveloped, I find a melancholic undertone in this general framing of Ecuadorian dance history that had actually been around before Mariño and Aguirre’s publication and was present not only in writing about dance but in the dance makers themselves.

This insurmountable distance between the local history and “the world” can only beget a melancholy position: self-diminishing, haunted by guilt, fear and grief. Literary and gender studies scholar Anne Anlin Cheng describes the subjective characteristics of melancholia as an affective formation structured and enforced through a racist imaginary. One of her main contributions to the concept is acknowledging that structural racism relies on keeping these negative affects on the side of the racialized subjects. Melancholia, as a “legislation of grief” (2001, p.12) is meant to keep the racialized system in place by denying the system’s own negative affects (guilt, fear, doubt, etc.) that haunt them. It relies on the fixed positions of universal, local, white, non-white, etc. in order to continue to assert its dominating powers and becomes a way of perpetuating them. This melancholy stance can be found in the paradoxical framing of the Mariño and Aguirre’s publication: sincerely attempting to account for this local memory while simultaneously erasing that very memory and the connective tissue that holds it together.

Within the perceived insurmountable distance between local Ecuadorian concert dance and its guiding ideals, the issue of dance education is key, given the lack of specific pedagogies and methodologies. In fact, dance education in concert dance forms was not given much

attention until relatively recently. When ballet arrived in Guayaquil, Ecuador in 1929. Its emissary, Raymond Maugé started training dancers at the National Conservatory of Music and Declamation from 1930 to 1934. Despite the fact that his work would continue in Guayaquil until 1950, the professionalization of dance in the Ecuadorian context presented a series of difficulties, according to Mariño and Aguirre, although the Quito aristocracy immediately welcomed Maugé and his project, this reception was rather limited:

The young aristocratic girls, who were his pupils, as well as their families who initially much supported ballet, did not look favorably on the possibility of their daughters' becoming professional dancers. Their conservative ideology, as well as the patriarchal structure of the families and the set of activities assigned to women did not allow for them to take up the challenge. Therefore, the support that the aristocracy gave to Maugé was circumstantial. Their daughters could learn, enjoy and spread ballet temporarily, but when it turned the fragile dancer into an independent woman, the support disappeared, and the weight of the family influence was exerted to "snatch her from such danger. (6, My translation).

On the other hand, as Mariño and Aguirre explain, ballet as an aesthetic practice was not of great interest neither for the institutions, nor for the middle classes, who were more interested in *Indigenismo* (an artistic movement interested in indigenous themes, though usually brought forward by mestizos) social realism and the influence of Marxism prevailing in the art of the time. Thus, the dancers who came from the middle classes did not have the means to sustain their activity as dancers over time, and unless they traveled abroad, they ended up giving up. The working classes, burdened by work, did not resort to ballet as a diversion either, but instead turned to musical traditions and celebrations that were closer to home and more popular. These characteristics of the context, in combination with the little institutional support,

ended up not generating a school nor a constant dance activity. It is only from the 1950s that a renewed interest for culture results in the creation of dance schools (Donoso, La Escuela, 24).

During the 1960s several National Ballets (amongst them those directed by dancers Patricia Aulestia and Marcelo Ordoñez) had popularized concert dance via stylizing traditional dance forms and Indigenous stories. In the nineteen seventies, an aura of “higher culture” had started to take over the previous hold of stylized indigenous dances made for touristic attraction and export (190). However, the advent of the two national dance institutions in the nineteen seventies, *Compañía Nacional de Danza* CND (National Company of Dance) and *Instituto Nacional de Danza* IND (National Dance Institute), was only made possible by the petroleum boom of that same decade and the consequent modernization of the Ecuadorian state (Mariño and Aguirre 336). Thus, the country’s insertion into industrial capitalism is concomitant with a pressure to dance according to “more advanced” traditions. For Ecuadorian dance historians Susana Mariño and Mayra Aguirre:

The modern Ecuadorian city began with the petroleum boom. Bananas ceased to be the main export and foreign exchange product. The image of an agrarian country changed to a commercial and industrial one. The infrastructure of the cities grew. Quito and Guayaquil increased their demographics. The country opened up to the outside world and came into contact with more advanced artistic processes. (336, my translation).

Although Mariño and Aguirre greatly contribute to historicizing dance in Ecuador, in their 1994 text *Danzahistoria*, we can find echoes of long-standing assumptions in dance studies, which traditionally followed a linear progression from “primitive” to “advanced” artistic expressions. As Susan Leigh Foster suggests, referring to influential dance authors Curt Sachs and Alan Lomax, their “projects are undergirded by a classical and linear narrative of continual progress and the invention of new forms” (2009, 60). The resonances of these linear

conceptualizations create a sense of chronological tardiness for formerly colonized territories – which do not share the same histories or artistic lineages – and reinstates colonial hierarchies in which Euro-American dance production, seen as an “advanced” artistic expression is not only desirable but “universal”, thus tacitly imperative.

UK Cultural Geography theorist Sofie Narbed (Forthcoming, 2024, provided by the author), whose work deals substantially with contextualizing dance in Ecuador in relation to global dance histories, notices how modern and contemporary dance’s narratives tend to be told as a singular story, a linear progression that starts in classical ballet, is contested by the expressive values of modern dance, then replaced by the deconstructed, minimalist approach of post-modern dance. In this narrative “Euro-US dance worlds serve as practice’s universal history and particular figures and bodies of work canonised as its universal founding reference points (...) thus, it involves parameters that fix practice temporally, geographically, and aesthetically. At the same time, its imagination as a de-territorialised ‘global’ practice ‘able to contain all difference’” (1).

The underlying hierarchies of this global imagination are not only reproduced at the level of writing about local dance but also trickle down to all arenas of dance practice. In places that are marginal to the Euro-US centric imaginary, the aforementioned universality can potentially be lived as an anxiety to be part of the global dance community. In 1985, approximately one decade after their establishment as official institutions CND and IND, were still negotiating their relation to dominant concert dance forms (ballet and modern dance) in Ecuador. In an interview from 1985 in a local newspaper, the director of CND, Marcelo Ordoñez, regrets what he calls “our lack of dance tradition” and consequently announces his ventures to strengthen modern dance and ballet training programs, bringing URSS, Cuban, French and American teachers to Ecuador “in order not to be so distant from dance as a

universal phenomenon” (Interview, January 1st 1985, El Comercio, my translation). This anxious desire to belong to a global stage and its manifestations stem from a perceived chronological lag. However, Ordoñez’s assimilating worries also revolve substantially around racial classifications and prevailing imaginaries about which kind of dance corresponds to whom. Later in the interview, the journalist incisively asks, “It is said that it is not up to us³ to perform classical dance on account of ethnic reasons,” to which Ordoñez responds:

Indeed, it is not up to us. And determining the kind of dance that would be corresponding to us is one of the biggest problems we face at a theoretical level, that should be resolved at some point with the creation of our own dance language, according to who we are. But the interference of the technique that we should necessarily acquire, limits us. Although this does not mean we should not keep on trying (Interview, January 1st 1985, El Comercio, my translation).

In the vagueness of the statements “on account of ethnic reasons” and “according to who we are”, there seems to be a racial connotation in which the assumption is that certain types of dances are corresponding to certain groups on account of a racial / ethnic classification. This adds another element to the consideration about the distance from dominant dance cultures in that it is not only a matter of geographical or temporal distance, but of an ontological difference: racialized subjects are “essentially” expected to perform traditional/Indigenous dances – seen as unchanging, monolithic phenomena. As Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano proposes, the very notion of ethnicities is a codification of an underlying social discrimination afforded by what he calls the “colonial structure of power” (1992, 438). This colonial structure

³ In Spanish, “No nos corresponde” can also be translated as “it does not correspond to us” or “it is not our place”

is a frame that holds together social relations of exploitation throughout the globe. In the particular case of dance, the tendency to separate and distribute “nature” and “culture” – where “culture” is a global design forged through Western expansion –, creates an implied hierarchy that makes any locality strive to successfully acquire (ballet and modern) dance as a sign of progress. The Ordoñez interview makes clear how there are conflicting logics between the need to acquire a dominant dance tradition and a sense of illegitimacy at dancing with/as racialized bodies.

Aníbal Quijano’s definition of coloniality is particularly useful for this study, in that it distinguishes coloniality from colonialism. For Quijano, colonialism is “a relationship of direct, political, social and cultural domination” (437); thus colonialism in Ecuador seems to be a matter of the past. Coloniality, however, is a logic of domination – consolidated through the colonial history of Europe in relation to the rest of the world – is still in force and accounts for the continuous “colonization of the imaginary of the dominated. That is to say, it acts in the interiority of that imaginary. To a certain extent it is part of it” (438, my translation). We can glimpse at an internalization of colonial racial classifications in Ordoñez’s interview as an expression of coloniality, and how it is perpetuated through internal negotiations around the legitimacy of Ecuadorian bodies dancing. However, these racialized bodies also perform a will to insist: Ordoñez’s “it doesn’t mean we cannot keep on trying” suggests that amid these contradicting logics, these bodies are bold enough to keep on dancing.

As we will see later in the work of Wilson Pico and Klever Viera, there is indeed a boldness in dancing with these racialized bodies, grappling with techniques that were not so readily available to devise their own working methods. I contend that the local ways of naming colonial difference and contesting colonial logics become crystalized later through Wilson Pico and Klever Viera’s work, co-directors of Frente de Danza Independiente. They both deploy a

process of generative territorialization that circumvents a binary logic between global and local dance traditions.

Frente de Danza Independiente

As noted above, the FDI collective was created in Quito in 1984 by dancers Klever Viera, Wilson Pico, Maria Luisa Gonzales, Pablo Cornejo, Marcela Correa, Susana Reyes, Luana Choez, and others. It was initially an effort to form a guild for independent dance artists and to cater to the needs of the independent sector, as a counterpoint to government funded dance institutions (Salguero,104). With time, although the collective was a place of passage for many independent artists, it became a place for choreographers Pico and Viera to develop and transmit their choreographic visions.

In contrast to institutional eagerness to acquire globally recognized modern dance techniques, the careers of Pico and Viera endeavored to foster dance vocabularies in dialogue with the local context: around local issues and problematics – like the growing modernization of the country and the concomitant differentiation between city and rural communities, centers and margins – and reflective of dancing with/as racialized bodies. Although they both trained in different modern dance techniques, both undertook a journey in which their own dance becomes mestizo (technically mixed) and concerned with mestizo (culturally mixed) issues that touched them, like poverty, racism and marginalization in the growing Ecuadorian cities.

After training initially in ballet, Wilson Pico established his first dance group in 1972, Ballet Experimental Moderno BEM (Modern Experimental Ballet, unofficially named Experimental Ballet of Hunger by Pico himself) progressively departing from ballet aesthetics. He realized that the Ecuadorian bodies that he was working with – including his own – did not

correspond to the European image of ballet bodies. In an interview published in 2007, he describes:

We started by accepting the bodies of the dancers. All of them with square hips, with rather indigenous traits. None of them were slender, within the canon that ballet demanded. We were bold enough to do modern dance with those girls' bodies and our own. With these bodies that we ironically called "ugly" but were actually beautiful. We worked with that "ugliness" on purpose (Salguero, 2007, 65, my translation).

Pico's realization sets in motion a reflective approach to working in the context of Ecuador and works towards giving a different value to local bodies and to questioning the authority of ballet images that seemed to have populated the local imaginary. Within his work, there is also a discernible gesture of reappropriating a colonial-racist look on these bodies to transform it into possibility. It is possible to see Wilson Pico's whole career as a journey to create a place for mestizo bodies and to invent a dance *mestizaje*, in the sense of mixing of techniques. As Fabian Barba (2017) insightfully asserts, Pico's dance *mestizaje* relies on a "useful appropriation" of different dance forms and technical tools "as a means to deal with local concerns" (49).

Although later he had the chance to take courses in major dance schools and companies – Guillermina Bravo in Mexico, the Graham School in New York, and a workshop by Katherine Duhman in Venezuela— (Barba, 43), Pico primarily undertakes his training and aesthetic preoccupations in an autodidactic way. His work can be considered the first manifestation of modern dance in Ecuador through his creation of danced characters that arose from his surroundings and lived experience: a bullfighter, a boxer, a worker, a pious woman, and other popular working class city dwellers. He created these works following leftist ideals of bringing the arts close to the people, initially referring to them as "danced chronicles"

(Salguero, 99). The proposition of danced chronicles came about during a tour where Pico presented his solos in the U.S., travelling with his wife, poet Natasha Salguero. In between the solos, Natasha would come out on stage and tell stories “about the reality of Ecuador” (99). They created this storytelling device when they realized a lot of people abroad had “little idea even where Ecuador was” (99). I fully agree with Barba that the appearance of this self-devised category (danced chronicles) suggests that the western category of modern dance was not immediately available to Pico until later in his career (Barba, 42).

Similarly, the work of choreographer Klever Viera can also be seen as a quest to find a sense of *mestizaje* through personal research on physicality in dialogue with modern dance techniques. After taking dance courses in 1974 in the recently founded Instituto Nacional de Danza, Viera began formal training in Mexico, with choreographers Luis Fandiño and Xavier Francis – both working within the José Limón and Doris Humphrey modern dance tradition. Upon returning to Ecuador and soon after the foundation of FDI, Viera underwent a creative crisis that brought him to question the pillars of his dance making. He felt compelled to return to his own memory of growing up in a rural setting, in closeness with marginalized kichwa culture. Through this arduous inward, reconnection journey, Viera managed to find the sources for his dance and his personalized style in what he calls the festive dancer: “I managed to break the formal language I inherited in Mexico (...) and this is where I find my gesture and what I believe to be my true identity, which is that of the festive dancer: the mutation of the body, the importance of weight, releasing and breathing” (Mora, 17, my translation). Viera’s work investigates a body entranced and transformed by heightened states of presence associated to indigenous ritualities, which he combines with technical tools from his previous training in Mexico. According to Barba, both Pico and Viera “combined their acquired knowledge in modern dance with the social reality of Ecuador and with an Andean cultural background” (Barba, 44). The two choreographers made, and are still making, significant contributions to

territorializing dance in Ecuador and in creating a place for Andean dancing bodies. Since both Pico and Viera came from the Ecuadorian *sierra* (the highlands), territorializing dance meant acknowledging bodies from the Andean mountain region.

Once the FDI collective was formed, Pico and Viera were faced with transmitting their still developing technical tools to mostly untrained dancers (Salguero, 53). Most of what will become the second generation joined as students of the collective during that time – at different points during the 1980s. Marcela Correa and Josie Cáceres was present since the beginning of FDI, Cecilia Andrade and Mónica Thiel joined in 1984 soon after its foundation, Terry Araujo joined in 1986, Irina Pontón and Carolina Vásquez joined between 1988 and 1989, Ernesto Ortiz joined later in 1998. Pico and Viera needed time to develop specific teaching methodologies due to two factors: the autodidactic way they arrived at their own findings, and the fact that the two choreographers did not search to create a codified dance language, but rather, aimed to act as mediators for each dancer to find their own inner creator (Mora, 17). Additionally, there was a creative impulse in both choreographers to continue to crystalize their own visions. In the coming section, I review how their developing pedagogies unfurled, specifically through testimonies of the group who created NMLA.

The inception of NMLA

In 1997, the group of women had spent about 10 years – with different timings – dancing as apprentices in works by the FDI collective's leading male choreographers Wilson Pico, Klever Viera and later young choreographer Terry Araujo for about 10 years. Pico and Viera were co-directors since the beginning the collective, leading the way in terms of artistic visions and teaching technique to incoming dancers. After joining the collective in 1986, Terry Araujo soon established himself as a choreographer and teacher. For the group of women, though artistically fulfilling, being considered apprentice dancers for the masters had its

disadvantages. They felt constantly judged for their bodies' capabilities, and under pressure to fit each of the choreographer's aesthetics and technical expectations. As apprentices, they did not participate in the collective's decision making, both aesthetically or administratively. The group of women did not feel supported in their efforts to grow as creators, therefore, they strived to create a space of their own. this initial urge to work amongst peers prompted both NMLA and their choreographic and pedagogical careers. The group of women only became functioning members of the collective in 1998, one year after they had created the festival. (Transcripts, April 24th 2019, Donoso)

During a conversation that unfolded during the April 2019 Workshop with the NMLA group (Marcela Correa, Josie Caceres, Carolina Vasconez, Irina Pontón, Mónica Thiel), the women comment on their initial dance training FDI. They relayed that in the beginning years of FDI, dance training was largely based on imitation of the personal styles of Pico and Viera (Transcript, April 24th 2019, Donoso, my translation). Although imitation and tacit, embodied transmissions are an important part of dance education, learning solely through copying in this case, seems to have become limiting. Since dance requires such a specific technification of the body, more than one body – a physical sensorial and cognitive entity – is needed to produce a dancing body.

In her article "Dancing bodies," (1997), Susan Leigh Foster distinguishes three bodies that work in tandem in the constitution of dancing body: the perceived body, the ideal body and the demonstrative body. The perceived body derives from visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory senses, but above all from kinesthetic information; one hears the sounds produced by locomotion, breathing, the sensations produced by joints contracting, extending, or rotating, the relationship with gravity, etc. (237). The ideal body is made up of fantasized visual or kinesthetic images, images of others' bodies or kinesthetic images, and videos of dancing

bodies; this body can specify body proportions, sizes, and shapes as well as movement execution skills. The ideal body and the perceived body are simultaneously constructed through the training process (237-238). The demonstrative body, on the other hand, is a mediator between the other two, it is usually deployed through the body of the teacher, sometimes on the body of other dancers, and sometimes on the dancer's own body: 'where the ideal body eludes the dancer with its perfection, the demonstrative body didactically emphasizes, or even exaggerates, the actions necessary to improve the dance: it isolates the moments of a movement sequence, or the parts of the body to present an analysis of the ideal' (238).

If imitation was the main teaching strategy at FDI, we could say the bodies of the choreographic masters were taken as ideal bodies, and it seems little attention was given to the role of the demonstrative body. Without the mediation of a demonstrative body that breaks up movement sequences or develops tools for gradual acquisition of skills, it would appear challenging for beginning dancers to deal with the demands of the ideal body, and to engage in a cooperative conversation with the perceived body. Concomitantly, in the beginning years of FDI there was a tendency to hinder the perceived bodies by installing hierarchies amongst the incoming dancers, according not only to their level of experience but also to their "natural" ability to move. Dancers who took longer or needed different strategies to learn tended to be marked – both by teachers and themselves – as "difficult", "defective", or "crooked". It is worth noticing that this kind of dance pedagogies was practiced not only at FDI but was indicative of the state of dance education in Ecuador in general. As Ecuadorian dance educator Ana María Palys's assesses, predominantly, the pedagogies at work in the 1980s in Quito generally tended to "conflate enforcing the necessary discipline to become a dancer with modalities of mistreatment, both overt and subtle" (Mora, 127, my translation). Additionally, she addresses the difficulty for dancers who migrated during the 1980s and 90s to train abroad and then returned to Ecuador, to systematize the techniques they learned in a cohesive manner (127).

Looking back at this period from the present moment, there seems to have been an ambivalence, in Pico and Viera's teaching efforts, between being generous at sharing their own paths and the still nascent state of their teaching methodologies:

MONICA THIEL. I do consider they were generous at giving us what they had. Wilson danced his dance with his body. It wasn't my dance, much less my body, but either you entered it, or not. The same thing went for Klever, he was technically rigorous. They were both generous in the sense of saying: this is the path to enter my dance.

CAROLINA VASCONEZ. But they learned haphazardly, and though they did make efforts to teach what they knew, but it just wasn't very pedagogical.

MARCELA CORREA. We were also not bodies ready to dance.

CAROLINA VASCONEZ. But we had just started to learn...

MARCELA CORREA. But Terry (Araujo) for example, he came in and he danced from the first day on. His body was ready, we did not have easy bodies. (Transcript, April 24th 2019, Donoso, my translation).

These bodies were indeed, constantly marked as "difficult" or even "defective." As Carolina remarks, "According to them (the masters) we always had a defective body and were not going to be able to make it". Despite their masters' openness to share their paths, these dancers describe an environment in which they were constantly compared with more experienced or more capable dancers. Although this seems to have the tone of being an ongoing joke, the group of inexperienced dancers were usually referred to be "the novices" (los advenedizos) to separate them from the "professionals". However, as Irina notices about class interactions: "feedback tended to be devastating", "our self-esteem ended up on the ground floor," says Josie. Beyond the still-emerging dance pedagogies, I find it noteworthy that it was precisely this group of women who became bearers of these language markers ("not easy",

“crooked”, “defective”) not as temporary descriptors during their training, but as ontological qualities, which stuck to their bodies. It is remarkable how, during our recent sessions, they constantly describe their bodies and dance abilities with similar descriptors, as though their bodies were still “not easy”.

I argue that beyond the display of an aesthetic authority, there was another layer of power the masters asserted onto these female bodies, which is best described by Marcela later in the same conversation: “there was a power dynamic in which they were upstairs, and we were downstairs⁴, so we did not feel empowered” (Transcript April 25th 2019). Interestingly, this aesthetic class division was a reversal of economic class; most of the women in the group came from rather privileged backgrounds, whereas the founding masters had built up their careers from very underprivileged conditions.

As mentioned above, the status of the group of women at FDI was for a long time an apprentice status. They were required to perform maintenance and supporting labor for the collective, which included transporting scenography, cleaning the studio, or making food and drinks for premieres. This maintenance work was demanding – even unconditional – and was not considered in exchange for their classes since they additionally paid for the training. According to Carolina: “We gave ourselves up as if to a cult” (Transcript, April 24th 2019, Donoso, my translation). Although these kinds of setups were not uncommon at the time between arts apprentices and artistic groups, I believe there was an additional naturalization of

⁴ She makes a reference to a popular TV series *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971-1975). The series depicted the slow decline of British aristocracy and clearly defined upper- and lower-class interactions and boundaries. The show was widely popular in Ecuador during the seventies and eighties. (Wikipedia)

gender roles in relation to maintenance work, which ended up functioning as supporting device for the figure of the male artists.

Seemingly, the invisible work of the group of women upheld an artistic class division between them and the careers of their dancing masters. An anecdote shared by Monica is illustrative of how even when they appeared on stage, their work tended to be invisible. In 1992 Klever Viera premiered “El Hermosa” with relative success. Monica substantially contributed to the creation of the work and performed in it as well. However, the piece was consistently publicized and referred to as Viera’s solo creation. It was against this sort of situation that they rebelled in 1997. As Monica relayed: “I told myself: we have a problem here. This is the sort of situation of which we got fed up. We told ourselves it was all good with the masters, but what about us? What are we going to do?” (Transcript, April 24th 2019, Donoso, my translation).

When examining the role of supporting systems in artistic work, performance theorist Shannon Jackson (2011) draws concepts from psychoanalytic and Marxist theories to notices that the way material structures of support rely on the fact that “the role of material in the management of needs quite often need that the infant as well as the socialized citizen does not notice are being fulfilled” (81). She insightfully analyses the role of habituation, and (not) perceiving the work of caretakers and supporting actions in the effectiveness of their naturalization. Similarly, performance theorist Laura Levin analyses how supporting work usually blends in with environment. This work is often gendered, performed by women or minority subjects: “one could say that women are constructed as environment, as the unacknowledged space of mimetic reflection, thereby providing the conditions for masculine self-differentiation.” (2014, 18). Within the visibly gendered dynamic at FDI, conditions provided by the group of women were unseen yet enabling of an artistic visibility of the

directors. The questions Monica relays: “We told ourselves it was all good with the masters, but what about us? What are we going to do?” were vital to start devising an autonomous space for their artistic interests.

In our conversations, the women ironically take on the half-joking label their masters had used, “las advenedizas” (the novices, in the feminine form) to reclaim the pejorative term. The process of getting together brought them later to create NMLA. It was also a process of realizing they were not going to meet their masters’ expectations, and that was ok. At the same time, they were opening a space to delve into their own bodies’ needs and desires.



Figure 3 Photo of FDI collective, circa 1998.

From left to right, Up: Klever Viera, Ernesto Ortiz, Cecilia Andrade. Down: Josie Cáceres, Irina Pontón, Carolina Vásconez, Wilson Pico. Photo courtesy of Josie Cáceres. This is the year when they received funding from Dutch ONG Hivos, which allowed them to build new spaces and renew the organizational model of the collective. At this time, one year after NMLA was founded by the group of women, Carolina, Josie, Cecilia, Irina and Ernesto had just joined FDI as members.

A studio of their own

In 1991, the FDI collective had lost its working studio and took several years to find a new one. Rehearsals happened in a less systematic manner in parks and different studios of the city. The lack of a stable studio made it possible for them to take classes with other teachers around the city. In 1996, Carolina found a community space at the residential complex where she lived. This was a suitable moment for the group of women to work start regularly working together. Initially the group was made of Cecilia Andrade, Carolina, Irina, Mónica, Both Marcela and Josie were not present since they were living abroad at the time. Establishing a more horizontal, dialogical dynamic in contrast to their previous training experiences, the women started to get together every day; taking turns to teach each other a morning class, they gathered to give feedback after each of their classes, to discuss their pedagogical strategies and methods and how they were working. Mónica recalls them saying to one another: “Well, let’s start by teaching each other classes, to be able to tell ourselves apart from what was proposed to us as the only possible way (to dance)” (Transcript, April 25th 2019, Donoso, my translation).

The trainings they developed were eclectic, taking different sources as inspiration, amongst them, a leaflet that contained a José Limón class description, a book of a Doris Humphrey’s disciple, Ernestine Stoller, the teachings of Gerda Alexander, and other experiences gathered at other classes they had started to take in the city, mostly with U.S. guest artists (Jennifer Muller, a former José Limon Dance Company member and modern dance pioneer, Shelley Senter, a dance teacher, Alexander Technique practitioner and repetiteur of post-modern icons Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer’s works). Carolina had also travelled to New York the year before. Initially the classes the group developed were very similar to the ones they took at FDI, but progressively they experimented with other techniques, like

releasing and somatic techniques⁵: “movement became easier, more pleasurable and with a clearer sense of self” relayed Irina when recalling their working together during the April 2019 Workshop. There seemed to be a process of shedding the expectations of what seemed a stifling training and researching their own capabilities after more or less ten years of working with Pico, Viera and later with Araujo. It is interesting to notice the eclectic nature of their sources, both modern and post-modern references coexisted in their collaborative working sessions. This suggests that their practices were not led by an impetus of following an external framework of dance innovation but by researching what was useful for their bodies’ journeys. These early practices became a ground for their progressive, individual experimentations as they continued to develop their own works.

Their daily working sessions became a sort of pedagogical laboratory. Gradually the group worked their way into creating their own solos; a creative impulse that became NMLA. In their sessions, dance work was intermingled with taking care of their kids, cleaning the space, cooking and “doing girlfriend stuff”. Developing their own visions took a process of self-authorization that didn’t happen at once. Rather these dances took time to become visible – in the sense that they were recognized by peers, audiences or critics. They describe their early dances today as “mended dances” (*danzas surcidas*) (Transcript, April 25th 2019 Donoso), or this moment together as a moment for “cooking dances”. These descriptions highlight the dances as very personal, resourceful, homemade and eclectic, making manifest their interpersonal connections as women and peers.

⁵ Somatic techniques is a broad term that refers to movement-based methods engaging the relationships between body, mind and movement. Its use has become widespread in dance training globally.

Having a space where they could start to unfurl their questions was key to developing and further “cooking” their ideas, to invoke Virginia Woolf’s ““a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is going to write”” (qtd in Levin, 20). As Levin notes, artistic and intellectual autonomy relies on a gesture of taking up space, particularly for women: “To invoke Woolf is to call attention to the ways in which women have, throughout history, experienced space differently, having been relegated to the domestic sphere without being able to claim it as intellectual refuge” (20). Interestingly, this group’s collective act of taking up space also reappropriated domestic space and domestic labor as being an unavoidable part of their lives. This feminist reappropriation was not unlike the work of other female artists during the nineteen seventies and eighties, such as Mierle Ukeles, filmmaker Chantal Akerman, Martha Rosler, and many others, who reappropriated domestic labor and the household / private sphere as a space for political and aesthetic claiming. To create a studio of their own was both a vital, aesthetic and a political gesture, in as much as it claimed space to, as Mónica so insightfully asserts, “to tell themselves apart from what they had learned was the only way to dance”. Claiming space to create her own dances was more than a vanquishing gesture. As will be developed throughout this dissertation, their undertaking was made of several attempts, many versions and iterations. The story of these dances brings forward questions about how to tell those stories. In the coming section I develop on our approach to storytelling.

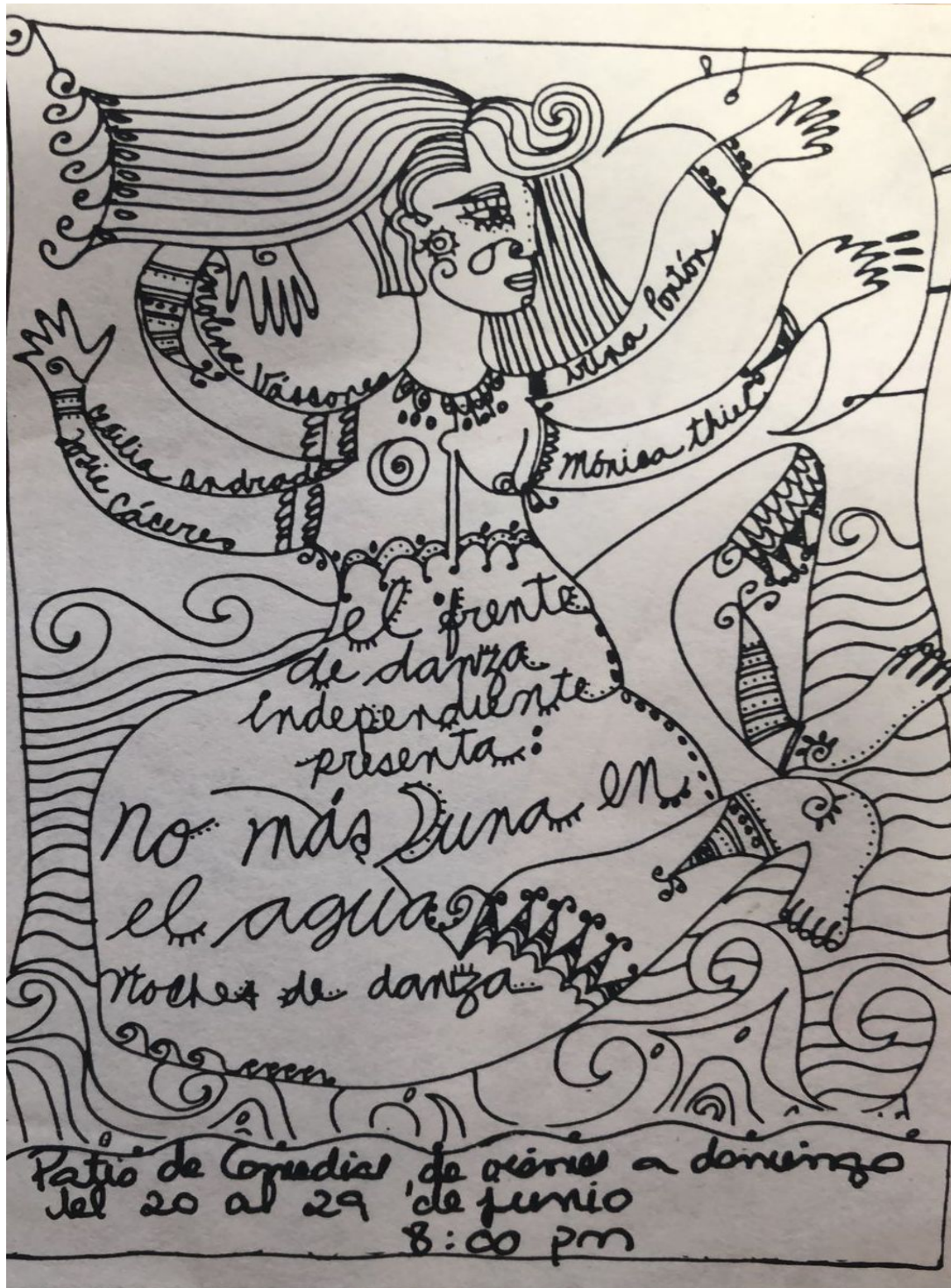


Figure 4 Publicity design for the first NMLA, 1997.

Design by Ecuadorian artist Ana Fernandez

Gathering (her)stories

In undertaking this study of NMLA, I follow Ursula Le Guin's proposition of the carrier bag as the inaugural artifact for storytelling (1988), given its aptitude to contain, to transport, and to transmit both materialities and immaterialities. Le Guin sets out to counter a storytelling that comes from weapons, stories of hunting, killing and vanquishing. Stories of vanquishing heroes are powerful, yet heroes tend to take over the space of storytelling itself, and to end up making every story, his story (18). Striving to counter narratives that stem from the rationalities of the weapon: the knife, the rifle, etc. I diverge from telling the story by sustaining the figure of a hero and endeavor to tell stories that are interconnected and carried forward – or backwards or sideways, etc. – to shed light onto our own situated lives. I propose that revisioning these dances is vital in order to create a reflective memory of Ecuadorian women in dance and their efforts towards artistic visibility and autonomy. The narratives we generated as a group may not be about vanquishing, arriving or succeeding; they are, rather, as Le Guin suggests: “full of beginnings without ends, of initiations, of losses, of transformations and translations” (35). Rather than focusing on vanquishing gestures, we refocused our gazes on works and processes that seemed initial, unfinished, or not fully realized, and hence were calling us to look again.

Explaining how contemporary patriarchal political systems are narrative projects, Argentinian Feminist Rita Segato (2018) suggests that in the landscape of contemporary capitalism, we can distinguish two projects and their corresponding narratives. The first one is the project of things, a narrative that accompanies the production and circulation of commodities, which by virtue of attending to relations of production, engenders utilitarian relationships. The second project is the project of bonds, a project that listens to and prioritizes the reciprocity of human interactions and the possibility to create connections, coalitions, and community. For Segato, the project of ties and connections and is an antidote to contemporary

patriarchal capitalism's production of inequality (16). It is my intention to diverge from telling stories of isolated dance heroes, and to listen to interconnected stories. In the stories I/we have gathered by spending time looking back at NMLA together, there is an embodied repertoire of sharing, thinking, and moving together that seemed to reappear through our revisiting procedure. Shifting from the story of heroes to the story of connections has helped me to recontextualize concert dance in Ecuador as a collective struggle, taken up by different generations. Dancing bodies in the independent dance scene in Quito seem to perform an insistence on dancing despite a series of underlying restrictions. Those restrictions stem from colonial / racial classifications, body image ideals, authoritative hierarchies and pedagogical limitations. Nevertheless, insisting on continuing to dance together has allowed these bodies to move through those restrictions and to territorialize concert dance in ways that are still generative.

Employing an oral history approach, I affirm that memory is intricately linked to the body's experience. Yet, as Spanish oral histories theorist Miren Llona (2012) suggests, memory can only materialize itself through deploying and versioning narratives (and self -narratives) (17), hence my interest in the life stories and conversations with the dancers. At the same time and for the same reasons, I consider memory as something that is permanently morphing and in the process of being created – this text is but one version of the multiplicity of the stories it gathers. Considering the reconstituted NMLA dances as “mnemonic reserves” accounts for the interconnectedness of bodies, movements, places, and narrations. They also participate of the interconnectedness of individuals and their collective histories. Thus, in order to trace the trajectories of this group's bodies and the other bodies connected to them, I intertwine descriptions of the dances with transcriptions of the working sessions, diaries and other materials. I further draw on secondary sources as well as relevant decolonial and feminist concepts and methodologies to deepen my analysis of the primary source materials.

In the upcoming chapter, I examine the ways in which the piece by Carolina Vásquez, *La Huesudita* from 2001 struggled with its own appearance in regard to dance critic's reviews, and its own records and archives. I contend that these obstructions to appear are revealing both of structural limitations of the local community at receiving this dance, and an insistence to survive this work performs through its many iterations and versions. I focus particularly on the different temporalities we were confronted with throughout our danced rumination journey.

Chapter Three: A horrifying dance, or how a dance survives

Carolina Vásconez choreographed and performed *La Huesudita* at Sala Mariana de Jesús at FDI in the 2001 edition of NMLA. This was the first edition in which the festival became international, including works from Brazil, Germany, Venezuela, and Ecuador. In the critic's review of the dance evening, a review of *La Huesudita* was missing, the writing had subtracted the dance from view. *La Huesudita* is a dance that has indeed taken time to appear. It has appeared slowly, throughout different versions, and iterations; it is also a dance that pulsed towards visibility. Perhaps its mode of appearance resembles the way a photo negative is developed through chemical processes; throughout time an image can be glimpsed. It may never become a definitive image, but it pulsates towards appearing, in a movement that seems converse to Peggy Phelan's well-known assertion, that performance constantly "disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control" (1996, 148). Assuming a dance can go in the opposite direction – becoming visible throughout time – this dance's struggle with its own appearance does account for the regulations and controls surrounding its creation process, critics' reception and its own archive and records. These controls have become apparent through the process of bringing the dance back.

This chapter starts with a description of how we dealt with archival objects during our 2022 sessions, and how they became entryways into our reenacting / ruminating undertaking. Following a full description of the 2001 performance of the piece, I examine *La Huesudita*'s relation to its own records, proposing the dance's many versions are themselves records of the dance's desire to become acknowledged. I later focus on Carolina's sharing of her work during the aforementioned sessions to look at the non-linear temporalities our revisitation enacted. I converse with the Andean notion of *ñawpa* time as well as Rebecca Schneider's concept of

syncopated time (2011). Lastly, I analyze the value of incompleteness in dealing with archive materials and propose that very incompleteness has allowed us to see ourselves and our works under a different light.

As mentioned in the introduction, during our ruminating journey since August 2022, Carolina, Irina, Marcela, Josie and I started presenting our works, laying out any archival materials we had, telling the story of the dances and our relation to it. The idea was to find our own way to put the dances' memory aids on the table so that they could become accessible to the reenactor, while allowing the choreographer to find her way back into the piece before transmitting it. These series of materials (including pieces of music, costumes, props, pieces of diaries, and oral accounts) started creating a path that directed our attention to individual and collective memory networks. We began to progressively unravel an entanglement of creative ideas, affective relations, life circumstances and internal processes, made available by the collection of objects and materials.

The objects became doorways to all the interconnected paths we started to transit. As artists Jomi Oligor and Shaday Larios comment when describing their work as object detectives: "objects constantly claim what is inherent to them and often disapprove of what does not come from them. You start writing by following what listening to them leaves behind" (9). What these objects left behind is a network of what has been contiguous or connected to them throughout time. The connections became apparent with each of the narrations in such a way that no object or item was ever by itself, but always a part of a larger net; made from other stories, other objects, etc. For the process of *La Huesudita*, the bones were our doorway into the substance of the piece. In the following paragraphs I review the work first as presented initially in 2001. Subsequently, I refer to our sessions in the recent years in which we unfolded the process of revisiting the work.

Carolina Vásconez' *La Huesudita* (2001)

La Huesudita (which means the bony one or the one with the bones) deploys an interrelation with the remains of a horse, its bones. It is based on a piece of writing about a woman who collects bones in rivers, written by Carolina herself. The original piece starts with Carolina standing against the wall in one of the corridors of the theatre run by FDI, Sala Mariana de Jesus SMJ. The audience had to pass through the corridor in order to get to the seating area. She is standing on a stool, so her figure looks very tall. She is wearing a beige slip, and foal fur legwarmers. On each hand, she is holding one or two long horse bones: two ribs, and a femur. She is soaking wet, looking down as spectators go by, water dripping onto the floor. On the floor of the dimly lit stage, there is a foal fur coat, and a cluster of horse bones laying on it. Once the audience is seated, Carolina steps down and slowly walks to the stage, she proceeds to kneel down and places her head on the floor. Slowly, she pushes the coat and the bones with her head in a steady, extended movement across the floor, outlining a long diagonal. At some point, a bone falls from the coat, she stops, picks it up without changing her position and continues to push. Once the trajectory has ended, she sits on the floor, picks up the bones one by one and starts stacking them up, building a structure that doesn't quite hold itself for long. The small building falls inevitably as she continues to rebuild it from scratch creating different ephemeral organizations. Finally, whatever remains of one of the bone buildings stays on the floor, making a sort of diagonal from the fur coat. Music starts, a piece from Zbigniew "Preisner's Requiem." Carolina steps on the coat, establishing an asymmetrical position with her body. She moves as though accommodating ever slightly her own physical structure, never staying in a fixed position. At times, she repeatedly collapses onto the floor then rearranges her own body parts into the vertical position. Her movement is necessarily unstable since she is dancing on the fur coat, constantly sliding on the floor. Sometimes her movement is more expansive gathering and sweeping up the space around her. When this

section is finished, she steps out of the fur coat, grabs one of the bones (a femur) and starts reiteratively stomping on the floor. The remaining horse bone structure vibrates, bounces, collapses into the floor. She starts walking out holding the femur in her hand, lifting it up as she walks out.



Figure 5 La Huesudita, 2001.

Photo by Gonzalo Gúaña, courtesy of Ernesto Ortiz.

Tracing records, tracing memory

During the session dedicated to presenting her work in June 2022, Carolina talked about an initial, substantial editing of the piece following the suggestion of her colleague, Brazilian choreographer Paula Rettore⁶:

CAROLINA. Initially, it was about 30 min long, but Paula edited the dance, and I accepted her edit, it came down to 4 min when performed at NMLA. After that, I re-edited it myself and it became about 12-15 min. I get a bit mad at myself because I was obedient to her edition even though the process was my own. Maybe because she had an authority amongst us, because she came from Brazil and us on the other hand, we felt like we didn't know anything. We thought she must know. And that wasn't the only time, I feel like I always yielded to other people's opinions not to create conflict. I was used to being obedient, but now I've become feisty. (Transcript, August 19th 2022, Donoso, my translation).

Paula's reasons for suggesting the edit are not clear; she extracted one section of the whole dance material, and reportedly said that that section of the piece "works". However, Carolina's remark about the power dynamic between Paula and the rest of the group is relevant as it foregrounds both a certain insularity of Ecuadorean dance, and sense of "not knowing anything" (in Ecuador we don't know anything) that echoes the "lack of dance tradition" brought up earlier in introductory chapter. This sense of feeling orphaned is also present in Wilson Pico's assertion "we invented modern dance for artistic survival" (Salguero, 70) when looking back at his own artistic trajectory. Since there weren't any modern dance references around at that moment, they came up with a form that ended up being baptized modern dance, perhaps to become visible in a global stage. In the local stage, along with the lack of cultural

⁶ Paula Rettore is a choreographer from Brazil, who became part of the team of NMLA from 2000 to 2004.

policy, institutional support, and scarce circulation of dance information, there is also a constant negotiation around authorizing Ecuadorian bodies to dance and to create dances. The ongoing comparison to an imagined authority does not allow them to create a vision of themselves without passing to an external, legitimizing frame. In as much as this set-up enacts a Euro-US centrist imaginary, the external frame could be geographically located in Europe, the US or even as near as Brazil, without substantially changing the feeling of “not knowing anything”. Ecuador is always in a lag in relation to dance “progress” even compared to other Latin American countries.

As dance scholar Ananya Chatterjea (2022) elaborates, global imaginaries about dance innovation – which can be seen as the symbol, in concert dance, of progress – are not only thought and lodged in Euro-US dance histories, but also tend to reproduce their own blind spots in their own assessment of difference. This creates a pattern of homogenization of dance forms that becomes sustained and promoted by institutions, curators, and other players in the circulation of dance in global markets. The dance field tends to recreate its own visibility by appearing multiple and diverse while continually reinstating its own distinctiveness: “The appearance of this field as multiplicity, disseminated centers of curation and assessment of innovative artistic work, in fact masks a singularity, organizing what is often thought of as a transnational forum through a limited set of consolidating ideologies” (14). For Latin American artists, the implication of this power structure is that they normally have to go through this global Euro-US legitimation network in order to appear even in Latin America – to its own eyes –.

In an interview from 2020, Argentinian feminist scholar Rita Segato talks about the legacies of Eurocentrism in how Latin America as a region struggles to compose its own image, referring to the mirror as a feminine device for self-imaging: “Latin America lacks a mirror of

its own. Because of Eurocentrism, the mirror in which we see ourselves is permanently distorting, masking our own image. How can we produce an image of ourselves, of how we are and what occurs to us?” (2020, 4:24, my translation). This potent consideration about the colonial determinations of our own image strongly resonates in *La Huesudita*’s struggles to become itself and to become a mirror to Carolina or the group, there is a reverberation of the insecurities that have traditionally haunted making dance in the context of Ecuador. However, Carolina also performs an insistence in re versioning her work that “becomes feisty” against those determinations and reclaims creative autonomy.

In Ecuador, the feeble cultural infrastructures (such as institutions, theatres, schools, programs, curators, critics) have made it harder for dance artists to assess their own visibility, while usually working under precarious conditions. However, the lag in relation to dominant ideals of dance progress, does not necessarily mean the works are lacking in value or potency. One of the main arguments of Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked* is questioning the assumption that the relationship between visibility and political power is directly proportional since visibility is always highly regulated by totalizing (racial and gender) regimes (1993, 1-2). Inventing modern dance outside of the modern dance Euro-US centric framework is quite an achievement, the same way “not knowing anything” points out to the possibility of devising the desired knowledge in situated, unexpected ways. However, under conditions of coloniality, recognizing these achievements may require a constant calibration of our gaze. It may also require tuning in to the specific temporalities a work proposes in relation to its appearance.

Paula Rettore’s assessment and edit of Carolina’s piece may have actually been pertinent, by judging the piece as final product, projecting it would be performed at what by then was an international festival; the edited fragment of the dance is indeed particularly compelling. Yet Carolina’s feistiness resides in the fact that she didn’t get a chance to pursue

her own artistic vision and make that decision by herself; hence her discomfort comes first and foremost from the need to be creatively autonomous.

I would like to propose that in the case of *La Huesudita*, the dance itself is a document of the struggles it has encountered in its path to becoming visible. In his essay on dance reenactments (2013), Timmy DeLaet emphasizes the link between dance and memory suggesting that dance itself is memory performed: “The dancing body puts recollection into motion as it executes movements rehearsed before” (135), in that sense, every dance is a record of its own creative process. *La Huesudita*’s edits and several versions can be then seen as records of its vicissitudes towards appearing. Another stratum of those obstacles towards appearance is brought forward by the critics’ reception of the work, during the same working session, Carolina explains:

CAROLINA. Perhaps it was not a pretty dance. The dance critic, Genoveva Mora, who wrote about the festival evening did not mention it at all in her review. It was the only piece of that evening that wasn’t reviewed. Later, she confessed to me that she had thought the piece was *horrifying* and she didn’t know how to write anything about it. At a later event organized by the same critic I chose to perform this dance, because it was horrifying. (Transcripts, 19th August 2022, Donoso, my translation)

The critic’s decision to omit the piece from the review is significant as it reflects a difficulty to come to terms with it. The term *horrifying* brought up later *off the record* qualifies the dance in ways that could be either dismissive, or mystifying, rendering it blurry or perhaps difficult to witness. I have chosen the term *horrifying* in English to convey the ambiguity of the Spanish term *horroroso*, which could either mean aesthetically poor or inciting to horror. Perhaps the ambiguity of both words does account for a discomfort in the writing or in the writer herself: Is it that the piece is bad? Or is it her difficulty to come to terms with it? At the time, Genoveva Mora was writing for the newspaper “La Hora” and, having a background in

Literature, had relatively recently started to write about dance and theatre (she started to write about performing arts in 1997, the same year NMLA started). Her work as a critic became established throughout the years but was relatively at a nascent state in 2001. In a recent interview about NMLA, Genoveva describes her arrival to dance criticism in the following way: “The decision to become a performing arts ‘critic’ involved preparation and audacity as well; if I was afraid of anything, it was to write about modern/contemporary dance, because it was out of the known terrain and demanded knowledge, which at that time I did not have, so I did it very carefully.” (Interview, March 13th 2023, Mora, my translation)

Her description of the process of becoming a critic, accounts for a calibration of her own gaze in relation to dance in general, but more importantly, I believe there was a calibration of her gaze in relation to the particular kind of dance Carolina was putting forward. In the same recent interview, she recalls her own assessment of *La Huesudita*’s 2001 performance in the following way: “I clearly remember I did not understand the work, it seemed incomplete (at that time), because it took time and training (i.e., to see a lot of dance) to understand these more conceptual works; or maybe something was missing in her proposition, who knows (..) This is a memory from 20 years ago! Who knows if I am falsifying it” (Interview, March 13th 2023, Mora, my translation).

Perhaps today’s assessment of the work as incomplete does account for the massive editing the piece had gone through. However, it is interesting to notice the very different descriptors that came up for *La Huesudita*: from horrifying to incomplete or unfinished (*incompleta*) – all in all, a sort of “what the hell is this?” I argue that these adjectives reflect a discomfort in spectating a dance that was still in the process of becoming itself, while pushing against internal and external censoring forces. This was, after all, a “mended dance”, a dance that was still being cooked, and cooking needs time, care, and attention. Additionally, the

process of this dance of becoming itself implied mending together different aesthetic principles and traditions.

It is plausible that the critic was unable to make sense of this piece because it presented an important departure from what seems to have become a local canon by that time, emblemized by the FDI founders, Wilson Pico and Klever Viera. As mentioned in the previous chapter, their works had a substantial expressionistic imprint, which meant that movement was highly choreographed and always pointed to a meaning in relation to the overall “subtext” of the dance. As Fabian Barba describes in his in-depth comparison of *Ausdrucksanz* (German Expressionistic Dance) and Pico and Viera’s aesthetics:

In the work of Kléver (Viera) and Wilson (Pico), as well as in Wigman’s work (an emblematic representative of the *Ausdrucksanz* aesthetic), the performer is asked to have his or her body under full control. No gesture should be executed if it is not purposefully produced. (...) Ideally, the dancers should reach a heightened or ecstatic state of being, transcending the mere physicality of the gestures and expressing the inner self of the human being. The dialectical interplay between rigid technical control and transcendent expression is a structuring principle of both dance traditions. (2017, 49)

Although Carolina maintained the sense of ritual and gravity that characterized her predecessors, she also devised a more playful approach to movement, combining set stage directions with improvised movement sequences under certain conditions of perception. Carolina’s work became progressively more task oriented and more attracted by logics of fine art and performance art – she often describes her own work as installation or moving sculpture and more akin to a post-modern aesthetic. As Sally Banes notes, the post-modern approach developed a “sense of casual activity rooted in concrete experience” (110). Carolina achieves

this sense of casual, concrete experiment through exploring these real and fictional, more-than-human architectures, by keeping the movement improvisational and alive and by attending to her inner physical perceptions as the guiding principle of the dance. At the time, she had had a recent introduction to somatic based work, particularly Alexander Technique.⁷ Additionally, she had classes in Quito with renown US dancers Glenna Batson and Shelly Senter, who were very connected to the post-modern movement. At the same time, she does retain a sense of ritual (that she calls alchemy) that may be reminiscent of the Andean undercurrent of Ecuadorian dance, as passed on by her masters. It is possible to imagine that her less solemn, improvisational approach to movement was disorienting for a critic accustomed to the more severe expressionist aesthetic identified with the collective's leading figures. In fact, the whole of the second generation is responsible for making FDI a hub for dance experimentation, through their unconcerned, investigational approach, which can also be seen in the works of Terry Araujo, Cecilia Andrade, Ernesto Ortiz and guest choreographer Paula Rettore. (Mora, 95)

As a record of itself, *La Huesudita*'s survival is haunted by its unfinished status (its many versions), by the absence of a "proper" record, neither on video – the quality of the extant video is very poor -- nor in the critic's review. It is also haunted by its absence of archive. In a 2015 interview, Irina Pontón, also founding member of NMLA, spoke about her perspective on her own dance repertoires: "Most of our works are forgotten, especially when they are group works, it is very difficult to maintain them and even more difficult to recover them. It is sad to see how works of great value die before maturing on stage, then as a dancer and creator you

⁷ The Alexander technique was developed by F Mathias Alexander and focuses on postural habits and movement. It helps gain efficiency and ease by unlearning unhelpful habits. This technique has been quite influential in certain movements styles and techniques.

can only practice detachment from works that you know will not be staged again.” (Mora, 95). Coming from a founding organizer of a festival that lasted for 14 years, the resigned melancholic tone is striking. Irina’s dismay around dance’s survival in Ecuador reiterates the melancholic affective atmosphere described in the chapter I as a result of an insistent comparison to dominant dance figures.

Irina’s words refer to the general lack of local institutional support and circulation networks that can sustain her and her peers’ artistic practices, but it also refers to the progressive falling out of most of the collective’s members and a sense of worn-out collective cohesiveness. From 2004-2012, members of the collective fell out due to administrative and personal disagreements. Klever Viera, Marcela Correa, Carolina Vásconez, Josie Cáceres, Irina Pontón, Ernesto Ortiz and Cecilia Andrade left. Only Wilson Pico and Terry Araujo remained, new members adhered later on. Most of the women, except Cecilia Andrade – who left in 2012 - left in 2009. As relayed during our group conversation by Josie and Carolina, when they left the FDI collective, they were not able to retrieve the programs, reviews, posters, and other printed material that was kept in the FDI storage room in the theatre. According to their account, the remaining director Wilson Pico explained that the firemen had detected a fire hazard, so they burned all the paper material (Transcript, September 21th 2021, Donoso, my translation). A considerable part of the memory of NMLA was missing. Today, the recorded memory of the festival is only kept through scattered personal archives. The only erected and available archive at FDI is Wilson Pico’s Archive, whereas there are only unclassified materials from the collective (Terry Araujo, Interview, November 1st 2023).

Other members of the collective have communicated having no knowledge of the burning incident; however, the materials remain missing. The loss of NMLA material brings forward the fundamentally patriarchal operation of the archive, in which its guardian (the

archon) decides which documents it will shelter and which ones it will extinguish (Derrida, 1998, 2). The relation of this dance to its remaining records could be seen as what Critical Race theorist Noémie Ndiaye calls “mechanics of obfuscation”. Ndiaye questions the factuality of any historical record while proposing there is always an interpretive act in the very production of what will be considered a record. She contends that the production of evidentiary facts is heavily biased by a systematic reiteration of dominant narratives. Hence, the appearance of minority or marginalized groups in records tends to be “always already scratched” (2020, 238) by the very mechanisms of record-making. As discussed previously, Ecuador is a context in which legitimacy around making dances is always being negotiated, those negotiations seem to oscillate within racializing and gender systems. In the case of FDI, its relation to records and archives makes evident its patriarchal imprint.

This is why the notion of survival becomes relevant; the fact that this dance’s survival depends on its most immediate elements, the horse bones, and the dancer’s body, is telling of the filters and infrastructures that may conspire to obfuscate its memory. The reappearance of the dance during our process and its subsequent mutation through its rumination reveal that *La Huesudita* lives on despite its vicissitudes to be recorded. By summoning it back we are actively producing an embodied againness that pushes against a precarious archive – in the manner of Diana Taylor’s notion of repertoire (2003, 20).

Bringing *La Huesudita* back

I would like to go through the first of the five sessions we did for presenting our works to the group in August 2022. Carolina presented her work to the rest of the group, Irina and Josie were in the same physical place – a small Yoga studio at Irina’s house — while Marcela and I were away and had connected through Zoom. I was the designated witness for this work while Marcela was the designated ruminator. Even though there is one assigned witness, the

whole group is usually present in all sessions. This emphasizes a sort of collective engagement in which, if anything is missing from the recollection, someone in the group jumps in to piece it together, or to hypothesize what was there. Albeit fractalized by the different modalities of attending -virtual and in person- the solo functioned as an interface through which we tuned into our own spectatorial selves from 2001.

Carolina had intended to bring all the costumes and props for her presentation but was only able to bring the bones she had worked with to create *La Huesudita*. Perhaps due to this feeling of having forgotten something important, she entered her own narration with such willingness, I was even thankful for the missing elements. What follows is a transcript of the session, my comments and descriptions appear in italics, interjecting Carolina's narration to describe the setting and what I can see through the Zoom camera.

CAROLINA. I had put together my diary, the slip, the foal fur coat that I used to slide on the floor. I put it all in a bag and had everything ready. But now I don't know where I left the bag... I stored it so well, but I don't know where it is, although I did bring the bones. This happens when you cherish something too much...

There is one video but it's really bad, it was shot at FDI during NMLA 2001. For me this piece was like an installation. When the audience came in, I was standing by the wall, on the corridor that led to the seating area. on a small stool. I was soaking wet, my dress also dripping wet. I was holding these huge bones on both hands as the audience passed by to find a seat.

So, let's say this was the entry to Sala Mariana, *signaling to her side*, to the right you had the ticket box and then you had a corridor that led to the seating area.

Visitors went in through the corridor. On the stage, I had the coat ready, laying there. I was holding the ribs of the horse in both hands. They were given to me by my friend Hugo, he found them in the fields. Some of them were already lying on the stage, on the fur coat. I have lost some of the bones, as I left them behind

after some shows here and there, so I no longer have them all. The foal coat came from my grandmother and aunts.

Carolina moves the bones around the floor, ordering them and giving them a place as she speaks, the bones make audible sounds.

I will speak while doing it because it seems a bit distant. *She picks up the bones on her arms holding them, carefully but swiftly.* I stepped out of the stool, and onto the stage where the fur coat was, and I dropped all the bones on it. *she walks and releases the bones into a piece of fabric that stands-in for the fur coat.* I was wearing a pair of fur legwarmers of the same color; it was an echo of the skin of the horse, an echo of the horse within me: me-skeleton, me-foal. At the same time, it was me-death, the bones of the horse and the skin of the foal connected me to death. I have a lot of memories with horses from my childhood, so they awaken many emotions in me.

I pushed the cluster of bones on the floor with my head, *as she is getting ready to push, while she speaks, a cat comes in and starts smelling on the bones. She says hello to the cat as she kneels into her position, the cat moves forward, closer to the zoom camera. She starts pushing the bones, sliding them on the floor as she describes how she pushed the bones when she performed the piece. She goes back and repeats the same trajectory a few times to give an idea of length of the trajectory on a stage, since the space is smaller.* I pushed and pushed describing a diagonal from the place where the coat was lying. I pushed with my head, tailbone going up in the other direction. Sometimes a bone would fall, I collected it back and continued to push. *She continues to push, no bone falls.*

Once I felt I had displaced it enough I sat to one side of the coat and started to create an installation with the bones. There were the ribs and the vertebrae, the sacrum, and a femur, *she starts to move the bones around, they make an audible sound.* It was like an architectural construction, a skeleton but also a building.

I started to build using the vertebrae as a base, they fell, but I rearranged them again trying to create a spiral, trying to create a path, a corridor or a puzzle, to come to some sort of balance where you could see the empty spaces between the bones, like when you see an actual skeleton, *bones fall on the floor every now and*

then, she assembles them back together. Now I am not skilled anymore at assembling them but at the time I was able to build a corridor of bones. The ribs were always creating this kind of bridge. I trained for hours to be able to build the corridor, but now I cannot do it. *Still, some of the bone structure holds itself together despite its instability.*

The structure stays like that, making a sort of diagonal on the fur coat. I stepped on the fur and established this asymmetrical position. *She gets herself into the position as she continues to speak. The position is not held but always slightly moving, as if permanently accommodating her own bone structure.*

The music started here, it was a piece by Preisner, a requiem. *No music sound comes in.* Here I was interested in an asymmetrical body and how my own skeleton descended to the floor; bones descending and collapsing into a disjointed structure. Those spaces you could see in that bony architecture were inside my own body. There were also moments with a different kind of energy, like wind or like a hurricane. Something that sweeps things away, like a river sweeping pebbles away. *La Huesudita* is a woman who collects bones in rivers. For me this dance performs an alchemical process of mourning. The alchemy I perform around death has to do with confessing grief to myself and to redeem myself, dancing is my medicine. *She brushes the space falling repeatedly onto the floor, although with no rush, as if invoking wind forces while recalling her own movement score.*

In this version, at the end I grabbed one bone, I think it was a femur. *She grabs the bone and lifts it towards one side, holding it slightly up with her back to the audience.* I left with this bone as though it was the only thing I rescued from the whole thing. I leave death behind, but I do take some of it with me.

MARCELA. My first impulse is to go search for bones in the river, like the character you wrote about. Of course, it would be a real problem to clean them.

JOSIE. Yes, would be great to see what comes out of that search is.

CAROLINA. I have to give you the piece of writing. (Transcript, August 19th 2022, Donoso, My Translation)

Witnessing Carolina revisit her own performance, 21 years later, amidst this composite of virtual and “real” presences, I could not help but give in to a temporal disorientation. Having witnessed the performance in 2001, we all possessed the necessary layers to experience both times colliding. Another aspect worth noting is the relation between narration and movement. Somehow, Carolina couldn’t only narrate the piece, it felt too distant, so she felt compelled to physically go back to it. Movement, movement descriptions and stage directions happened in tandem, adding a meta layer to the piece itself. The dance felt surprisingly available to her given that she had not performed it in years and there was no previous rehearsal before the working session.

The dance reappeared through a sort of flickering, an intermittence of two channels, in which at times we could see the dance remembered and sometimes we could see the act of bringing it back. This is true especially in moments when Carolina’s narration did not coincide with what we were seeing: there was no music, no falling of the bones, but at times a cat entered nonchalantly into what we were imagining was the stage. We were constantly confronted by the temporal gap and a sort of double experience between what was there physically and what was presented through her narration. If this had been presented to somebody who did not see the dance in 2001, there would still be two layers to the experience: one of physical enactment and another layer of imagination/evocation elicited by her narration. Perhaps the unexpected appearance of the cat introduces – within the temporal gap we were trying to bridge – the animal presence of the horse. It also short-circuits the settings of the stage and the house studio/domestic setting.

My interest in this doubled experience of time – experiencing one time at a different time – stems from a general temporal sense of the project of revisiting NMLA, in which we were not only dealing with evocations but with an actual presence of the past. Challenging

linear time, we seemed to be engaging in a time logic in which the past is not past, and the future can only appear through glancing at the past. Conceiving a logic of a spiraling time, the Andean concept of Ñawpa offers a fitting framework to look at how our ruminating reenactments may come to work.

Temporalities: Ñawpa Pacha or the past in the Andean world and syncopated time

In the Andean worldview, the past is not past, but lives on in the present. For the Incas (Ingas), this is exemplified by the fact that when they died, their mummified remains continued "living" in their palaces. According to chronicles, these remains stayed in their respective palaces with their own servants and were taken out to be paraded once a year in processions to intercede for their people before the supreme divinity (Manga Quishpe, 2014).

Different from linear time, the Andean understanding of time is spiral. The present (kay pacha in kichwa) is understood as a closed loop, a space-time that comprehends a controllable past (ñawpa), a lived present, and an immediate future (ñawpan or ñawpany), which is a consequence of both past and the present. These three temporalities are interconnected and coexist within the same loop. The succession of time is made from these spiraling loops, and interestingly, the person is always oriented towards the past, rather than towards the future. This orientation and the imbrication of the three temporalities imply that the only way to move into the future is to advance towards the past, which has created the lived experience of the present. In this conception of time, the past inevitably lives on in the present so much so that the future can only be traced through incursion into the past: “trazar por lo pasado lo futuro” (to trace the future by way of the past) (Manga Quishpe, 2014).

Following a similar logic, in *Performing Remains* (2011), Rebecca Schneider sets out to complicate linear time by addressing the collusion of different temporalities in the context

of reenactments. She evokes Gertrude Stein's idea of a syncopated time to explain: "the warp and draw of one time in another time" (6). We may assume that the time appearing in another time is a resurgence of a past in the present, a past that is then not past but lives on. It could also be that, looking in the direction of the past, a upsurge of the future haunts the past, via the present – a non-exhausted potential of the piece. Past, present, and future are stitched together in a similar fashion than in ñawpa time.

Looking at Carolina's revisitation of *La Huesudita* we are certainly not witnessing a dance that operates only in the present but rather observing it move in different directions in time. We are walking into its past, bringing it into its future reenactment, experiencing it in the present while being punctured by both past and future. During a conversation about *La Huesudita* between Carolina and Genoveva Mora, in 2009, as part of *Dialogos con la Danza* (Talking to the Dances)⁸, they discussed the process through which the horse bones undergo a journey from being remains to becoming a presence alongside the performer. During the performed narration we went through, this trajectory takes another spiraling turn: the horse bones become remains again, both of a more than human life as well as remains of the dance. Carolina parades them on the studio floor to summon both her dance and the animal.

Looking deeper into Carolina's artistic universe, we can glimpse into a wider temporal frame than one being's lifetime, being human or more than human. In a later conversation, following one of our rehearsals, she recounts: "In 2018, scientists discovered the rests of a horse from 42.000 years ago. It had fallen into some sort of ravine in Siberia and the low

⁸ Diálogos con la Danza was an event organized by Revista El Apuntador in which dance creators presented a work of their choice followed by a conversation with critics, artists, and audiences about their creative process.

temperatures conserved its body so well they actually found liquid blood in it. I'm fascinated by this discovery.” (Notes, September 21st 2022, Donoso)

When thinking about this more than human life's blood surviving 42.000 years, the notion of syncopated time acquires a new scale. Although we have been dealing with the multidimensionality of time by looking at twenty some years ago, it is also true that *La Huesudita* was already dealing with a much larger time frame. By creating her own version of a composite being, or as Donna Haraway would call it, a “simpoietic entity”, a “generative enfolding” between beings (60), Carolina engages with life echoes of a deeper time, the survival of life itself, and the cycles of life and death. Her work and preoccupations significantly invite spectators to consider ourselves as a species.

Silence and other beings

In Marcela Correa's notes for the rumination process, engaging with *La Huesudita* confronts her with a distinctive experience of silence. Silence appears in her diary as having both temporal and spatial dimensions, and as impregnated with possibilities: “Silence resonates within me as a strong element, time is suspended, and I feel a very heavy weight as I mobilize the bones that are falling in my lap: death and silence. Silence can be compared to the dim light of the morning before dawn: it is an instant that completely opens itself up to listening. In the instant, you understand life as an eternal succession of presents that do not die. Death is inexistent, or part of a flux.” (Notes, October 5th 2022, Donoso, my translation). For Marcela, the lived experience of silence was an entryway into experiencing the temporality of *La Huesudita* as spiraling time. Both the evocation of time within the piece and the time the work has taken to become visible.

In the process or re-corporealizing this dance, it is through inhabiting silence that new potentials of the work made themselves present. The ruminated vision of the piece relies largely on the realization that death is not an end but part of a larger succession of cycles. Additionally, Marcela underlined the more-than-human elements, and a considerable part of her research was learning about the behavior of ants and other insects to learn about their paths, habits, and sense of time. Silence may well have been a way of tuning in into other being's timings, as well as the turning point for stepping into spiraling, *ñawpa* time, the point where a future can be traced, through directing oneself into the past.

Marcela's dance rumination will be performed on the first floor of the house at Casa Malayerba, a large room surrounded by doors and a large window at the entrance of the house, from where you can take a stairwell that leads to the second floor. On one side of the stairwell, there is a small wall, in between the stairwell and a wall. Marcela starts moving coming out of that wall, slowly pushing the cluster of bones resting on a piece of fabric, with her head on the floor. Her garment is made of many layers of different textured and colored fabrics, covering different lengths of her body, the legs of her dark pants are very long and lag on the floor as she is crawling/pushing. When she has arrived somewhere, she prepares the space by placing a small lantern she carries amongst the bones. She starts the ritual of stacking the bones on top of each other, after a slight moment of balance, some of them collapse, some stay, she insists in her endeavor. Sometimes they collapse leaving nothing of the attempted building structure.

The sequence is repeated with slight variations every time, although slow, her trajectories on the floor are unpredictable. The audience has to adjust in the space as a group as she advances towards a new place in the room so they can all see. One of her stops takes place in one of the walls, which she slowly stands up against, holding one of the bones as though it was a curved continuation of her own arm, she goes down in a sudden movement to

go back to her task of relocating the bones. After the last repetition, she places the bones one by one over her own body, in a sitting position, slightly leaning backwards. We can see her becoming other body, receding to the weight, temperature, and texture of the horse bones. Very slowly, she covers her head, face, and then torso with the fabric in which she had been transporting the bones as she continues to bend forward, gradually covering up, the lights fade out.

Her final movements evoke a surrendering to death and a reintegration to the array of materialities she – through her costume – is already made out of. Somehow the non-exact repetition of the sequence makes it evident that her movements are scripted, as though she is fulfilling a task. Through this kind of “job”, there is a movement beyond individuality that connects her to the fabrics, the bones and to the lanterns. Differing from Carolina’s triumphant, archaic gesture of vanquishing death, Marcela’s movement is one of selfless connectivity to a larger system, signaling a spiral ongoingness not only of her gestures but of an ecosystem made out of the textured materials, the materiality of her body; hair, skin fluids, bones, muscles, the horse bones, the wood of the floor, the banister of the stairs become agents in this cycle of decay and rebirth. Within this bizarre ecosystem, her body, the remains of the horse, excavation site and household collide. The profound calm and commitment of Marcela’s performance convey an extra layer of gravity to the work. In my own notes as the witness of the rumination, I focus on the new meaning death takes on, and the different human and more-than-human entities that – at least in my imagination – become entangled:

More than about death, I do see it is a full, pregnant silence that attracts and summons other beings and other lives. When a tree dies, it is taken over by other live forms, which transubstantiate it to continue its cycle of rebirth, with and towards other bodies. It is as if a slow migration of life into other lives would take place. The feeling I have now

is that during the process of rumination, the dance would have gone under the skin. While in the first version the work creates an exoskeleton, an architecture, a carnal structure, now I feel it organizes a kind of energy, a sap that circulates at other levels, underneath the visible layers. So, it becomes a cycle that can go on and on, that may seem futile, but the results will not be known for a long time. There are many textures that are superimposed, transparencies, vegetable tissues, animal remains, human body. It is a kind of compost in which the visuality is dynamic and does not compose an image. More important are the insistence of gestures and a kind of dilution that takes place with repetition, which is not so much an intended repetition as much as it is an ongoing process, a procedure, a remaking of a score that goes beyond oneself and that builds and destroys. I feel very moved by some kind of deep sadness, something that seems to have been there all along, but only now becomes tangible. (Notes, May 14th 2023, Donoso)

My perception that the dance has moved under the skin foregrounds, perhaps, the immaterial aspects that are immanent to it. There is after all a sap, a blood – like the liquid blood of the prehistoric horse in Carolina’s story – that has kept it alive for 23 years. Marcela’s final gesture of receding her individuality accounts for a dissolution into forces that precede her and survive her, underlining life processes that do not necessarily happen in the realm of the visible. Our danced rumination makes us consider *La Huesudita* not so much as an objectified dance but rather as a force and an ongoing process. The relation of the project to archiving is twofold since it acknowledges the impossibility to capture an always mutating occurrence, an example of what Phelan calls performance’s “inescapable transformation” (148). However, by following the paths signaled by the bones, narrations and other traces, the gesture of pushing the bones has claimed to be inherent to the work – to go back to object

detectives Oligor and Larios (2019). Marcela's metabolic endeavor has followed that fragment into the past and into its future in this new iteration.



Figure 6 Marcela Correa's rumination of La Huesudita, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo by Juan Pablo Viteri.



Figure 7 Marcela Correa's rumination of La Huesudita, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba Photo by Juan Pablo Viteri.

Joy of the archive: the joys of incompleteness

In Giulia Palladini and Mateo Putianaz's *Lexicon for an Affective Archive*, they insightfully articulate the latent paradox in the figure of the archive: it confronts us with the fragility of memory and the fragility of our memory aids – particularly when we are dealing with the body – but it also opens up potentialities, new organizations, and perspectives (14-19). They introduce the phrase *joy of the archive* to signal the creative enjoyment and the possibility of community making an archive can afford. The joy of the archive is possible only because of its incomplete, fragmentary nature, which is something that resonated with those participating in the ruminating project. As mentioned before, during the time we have been working together we have both assembled and created an array of materials: videos, newspaper reviews, diaries, photographs, recordings. They will reconfigure our experience of the past in ways we don't yet know, opening windows between timeframes, bringing together past notes and current annotations. Beyond the need to erect an archive, our facing the past is made of spending time with it, ruminating, re-narrating it, and observing its unrealized potential.

It is through the unfinished nature of *La Huesudita* that we can re-turn to its “non-exhausted creative fields” (2017, 120), as Lepecki describes. Additionally, re-narrating has allowed us to reassess the enmeshment of language markers, dance traditions and struggles for legitimacy and visibility in Quito. Our process of bringing back the NMLA project could be seen as an act of re-vision that is still at work. As feminist poet Adrienne Rich describes, re-visioning is a process that has allowed women to gain a critical look at their own pasts. For her, re-visioning “would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh.” (1980, 40). Re-narrating has allowed us to examine

some aspects of our own image as dancing bodies in the context of Ecuador. Reassessing this group's history may well be a way of devising a fresh image of themselves, recognizing how our image has been determined by both colonial and patriarchal structures. The ways we have learned to name our dancing bodies is an effect of how dance has been narrated and enacted within those structures – following Rich – renaming may have the effect of redistributing power dynamics, of seeing and living “afresh”.



Figure 8 Marcela Correa's rumination of La Huesudita, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo by Juan Pablo Viteri.



Figure 9 Marcela Correa's rumination of La Huesudita, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo by Juan Pablo Viteri.

Chapter Four: A ghost, a web of ghosts, and a wake of objects

Histeria Blanca is a solo created in 1999 by Irina Pontón and performed that same year at NMLA. That same year, I had started attending the FDI school as a student and was present at the performance. Irina was my first dance teacher at FDI. I felt fortunate to be in charge of the danced rumination of *Histeria Blanca* two decades later, since it had had a fascinating effect on me back then. It was dark, alluring, and emotionally charged. It was a piece that, beyond its representational or theatrical value, seemed to perform an act of transformation that went beyond its presentation and to invoke a presence beyond the performer's body and movement. That is my lasting recollection of seeing it then, and I cannot readily explain it through any formal trait. I rather see it as an impression of the work in my own body/self.

In this chapter, I firstly describe the piece as performed in 1999. Later, I focus on my own documents as ruminator of the work to navigate issues of ghostliness, reviewing formal aspects of the piece to connect them to broader concepts and frameworks on spectralities. I explain a methodology I created during this process to listen to individual yet interconnected stories of family traumas. Subsequently, I relate the figure of the ghost to local dance inheritances and transmissions, and to an unintended haunting I encountered during the reenactment. Lastly, I analyze the role of small objects in Irina's work as documenters of autobiographical paths, outlining individual lives, but also the paths and trajectories of the objects themselves.

Irina Pontón's *Histeria Blanca* (1999)

I describe the work based on my observation of a videorecording of the 1999 performance. At the outset of the dance, you can see a female figure grappling with her own entrance onto the stage, hiding in the wings of the theatre, moving slowly into the field of vision of the audience, first only grabbing the theatre curtain, to glimpse at the audience, then

disappearing from view. After many attempts, she progressively advances to center stage, always in a hurried, contrived, and cautious manner. Movement in this section happens mostly downstage and stems entirely from this struggle between hiding and showing herself and exhibits a very particular kind of tension in the body: a body that cannot be at rest. This was the first feature that stood out for me when watching the video since it seems this specific body disposition was responsible for creating the general atmosphere of mystery and roguishness. Always double-checking her surroundings, she performs movement sequences that swirl around her, constantly coming and going and only temporarily positioning herself in different spots on stage. At the end of this sequence, she runs to disappear again into one of the wings.

After a blackout, the female figure reappears sitting, facing the back curtain, accompanied by a doll (a baby) to her side, both sitting in the same position, facing the same direction, with their back to the audience. From here, a constant gesture in the movement is a shaking of her arm while holding the baby in various positions. There is a fluctuation between dramatic gestures of concern, animating the baby's movement, gestures of care towards the baby and creepy or even cruel interactions like shaking the baby as a sign of anger. This section is performed to Meredith Monk's *Window in 7's*, a hectic, syncopated piano piece that adds to the disturbing yet enigmatic atmosphere. Towards the end of this section, she has made a long gesture of comforting the baby on her shoulder while anxiously walking in a circle. Then, in a calculated manner, she separates the baby from her body with her hand, making a pause suspending the baby before letting it fall on the ground. The instant the baby falls, she makes an exaggerated gesture of screaming in which the sound resonates inside her throat, absorbing the air so that it's not so much audible as it is visible. The quality of the scream is also somehow indiscernible; it is not a scream connected to a particular emotion but rather, to a cluster of undefined emotions.

After a blackout, she then re-positions the baby sitting, facing the audience while she goes into a sitting position behind it. After a much-needed pause, she proceeds to take out small objects from a chest pocket in her dress. They included a photograph of a mother and her child, an image of a Saint Rita, and a golden brooch. She arranges them carefully around the baby, which suddenly becomes itself one of the objects. Speaking in a calm voice, she asks the following questions and answers them herself:

- Did she have lovers?

We don't know.

- Did she like women?

We don't know.

- Did she have vices?

Three.

- Did she kill him?

An excess of potassium. (Notes, September 21st 2022, Donoso)

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, for each piece, we held a session with the whole group in which the choreographer presented the work in their preferred way, laying out different archive materials, telling the story of the piece, or sharing specific aspects of the creative process. During the session dedicated to sharing this work on September 21st 2022, Marcela, Carolina, Josie and I were present in person along with Irina. She chose to show us a video of her NMLA performance. Watching the video brought me back the eerie aftertaste I was left with when watching the work as a student in 1999. After showing us the video, she continued to talk about the work, accompanied by the doll and the green velvet dress she had worn. She talked about the relationship with her mother as the departing point for *Histeria*

Blanca (White Hysteria) and described that the title of the dance as a “sort of innocent way of being evil”. Irina took some time to describe a painful, intense, yet ultimately accepting relationship with her now late mother. Although the whole piece reveals a general ambivalence of the mother-daughter bond – tainted by cruelty yet not entirely abandoning – she initially focused on her mother’s kleptomaniac trait. Her mother collected all kinds of small objects wherever she went, hence Irina’s emphasis on the gesture of hiding and the need to conceal an act that could be reproached by others (stealing).

The piece was created at a time when Irina’s mother was still alive, though when we revisited *Hysteria Blanca* she had passed away recently in 2021. Although her passing added a different background to our return to the work in September 2022, I affirm that Irina was always dealing with her mother’s presence and imprint by presenting a female figure other than herself; she was always dealing with her mother’s spectral presence. Analyzing this piece through the lens of the process of ruminating on it will allow me to discuss issues of ghostliness, collective dance pasts and the possibility of objects to document people’s lives.

My analysis moves within a liminality between individual and shared live experiences, and personal and collective dance histories. In conversation with transcripts from the process, diaries and other materials, I argue that ghostliness spurs unattended capabilities in our embodied selves, and those dormant abilities stir and incite modes of listening to our – both personal and dance – ancestors in ways that connect us to larger webs than those we can immediately see. As noted by Jacques Derrida (1994, 56) and theatre scholar Alice Rayner (2006, 25), the appearance of ghosts calls into to question matters of inheritance and responsibility, not only about what we have inherited and what we can choose to inherit but also what we do not know we have inherited. Dealing with ghosts, hinging to the other side, is not an experience of continuity but rather an emotionally charged, disorienting experience. It

may require readjusting our sensorium, since characteristically, it is a form of experience we cannot readily account for. Yet the type of knowledge a ghost can afford appeals precisely to an affective-embodied way of knowing, what Avery Gordon calls “the sensate quality of a knowledge meaningfully affecting you” (1997, 205). This sensuous type of knowledge moves between disorientation and illumination.

Dancing, as Feminist scholar Silvia Federici affirms (2020, 123), can be a privileged way of reappropriating long lost powers of the body, which have been progressively extinguished in favor of a productivist-mechanistic view of the body. These powers and abilities were always connective to other realms: spirit, animal and ecological. Relatedly, Eduardo Kohn’s anthropological account of how Amazonian forests think (2013), explains his own encounter other ways of knowing about the world that can help us reconnect not only to Western ideas of repressed, excluded and haunting ghosts, but to a more lively and relational spirit world, a world in which we walk together in intertwined vicinity with the invisible. In the process of ruminating on *Histeria Blanca*, movement, stories and material objects became interfaces that allowed us to engage in conversation with our ghosts and to ponder about the impressions of them we carry with us. Concomitantly, we were faced with the invocatory powers of re-enacting a dance.

As ruminator of the work, I intuited that the process of revisiting *Histeria Blanca* was going to be a transformational venture for me as well as Irina. My own mother had also passed away in 2013, and since our ruminatory processes were dealing with re-incorporations of the original material onto our own embodied memory, I felt intuitively compelled to go through my own history of sonhood via dealing with those materials. Notwithstanding this strong connection, I decided to focus first on structural matters to create a container for those

emotional movements. My first notes in my working diary after watching the video were about choreographic and spatial structure, there were three distinct moments:

Section One: Hiding on stage, appearing to disappear.

The beginning part happens mostly in the proscenium, which is conventionally considered the site of the present -of presence- yet all we can see is a reluctance to make herself present. Paradoxically, this reluctance to appear is a way to make her mother present, precisely via Irina's constant disappearance.

This first section happens mostly in the proscenium.

Section Two: Motherhood, interacting with the baby.

Throughout this section, there is a display of the complexity of that relationship. For one thing, the roles of mother and baby are indistinct. Is Irina performing her mother? Or herself as mother (which she already was at the time). On the other hand, the bond that becomes apparent is ambivalent, both caring and aggressive, careless but also always present. It is striking that in such short period of time - the piece's duration is about 10 min. we manage to see the many nuances and oscillations implied in that kind of bond.

This second section happens backstage, like some kind of evocation.

Section Three: Objects

Here, Irina appears clearly as herself presenting her mother through a small collection of small objects. Also presenting her through the three questions she audibly asks and attempts to answer: Did she have lovers? Did she like women? Did she have vices? Did she kill him? I wonder in the logic of the scene, who would be listening to this short questionnaire? Is it for herself? For the police? For a psychological evaluation? For a kind of moral authority? Is knowing something about her secrets a way of denouncing her too? What is the place of the audience in relation to these "private" matters?

This third section also happens backstage, although it clearly brings us to a present tense. (Diary, September 21st 2022, Donoso)

I found it useful to keep the three-section structure of the original work as dramaturgy for both the reconstructed piece and for this chapter: a ghost, a web of ghosts, a wake of objects. This tripartite structure echoes the construction of the initial piece and describes a trajectory for thinking through and connecting individual experiences to collective histories through memories, movement, and objects. The first section of this chapter analyzes the ghost as a liminal figure – existing between the visible and invisible, the present and absent, the material and immaterial. I engage in dialogue with authors like Alice Rayner, Avery Gordon, Heather Davis-Fisch, Jacques Derrida, looking at its phenomenology and the way we experienced them during the reconstructing journey.



Histeria Blanca 1999

Foto: Gonzalo Guafía

Figure 10 Histeria Blanca, 1999.

A ghost: seeing double

The concept of ghosts in performance is an unruly concept. It is a concept that challenges intelligibility, rationality and visibility. It is entirely different to mentally “know” or “understand” what a ghost might be than to live an experience dealing with the ghostly. Any experience that puts us in contact with the ghostly tends to challenge our assumptions and certainties, forcing us to look twice to wonder what may have happened. Alice Rayner (2006) tells us that doubts are always a sign of the presence of ghosts and warns us that writing about ghosts without having had an embodied experience of the ghostly may only be idealizing them: “if words are successful in naming the ghost, there is no ghost” (xxiii). The ghostly is then, characteristically, a form of experiencing the world. Yet the effects of seeing ghosts can help us reshape our understanding of reality by engaging not only our intellect but our imagination and embodied knowledge, and we should not underestimate those powers.

Rayner also contends that ghosting has always already been embedded in the experience of theatre. The actor is always conjuring the presence of what isn’t there, absent yet haunting his very presence: “The actor is ghosted by an absent text that has already produced the phantom of character, and to inhabit a character fully is to become a ghost who wears a human, living mask.” (xx). She therefore describes the ghostly as inherently theatrical, not in the sense of being a theatrical object but rather as being a “theatrical way of seeing double” (xxi). Seeing double recognizes the imbrication of the animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead, the visible and the invisible, the real and the unreal. The doubling Rayner describes is similar to the Freudian theorization of the uncanny, in which there is a hinging from the familiar to the unfamiliar. They are different sides of the same coin; different but indistinguishable. In Irina’s ostensible doubts about coming on stage I perceived a negotiation with her own identity as a performer. Her reluctance to make herself visible attests not only for

her mother's relation to secrecy and shame, but also for a fluctuation in Irina's dancing body in presenting herself and making her mother's imprint appear.

In live performance, continues Rayner, doubling entails a complex interface between two different temporalities that may overlap and intersect though not necessarily match: the temporality of the senses and the temporality of consciousness, or "the difference between somatic and mental representations of time" (4). Somatic time is the time of the present moment and sensuous experience whereas the time of representation is a signified time; it jumps back and forth and allows for the temporality of the theatrical –or performative action- to unfold. Although there may be performance propositions where these two temporalities are meant to coincide, our mental representation is always traveling across temporal lines of past present and future. Meanwhile we are also in the here and now of the performance phenomena. Due to this fact there cannot be one and only present of the performance, but instead, the syncopation between the two temporalities of the somatic and psychological representations of time.

Perceived from now, the seeing double effect was quite vivid in my experience of spectating *Histeria Blanca* in 1999, especially in the opening section, where I felt a third presence between myself as spectator and Irina as the performer. Its substance was hard to discern. It appeared to be emanating from the movement silences and non-presences on stage when Irina retreated to the wings. Her mother's imprint was carried along through the insistent gesture of hiding herself and/or hiding something. This doubling, ghostly presence was not only explained by the movement material; it could be that Irina herself was insistently hiding from the spectators for some reason. Yet it was evident that some otherness was invoked and made present through those gestures. Later in the piece, there seemed to be a fluctuation between Irina lending her body to the ghost and appearing as herself, which created a syncopation between different temporalities: the temporality of the performance, which was

mostly carried through Irina's dancing body moving in the space, asserting and displaying her own individual presence. There was also the temporality of her mother appearing through her hiding and cautious gestures that were intermittent in her dancing sequences – and subsequently positioned Irina as a daughter-medium invoking her mother. Furthermore, there was also the temporality of Irina appearing herself as a mother later in the piece, which was also intermittent in the sequences where she interacted with the doll.

To better explain this intermittence between the different presences on stage, I go back to Rayner, who – within a psychoanalytic framework – explains the inherent gap of performance's temporality, examining a well-known dream analyzed in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), which became a structural model to understand trauma and repetition:

A father had been watching beside his child's sick-bed for days and nights on end. After the child had died, he went into the next room to lie down, but left the door open so that he could see from his bedroom into the room in which his child's body was laid out, with tall candles standing round it. An old man had been engaged to keep watch over it and sat beside the body murmuring prayers. After a few hours' sleep, the father had a dream that his child was standing beside his bed, caught him by the arm and whispered to him reproachfully: "Father, don't you see I'm burning?" (Qtd. in Rayner, 7).

In the Lacanian interpretation of this dream, Rayner explains, what is important is how it reveals a missed encounter with 'reality'. The child's speech: "Father, don't you see I'm burning?" is a representation –perhaps elicited by the actual sound of flames burning-, to consciousness from within the dream, of the actuality of the burning child. The body hears the flames, but lingering in their representation in the dream implies that they have arrived too late to prevent the dead body from burning. This is the missed encounter, the inevitable delay

between perception and consciousness in the dream, and that missed encounter repeats itself in reality by arriving too late. (9). Rayner understands the temporality of the Freudian unconscious as an instance in which there is no differentiation between past, present, and future. She contends that it should not be seen as a place, a reservoir of mental information, but rather as “a set of potentials that are activated under certain conditions” (10). Since the unconscious knows no time, it is always present for the body, the very site of presence. “The relation between time’s passage in consciousness and time held as a set of potentials in the unconscious thus involves a gap or syncopation.” (10). This explanation reveals a structure that functions for different psychic phenomena: traumatic memory, dreams, images and live performance. The ghostly in performance dwells and operates within this gap as a negative double of presence, animating what is not present and activating unknown potentialities.

Irina’s presence is disorienting in as much as her body activates other presences of herself as a mother and of her mother. The doll repeats this double presence since at times it represents Irina as a baby, and at other times it represents Irina’s own baby. It is particularly interesting that the questions Irina utters at the end of the piece: “Did she have lovers? Etc.” are formulated in the past tense, as though the mother has already passed. Such phrasing renders her already a haunting ghost even though she was still alive at the time of *Histeria Blanca*’s first performance. Her presence is activated in this negative, potential space so Irina can work through their relationship, in a similar manner to that of the child appearing in Freud’s dream to announce his own death.

To continue with my spectatorial account, I found that along with the disorientation that is often associated with an uncanny experience, I experienced an affective weight. Amidst a lingering myriad of affects, I could clearly distinguish a feeling of secrecy, that seemed to be linked to a sensation of “darkness”. In fact, the theme of darkness appears many times in

documents of the process, including my own notes made during the recent presentation of the work in 2022: “There was a dense affective atmosphere. One feels that something daunting is inhabiting the scene. In the unknown and mysterious, there is also a darkness.” (Notes, September 21st 2022, Donoso, my translation). When I mentioned this feeling in our conversation following Irina’s sharing, she explained that she located different affective atmospheres in different parts of the stage: “The idea was to show different facets in different stage spaces; darkness is presented up front, on the proscenium, whereas in the back there was the maternal part.” Carolina, who was the witness for this rumination, also brings up darkness in an evocative way in her witnessing diary (Diaries, September 21st 2022, Donoso, my translation):

“Backstage, there is an unfathomable darkness.

An open mouth.

A tunnel.

A black universe.

A hole that swallows.” (Diaries, November 22nd 2023, Donoso, my translation)

Darkness is often associated with both femininity and the body, made to be something beastly, that needs to be reigned upon (Federici 2004, 151-153). But there is also an associative chain of secrecy, darkness, queerness, or hysteria, that seems to be cluster and populate the universe of the work. The question at the end of the dance about Irina’s mother possible lesbianism or bisexuality (“did she like women?”) seems to confirm the aforementioned associative chain around femininity, queerness and darkness as a symbol of socially unacceptable feminine behavior.

Although locating darkness backstage seems to contradict Irina's initial stage mapping of affects, Carolina's text refers very vividly to the final gesture before the blackout at the end of the second section (the maternal part) in which Irina willingly and mischievously lets the baby plunge to the floor, then, the second it hits the ground she opens her mouth as though screaming. The sound she utters does not travel outwards but inwards, creating a sort of vacuum around her, creating indeed a tunnel, an expansive darkness that although coming from Irina's body, radiates onstage, summoning a grander darkness that is "unfathomable". It is through this gesture that Irina's mother becomes present, perhaps because it is an exaggerated, almost ironizing gesture, and thus it seems to not only fit in the dancer's body but it's rather a commentary on a social gesture ascribed to motherhood. The gesture is a clear, nonetheless unintended, reference to Brecht's *Mother Courage* and Helene Weigel's infamous silent scream, which condensed an array of emotions at sighting the corpse of her own child. I similarly read in Irina's gesture an echo of Brecht's concept of *gestus* or *gest*, a gesture in which the performer "has to adopt a definite attitude towards a fact" (1978, 105) instead of letting the gesture speak for itself as a fact, the *gest* provides social commentary. My assessment is that Irina's gesture may not be solely locatable in her personal constellation of affects and life story but is easily generalizable as haunting other motherhoods. The inassimilable nature of the scream – it is not clearly an expression of despair or concern, but rather an unspecific, visceral exclamation – the going inwards instead of outwards, offers a sound materiality that is difficult to make definite sense of. The scream also plagues the whole baby section of *Histeria Blanca* with many affects: discomfort, care, tenderness, cruelty, worry, sadness, roguishness. The polysemy of Irina's screaming gesture allows us as viewers to associate the scene to other scenes about motherhood, troubled bonds, darkness, even trauma and to regard motherhood in its complex affective range. The "hole that swallows" in Carolina's diary does swallow other

stories; as spectators, taking us on a journey into our own histories of motherhoods, daughterhoods or sonhoods.

During this section, she performs an oscillation between different subject positions: being herself a child, being her mother, being herself a mother, being her daughter, in a way that it is difficult for audience members to clearly discern between subject and object of her movements and actions. As manifested through the singularity of her own story, she unveils unassimilated, perhaps unassimilable affective aspects of motherhood that disclose the complexity of mother-child bonds. She delves into the inherent density of other mother-child relationships and thus the gesture becomes extendable to other stories. Beyond a normative idealization of motherhood, Irina's particularization of motherly bonds enacts its own set of troubles. As Canadian Performance Scholar Heather Davis-Fisch elaborates, gestures can capture and transmit affective social knowledge throughout time via the survival of "its lingering affective power and its inherent mystery" (2012, 126). The affective power of Irina's gesture radiates outside of a single presence and story and magnetizes other stories of motherhood, including my own. It enables other mothers, daughters, and sons to be swallowed by the hole her mouth outlines and the air her sound absorbs. During our rumination, Irina and I started to come across common threads to our life stories, we found the need to share them and re narrate them in order to rediscover ourselves in relation to our filial wounds. As they became shared, they revealed connections between the stories and the contexts in which our mothers lived. Sharing stories became a way dealing and elaborating on our own pasts as well as on both our mothers' stories.



Figure 11 Esteban Donoso's rumination of Histeria Blanca, May 2023.

Casa Malayerba. Photo by Silvia Echevarria.

Traumas as shared histories

Trauma studies scholars have offered rich theorization on the ghostly. Similar to Rayner's idea of doubleness, literary theorist Cathy Carouth (2016) describes trauma as a double wound, an event that comes so unexpectedly or disproportionately to the psyche that it cannot be fully apprehended. Such trauma repeats by intruding in the person's psychic life: "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (18). Trauma has a particular relation to language since we cannot readily find a way to communicate it, yet it demands a repeated presence. Traumatic memory reoccurs insisting in the fact that we cannot either fully grasp it or effectively communicate what happened, or its effects. As Carouth notes, the relation of trauma to witnessing is paradoxical, as it "simultaneously defies and demands our witness" (20); there is a double relation to the wound. Like ghosts, the traumatic's insistence in disrupting psychic life signals to a demand, but what does a ghost demand? The experience of haunting makes trauma a mysteriously collective phenomenon; it binds us to others through the very (im)possibility of accounting for it.

In Freud's dream of the burning child discussed earlier, the father and his son are bound together through both the child's death and the father's survival. The father's relation to witnessing is double bound between bearing witness to the death of his son as well as bearing witness to his own survival. Now, does the traumatic effect come from the encounter with death? Or from the experience or realization of having survived? For Carouth, the lingering in the dream has a defensive function: "If the father dreams rather than wakes up, it is because he cannot face the knowledge of the child's death while he is awake" (209).

Awakening confronts the father with the inexorability of death, but the same act of awakening has another function in as much as it follows the call within the dream. For Carouth, the child's speech – or the speech of the specter of the child -: “father, don't you see I'm burning” is a call, an imperative to acknowledge death but also to survive, and not only to survive but to bear witness. In the child's specter command, the words are not just affirming the child's dream existence to fulfill the father's wish – as Freud would have it. They are a reproach that compels him to awake, to survive, and to bear witness at once, they are a call to perform survival: “What is passed on, finally, is not just the meaning of the words but their performance (...). The passing on of the child's words transmits not simply a reality that can be grasped in these words' representation, but the ethical imperative of an awakening that has yet to occur.” (247). “An awakening that has yet to occur” embraces a potentiality beyond the literal sense of awakening and opens up to possibilities of what performing this awakening may imply.

Ghosts raise questions about ethics and responsibility in relation to shared stories and compel to action and transmission in ways that are not necessarily prescriptive. As I mentioned before, during the work of bringing the piece back in 2022-2023, memories of my own mother and childhood came to visit. Rather than engaging in producing individual accounts of our mother's lives and imprints upon us, it became more important for us to map out both of their stories. Teresa (Irina's mother) and Martha (my mother) were born only two years apart, 1934 and 1936 respectively, Martha in Quito, the capital city, while Teresa was born and brought up in Tulcán, a smaller city on the border with Colombia. I endeavored to devise a methodology for collaboratively writing a text with Irina, where we began by telling stories about our mothers to each other in order to recreate our connections and inheritances.

Weaving stories

Our rumination on *Histeria Blanca* built directly on the storytelling methodology I had developed throughout earlier performance projects. It consists of two or more participants alternating telling each other stories of our lives with the aim of connecting them. Gradually we begin to borrow some words from the other's story, as steppingstones to continue our next story. This way, both stories advance together as if one depended on the other to move forward, since you can only continue with your own narrative by keeping something (a word, a theme, a timeframe) from the other participant's last story. On occasions, I have tried combining this co-creating exercise with the act moving small objects on a table or weaving a piece together with yarn. The materials and colors usually become part of the story in ways that are intermingled and co-constitutive, without necessarily representing or symbolizing the stories literally. This initial work is not scripted but a regular practice. It can engender a text, an audio or other kinds of materials.

With Irina, we started by telling short stories about our mothers, Martha and Teresa; in keeping with my storytelling methodology each short story kept an element from the previous one. We continued to tell the stories for at least one month (meeting once a week). Once the stories had started to sediment and become more recognizable for us, we wrote them in a shared text, in the form of a scripted conversation. For the performance, we recorded the text read out loud by ourselves. When I started the rumination process, I began creating a collection of objects following what I thought was Teresa's criteria for collecting objects: according to Irina, she was drawn to collect small objects, ranging from toys to small family photographs, figures of saints or virgins, trinkets, and not particularly valuable jewelry. While listening to our text, we manually arrange and rearrange a collection of small objects in different constellations following a sort of classificatory logic, sometimes by kind of object, other times by color, other

times by newness, and so forth. As we move the objects, we create a moving constellation that connects to the text, sometimes more directly, sometimes in a more tangential way, for the spectators. The practice of reading of our text has become a medium-like invocation to both our mothers, a way to listen to those stories resonate with one another. Their stories ended up creating a fabric to which other stories may certainly adhere. At this point, the ruminated work only been shown as a work-in-progress. The following text comes from the last showing:

IRINA. She painted her lips red, she did it in a way that made them look thicker because she didn't like them to be so thin.

ESTEBAN. She painted her lips with a deep red color and accentuated the beauty spot near her mouth with black pencil. She looked like Lucille Ball.

IRINA. When she was nine years old her father died, and everything changed for her. She was put in a nuns' school, and they forgot about her existence, her family never visited her. Until one day she decided to run away. It was then she learned to run away whenever she felt burdened.

ESTEBAN. When she was a child, a school friend had lent her a book, as she was very interested in reading: Dumas' The Count of Monte Cristo. When her father discovered the book in her house, he was furious, and hit her. He told her never to ask anyone for anything again. I don't know if it was because he didn't want her to read, or because he was ashamed to ask other people for things.

IRINA. No one could ever convince her of anything, she was irrational and didn't understand reasons, she always did whatever she wanted. I wonder now if her madness was the way she found to be free.

ESTEBAN. At her funeral, my older brother said publicly that she had been a woman of God. I cringed. To me, she had a free and rebellious spirit, but she felt compelled to obey, to be of god, to restrain her desires.

IRINA. She was a licentious woman, a woman of an obscene vulgarity, she never knew shame. Her spirit was always indomitable, she never had a place in the world.

ESTEBAN. She was obsessed with talking to the dead, and with the afterlife. She always told a story in which a famous actress who dies tragically, is invoked, in a spiritism séance. Through the medium, the actress tells that, as if she had woken up, she suddenly saw herself lying dead in bed. She saw herself motionless as her spirit floated above her own body and drifted away towards the window.

IRINA. Before she died, she talked to the dead, they came to visit her and told her things. One day she told me that she met the virgin Mary under the bed. She was moved by the beauty of the encounter, her eyes shone with an intense emotion or a state of deep delirium, I couldn't decipher which.

ESTEBAN. My father and my sisters went to a medium to communicate with her. The medium spoke exactly like her. She told my dad she was waiting for him on the other side. She also told him that she was by him every night, taking care of him.

IRINA. When she passed away, she had been very angry with me. I later asked her for a sign that she had forgiven me. That same day, an endless message appeared on my phone with indecipherable signs and letters. Only one word was legible in the middle of the very, very long message: TERESA.

ESTEBAN. When I was 10 years old, out of the blue, she told me that there were two things that God never forgave: homosexuality and sorcery. I had never been able to figure out why she had put the two things together. Later, I thought that she had herself often wanted to be a sorceress, and be able to talk to the dead, for one thing. That meant that we were both, in actuality, god's unforgiven beings.

IRINA. She studied up to third grade. After she ran away from the boarding school where she was harassed at night by perverted nuns, her mother never considered to put her back in school. Her dream was to become a nurse, but no one ever paid any attention to her.

ESTEBAN. Martha was born in 1936 under the sign of Leo. She studied at Colegio La Providencia, a nun's school in Quito. She lived in downtown with her parents and sister. It was a poor family. They had many guinea pigs in the kitchen, they helped maintain the temperature in the room. It was a city family, but cities were only becoming cities back then.

IRINA. Teresa was born in 1934 under the sign of cancer, she was the last of twelve siblings, she had four unmarried sisters, an alcoholic brother who played the guitar, he had an accident when he was young and was left with a hanging eye. This unfortunate event made him even more drunk and evil.

ESTEBAN. Her father's family was very alcoholic. One time, my grandmother left the house with her two toddlers and give my grandfather an ultimatum, so that he wouldn't drink alcohol again. He accepted.

Alcohol was a kind of taboo in my house, it was seen as a demon. A sign of moral decadence. My grandfather's sisters were famous in town for throwing parties that lasted for days, drinking alcohol in large quantities and “who knows what else”.

The Cabrera sisters were the terror of every decent woman, because when their husbands went to their house, they were up to no good and they didn't come back for days.

IRINA. She had an older sister named Laura who was called the *Santica* (the saint), she was actually a wicked woman. She once gave a huge beating to a girl who had been given to her to be her maid, La Rosita. This was a reprimand after she had been raped and got pregnant, like a common whore.

ESTEBAN. She had a sister, my aunt Piedadcita, who was very religious, but she was also a party girl and loved to dance. She never got married. She used to say that she preferred to have been left to “dress up saints”, rather than to “undress drunks”.

IRINA. She was beautiful, a movie star kind of beauty, everyone was fascinated when they saw her. She was funny and flirtatious; she had a lot of suitors. My dad first fell in love with her sister Bertha, but when he saw little Teresa, he lost his

mind and run away with her. Bertha stayed single and abhorred Teresa from then on.

ESTEBAN. She was a very beautiful woman; she had many admirers, and many were envious of her. She was very interested in showbusiness gossip, movies, the afterlife, and the lives of famous women artists. However, she always criticized them for being licentious, dissolute, or corrupt.

IRINA. When I was four years old, I dreamed that we were walking together with her, holding hands, walking in the park. Everything was so real, the colors were intense and beautiful, I felt happy and safe. Suddenly, we both exploded at the same time as if we had had an explosive bomb in our hearts and it all ended there, I never forgot that dream in which we both exploded into a thousand pieces.

ESTEBAN. I have this recurring dream: I'm pregnant and when it's time to give birth, I give birth to three black kittens. Only once was it a jaguar.

IRINA. She lived by a park, in Tulcán, in a very big corner house that had an orchard with many fruit trees, she always remembered the beauty of that house. She came from a very rich family, but she always dressed in her older sisters' hand-me-down clothes.

ESTEBAN. In her last years, she lived in Cumbaya – a formerly a rural small town now become suburb in the vicinity of Quito – in a beautiful house with a very big garden. She used to tell the story of all the pigeons that came to visit her every day. They all had names and characters. The day she got sick, all the plants in the garden got a pest. a kind of thick, white matter came upon them. they never recovered. (Scripts, March 2nd 2023, Donoso)

In re narrating the story of both our mothers, we recreated a web of relations that continues to mobilize through our invocatory performance. Some elements stand out: the course of the twentieth century in Ecuador, the overpowering presence of the catholic church, the strong presence of alcoholism, female subjectivities struggling with their own freedom, social hierarchies, and so forth. Although these aspects would certainly require longer analysis, they appear here as fragments and glimpses, revealing the mutual resonance of Martha and Teresa's stories through both similarity and difference. For instance, they came from different class backgrounds although they both were white mestizas (from culturally and racially mixed background), they were both religious, but they were at different sides of the good woman / bad woman cultural binary. Both of our mothers reappear through our affective, embodied retelling of their stories and their materializing in the space of the performance.

In our recent conversations (2023) about Irina's conception of her dance endeavors, I remind her that on repeated occasions she has referred to the creative act as "something magical". After expressing surprise at this phrasing, she continues to explain that she fully relies on intuition. She strives to follow her initial hunches and intuitions with dedication, "until something, that is not herself, is revealed" (Notes, November 2nd 2022, Donoso). Indeed, to create and to recreate this dance has entailed a process of retracing and re-delineating the trajectories our mothers described. We have become mediums in the sense of sighting our mothers through the prism of the imprints they have left on our affective and embodied histories. Looking back from a moment in which we are about to perform the works, and returning to one of my initial impressions of the work, I wonder what it is this dance performed, what was the sort of ritual I intuited when watching *Histeria Blanca* for the first time? Looking at my own diary from the ruminating process, I found these short descriptions that depict the imprint our mothers may have left for each of us:

IRINA.

Teresa

A licentious woman. Unscrupulous. Traveler. Uprooted. Motherless. Homeless.

ESTEBAN.

Martha

A woman of god. Warm and kind. At times restricted and rigid. Afraid, perhaps.

Of what? Of god (Notes, November 6th 2022, Donoso)

In the manner of Sara Ahmed's notion of "impression" in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), we are attempting to name the traces our mothers have left on our lives. These traces are as much sensation as they are thoughts as they are emotions: "the word 'impression' is what 'allows me to avoid making analytic distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be "experienced" as distinct realms of human "experience"' (230). Both *Histeria Blanca* and its danced rumination perform a survey of those impressions but become a way of dealing with inheritance. In my notes for the rumination, I advance a hypothesis for what these dances perform for us: "Perhaps, for Irina, this dance was a way to exorcise the relationship with her mother, to reverse the inheritances of cruelty. For me it's a bit the opposite. It is a way to inherit that magic that my mother was not allowed to fully access. Her powers were there, imprisoned." (Notes, November 3rd 2022, Donoso)

In Irina's attention to the invocatory and magical powers of dance, I trace a reference to what feminist scholar Silvia Federici calls the "occult virtues of the body" (2004, 139). In *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), she gives an exhaustive account of how the establishment of capitalism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was preconditioned by a progressive mechanization of how the human body was conceived. This progressive mechanization implied

a suppression, and even prosecution of previous notions of a magical body, a body enmeshed and in constant interaction with natural and celestial forces. In *Beyond the Periphery of the Body* (2020), Federici asserts that the pre-capitalist body's virtues and powers such as talking to the dead or communicating and becoming animals "were not all imaginary" (123), but actual embodied skills that allowed for people's survival through agricultural or sailing knowledge. Later, she positions dancing as a central act to be able not only to reconnect to long lost embodied possibilities, but as a sort of laboratory to explore, invent and reinvent our bodies: "Dance is central to this reappropriation. In essence, the act of dancing is an exploration and invention of what a body can do: of its capacities, its languages, its articulations of the strivings of our being." (123)

Throughout the process of redoing *Histeria Blanca* we both performed a reappropriation of our capacity to invoke other's presences through dance, and in doing so, to reinvent our connective stories. As we will see in the next section, we were not only dealing with our family ghosts, but also with our dance pasts and inheritances. The second section of this chapter ponders our dance ghosts and inheritances and considers how they reappeared either expectedly or unexpectedly creating different kinds of connective threads and webs; as Derrida notices, ghosts tend to appear as not only one but as a crowd (31). The movement material of *Histeria Blanca* signaled to a web of dance lineages I aim to trace in conversation with elaborations by Fabian Barba, André Lepecki, further conversations with Irina and the rest of the group, and Eduardo Kohn's broader conceptualizations on the spirit world.

A web of ghosts

Although this process started off as an invitation for one ghost to appear – the ghost of the original dance as it had once been performed – it quickly started attracting other ghosts, both family and dance ghosts. In order to reflect on the manifold relations and influences ghosts can have in our day-to day lives, I turn to Canadian Anthropologist Eduardo Kohn and account of how the spirit world interacts with humans and non-humans. In *How Forests Think* (2014), describes his life in the small town of Avila in the Ecuadorian Amazonia. The imbrications of the inhabitants with the spirit world are instantiated through their relationship to the realm of the masters: spirit entities who dwell in the deep of the forests surrounding Avila. The ways the masters interact with the material world is determined by the different kind of relationships they hold with humans and non-humans and the different kinds of beings they are:

The emergence of the spirit realm of the masters of the forest is the product of the relationships among the many kinds of selves that make up this thinking forest. Some of these relationships are filial, others rhizomatic; some are vertical, others lateral; some are arborescent, others reticulate; some are parasitic, others predatory; and, finally, some are with strangers, and others, with those that are intimately familiar. (218)

My proposition of the web of ghosts is inspired by the many types of relationships that can exist between humans and invisible forces. I argue that this multiplicity of beings and relationships unlocks more possibilities for thinking the ghostly than those stemming from psychoanalytic notions of the repressed, the suppressed, the unacknowledged or the encrypted associated with ghosts. They also reflect a more colloquial, perhaps less transcendent relationship to these acting influences. There is a whole ecology of presences coexisting in our everyday life. Echoing this mysterious multiplicity, Derrida notes in *Spectres of Marx*, that when there is a ghost, it is not a singular entity, since the effects of their haunting are always

“multiple, heterogeneous, contradictory, divided – thus they bring forth “an inheritance that will always keep its secret” (57). This implication of mystery makes our relationship to the ghostly a permanent enquiry, a task, to constantly redefine what we may or may not inherit from them. As dance scholar André Lepecki suggests in *Exhausting Dance* (2006), “choreography demands a yielding to commanding voices of masters (living and dead)” (9). In that sense, dance may always be a ghostly matter, an invocation to an-other’s voice – and presence – to join us. Lepecki’s text mainly refers to dance’s ability to discipline and police bodies and movement through commanding voices. Yet, along with their commands, there is also a lingering trace of their dancing bodies.

When I started rehearsing *Histeria Blanca* in 2022-2023, I initially worked with the video, dealing mostly with how the movement looked and how it felt to perform it. Later, I needed another source of information and asked Irina to teach me the material, in whichever way she remembered. She hadn’t performed the work in over 20 years, so it was clear that there was not going to be more precision than by looking at the video. I asked her to recall the movement sequences in the first section. She explained that they were improvised following the guiding premise, which was that she was always in fear of getting caught. From this prompt, her movement sequences came out of a sort of circularity, sprung from the movement of looking around repeatedly. I developed my own movement material out of this improvisation score and from what I remembered from the video. It seemed important to maintain the liveliness of the improvised material instead of reproducing the results the initial score had begotten.

However, as I continued, it seemed to me that beyond the movement score, there was an underlying score related to the emotional state that was necessary to convey and to experience the situation or the “character”. While rehearsing, I experienced a jagged

conversation between movement material and emotional state. It seemed that in only a few occasions I was able to connect with the state of secrecy and mischievousness that the work demanded. Conversely, when I managed to clarify the movement in terms of formal qualities, spatiality, movement initiations and impulses, etc., the material became more graspable, and I felt more confident. I had the recurring feeling that I did not have the necessary training to consistently attain an expressive state, and it often felt like I was forcing this aspect in. At the same time, the process of getting into the work repeatedly brought me back to my experience of studying dance at the FDI school. As I mentioned, Irina was my first teacher there. However, I did not specifically have the memory of her addressing emotional states during her classes. Every time I encountered this difficulty in entering the work, the distinct image of Wilson Pico dancing came to me. As discussed in previous chapters, Wilson Pico is one of the founding members of FDI, and a celebrated figure of modern dance in Ecuador. Given his status, it was not a surprise that I vividly recalled his presence. At the same time, these feelings dismayed me, as I distinctively thought: “I feel like I am doing -or rather not doing- what he does when dancing.” I felt that I was somehow bringing him in by failing to reproduce his working methods. I never had the opportunity to work directly with him but there was enough familiarity with his work for me to think about his choreography and presence.

When gathering more details from Irina, I learned that her piece had developed substantially during a choreography workshop taught by Wilson Pico. The focus of the workshop was to develop choreography using an object as point of departure. Irina had won the doll in a raffle and had brought it to the workshop without giving it much plan or thought. As the workshop progressed, the story of her mother and their relationship started to emerge more and more clearly through her interactions with the doll. It is clear now that all the nuanced multifaceted work with the baby came from a training that was not explicitly brought up in our

previous conversations. I would not have known this had I not felt the presence of Wilson Pico myself while dancing Irina's steps.

It is only logical that Irina's training and working with Pico for many years would make itself present in the work, but it is of particular interest that his presence so vividly emerged in my process the way a ghost would. After this recontextualization of the working tools I was dealing with, I was redirected to the idea of subtext, as used in expressionist dance. As dancer and scholar Fabian Barba explains in his text *Impure Transmissions: Traditions of Modern Dance Across Historical and Geographical Boundaries* (2017), the subtext is a central element in expressionist dance. Exemplified in the work of German dancer Mary Wigman, subtext is an element that eludes a definitive conceptualization, and often becomes that "something" that the dances expresses, making it difficult to translate that subtext into words:

In this sense the subtext is not textual, but it can be understood as the intensity that brings coherence and 'substance' to the dance. I have come to understand the subtext as an intense subjective experience produced through the dancing. It is this intensity that can be perceived as the emotional dimension of *Ausdruckstanz*, yet reducing this dynamic, and to some extent unidentifiable, intensity to a well-defined emotion misses out the richness and the potential of this kind of dance. (45)

In his text, Barba elaborates on his own experience of reconstructing a series of Wigman's solos, while recognizing the echoes of his early dance training in Quito within that reconstruction process. He meticulously traces the overlooked and less direct influence of *Ausdruckstanz* (German expressionist dance) on the development of Modern dance in Quito, specifically in the work of choreographers Wilson Pico and Klever Viera (another well-known dance figure, founder of FDI who Barba studied with in his early years). Although there was never a direct body to body transmission between the two traditions, there is a strong affinity

between *Ausdrucksanz*, as developed in Germany in the 1930s and Modern dance developed in Quito from the 1970s on.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, ballet arrived in Ecuador in the 1930s, but took many decades to establish itself both as an aesthetic form and as a profession. In the early 1970s Wilson Pico and his brothers Romel and Diego created Ballet Experimental Moderno BEM (Experimental Modern Ballet). This undertaking might be recognized as the first dance practice that later on would be identified as modern dance in the country (43). Although initially trained in ballet, Pico was significantly influenced by Pascal Monod, a disciple of Jerzy Grotowzky, who had taught in Quito for one year during the time BEM was active. Another important influence was Germán Silva, a dancer from Chile who trained mostly in ballet but was familiar with the work of Kurt Jooss (also an important figure of the expressionist dance movement) and Maurice Béjart (Mariño and Aguirre 1994, 315-316).

After BEM, Wilson continued to develop his work as a soloist. Most of the *motifs* developed in his early works were drawn from popular everyday life in the city. The works were clearly engaged with social problematics and it staged characters that could be easily identified by the audience (a boxer, a bullfighter, a pious woman, a bride). They were often performed in plazas, markets, hospitals, and other non-theatre venues. Pico trained in an autodidactic manner, nonetheless, studying short periods with big dance figures and schools of the time: Guillermina Bravo in Mexico; Martha Graham in the US and workshop with Katherine Dunham in Venezuela. (Salguero 2007, 70). Pico continued to form his own distinctive voice, characterized by a search for a personal vocabulary and a pressing need to engage with the social reality surrounding him.

As Barba explains, although there was no direct contact between the aesthetics and working methods, there was an effort from the later founders of FDI to access other materials

such as texts, photographs, videos to get on touch with *Ausdruckstanz*. Furthermore, he explains: “In conversation, Wilson told me he considers himself to be an unofficial heir of Mary Wigman. During one period in his career, he referred to his dances as dances of expression” (Barba, 44). In the 1990s, the FDI organized a dance festival that was called *Jornadas de la danza Mary Wigman* (Mary Wigman dance sessions) to credit the expressionistic legacy and the relevance of their adherence to it. They performed their own works (mostly Wilson Pico and Klever Viera’s) during these sessions.

I find Wigman’s appearance in the midst of Pico’s aesthetic endeavors no less spectral than Pico’s appearance during my own reconstruction of Irina’s piece. There is both an elusiveness and a sort of fascination in those relationships. There is also a replication of the double-seeing effect discussed at the beginning of the chapter: Wigman appearing through Pico’s body despite temporal and geographical distance; conversely, Pico and Viera appearing in Fabian Barba’s reconstruction of Mary Wigman’s works. My rumination was a setup for Irina’s body to reappear through my own body, but Pico’s body appeared unintentionally in the process bringing echoes of Mary Wigman’s subtextual work.

There is a web of ghosts surrounding *Histeria Blanca* and its reappearance in the present. Although not the central focus of this study, our web of ghosts extends even further, as Barba intelligently asserts: the adoption of modern dance traditions by artists in Quito (Particularly Pico and Viera) coalesced with their own Andean inheritances (49).

I realized later that I lacked specific training for performing *Histeria Blanca*, training that Irina had received by working directly with Pico and Viera. As Barba continues to explain how the Wigman aesthetic implies a technique around subtext and inner state of the dancer: “The dancer is expected to recapture the lived experience of the dance each time it is performed. Ideally, the dancers should reach a heightened or ecstatic state of being, transcending the mere

physicality of the gestures and expressing the inner self of the human being.” (49). I had to recognize my limitations at inheriting the expressionist aesthetic, since I did not study long enough with them, whereas I do acknowledge there was a sense of creative experimentation at the FDI school I am certainly an heir of. I had to approach the rumination of *Histeria Blanca* admitting that limitation, which in turn was an opening for other possibilities of experimenting with the material. My difficulty at reproducing that kind of work was the prompt for re-discovering those traces and embodied transmissions. When discussing inheritances during our recent work process started in 2022, Irina, Josie and Carolina brought issues of conscious and unconscious legacies, audience habituations, and the influence of collective and group work in the local and Latin American context:

IRINA. The first part is sort of presenting a character.

ESTEBAN. Yes, creating characters is an inheritance that comes from both masters (Wilson Pico and Klever Viera). Perhaps that was a transmission without much effort? In how you move in *Histeria Blanca* I see a particularity that I would like to reproduce, the way you deal with tensions for example. There is a particular way of presenting this other being. I would like to get into that, this is why I would like to learn it from you.

IRINA. Yes of course, these things are taken or transmitted without realizing. I deliberately decide to present a character.

ESTEBAN. Exactly.

IRINA. It comes from an unconscious...

ESTEBAN. ...Schooling? I remember when I studied at FDI, it was common to talk about characters, whereas when I later studied in the US, it was not necessarily usual to talk about a character, it was a possibility among many others.

IRINA. But now that you mention it, what I find nice is that the piece was not about myself. It was about somebody else.

ESTEBAN. You were sort of being a vehicle for somebody else.

CAROLINA. Embodying Doña Teresita⁹

JOSIE. Yes, but it's also that your way of embodying her was to create a character, you weren't approaching it from a sensorial or from another point of view, those were the tools that we learned.

CAROLINA. Now that you mention it, it was an inheritance of the patriarchs but also, during that time, theatre dance and film were all very close. in fact, at the time, they were all looking for a space, a house, so they could work together. Film, Theatre and Dance, I went to some meetings about it.

JOSIE. Klever (Viera) and Wilson (Pico) had a big influence from theatre, they had strong connection to Theatre Group La Candelaria, Juan Carlos Moyano (in Colombia).

CAROLINA. There was also some information about Pina Bausch's TanzTheatre.

JOSIE. I believe that is still current for our country. As the director of a Theatre now, I feel contemporary or experimental or whatever you want to call is more difficult to program because people ask for theatre-like works. It is in their memory that is what dance is: to dance a character.

ESTEBAN. They've created a tradition.

JOSIE. They became important references for the audience. There may be different interests now in the dance community, but in the audience, there is still an appetite for works that seem more theatre oriented. (Transcripts, October 15th 2022, Donoso, my translation).

⁹ A familiar way of calling Teresa, Irina's mother.

This recognition of a local dance tradition seems to counter a widespread assumption that “there is no dance school” in Quito, since there was never a dominant concert dance school establishing itself for long enough (Donoso, 2018, 78). As we can see, there are indeed ways of doing and seeing that have become habitual for both artists and audiences. It is certainly not common to see through those habituations, but the process of collective looking back has allowed us to recognize habituations and sediments that have been collected for long periods of time.

The third section of the chapter follows the paths of objects and materials as documenters of our lives by becoming de-railed or repurposed from the chain of consumption they are part of the way authors like Michel de Certeau or Igor Kopitoff explain. The objects we encountered and assembled throughout the rumination also became interfaces for communicating with our ancestors.

A wake of objects

Within her writing on issues of trauma and death, theorist Christina Sharpe proposes the wake as a ritual work of mourning, a way to celebrate the lives of relatives and to gauge the insistence of Black lives on continuing to exist, despite annihilating forces. She foregrounds “The power of and in sitting with someone as they die, the important work of sitting (together) in the pain and sorrow of death as a way of marking, remembering, and celebrating a life” (2016, 10-11). When someone dies, they also leave a wake of objects behind (*una estela* in Spanish).

“Wake: The track left on the water's surface by a ship (in the sea often marked by a smooth appearance)” (Oxford Dictionary). I distinctly remember going through my own mothers’ trail of objects not long after she died. My father had sold the family house in record time after her passing and us, sons and daughters, had to make swift decisions on a myriad of different objects. As I went through them, sometimes the objects I found led me into moments of the family history that I could recognize: a child’s Christmas costume, cards made at school to celebrate Mother’s Day, cosmetics, jewelry, unfinished knitting projects, etc. At other times, I discovered facets of her story that were unknown to me.

I discovered my mother had kept a daily planner, which she used as a diary as well. In the small spaces where you usually write times and dates for appointments and other summarized information, she had included descriptions of other tasks and activities she had performed on that day and curiously, more lengthy accounts of how she felt, things she wanted to do, enjoyed, or was worried about or details about what had happened on a doctor's appointment. It was as though she had managed to fit – to the extent that it was possible- the structure and writing of a diary within the format of a planner. It was beautiful and moving to see how through that overlap and mismatch of writing purposes, I glimpsed a different person

than the one I was habituated. I sighted a fulfilled and joyful woman who despite -and perhaps through- the overwhelming demands of everyday life, household and family obligations, had found her way to being content and happy. By taking care and overseeing the lives of her seven kids, a household, a husband, a job, she found her own realization. She had always deeply desired to be a mother, I learned by reading this planner, and this is exactly what she became. What at first seemed to be a spatially awkward way of keeping a diary was an unflawed manifestation of how, through what seemed an imposed grid of chores and obligations, she found a way to perform her own motherhood in a way that reflected exhaustion, juggling with schedules and imperious needs, yet it also reflected contentment with the minutia and the attentive care to others she had developed. It became clear to me how much of her life had fulfilled her desire of being a mother.

Teresa (Irina's mother) also kept a collection of stolen objects: small, appealing objects that were easy to subtract and also possessed some sort of an "aura": photographs, cosmetics, pieces of jewelry -with no monetary value-, toys, images of saints, crystals, all sorts of miniatures, curious objects of all sorts. As Carolina mentions in her witness diary: "When Teresa died, everything stolen began to emerge from the drawers. Little hidden treasures." (Diaries, January 15th 2023, Donoso, my translation). Secrecy had been lifted, and a pile of objects emerged, revealing a sense of Teresa's joy in keeping these treasures for herself, for her own aesthetic, memorial, or devotional enjoyment.

With every act of selecting and subtracting an object, Teresa connected that object to the other objects in her collection as well as the stories of their previous owners. At the same time, her act also derailed (disturbed) the objects' participation in a chain of value-exchange. Their value is not one of a commodity since they are not there to be exchanged for money or for other objects. As anthropologist Igor Kopytoff suggests in the *Cultural Biography of Things*

(1986): “To be a non-commodity is to be “priceless” in the full possible sense of the term, ranging from the uniquely valuable to the uniquely worthless” (75). Beyond a marketable exchange value, these objects possess a mysterious value that grants them the status of treasures. They are, after all, an archive of Teresa’s errands and trajectories through life as well as an archive of the previous lives of the objects themselves.

In my mother’s “awkward” use of the daily planner and in Teresa’s derailing of small objects into her collection, I find poetry. This poetry arises from the way they reappropriated the use of those objects to delineate their own paths in life. Through following the paths those objects afford, we can trace their trajectories, as Michel de Certeau explains, people’s everyday life meanderings end up tracing “‘indirect’ or ‘errant’ trajectories obeying their own logic.” (*The Invention of Everyday Life*, 1984, xviii). Even though the trajectories of these two women were largely determined by a patriarchal cultural order, defined religion and an expanding industrial capitalism throughout the twentieth century in Ecuador, they managed to become themselves and to bring forth their own interests and desires despite these constraints, disrupting those demarcations through daily practices. As de Certeau explains, daily practices can become a ground in which people exercise their own desires and interests, blurring prescription from the systems they are embedded in:

Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages (...) and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop. (xviii)

The relations woven by the biography of these objects and Martha and Teresa’s own subjectivities put forward a personalized syntax in relation to existing parameters. This

trajectory ends up describing their own motherhood, imperfect and haunted as any motherhood can be, a trajectory through which they found, amongst a myriad of other affects, joy.



Figure 12 Reconstructed collection of objects.

Reconstructed collection of objects made of remainders of Teresa's collection, Irina's and my own contributions to the logics of collecting Teresa had developed: small, visually attractive, trinkets, toys, small pieces of jewelry. small photos, religious imagery, naughty objects, cosmetics. Here, they are arranged by color. White: baby, soap, stone. Transparent: stone, soap container, small My Little Pony, small animal toy. Blue: painted Baby Jesus. Pink: bigger My Little Pony, vulva, female doll, heart, hair clip. Red: pompom hair elastic, heart, lipstick, plastic fangs, toy cars. Metal: religious image, handcuffs, lock. Black: photo of Irina and Teresa, photo of Martha with her sister, mother and father in a park bench, two stones, stone figure, watch, compass, spider. Brown: rope, violin, penis, breasts.

Re-tracing the connective threads around *Histeria Blanca* has shown me how we carry other presences within our bodies, spending time with this web of interconnected ghosts. We have been able to discern ourselves and our own stories by performing a ritual of both acknowledgement and separation from our mothers. We can see the impressions and inheritances that live within us while also recognizing that they have had their own lives and their own struggles. At the end of the performance, Irina, and I both read out loud a list of questions to both our mothers. The questions are not there to be answered but to resonate, hauntingly, in the dark:

IRINA. Why did she steal?

ESTEBAN. What did she discover in the afterlife?

IRINA. Did she have many lovers?

ESTEBAN. Does she still have something to tell me?

IRINA. Did she like women?

ESTEBAN. Do I have anything to tell her?

IRINA. Did she kill him?

ESTEBAN. Did she really die? (Scripts, January 15th 2023, Donoso)



Figure 13 Esteban Donoso's rumination of Histeria Blanca, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo by Juan Pablo Viteri.



Figure 14 Esteban Donoso's rumination of Histeria Blanca, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Silvia Echevarria.



Figure 15 Esteban Donoso's rumination of Histeria Blanca, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Juan Pablo Viteri.

Chapter Five: “No More Moon in the Water”: Insubordinations, Illuminations

No más Luna en el Agua (No More Moon in the Water), the name of the dance festival we have been recalling, came from consulting the Osho tarot cards. In 1997, Mónica Thiel, Cecilia Andrade, Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón and Josie Cáceres drew one card from the deck with the specific objective of finding a name for their festival. The card depicts a young woman looking at a pail of water, that is just falling on the ground, with surprise and disappointment. A full moon shines in the night sky and seems to be reflecting on the spilling water. The name of the card reads: “*El Accidente Definitivo*” (The Definitive Accident). The description of the card communicates the following fable:

The nun Chiyono studied for years, but was unable to find enlightenment.

One night, she was carrying an old pail filled with water.

As she was walking along, she was watching the full moon reflected in the pail of water. Suddenly, the bamboo strips that held the pail together broke, and the pail fell apart.

The water rushed out; and the moon’s reflection disappeared, and Chiyono became enlightened. She wrote this verse:

This way and that way I tried to keep the pail together,

hoping the weak bamboo would never break. Suddenly the bottom fell out.

No more water, no more moon in the water – emptiness in my hand. (Osho Tarot Cards)

This parable illustrates a person’s relation to breakthroughs and illuminations which, it advises, happen suddenly and beyond rational control. The works examined in this chapter relate to breakthroughs and illuminations in more than one way. I look specifically at the processes of ruminating on the pieces *27 Minutos* (2004) by Josie Cáceres and *Más Adentro*

(Further Deeper Inside) (2002) by Marcela Correa. Both works played a critical role in their choreographic careers, by inaugurating a reflective space for Josie and Marcela to become conscious of their participation in hostile situations in both artistic and personal realms. Creating these works meant for them starting to work through their own questions about authority and power and how their bodies had become in many ways captive of power asymmetries.



Figure 16 Osho Tarot Card.

In this chapter, I describe the work *27 minutos*, followed fragments of our collective conversations to look at issues of authority, dancing bodies ideals, insubordinations and micropolitical gestures. These aspects are echoed and amplified in the danced rumination of the work through the inclusion of a spoken word text by Carolina Vásquez. Later on, I turn to describing *Más Adentro* to examine power relations within affective and love relations. The danced rumination on *Más Adentro* by Irina Pontón offers both a critical distance and insight on heteronormative gender relations.

Throughout conversations elicited by these two danced ruminations during our 2022 sessions, we were able to locate experiences that strongly resonated with one another, all dealing with issues of authority and power. These connections we started to make, led to individual and collective insights around pedagogies and self-pedagogies, personal poetics and collective/political spheres of action. I turn to Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik's contributions about micropolitics and insubordination and to Laura Levin's concept of camouflage to analyze the way in which these dances became devices for Josie and Marcela to claim space as women choreographers. Paulo Freire's work on the pedagogical space as political potential provides a ground for connecting individual and collective struggles for emancipation, which strongly resonate with Audre Lorde's insights about the functions and reach of poetry, especially for women. Listening to other Ecuadorian dancers' testimonies to provide context on local pedagogical climates, I examine how both works and their ruminatory reenactments develop strategies of auto pedagogies and of learning with and through other dancing bodies. I establish a dialogue with Mexican Feminist scholar Marcela Lagarde's conceptual frame on the captivity of women, a historical construction of womanhood that materializes in different domains: work, household, affective relations, and others. I consider how these realms may overlap and how they to reaffirm relations of subjection.

Josie Cáceres' *27 Minutos* (2004)

27 minutos was created and performed by Josie Cáceres in 2004 at FDI. The process of looking back at the work in November 2022 was marked by the fact that, along with Josie's narration, the only remaining records of the piece are the costume, a silk dress designed by Josie herself in 2004, and a long piece of white fabric from the same material. During the session for sharing the work in November 2022, Josie, Irina, Carolina, and I were present. Josie spent some time narrating the context in which the work was created and her own personal journey with it. In 2004, Josie, Irina, Carolina, Ernesto, Cecilia, Terry, and other dancers had been involved as performers in a several months-long creative process with one of the directors of the collective, Klever Viera. At a given point, around 3-4 months into the rehearsals, the director decided to interrupt the creation and call the whole thing off. The reason for this disruption was unclear, yet Josie was left with a "bodily discontent", angry and frustrated. She felt disapproved and unacknowledged as a dancer. She then endeavored to create a work of her own immediately to channel this anger, performing a gesture of self-authorization. *27 Minutos* became a sort of laboratory for questions about the ways in which authority and power were exercised at FDI, as evidenced by Viera's single-handed decision to interrupt a creative process. *27 Minutos* asks: "Who gets to decide and who gets to enable a dance to come to existence or not? For what reasons? What is it with the big guys, the sacred cows who are the only ones who can decide to open a creation space or close it off at will?" (Transcripts, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation).

Later in the same session, Josie narrated descriptions of sections of the work with the help of annotations from Carolina and Irina, who were there when the piece was originally created and performed in 2004. Since there was no video of the work, some of the descriptions left a considerable space for our imaginations to fill. In what follows, I provide an annotated

transcript of the conversation to highlight the collective process that guided our ruminations. The texts in italics are my annotations on Josie's narration of the dance as well as my own imagined understanding of the work from the way she tells the story. These annotations are also accompanied by Carolina and Irina's commentary on the piece.

JOSIE. The beginning of the dance consisted of a tense, contained walk from backstage to front. *She walks in a staggered manner, propelled by forceful impulses coming from her hips. They go in different directions.*

She demonstrates the walk and the accompanying movement while describing.

Lights come in.

She is dressed up in a white silk dress.

She is standing in the center, backstage.

IRINA. The hips are a body part linked to animalistic survival strategies, it is a set of joints with which you resist, you stop attacks from the outside world, or fight back. The hip joint is connected to the way you deal with defending your own space, your own territory, this is symbolically located in the hip joint.

She is murmuring something as she moves forward from backstage.

JOSIE. I was moving with my hips, energetically, as though they were saying no. The text that I was murmuring was a letter I had written to Klever. I distinctly remember the words: "Tu te crees la vaca sagrada (You think you are the sacred cow)".

The silk dress echoes the movement of the dancer throughout, moving with a lag in relation to her sharp body movements. A sound emanates from the material, making her motions audible as the body moves forward.

JOSIE. The second section of the piece is more virtuosic, big turns, jumps and complicated stuff.

If she would do it again now, Josie wouldn't include this part. It seems now unnecessary in relation to the exploration, which was about the interaction of the body with the material.

JOSIE. This was performed at Sala Mariana de Jesus. I don't really remember the walk and the hip impulses. I had erased that section in my memory.

The choice of the silk was connected to an idea of status, royalty, or grandeur. After the "virtuosic" section, Josie retreats to the wings. The white silk fabric draws a path on the stage from left to right. She moves slowly, gradually incorporating the fabric on her body as a head piece, as a dress, or as part of her body. She goes down on the floor, placing herself under the piece of fabric, to sometimes cover her whole body, and sometimes covering different body parts. She begets a series of silhouettes resembling different creatures, they appear in a permanent state of metamorphosis. (Transcription, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

Insubordination

In this dance there is a rebelliousness at play and a performed conversation with the dancing masters, Wilson Pico and Klever Viera, with whom Josie and the other group members had trained and danced. *27 minutos* also poses a challenge to the movement and body ideals the dancing masters transmitted and how they transmitted them. While reviewing Josie's creative process in 2004 for our rumination in 2022, a series of additional questions became relevant: What were the technical values Josie had learned and that she felt she had to comply with? What was the process of authorizing herself to be onstage as a creator and a dancer? What kind of obstacles stood in the way of this self-authorizing? And how did working values taught by their masters played a role or became conditioning to her appearance on stage?

27 minutos became a laboratory for Josie to work through these questions of authority intermingled with questions about techniques and physicality. Seen from the present moment, these questions were crucial in creating a space for Josie and her fellow dancers to experiment

with, and subvert, both dancing politics and pedagogies. During our recent conversations, the interruption of the creative process seems to have been a symptom of a generalized power dynamic in which Josie felt powerless and diminished. As discussed in the Introduction, Josie and her fellow dancers lived in a creative environment where their bodies were constantly described as “defective”. The repetition of such derogatory statements amplified implicit power asymmetries within the FDI collective, especially when it came to making artistic and organizational decisions, even if at that point (2004) they were all considered to be active members. When the creative process was called off, Josie wrote a letter to Klever, who had been her partner in the beginning years of FDI. She never intended to send the letter but rather saw it as a place to lay out her discontent. She couldn’t find the letter for our session but remembers the opening line: “you think you are the sacred cow”.

In the solo that Josie developed out of these feelings of frustration and anger, I note that there is a defiance to Klever’s authority figure, but concomitantly, a defiance to prevalent dancing body ideals. This attitude is manifested through Josie’s walk, accompanied by movements initiated by the pelvis and her murmuring the letter’s opening line. Irina’s interpretation of the symbolics of the pelvis in the above conversation is thought-provoking since Josie’s incursion into the stage space does suggest a gesture of “defending your own space, your own territory.” Later in the same conversation, we elaborated on how the figures of the dancing masters were infused with the authority of a *patrón*. In Spanish, *patrón* can mean master, ruler, traditionally someone who has all power and can command at will; but can also mean pattern, a movement pattern, a behavioral pattern, or a textile pattern.¹⁰ The dancers

¹⁰ This association of pattern and patron was initially brought up during a workshop at Universidad San Francisco and was subsequently brought in again in our conversation about *27 Minutos*.

recalled how a dynamic of ruling masters was consistently present in the collective. This dynamic continued to be reproduced formally in terms of decision-making and informally in terms of daily rehearsal or training interactions. The women also described the process through which the power imbalance became tangible for them. Rather than a one-time breakthrough – like the Osho card had described when they consulted the oracle – these realizations have continued to act on them individually and collectively over time. I quote the following conversation to illustrate how the figure of the *patrón* continues to inform their lives and relationships to one another:

IRINA. I wonder how much this memory of dominion continues to be reproduced. How this idea of *patrón* continues to act: someone becomes the one, the only one who knows, the only one who decides, and somehow you submit to it.

JOSIE. And you become part of that order.

IRINA. Yes, this is a pattern or an order of dominion of which you can become complicit of. Then you see him as the master.

JOSIE. And you submit to it.

IRINA. You submit to it because you want to dance, or you want to be part of it. And somehow you sacrifice something of yourself, something precious. We sacrifice our freedom which is a precious thing, and we repeat a pattern (*patrón*). This is the beginning of what Josie does in *27 minutos*.

ESTEBAN. She rebels.

IRINA. She rebels, like everybody at some point in their lives, you want to let go of a pattern and take your life in your own hands. To live your own live, you have to betray your own clan, betray the *patrón*. This is how you create your own thing, which is beautiful. However, when there is something that you need to demonstrate it means you are still linked to the *patrón*'s expectation. (Transcripts, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

Realizing that imposing dynamics within the collective required their participation becomes a starting point to subvert those logics. In *27 minutos*, Josie maps out a journey that goes from confronting an external authoritative force and claiming space to asserting her own body's physical abilities, to finally retreating into a succession of metamorphoses and versions of herself. Exemplified by the two-fold meaning of the word *patrón*, confronting the authority of the *patrón* takes a new path via directing attention to her own body and literally reworking patterns of interaction with the fabric, which she deploys as a physical path in which transformation can take place. In order to further analyze these gestures of self-assertion I would like to invoke Suely Rolnik's understanding of the micropolitical sphere.

In Spheres of Insurrection: Notes to Decolonize the Unconscious (2019), Suely Rolnik focuses on the micropolitical to creatively resist what she calls the “colonial pimp unconscious” (21) (*inconsciente colonial cafisheista*). The current global colonial regime – also patriarchal and heteronormative – is a series of precepts or forms that appropriate and profit from our life force – our “embodied-living ways of knowing” (47) –, the way a pimp would. Our ways of responding to the unconscious colonial system's determinations vary, according to the degree to which we can creatively reshape our life forces, bypassing the overpowering forms the system imposes and finding other ways to connect to the living world. By reappropriating and redirecting our life forces we are also devising other possible worlds, even if in a germinal, virtual state (48).

The series of creatures that appear through Josie's interaction with the silk prefigure the appearance of other possible worlds for her own dancing body. However, before getting to this transmogrifying section, I want to focus on an earlier section. During the section in the choreography she calls “virtuosic”, Josie goes through a process of reassessing her own

technical abilities in relation to the technical values she had learned from her masters. In this section, she performed more technical movement, in her words: “big turns, jumps and complicated stuff”. She is determined to demonstrate her technical abilities through taking up the objections the masters against her body and movement abilities. Specifically, Josie refers to the masters’ insistent description of her as ‘not having enough *en dehors*’ (turnout). Traditional dance schooling tends to place a special emphasis on turnout, or the outward rotation of the hip joint, which it views as an indicator of the physical capabilities needed to become a dancer. Although outward rotation of upper and lower joints does enhance overall body mobility, outward rotation of the hip joint is often overemphasized. It was a common problem to replace the body’s rotated position -which depends on each body’s anatomy- with the action of rotating. This confusion results in classifying people according to the shape of their rotated position instead of cultivating each body’s natural ability to rotate, which everybody can make use of according to their own anatomy. As somatic movement practitioner Peggy Hackney elaborates, the femoral joint is a:

Major joint for movement and full range articulation in the lower body. It serves in all locomotion (walking, running, jumping, etc.), level change (going from standing to sitting to lying down, etc.), swiveling, turning; all basic shape changes of opening and closing (whether in the flexion-extension range, the adduction-abduction range, or the rotary range—most often involving all these in a subtly gradated and proportionate way.) When your femoral joint is fully functioning, you can really get around easily in this world. (133).

Given the broad functionality of the rotary movements in the lower body and moreover in the whole body, it seems reductive to focus on a fixed position of the lower body to evaluate a dancer’s capabilities. Hackney also emphasizes the importance for dancers to work with their

own anatomical structures: “Turnout: If you are a dancer, it is wise to work with your own anatomically correct degree of outward rotation” (157). Hence when a teacher or other critic assesses a dancer and suggests that they do not have turnout, it can mislead how a dancer perceives her body as well as create a sense of insufficiency.

27 minutos stages these complex feelings. There is an ambivalence in the process of self-affirmation that this dance performs: on one hand, it presents the need to break free from what seems like a constraining order, yet on the other hand it stages an unknowing reproduction of the value system Josie aim to overcome. The need to perform the virtuosic section according to the masters’ definition of what was considered virtuosic does account for a need to assert herself as a dancer through reinstating the values she had internalized. At the same time, the “virtuosic” section was perhaps a way of discerning movement principles – like rotation – from the way they were enforced by her masters. The creation of the solo assisted her investigation of the rotating mechanisms in her own body. Distinguishing and experimenting with movement mechanisms from the way they were transmitted led her to move within a wider range than predicted by her masters. To expand on the topics of training, and self-teaching, Josie relays: “I had to do it, to be able to internalize movement, otherwise, my body felt distant, cold, and universal. I can see now that they (her masters) were looking for ‘global bodies’, standardized bodies and mine – like many others – just wasn’t like that” (Transcript, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation).

Josie’s comment that her body “like many others” was not “standard” points to the fact that indeed many bodies in Ecuador – and elsewhere – may fall out of the universalized imaginary of the dancing body. It seems the act of dancing in Ecuador was strongly overburdened by its imaginary aspects and less concerned by its grounding in technical / functional elements. This might be a reverberation of Wilson Pico’s assessment of Ecuadorian

bodies being “ugly bodies” (Salguero, 2007, 65). Relative to Josie’s narration, the label that Wilson Pico coined to reappropriate the racist look at Ecuadorian bodies seems to nonetheless retain its racist citation and to perform classification and exclusion. When asked to further describe what kind of ideals Josie felt compared against, she explains:

JOSIE. I talk about globalized bodies, because that approach didn’t account for the particularities of each body, i.e., the dancer’s body was only one possible body: flexible, able to do big extensions, the legs can go very far up and rotations are fantastic, it never gets hurt, or it doesn’t matter. I don’t know how much the teachers knew about physiological or kinesiological aspects of the body, but I feel like the body was constantly taken merely as an instrument. My body as I have already said does not have big rotations or *en dehors*. I don’t think I was fat but there was always that feeling that I should be thinner. (Transcription, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

Here, Josie describes what seems an attainable, even unreal body: thin, utterly capable, flexible, and unencumbered with injury. This ideal body remains out of reach since what is being enforced in this environment – FDI, but applicable to other dance institutions in Ecuador, – are solely images and ideals, and not movement tools and principles to mediate the rapport to those ideals, as explained in the introduction. Thus, the bodies tended to get stuck in comparing themselves with those ideals, with little attention paid to each dancer’s actual bodily possibilities.

Ecuadorian choreographer and author Ernesto Ortiz writes about how Wilson Pico, despite creating new paths for Ecuadorian dancing bodies throughout his career, unintendedly preserves universalizing European body imaginaries of ballet and modern dance. In an interview from 2005 with Ortiz, Pico goes back to his own training history. He relays his own relationship to comparing himself to dance ideals and the recognition of his own creative impulse: “I didn’t set out to compete. It was clear to me from the beginning that there were

dancers more prepared than me, with better conditions, but that what I carried only I could say” (Qtd. in Ortiz, 2005, 46, my translation). Ortiz argues that Pico’s acknowledgement of not having “better conditions” is a sign of an avowal of an ontologically “better body” to dance, allegedly an idealized ballet body, regularly thought of as white. This seems to contradict Pico’s intention at coining of the term “ugly bodies” in the 1970’s, (Salguero, 2007, 65) which set out to reassess non-white dancing bodies – like his own – and to access other ideas of beauty with the aim of creating a more authentic¹¹ dance: “We then turned our gaze to ourselves, not as individuals but as a collectivity. From that search we started to give birth to a new language. A language we could later call authentic” (Salguero, 2007, 65, my translation). Agreeing with Ortiz, I contend that even though Pico performed a potent micropolitical gesture of claiming space for his and his peers’ bodies, he may have kept internalized ideals of an unattainable (ballet) body imaginary. These ideals seem to reappear later in Pico’s transmissions of his dancing at FDI – even though ballet was not part of those transmissions – specifically to the group of women who created NMLA and trained with both Pico and Viera during the beginning years of FDI. In Josie’s account of “globalized bodies” above, her body appears fatally compared against a body that doesn’t exist, and inevitably marked as “defective” as relayed by Josie and Carolina in the Introduction. The act of defying and continuing to reassess this overpowering imaginary was not Josie’s alone. Rather, her choreographic undertaking carried a collective voice, as Carolina disobediently affirms:

CAROLINA. Your voice is present in the dance, but you also carry a collective voice. It is not only your voice but all of us’ voices. Because we all “danced like

¹¹ I am referring Pico’s assessment of an “authentic dance” in the quoted text, although I recognize the term “authentic” can be misleading at essentializing Ecuadorian bodies. I think the use of the word authentic functions as a delinking strategy from a universalizing ballet and modern dance body ideal.

girls”, we all didn’t have enough *en dehors*, we all didn’t know how to *sous sous*¹², or whatever that is called. We all weren’t classical dancers. We all were creative and were not obedient to the hair bun and all that shit. (Transcript, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

In her elaboration on micropolitics Suely Rolnik describes how, what she calls “active micropolitical gestures” (58), operate not only within the individual but rather express vital forces always already interconnected with the world. In the micropolitical sphere of subjective experience, the external forces coming from an imposing system “agitate the vital flow of a world and singularly traverse all the bodies that compose it, making it a single body in continuous variation, whether or not one is aware of it” (48, my translation). I find it instructive that in Pico’s micropolitical gesture of reevaluating Andean “ugly bodies,” the “turning of the gaze to ourselves” is a proposition to all racialized dancing bodies: “not as individuals but as a collectivity”. If we take up his reappropriation of Andean bodies as a collective undertaking, one gesture and one individual will not do the trick. Perhaps the work of the next generation, the NMLA generation can be understood as a continuation of that process of questioning those racializing forces. Perhaps the gesture of “turning our gaze” as a collectivity has not yet happened; it may be a utopian “then and there” (Muñoz, 2009,1), a horizon that is still at work today.

The space that *27 minutos* unfurls contains a micropolitical, pedagogical potential in which Josie, as she mentions above, “internalizes movement”. By creating a space to teach herself, she recovers the actuality of her body from what seems to have been a tyranny of an unreal body imaginary. Brazilian Philosopher Paulo Freire (1970) proposes pedagogy as a

¹² A ballet step.

liberatory project that recognizes a person's dependence on a system or environment, and through this very recognition, aims to create independence from oppressive forces, through what he calls the liberating action "The liberating action, recognizing this dependence of the oppressed as a vulnerable point, must try, through reflection and action, to transform it into independence" (46). Through reflection and action, a dynamic process of becoming conscious of the world appears, this process cannot be thought as isolated but as intrinsically collective: "Consciousness of the world, it seeks itself in a world that is common; because this world is shared, to seek itself is to communicate with the other. Isolation does not personalize because it does not socialize. The more it is intersubjective, the more subjective density the subject gains" (12). In the recent conversations about *27 minutos* with Irina, Carolina, and Josie and me, an intersubjective, collective voice emerges. From this shared perspective, meaningful spatial metaphors appear and help to envision the kind of ground the works of the NMLA creators crafted.

IRINA. I see this dance not as liberation, but as a bridge towards moving forward. The reconstructed dance will also allow us to reuse the material of the fabric, which is noble, fluid, malleable, reusable in many ways. Carolina is the recipient of that inheritance (of the piece, as ruminator). Having crossed that bridge, at this moment, she can act being on the other side. She can continue with the process that Josie initiated back in the day.

ESTEBAN. I am very intrigued by that temporality. There is a bridge constructed at that time, 18 years later, we go back to that bridge to see it from the other side, and to be able to go further.

IRINA. Yes, we see it from a different time now, and from the different place from where each of us stands.

ESTEBAN. There may be a connection in what we were saying before between the idea of *patrón*, an authority, and on the other hand a process of authorizing oneself.

CAROLINA. I find that interesting because there is always going to be a sense of authority that normalizes you or limits you. How do you then authorize yourself to find your own path? Sometimes you just pass to the other side, but sometimes you need to learn how to survive by authorizing yourself. Not by crossing a bridge but by entering a labyrinth and you may stay there a long time. Sometimes it works like that, and some other times you just go ahead cross the bridge.

IRINA. But you must be ready to authorize yourself. You cannot do it before.

CAROLINA. Or you can do it progressively, you authorize yourself against what normalizes you through small actions.

JOSIE. I see it as a process that you cannot jump ahead of. Everything has its time and at a given point you are just ready to cross. And sometimes, things push you towards it. Like you are expelled from a choreographic process arbitrarily and that pushes you to act. (Transcript, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

I want to call attention to two key elements in this fragment: on the one hand the spatial metaphors of the bridge and, on the other, the labyrinth, which points to the temporality of realizations and consciousness in relation to the dance and its current rumination. As the collective became conscious of their place in a toxic environment that diminished their vital force, they authorized their own voices. By including themselves in their environment, they also claimed it as theirs and began to transform it in a manner similar to camouflage. Laura Levin defines camouflage, differing from its military association of hiding from view for self-protection, as “a visual and physical negotiation with one’s environment; it is how individuals transform their appearance – much like animals and insects – as a means of locating themselves within a larger environment or picture.” (4).

27 minutos deploys different strategies to locate Josie’s body within the FDI environment and within the dancing body at large. The virtuosic section enacts a conversation with technical principles to discern and affirm her body’s claim on the stage space, whereas

her later transformation into different creatures (humans and animals of different kinds) perfectly instantiates the building of a bridge Irina refers to – the silk literally being a path that can be transited over – and that can now be assessed from a temporal vantage point. However, Carolina’s insertion of the labyrinth metaphor acknowledges the different paths and dynamics a gesture of affirmation may acquire, afforded by different spatial metaphors. The labyrinth affords a less clear-cut conduit for arriving to the other – desired – side, the possibility of getting lost and the likeliness of having to restart again. In the Osho fable that provided the name for the NMLA Festival, *No More Moon, No More Water*, illumination happens suddenly, in the brink of an eye, whereas what appears in our ruminating procedure was much slower. There were many attempts, the creation of many different paths, and sometimes the breaking down of a gesture of claiming space into smaller, progressive actions.

Freire’s ideas about pedagogical space resonate strongly with Audre Lorde’s (1985) ideas about poetical space and its function for women’s lives. Rather than serving a decorative function, Lorde insists, poetry is a way of illumination, it creates paths that allow to progressively give words and concepts to sensations or discontents, ultimately creating understanding: “For it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are, until the poem, nameless and formless-about to be birthed, but already felt.” (1). Josie’s undelivered letter to Klever was only murmured during the beginning of the dance in 2004. However, in the long run it created a space for naming the group’s discontents. Our rumination provided a re-edition of the space *27 minutos* created, as Irina suggests, “having crossed that bridge, at this moment, she can act being on the other side.” The affective power of the letter created a journey from murmuring to enacting to voicing via a sort of queer transformation into other beings, creating a horizon of potentials for Josie’s body. The indefinite, always forming shapes created by her interactions with the silk seem to have brought about what José Muñoz’ queer illumination, the appearance of a horizon in which being becomes possible, beyond the existing

constrains and limitations placed onto Josie's body. In the ongoing changing of form, she found: "the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality." (1)

CAROLINA. Do you still have that letter? The letter Josie murmured during the solo.

JOSIE. I will look for it. I was murmuring the text of the letter all along.

IRINA. When animals fight, they do it with their hips.

JOSIE. It was a whole speech I had written. I think I already threw it away.

CAROLINA. This is why I want to know about Josie's letter: what did you want to say to this man?

JOSIE. Oh, it was a big "fuck you". This is why I like what you said (to Irina) about the hips and the animals. (Transcript, October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

27 minutes, 27 hours, 27 years

Animality is key element in Carolina's rumination on *27 minutos*, in which she explores the temporality of different life processes, human and non-human. During the creation process, she recorded a spoken word soundscape in which she intermingles the story of the creation of the original piece with the story of a prehistorical horse recently found by archeologists, whose liquid blood has survived until the present (mentioned in chapter 3). Her text weaves together the body of the horse and its trajectory before death and beyond, an evocation of the sea that she discovered in the silk fabric, and an imagined trajectory of human bodies moving throughout time. She moves responding to her own voice unfurling different assemblages between her body and the silk fabric. Since there was no video of the original piece, Josie's description of the work and how it came about became a loose movement score – a bridge – for Carolina to transit. The juxtaposition of the audio, the fabric materials and her movement

create a landscape of superimposed textures, images and stories that describe the becomings of the horse, its survival and resurgence at a current time, and the different scales of time and distance a body can journey.

In Carolina's spoken word soundscape, there is a successive rescaling of time and space, a constant shrinking and expansion of timeframes. Josie's performed insubordination of *27 minutos* becomes rescaled as something that could take years or miles to traverse. As discussed in our previous conversations, the individual and collective journeys towards independence and autonomy have taken the form of steps, bridges, labyrinths, and now seas. These metaphors serve to relativize chronological time and remove the pressure for Carolina to achieve a specific goal at the end of her personal journey. It will simply take the time it takes. This is a fragment of her audio text:

The sea shines. Wet hole, wet hole that sings.

Between our bones, space, emptiness, nothingness.

How can a space be judged, how could we, who are movement, move wrongly,
how could the tide move wrongly?

He was a week or two old when he died. He sank into the mud with his brown
skin. Thrown.

Falling into waters of brightness and hollowness.

Deep blue sea.

The sea has silky textures.

What is it to move well? What movement can be imperfect?

Brown horse. Architecture of porous bones.

The sea can be seen as a rough fabric that shimmers and flickers. Silk is like the sea.

Sometimes eggs die, sometimes they turn into larvae.

Sometimes precious things burn. A big hand throwing history into the fire. A big hand trembling.

Moving forward, moving forward, moving always straight ahead. Towards the end of the imperfect world. Traversing.

Thin legs walking on the floor. Black eyes, dark or red or brown hair, thrown, coming from the ether.

We are weight of bone and water. Organisms of liquid blood. Frozen organisms.

Crossing 27000 miles of sea, 2700 km of land.

Sometimes valuable things burn. The history of movement burns, a big hand trembling throwing things into the fire.

Thin legs. Pregnant organism, big wings. Tiny eggs.

27 minutes.

27 hours.

27 days.

270 months.

2700 years.

27000, centuries. An eternity

(Script, February 7th 2023, Donoso, my translation)

Through our ruminating about *27 minutos*, we observed that the figure of the masters at FDI was a mediating force between the female members and prevalent, tyrannizing ideals of

dancing bodies. Despite Wilson Pico and Klever Viera's unequivocal intentions to build a collective that diverted from the white looking ideals of dance and creating a fertile *mestizaje* of techniques, their – perhaps unconscious – participation in normalizing dance ideals became a way for them to exert power and control. The FDI masters enforced two kinds of authorities, they instantiated a colonial imaginary of concert dance – an unattainable, hyper abled body – and a male authority over female bodies via exercising an aesthetic judgment over the dancers' bodies and abilities. Additionally, there were different sets of heterosexual, romantic couples formed within the collective, which had spent about 15-20 years working together by the time *Más Adentro*, the dance I am about to introduce, and *27 minutos* appeared. The overlapping of work and love relationships added a sexual/erotic element to the mix of power relations. In Marcela Correa's *Más Adentro*, she explores a love / sexual relationships and its violent undertones. I argue that similarly to *27 minutos*, the dance inaugurates a space for working through issues of power and violence.



Figure 17 Carolina Vásquez' rumination of 27 minutos, work-in-progress, May 2023.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Silvia Echevarria.



Figure 18 Carolina Vásquez' rumination of 27 Minutos, rehearsal, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Silvia Echevarria



Figure 19 Carolina Vásconez' rumination of 27 Minutos, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Silvia Echevarria.

Marcela Correa's *Más adentro* (2002)

Más adentro is a duet choreographed by Marcela Correa, first performed in NMLA 2002 by dancers Karina Cárdenas and Fabian Barba. The dance spotlights scenes of violence amid an intimate relationship. There is a certain rawness to *Más adentro* that is comparable to Josie's *27 minutos*, in the sense that both start out as overt expressions of their inner lives, acquiring nuances throughout time. That rawness allows for a closer examination of the works' constitutive elements. During her presentation about the work in November 2022, Marcela explains, "I did it out of intuition, without any previous idea... it just started coming out...". Involved at that moment in an affair with someone from the collective, the relationship was described as lovers and entailed constant cycles of violence. In the script of the dance from 2004, we can see how that violence is purported oftentimes by the male's physical dominance, though not exclusively. We can also observe the conflation of physical aggression and sexual gratification. There is also a participation and enforcement of violence on the female side. Creating this work was a way for Marcela to purge the violence the affair entailed but at the same time, to question her own participation in that violence: "I see an intense sexual relationship, charged with distance, desire and violence." (Diaries, November 8th 2022, Donoso, my translation). This is Marcela's own script of the original work:

Scene 1:

Her: Standing in front of a bowl filled with water. She takes refuge, tries to calm her mood and be with herself. Her movement is languid and distant due to a depressive state in the face of an unresolved relationship that she desires and misses.

Him: Distant. Busy with himself, he performs a series of physical exercises as if preoccupied with his image, his exercise routine, and chores of little significance.

Scene 2:

She approaches him: It is time. They begin a movement sequence between sensual and impulsive, but it gradually acquires speed and violence until she pushes him off the stage. He, being proud, seeing himself defeated, leaves.

Scene 3:

She tries to pull herself together, to calm down, but he enters and ravishes her (I call it the rape scene because he stands over her, throws himself on her and covers her mouth as soon as she wants to scream. She fights to get free until he releases her and leaves. She alone could never free herself because 'he has all the strength, all the power).

Scene 4

She is in the water bowl, sinks her whole face as if to get away, to evade, not to feel the real world. She does this several times, sinking until she can no longer hold her breath.

Scene 5

He enters and sinks her in face in the bowl, barging into her private space. She frees herself, grabs his head and drowns him. This goes on several times until a duet begins in which he tries all the time to drown her, and she can only fight against him, who is physically much stronger and as such always ends up throwing her face into the bowl. This duet is not only physical violence, here, a sexual desire is consumed.

Scene 6

He stops, they go backwards but they come back and without force, they put each other's face in the bowl taking turns until the end, light fades into a black out. (Scripts, *Más Adentro* 2002, Donoso, my translation).

In the piece, water is an element that expresses feminine desire, its ability to morph and take many forms, as well as an element for exercising aggression and possibly annihilation. The cyclical structure of the dance and the fact that the end is not an ending to violence but a clear suggestion that it will go on, bring about a general sense of entrapment. In order to address gender power dynamics within FDI, I would like to bring in the notion of captivity proposed by Mexican Feminist scholar Marcela Lagarde (2005). As she discusses, the historical construction of being a woman – within a patriarchal matrix of power – revolves around being *of* and *for* others (33). This construction becomes materialized and sustained through a vital dependence in relation to men: “Women's dependence on men should be conceptualized as vital dependence. The most evident central areas of this vital dependence are economic, social, legal, ideological, emotional, sexual, and erotic.” (171). According to Lagarde, these spheres of dependence are often overlapped although they have relative independence. The notion of captivity implies the power of deciding on the life of the captive from a position that “dominates, judges, sentences and forgives” (153). At FDI, the overarching power dynamics were customarily in favor of the male members, who were the more visible artists initially. My contention is that starting to create their own choreographies was for the group of women a way to elaborate on the different kinds of captivities in which they participated. These elaborations compounded examining emotional attachments and sexual desires that were an integral part of those captivities. Many of the different spheres mentioned by Lagarde crisscrossed at the FDI; there was the area of artistic work, which by being economically

precarious, became work out of artistic devotion or love, but also the ideological component of being part of a collective, they were all committed to dance production and experimentation. The intersection of these different arenas created long lasting relations of captivity that started to become questioned – initially intuitively – through choreographing, specifically in the case of Josie and Marcela.

In her own diaries Marcela expresses her thoughts on the violence enacted throughout the piece: “This violence is not necessarily a relationship of male-female dominance, in fact at the end, not only he drowns her. She also exercises violence and drowns him (...) I see the violence rather as a product of the intense desire that never manages to be achieved perhaps because of the couple's differences” (Diaries, November 8th 2022, Donoso, my translation). Though indeed the piece is not about complete male domination and female victimhood, I do read an uneven power dynamic by virtue of the unevenness of his physical power and the conflation of that physical dominance and sexual pleasure: “This duet is not only physical violence, here, a sexual desire is consumed.”

For Marcela, *Más Adentro* became the starting point of a longer investigation on the nature of violence in human relationships. Beyond the fact that physical manifestations of violence can come from both sides, i.e., both drowning each other, the issue of male dominance in relationships remains structural in the form of a dominator/dominated binary. To go back to Lagarde, to sustain the unequal power of a structure of captivity, one of the ways in which women (as the dominated side) collaborate, is by submitting themselves to that power dynamic. Within a framework of structural dominance, this submission “confers power and existence to the dominator” (155).

As I mentioned, the appearance of *Más adentro* in 2002 was a springboard for Marcela to further investigate the relationship between seduction and violence. A few years after

performing the work, after leaving FDI, she started teaching at Universidad San Francisco and created her own company in 2008. Working with other bodies allowed her to continue to unfold her research and led her to investigate seduction and violence as ever-present elements in people's lives and led her to create choreographic devices which were inherently dealing with those elements. In *From Seduction to Violence* (2016) the dancers slowly seduce audience members by asking them to innocently play with a bowl of water, gradually leading them into witnessing a playful yet very aggressive fight between two performers aiming to drown each other in the bowl of water. This new version of her research poses questions around what constitutes violence and how we position ourselves when confronted with it; it forces audience members into taking positions of being complicit or denouncing a violent scene. The bowl of water, originally used in the 2002 dance became a transiting sign of a malleable feminine desire, while water becomes the physical element through which violence is enacted. In Irina's ruminating version of *Más Adentro*, she continues to investigate both violence and seduction, though from an entirely different standpoint.



Figure 20 De la Seducción a la Violencia, 2016, dancer: Daniela Cevallos.

Photo courtesy of Marcela Correa.

In this image, it is clear to notice the element of water as a conduit for desire and seduction. The water becomes an element that incites an unguarded, vulnerable body, which in turn becomes a trigger for the exploration of violence and domination the work proposes.

Ruminating on *Más Adentro*

Irina's version of *Más adentro* becomes, through humor, a lens for looking back at the work from a critical distance. In her rumination, she replaces the male dancer in the initial piece with a manikin, while keeping the bowl of water, using parts of the same musical score and loosely the same script displayed above. Her interactions with the manikin are at once earnestly tender and intendedly erotic, making the work not merely satirical but also complex and bizarre. The immobility of the manikin makes evident its inability to respond and the array of imaginations we can project, as spectators, onto its absence/presence. We can only imagine in our heads his ability or inability to empathize or to be present in the encounter. Irina's actions become a window for spectators to glimpse into her own imaginary of the situation as well as our own, and all the possible mismatches one can project onto a relationship. The piece starts with Irina sitting on a chair, holding the standing manikin's hand during a whole music piece, a pop, dramatic love song (Mon Laferte's *Aline*). In its simplicity, the scene welcomes floating projections about what she's thinking, and what the story of the relationship is. When the song finishes, she stands up to approach the water bowl, she takes off the head of the manikin and sets out to drown him forcefully. When she is finished, she stands calmly in front of the water bowl, immerses her head into the water for quite a long time, comes out gasping for breath, waits calmly until her breathing slows down, looks right at the audience, and addresses them by saying:

IRINA. The truth is, I'm really afraid of immersing my head in the bowl! The first time I showed this to my colleagues they told me it was okay... but that I should do it for real. But how? I said. How do I drown for real? Since then, the question continued to come to me. How do I actually drown? Or to what extent, because continuing would be

suicide and that would be terrible for all of you, especially if there were children and elderly people in the audience.

The police would have to come, and until then no one could get my head out of this bowl, and I would still be drowned and that would no longer make sense... at least for me.

For the time being I am left with the doubt, up to which point do I have to drown myself for it to be a real act. It is not about pretending to be drowning either, but in one part I do pretend to be drowning, otherwise I would really drown and I do not want to die yet, although sometimes I do want to, especially when I am hurt and resentful, I feel like getting revenge and I want to see the culprit crying for my drowning, filled of regret and guilt.

I need to pause here. I am going to stir the soup... (Script, April 17th 2023, Donoso, my translation)

Through her speech, Irina exposes the constructedness of the household drama she has established from the beginning, going through the script of a violent relationship (by drowning the head of the manikin) but also acknowledging that all of this is make believe (“How do I drown for real?”). Furthermore, the fact that she leaves the room after announcing she is going to stir the soup blurs the boundaries between the reality of the performance and real life. We are after all in a house in Casa Malayerba where there is a kitchen, and it is plausible that she is indeed making soup and performing in the meantime. As a spectator, these blurred boundaries between art and life, create a distancing from the housewife and relationship drama, so that what comes next moves in-between irony and sincerity, between evident constructedness and actual drama.

For Judith Butler, gender identities are not ontological qualities of men and women, but they are in constant process of becoming via the repetitive acts that constitute them: “identities can come into being and dissolve depending on the concrete practices that constitute them.” (2002, 22). Irina’s movement between sincerity and irony, reality and constructedness, set up a situation in which her own, fatally romantic housewife character both appears and dissolves. It comes into being through her earnest devotion and flickers away throughout her speech about doubting the reality of drowning on stage.

“I need to pause here. I am going to stir a soup I’m making...” She leaves the room and comes back a few minutes later, to start a slow, cadenced dance with the manikin, which is much taller than her, so its smooth manipulation seems to take a lot from her smaller, frailer body. When the slow-paced song is over, they continue to dance in silence creating an odd sense of intimacy. After a while, very gradually, dancing starts to get a bit faster and progressively, more and more frantic, at some point one leg the manikin falls off. She continues to dance in frenzy holding on to the rest of her partner, but the manikin keeps disassembling, she starts turning faster and faster until all body parts flail and fall. There is a pause for her to contemplate all severed body parts lying on the floor, while breathing heavily. One by one, she starts to collect them, carrying them closer to make a pile, later laying down on the manikin’s torso, holding on to the pile of body parts while catching her breath. Lights fade out.

Somehow, the pile of body parts is reminiscent of *La Huesudita*’s pile of bones in chapter 3. The returning imagery reminds us how remains can come back to live then desiccate again in permanent cycles. The way Irina deals with the presence of the manikin – partly funny, partly ominous – reassesses the elements of seduction and violence proposed in the original work. In Irina’s version there are not really two people involved. Pushing further into the fact that *Más adentro* was initially an objectivization of a life situation, in this iteration, she is

dealing exclusively with her own projection of desires and fantasies onto the manikin; the man is never really there, present in his absence of action. However, the fact that he is not entirely there makes more evident her subjection to the idealized symbol of a man. If the manikin is just a stand-in object for her seduction and need of affection, her subjection becomes even more tyrannical, and her dependence more structurally determined. Violence then lies on the structural imbalance of that relationship and her insistence in believing in it.

The rumination also comments on who really devises this man-woman script and the asymmetry of male and female positions in this dissected household drama. In the absurdity of relating amorously to an object that cannot respond, Irina acknowledges the artificiality of relationships. As much as someone – even if herself as choreographer – has devised this make-believe situation, there is also a cultural silent script that devices power relations in patriarchal heteronormativity. As Butler suggests, the normative frame of heterosexuality at once enforces and requires the male/binary positions to be distributed in particular ways and to express themselves accordingly: “The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine,” where these are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female.”” (23)

It is significant that in Irina’s life story, the recognition of submission was not so evidently linked to dance or to the interactions within the FDI collective, although she recognizes the power imbalances therein. For her, the experience of being a housewife was significantly more charged with an involvement in submission. This suggests that her iteration of *Más adentro* sprouted from a resonance of Marcela’s work into Irina’s own biography. This next conversation fragment belongs to our discussion about submission and the figures of authority at FDI. For Irina, dancing and creating was a way to evade what can be seen as her domestic captivity:

IRINA. It's funny that I lived a very submissive life at home, with my husband. So, dance for me was a space of freedom.

CAROLINA. It was also the company of the feminine alongside you, which was us.

IRINA. That was very important because it meant being emotionally supported. It felt like a family of sorts. I was able to exorcise that submission to my family live. This is why I didn't see FDI as submission and I didn't care much about the *patrones*. Because I had another submissiveness that was far worse, and I had no way of seeing any way out of it. My only moment of freedom was when we were creating. (October 2nd 2022, Donoso, my translation)

From this testimony, we can see that the space of the FDI collective was not a monolithic space of captivity for this group of women, despite the power imbalances it represented, but it was a far more complex ground in which its members also learned to exercise artistic freedom and meaningful exchanges amongst them. All in all, Irina's take on *Más adentro* accounts for a reflective distance and an ability to reassess relationships and subjections in her own life with insightful irony, while also resonating with life and work situations of the group. Similarly to the space *27 minutos* opened, Irina's rumination also operates in a pedagogical/political space that is shared with her peers. The reenactment device of sharing and ruminating on our works, shared memories and struggles has also allowed for a shared poetic space in which elements flow freely from one's biography to the other's creative space, crosspollinating both arenas.



Figure 21 Irina Pontón's rumination of Más adentro, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo by Silvia Echevarria.

Both *27 minutes* and *Más adentro* seem to have been doorways to auto-pedagogical paths for Irina and Marcela. They sprang from the very initial questions that created the works, questions about authority, power violence and creative freedom and autonomy. The works became motors for thinking through these issues in these dancers' own lives and beyond. In resonance with the original pieces, both danced ruminations establish a meta space in which they deploy a new perspective on the works, their imbrications with life, and the authorizing processes they enabled. They seem to take another turn of the screw by adding another layer of reflexivity to the raw, emotional intuition that powered the original works, establishing a calmer, more nuanced reflexivity. They do this by deploying irony, questioning the sense of reality of the drama in the case of Irina's *Más adentro*, and, in the case of *27 minutos*, by creating a woven fiction and a poetic landscape that relativizes our sense of time.



Figure 22 Irina Ponton's rumination of Más Adentro, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Milena Rodriguez.



Figure 23 Irina Ponton's rumination of *Más Adentro*, January 2024.

Casa Malayerba. Photo Silvia Echevarria.

Conclusions

Olas de otro mar was performed at Casa Malayerba in Quito, on January 26th, 27th and 28th 2024. Casa Malayerba is an esteemed cultural space in the city, a three-story house with a small theatre on the top floor. It was founded by Malayerba Theater Group in 1979 by Arístides Vargas, Susana Pautaso and María del Rosario "Charo" Fránces, and is an emblematic venue for theatre experimentation locally and internationally. Regularly, the rooms of the house are used for rehearsals or as a foyer before entering the theatre. For our performances, we devised a trajectory through the entire house for watching each danced rumination in a different space, including the theatre.

Upon arrival, about 40 visitors each night, gathered in one of the rooms of the house for an introductory briefing on the work. The briefing was communicated by fellow dancer Milena Rodriguez who had been following the project closely and kindly offered to moderate the evening. After welcoming the visitors, she explained the performance was a result of a long-term research, revisiting older dance works that had been performed at festival *No Más Luna en el Agua*. Each of the original pieces were created between 15 to 25 years ago, and that we had exchanged the direction and execution of the reconstituted dances. She also cited two questions we wanted to share with them: How does a dance travel through time? And how does it travel to another body?

Jabiera Guerra, daughter of Carolina Vásconez, took on the role of leading the spectators to the space of each performance, introducing the name and year of the original piece and the current choreographer/performer. Most of the works took place in close proximity to the audience – except *27 minutos* which happened in the theatre – given the size of the rooms and the slightly overbooked spots for each night. After the performances, we held a conversation with the audience members to expand on aspects of the research and listen to their

questions and comments. The talkbacks were also moderated by Milena Rodriguez who provided a generous mediation with the audience.

The questions we conveyed during the introduction of the performance evening were not specifically part of the initial research questions. Instead, How does a dance travel through time? And how does it travel to another body? Were intended to engage the audience and encourage them ponder about the journeys and transmissions that had been taking place during the research. I proposed these questions to the group as part of the promotional material on social media – our main medium for promoting the work. They turned out to be fitting for communicating aspects of the work to broader audiences and to motivate them to share their side of the experience during the talkbacks. The audience consisted of people associated with the performing arts, former students of FDI, as well as family members, friends and people from other fields.

In this concluding section, I address core aspects of the project such as time and temporalities, archiving, witnessing, self-narrating and narratives, in dialogue with post-performance spectator responses, and critic's reviews. I bring back concepts and ideas from earlier chapters in the dissertation. As a closing gesture, I evoke initial research questions about how to approach Ecuadorian dance stories, to assess them from this vantage point.

After the first night, moderator Milena Rodriguez started the talkback conversation by cleverly introducing the issue of time:

MILENA RODRIGUEZ. I was thinking about the questions you proposed as I went through the performance, and I was wondering if you could also ask: How has time traveled through the dances? Or what has the passage of time done to these dances. It seems to me we could say a lot about how time has moved through the works we saw today. (Transcript January 26th 2024, Donoso, my translation)

This question directed the conversation to one of the core aspects of the project, temporalities. As elaborated on chapter three, the Andean worldview of spiraling time, *ñawpa*, provided a useful spatialization of time to understand our coexistence with the past as integral to our experience of present and future, rather than seeing it as a finished part of an ongoing progression line. The Andean understanding of time is a reoccurring spiral in which the present (*kay pacha*) a controllable past (*ñawpa*), and an immediate future (*ñawpan* or *ñawpany*), are interconnected and coexist within the same loop. The person is always oriented towards the past, rather than towards the future. Given this orientation and the imbrication of the three temporalities, the only way to move into the future is to advance towards the past, so that the future can only be traced through moving towards the past, “tracing the future by way of the past” (Manga Quishpe, 2014).

However, beholding these dances as present, living memory at work, does not exclude observing that chronological time has indeed gone by. Not only has it passed but its passage has had visible effect on our bodies. It is by acknowledging a chronological distance that we can witness the migration of dance through time and through different bodies in our reenactments. In order to exemplify the kind of reflective space the performance – along with the introductory questions – produced, I would like to paraphrase FDI school alumna and colleague Camila Enriquez. During the same talkback she relayed that she had watched *La Huesudita* 23 years ago. Seeing Carolina Vásconez in the original work she remembers being struck by a sense of beauty, sensuality, and vitality. In Marcela Correa’s recent re corporealization of the work, she was struck by the relative fragility of her body at the same time than by the powerfulness of her performative presence (Talkback, 26th January 2024). Camila’s remark suggests that the dance’s reincorporation has also relocated and rearranged the performative qualities of the work. It migrated from the performer’s physical body to the performer’s stage presence. This relocation of the dance beyond the individual dancer’s body,

is determined by how the performer's physicality has become a vector of the passage of time. The reading of the dance has also shifted and migrated, as assessed in chapter 3, from the gesture of a young female body vanquishing – while coming to terms with – death, to a gesture of a knowingly frailer body, surrendering to death and life cycles.

Continuing with the talkback, on the topic of spatializations of time, dancer Valeria Andrade – who had not seen all the works previously but is familiar with the group's work – mentioned that the way she saw other temporalities reappearing during the performance was as “wisps of smoke”; appearing images that lingered yet did not create a defined path, as the idea of spiraling time would imply. This image is evocative of other temporalities appearing in a more fugacious manner, lingering, and disappearing in unexpected ways. Perhaps closer to Schneider's time syncopations (2011, 6), these wisps of smoke become intrusions of another timeframe in the present tense of the performance.

At this point, it is also worth wondering what the experience of temporalities was for someone who did not see the original works at all and could not compare them, which was the case for many of the spectators. From different post-performance debriefings, I concoct that since all dances are introduced as originated in a now absent work, they became unformed ghostly presences in relation to which spectatorship happened. The ‘original’ work becomes a constant “double presence” (Rayner, 2006) to the lived performance, a sort of ongoing score, that acquires different forms through watching the current embodied iteration. This double presence accounts simultaneously for the connection of the work to its own past as well as for the sense of newness of its current grounding.

In the reviews of the opening evening, critic Genoveva Mora¹³, who also attended the first night, wrote specifically about the migration of the works onto the other's body:

Each one of the participants ends up translating the work from their experience and personal standpoint, turning it into an interpersonal and inter-temporal dialogue, because the dancers are no longer the same, their bodies have changed as well as their ways of conceiving performance. On the other hand, the re-interpretation is very subjective, each of the new renderings respond to the timing of each artist. It is like the book we read twenty years ago, and we take it up again, it will never be the same. The acquired or omitted knowledge, together with what we have gone through in life, make us read from an altogether different reality. So I imagine these bodies reading and rewriting each one of these... archives? (El Apuntador, Mora, February 10th 2024, my translation)

Mora insightfully dives into an insider's perspective of the process, interestingly signaling translation as the strategy to deal with the other body's knowledge. Her reservations about calling the work an archive are pertinent, as they invite further discussions about how we approached archiving in the work. I interpret Mora's words to mean that these ruminations do not become fixed, erected archives, nor do they try to preserve the original works. Rather, we know they are inexact interpretations and as she mentions, translations into other circumstances. Furthermore, we know they are questions being performed, and experiments that are in constant flux. For me and for us involved, the works are still considered in-progress

¹³ Genoveva does not write critic's reviews anymore, but on this occasion, given her familiarity with the group and the works, she went back to writing.

and subject to changes by each of the choreographers.

As elaborated in the introductory chapter, our approach to dance reenactments followed Andre Lepecki's notion of a "will to archive" (2017, 118) a choreographic strategy of live performance that activates "still non-exhausted creative fields" of past works (120). In this approach, there is an activation of the past in which the dancer's body becomes a catalyst of the work's transformation, without becoming a domiciliation. As Derrida proposes in *Archive Fever*, the double function of the archive lies in it becoming a shelter for memory, as much as what shelters itself from memory (1998, 2). Thus, domiciliating the archive is a way of forgetting.

As elaborated throughout the dissertation, the works portrayed in *Olas de otro mar* hold a troubled relationship to becoming archives, as there is a lack of archives specific to the FDI collective and valuable NMLA archival material was lost when the group left the collective. Our metabolic, embodied approach to archiving has distilled in a performance but also in a laboratory about how to puts these works together and how to communicate it to audiences. For now, there will not be an erected archive. There will be potent wisps of smoke, but not a domiciliation. At the same time, I am aware that a great deal of archival material has been both gathered and generated throughout the duration of the project. As a researcher, I acknowledge the responsibility I have in finding ways of communicating and passing on this memory, and I will continue to search for other instantiations of the materials in conversation with the NMLA group.

Archiving, for our project, seems to be an excuse. We have been hacking the archive – traditionally a patriarchal/colonial device for storing/erasing memory – for us to be able to ruminate on these dances, and to share them coming alive again. These dances have come back to life by being contiguous to life. For our performances, the ushers, technicians, and audience

guides, were all sons and daughters of the performers: Jabiera Guerra, Rafaella Robalino Emiliano Guerra, Tea Araujo and Gerson Guerra (Carolina Vásconez's husband) were generously present during the performances, executing these "domestic" backstage works. There was a younger generation bigheartedly sustaining the work of their mothers.

Throughout, there was an atmosphere of "homemade theatre" that substantially changed the experience of what a theatrical performance tends to look like. As mentioned earlier, the works were shown in close proximity to the audience in different rooms of a house, curtain calls and technical adaptations of the space were a visible background to the performance, and there was no written program, but verbally transmitted instructions, and acknowledgments. Concomitantly, people were also experiencing a house that holds a history of theatre making in the city and has also gone through decay despite the relentless effort of its administrators to maintain its activities. Very much like in the history of NMLA, life and art became visibly entangled, spectators of the show were also witnessing the passage of time into a new generation, the connective work of sustaining a life dedicated to dance making, and the house as a witness of these multiple performance stories. All the fluctuating layers of memory were alive and available.

The notion of the archive, as Mora suggests in her review, became flooded by our present-day circumstances, de-domiciliated and returned to a state of flux. This was foregrounded by the fact that the 'original' dances did not remain the same but continued to live their own afterlives. We were not domiciliating memory, we were temporarily instantiating it and mobilizing it. It is significant that when referring to the reconstituted dances, the process of how we got there becomes alive in the critic's imagination: "So I imagine these bodies reading and rewriting each one of these... archives?".

The show demanded a particular kind of spectatorship I will attempt to describe. In the essay *Afterthought: Four notes on witnessing performance in the age of neoliberal dis-experience* (2017) Andre Lepecki discusses the tendency of capitalism to appropriate the realm of the experiential. He describes an incompatibility between the roles of the witness, and the forensic. Whereas the witness' account is valuable by virtue of having been there, the forensic judges the veracity of a situation by appealing to scientific truth and precisely because not having been there provides them with a neutral objectivity. According to Lepecki – and I couldn't agree more – forensic sensibility violently undermines the “performativity of storytelling” (171) and its political potencies. In turn, he advocates for what he calls a “testimonial audience” (172). In the age of the proliferation of images, social media, measuring validation via ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’, we become accustomed to a disembodied circulation of image-captured experiences that end up obliterating the shared coordinates of experience. Lepecki's “testimonial audience” foregrounds the fact of “having been there” and imagines an audience that “thanks to the affective dynamics intrinsic to sharing an experience, does what audiences must: be receptive, embody the experience being told, and retransmit the experience later on, to new audiences.” (173)

After our performances, many audience members have posted images and reflections on social media, invited their students to come see it, or sent long personal messages with their impressions and responses. Our invitation to witness the journeys of dances, also invited affective responses of audience members who had been spectators of NMLA, former FDI students and other visitors who, despite not having been connected to the works or the group, were pleased to have been told a story about dance in the city by their protagonists. The connectivity of our work to the local dance scene was central to our project, and I can safely affirm that our performances did create what could be considered a testimonial audience.

The notion of the witness was present in the project from the beginning. Each of our danced ruminations had a witness, and its role consisted in overseeing both the original's traces and materials and their migration into the rumination. However, the role of witness became blurry as the procedure went on, since we were all present throughout the process. It was then difficult to discern what the role of the witness added to the collective accompaniment or our work.

Since the figure of the witness only acquires its full status when giving testimony, in writing these concluding remarks, I realize that my role has been that of the witness throughout. Writing these chapters bears the responsibility of accounting for the lived experiences, the gathered materials and the performative aspects of our work together. This realization has, in turn, made me reassess my initial research questions, stated in the introduction in the light of the witness' mediating role: "How can we create a framework through which we can look at the collective's history in light of these colonial dynamics? And how can we enable ways of making visible these dance practices in their own terms while recognizing the power asymmetries of the different narratives? By colonial dynamics, I am referring to a tendency to impose overpowering dominant narratives of concert dance that create homogenizing ideals of what practicing dance entails or looks like.

Both of the questions mentioned above point out to methodological choices and to developing a lens to approach local histories, particularly of underrepresented geographies. I would respond to them by reframing the metaphor implied in the question, by moving from the field of vision to the field of audition. Throughout the dissertation I have described dances in which I hear a haunting, an echo of a sort of colonial melancholy; plagued by constant comparison to dominant narratives and a struggle with the resulting insecurities of being either "wrong", "ugly" or "defective" dancing bodies. By allowing myself to listen to the NMLA

group voicing their own histories, colonial and patriarchal determinations of their work resurged, yet creating a space for these voices has also mobilized and redirected my attention towards the ways in which their work has survived and persisted beyond those determinations.

Defining settler colonialism precisely as a particular way of (not) listening, Dylan Robinson proposes working towards questioning what he calls “the tin ear of settler colonialism” (2020, 38-39). He contends that, when unquestioned, settler colonial positionalities tends to guide our perceptions towards certain ways of narrating, marked by Western categorizations of sounds and music (41). In the case of concert dance, listening to the syntax and affective effects of these NMLA works has led me to perceive how much these dances achieved and afforded, despite being determined by struggles towards emancipation, visibility, or by structures of captivity of female bodies. As mentioned in the introduction, the powers of these pieces emerged by tuning in to dances that initially seemed left behind (*27 Minutos*, *Histeria Blanca*), unfinished (*La Huesudita*) or constantly restarting in the form of different projects (*Más Adentro*). These pieces’ ruminations also required listening to their singular way of telling the story of their creators and the group. I commend these women’s (Carolina Vásconez, Irina Pontón, Marcela Correa, Josie Cáceres) remarkable ability to assess their own life and dance history from a critical distance, and how their voices became interlocutors in my elaborations throughout the dissertation.

I would like to bring back Rita Segato’s suggestion – during an interview – that Latin America “lacks a mirror of its own” due to the Eurocentric biases we’re immersed in. During the same interview, Segato asserts that “words are mirrors” that can allow us to “produce an image of ourselves, of how we are and what occurs to us” (2020, 4:20, my translation). In the same manner, I propose that dances, particularly these danced ruminations have also become mirrors for us to address issues of visibility and memory, inheritances, family and dance

ghostly presences, power imbalances, authority and violence. These dances have afforded a voice to the group of women of FDI. It has been my intention to echo their voices throughout this work, and to foreground the connectivity of those stories to others' stories, like my own.

Olas de otro mar will continue to research the danced ruminations, performing and reassembling the works for different venues and institutions, such as universities, theatres, or artist residencies, following collective interests and concerted decisions. In order to socialize the dissertation and its outcomes, it is of utter importance to translate the text into Spanish, as this will create better communication and exchanges amongst the interested parties. Disseminating the work will also take the form of laboratories, workshops, lectures, conference presentations and other forms of sharing experiences with related undertakings and discussing topics such as decolonizing and feminist methodologies, dance memory, situated performance histories, reenactments, and approaches to artistic research / research-creation. By sharing its methodologies and stories, *Olas de otro mar* can contribute to create dance and performance cartographies across the Americas by connecting geographically distant histories and places. Engaging in diverse and imaginative ways of socializing and disseminating the project's work can become an interface between different performance histories. Recognizing its embeddedness in the contexts of Ecuador and Canada, the project incites further dialogical endeavors that connect and crosspollinate both places in the interests of re-creating Hemispheric networks of memory.

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Annex: Working Diaries / Notes / Scripts *Olas de Otro Mar* 2022-2023

La Huesudita

Marcela

Nicole Loreaux: La voz enlutada

La expresión aion = eternidad, definido primero como designando la fuerza vital, los adverbios derivados de formas afines dan los adverbios cuyo significado es siempre. “este siempre indica aquello que perpetuamente vuelve a comenzar, antes de ser un siempre permanente e inmóvil.: “Transitoria y permanente, que se agota y renace a lo largo de las generaciones, que se abole en su renovación y subsiste hasta siempre en su finitud eternamente reiniciada”. (p 76)

“Death is the continuation of life with different means... death is the state that can only generate more and more of itself”, “Life is a continuous self upsetting balance, life is a balance that needs to upset itself continuously in order to be” (Rein Raud: The dessert island revisited or the limits of object related ontology:

Vestido rojo de sangre McQuin



-topo los huesos me dan temor, frío, temblor, miedo: tengo que hacerme amiga de los huesos, de lo feo de la muerte.

-Muerte, silencio es un elemento muy fuerte en mí con un tiempo detenido y un peso muy pesado mientras muevo huesos que van cayendo a mis faldas: muerte y silencio, siempre he amado el silencio más allá de todo, de toda distracción musical. El silencio como y la luz tenue de la mañana, antes del amanecer: es el momento que se abre total a la escucha.

Los huesos y su caída en mis faldas, con su peso, qué aumentan a ese momento de silencio y de escucha... -el peso de soltar y dejar ir tanto exceso de lenguaje previo (la mente), de deseos, deseos que ya no buscan necesariamente el placer (Berardi), de proyectos que se acumulan únicamente en el cerebro personal. -entrar en un estado de vacío, meditación infinita, suspensión, tiempo ido y a su vez, tiempo presente: lo eterno. – Ahí, en ese lugar entender la vida como la sucesión eterna de presentes que no mueren, la muerte como inexistente, o cómo fluir: el todo antes que la parte (Coccia), la aceptación más total de la muerte como estado que existe, es parte de.

En el fondo es solo ese placer que siento cuando elimino el afuera. Es también tristeza, depresión, suspensión; pienso en Louise Von Franz y su interpretación de las princesas durmientes: esa necesidad de lo femenino de suspenderse y esperar como cura y crecimiento.

-El sonido de los huesos puestos en mi cuerpo como exo-esqueleto y movimientos mínimos como si fuera un bicho: el bicho del proceso con TALVEZ surge en mi cuerpo: ellos todos tienen sus bichó, pues aquí sale el mío, movimiento aut con el Esteban también salió el bicho: ¿hay algo más ahí? Siento algo como una mimesis celosa con los chicos de TALVEZ. Siento también una absorción que mi cuerpo necesita vomitar: tantas horas en las que miro y escucho lo más atenta y abiertamente posible, absorbo y luego mi cuerpo saca, dispara, exhala, vomita. ¿O me gustan tanto esos bichitos que yo también quiero jugar?

-avance como avanzaba la Caro arrastrando los huesos con mi cabeza en la diagonal, la inclinación me hace pensar en Cavarero, como una sumisión aquí, y como una oda y una plegaria, o como una carga que arrastro por el piso, o como un ir hacia empezar una tarea: abrirse a la muerte.

NOTAS DE ESTEBAN

Somática

Ancestralidad

Caballo

Animal muerto

Arquitectura frágil

Alquimia

Desagradable

Incógnita y el movimiento orgánico

TOMADO DE EMANUELE COCCIA

El insecto puede llegar a ser tres veces huevo: el huevo, la oruga que viene a ser un huevo capaz de moverse y comer por sí solo, y otro huevo: el capullo. Esto implica la capacidad de génesis constante que somos. La capacidad de ser o devenir otro siempre. YO: para ello algo tiene que morir: el olvido del que habla Coccia, para ser un individuo, debemos olvidar que fuimos un solo cuerpo otro: el de la madre.

las ballenas barbadas sólo tienen dientes en la etapa fetal y los pierden antes de nacer.

Existe una especie de medusa, capaz de volver al estado pre sexual, un estado de polípos, con lo cual, prácticamente podría tener una vida infinita.

Día 3 de ensayo

Horas tratando de encontrar una construcción arquitectónica de los huesos que no se desmorone

Horas empujando los huesos en su chal enlutado para que el arrastre en su diagonal no descuadre el bulto de huesos y avance en su línea recta: ¿quiero dibujar la diagonal siempre en una línea recta, sin desvíos... o será mejor avanzar en desvíos? O tal vez planteo un avance recto que luego se desvía en desvíos...

El avance lo hizo mi bicho también, ¿debo dejar esta imagen? ¿entra aquí el bicho? ¿o se me cruza el trickster y el juego y quien debe empujar los huesos es un ser más serio, afligido a sabiendas del ritual que deberá iniciar?

Me costó esta vez sentir el placer infinito del primer día en el cual solo quería quedarme en la sensación eterna de aceptar los huesos: la muerte, silencio y etcéteras.

La Huesudita – testigo - Esteban

La Huesudita es una danza que habla de lo que sobrevive, de morir y renacer

También es una danza que ha sobrevivido a través de varias borraduras: La de la crítica, la de la destrucción de archivos, la desmemoria...

La huesudita es ese animal indómito que es la memoria. Reaparece y nos inquieta.

Tambien es una danza que hace presentes a otros seres, un caballo, un gato (en el primer ensayo, un gato aparece en medio de la presentación de Carolina, como para tomar el lugar del caballo al que se hace referencia). Se invoca una animalidad, por un lado, pero tambien una temporalidad otra, expandida, glacial, de los deshielos y de otras eras de la tierra.

En la reconstrucción de Marcela aparecen otros seres, insectos, micelios, fibras vegetales, bacterias, microseres...

La reconstrucción de la huesudita hace un énfasis en el silencio como potencialidad, como posibilidad de que algo nuevo nazca. Más que la muerte se trata de un silencio pleno, pregnante, que atrae y convoca otros seres y otras vidas. Cuando un árbol muere, se llena de otras vidas, que lo transforman y que continúan el ciclo de renacimiento, con y hacia otrxs cuerpxs. Es como si una migración lenta de la vida hacia otras vidas tomara lugar.

La sensación que tengo es que, durante el proceso de reconstrucción, la danza se hubiera ido debajo de la piel, mientras que en la primera versión es un exoesqueleto, una estructura visual y carnal. Ahora la siento más como un tipo de energía, de savia que circula a otros niveles, debajo de las capas visibles. Por eso es un ciclo que puede seguir y seguir, que puede parecer fútil, pero del que no se sabrán “resultados” sino en mucho tiempo. Es una especie de tejido que se hace de modo muy muy lento, imperceptible hasta que algo nuevo aparece.

Hay muchas texturas que se sobreponen, transparencias, tejidos vegetales, restos animales, cuerpo humano. Es una especie de compost en la que la visualidad es dinámica y no compone una imagen. Son más importantes las insistencias de gestos y una especie de dilución (de diluir) que se efectúa con la repetición que no es tanto una repetición sino proceso en curso, procedimiento, rehacer una partitura que va más allá de unx y que construye y destruye, edifica y demuele y en ese proceso entremezcla sustancias: los huesos, la fibra, la sangre...

El color rojo me impactó mucho en la última muestra, como si fuera un signo de algo que duele, que desagrada, que tiene que romper materiales para abrirse paso. Le dio de repente una carga emocional que estaba, pero que no se había materializado aún. A propósito de la potencialidad y el aparecimiento de algo.

Si hay algo que hace esta danza, para mí, es insistir, reaparecer, incomodar para hacernos saber que el presente no es lo único que existe. Como testigo convertido en dramaturgo, yo solamente quisiera incluir estas reflexiones en la conversación, para que ellas continúen alimentando la perjumans.

*La imagen viene de un texto referencia en los diarios de Marcela, La Mujer Indecible



Más Adentro

Guión Irina

¡La verdad es que me da mucho tiempo ahogarme! La primera vez que mostré esto a mis compañeras me dijeron que estaba bien, pero que tenía que hacerlo de verdad. ¿Como? Dije yo. ¿Como me ahogo de verdad? Desde ahí me surgió la pregunta. ¿Como ahogarme de verdad? O hasta qué punto, porque de continuar sería un suicidio y eso sería terrible para todos ustedes, sobre todo si hubiera niños y ancianos dentro del público.

Tendría que venir la policía, hasta eso nadie podría sacar mi cabeza de esta la acara y yo seguiría ahogada y eso ya no tendría sentido, al menos para mí.

Por lo pronto me quedo con la duda, hasta donde me debo ahogar para que sea un acto verdadero. Tampoco se trata de hacerme la qué me ahogo, pero en una parte si me hago la qué me ahogo, porque si no fuera así, de verdad me ahogara y aun no quiero ahogarme todavía, aunque a veces si quiero, sobre todo cuando me hieren y me resiento, me dan ganas de vengarme y quiero ver al culpable llorando mi ahogo, lleno de arrepentimiento y culpa. Voy a hacer una pausa para ir a mecer la sopa....

Marcela

INSPIRACION/origen: Mi memoria me dice que lo hice por intuición y sin ninguna idea previa... fue saliendo.

COMO LO ENTIENDO MIRANDO HACIA ATRÁS: Lo miro con dos connotaciones:

-una más social se podría decir, donde se juega una relación de pareja desde una óptica bastante machista: el hombre distante, preocupado por lo suyo simbolizado en una primera escena donde él hace una serie de variaciones de ejercicios corporales por su cuenta, ocupado, concentrado

en los suyos. Una mujer que busca una y otra vez refugio en sí misma (el sí mismo está simbolizado por el bowl con agua, sin embargo, en la obra se da un segundo momento donde ella busca un estar sola en otro lugar que no es el bowl, cuando luego de un dúo más bien intenso de los dos, él se larga.)

-Desde un punto de vista más personal, veo una relación de pareja intensa, sexual y cargada de distancia, deseo y violencia. Esta violencia no necesariamente como una relación de dominio hombre-mujer, de hecho, al final, no sólo él le ahoga a ella, ella también ejerce violencia y le ahoga a él. Así mismo, el final del dúo en pareja que va acelerándose en la escena 2, termina en el rechazo de ella hacia él. La violencia la veo más bien dada por el deseo intenso que nunca logra resolverse quizás por las diferencias de pareja: fractales de deseos y expectativas que frustran intentos de encuentros más simples, comprensivos. Un deseo que no se resuelve por una desconexión de tiempos, expectativas y necesidades, que no logran cuadrar entre esta pareja; y aquí no tengo claro por qué entra la idea de tiempo, pero me doy cuenta de que el tiempo de él es otro que el de ella y no tengo claro de qué forma.

Violencia, violencia remordida, tanta frustración de aquello que sucedía y sucedía y seguía sucediendo y acumulándose y no tenía salida.

ESTRUCTURA

Escena 1:

Ella: en el bowl, se refugia, procura serenar su ánimo y estar consigo misma. Su movimiento es lánguido y distante debido a un estado depresivo ante una relación que no se resuelve y que ella desea y extraña.

El: Distante. Ocupado en sí mismo, realiza una serie de ejercicios físicos como preocuparse por su imagen, sus rutinas y quehaceres poco significativos o trascendentes.

Escena 2:

Ella se acerca a él: es la hora. Inician una rutina entre sensual y fuerte, pero que poco a poco adquiere velocidad y violencia hasta que ella le va echando a él fuera del escenario. El como es orgulloso, al verse vencido, se va solo.

Escena 3:

Ella procura recomponerse, serenarse, pero él entra y la violenta (la llamo la escena de la violación porque él se para sobre ella, se lanza sobre ella y le tapa la boca en cuanto ella quiere lanzar un grito. Ella pelea por soltarse hasta que él mismo la libera y se va. Ella sola no podría liberarse nunca porque 'él tiene toda la fuerza, todo el poder).

Escena 4

Ella en el bowl, hunde todo su rostro como para alejarse, evadir, no sentir el mundo real. Hace esto varias veces quedándose hundida hasta no poder aguantar más la respiración.

Escena 5

El entra y le ahoga en ese mismo bowl, irrumpiendo en su espacio privado. Ella se libera y ella misma le ahoga a él. Así varias veces hasta que empieza un dúo en el que él intenta todo el tiempo ahogarla y ella solo lucha contra él que físicamente es mucho más fuerte y como tal siempre termina lanzándole la cara dentro al bowl. Este dúo no es solo violencia física, aquí se consume un deseo sexual.

Escena 6

El para, se van hacia atrás, pero vuelven y sin fuerza, se van metiendo el uno el rostro del otro en el bowl por turnos hasta el final que se da por black out.

MUSICA

Ella Fitzgerald

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXeEXnhuFzk> 1,31.00 (no es la canción original de la obra pero es de Ella Fitzgerald como la original)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Q3pKKIrWdY&t=5085s&ab_channel=LongueSensationTV

Blue Moon 0.00 1''0025

Kodo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7HL5wYqAbU&ab_channel=AgoraVoxFrance (no es la canción original de la obra pero es de KODO como la original)

Café Tacuba La 13

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qoK4NfJTvM&ab_channel=oooCAFETA
[CVBAooo](#) (música original)

EL ANTES:

WC o Armario de Aguas

EL DESPUES:

DE LA SEDUCCION A LA VIOLENCIA

<https://vimeo.com/197304884>

<https://vimeo.com/185514612>



Marcela presentando Más Adentro, 2 dic. 2022

Histeria blanca



Irina presentando Histeria Blanca, 21 de septiembre 2022

Notas Esteban

1.- objetos

Mujer licenciada

Mujer silenciosa

¿Qué objetos? Robados

2.- movimiento bebe

Shaking de pie

Parte II Guion Reconstrucción: texto proyectado

Irina fue mi primera profesora de danza.

Cuando vi esta obra en vivo, me resultó muy inquietante.

Irina suele referirse a la danza como “una cuestión mágica”.

Esta obra hace referencia a su mamá.

¿Como describe a su mama?

Una mujer licenciosa.

Inescrupulosa

Viajera

Desarraigada

Sin madre

Desamparada

Mi mamá tenía una obsesión por contactar con el más allá. Bueno en realidad por contar historias de espiritismo y hablar con los muertos.

En el velorio de mi mamá, mi hermano mayor dijo que ella había sido: una mujer “de dios”.

Se me erizó toda la piel. Tal vez fue esa fidelidad a dios que no permitió que ella gozara de su propia magia. Tan presente.

Incontenible. A veces se manifestaba en forma de una lucidez asombrosa.

Tal vez está danza era una manera de exorcizar la relación con su mama, de revertir esas herencias.

Para mí es un poco, al contrario. Es una manera de heredar esa magia a la que mi madre no se permitió acceder. Los poderes estaban ahí, aprisionados.

Tengo un sueño recurrente, desde siempre: estoy embarazado y cuando doy a luz, doy a luz a unos gatitos negros, normalmente tres.

Solo una vez fue un jaguar.

La mamá de Irina coleccionaba (está bien, más bien robaba) objetos pequeños, a veces cosas de valor, otras sin importancia aparente. Fotos, baratijas, joyas, objetos curiosos, juguetes, miniaturas.

3.- preguntas

¿Por qué robaba?

¿Qué descubrió en el más allá?

¿Tenía muchos amantes?

¿Tiene aún algo que decirme?

¿Le gustaban las mujeres?

¿Tengo yo algo que decirle?

¿Ella lo mató?

¿De verdad se murió?

Exceso de potasio

Documento de testigo / Carolina

Yo soy testigo de *Histeria blanca*. Una obra de Irina que repone Esteban.

Este documento surge de las notas tomadas el 30 de julio de 2022, y de apuntes que hago en la madrugada del domingo 14 de mayo de 2023.

Recuerdo la caja negra de la sala Mariana.

La Irina escondiéndose tras las cortinas, como un acto misterioso, o pícaro.

Corría de un lado a otro. Escondiéndose.

La siguiente imagen que recuerdo es la Irina sacudiendo la muñequita que se ganó en una rifa que organicé para mi amiga Consue, cuando le robaron su restaurante La Mandrágora.

La Irina sacudía la muñeca y luego la tiraba al piso. Más adelante, ella se sentaba, y seguía sacudiendo la muñeca. Luego bailaba.

En el inicio, Irina explicó que llevó esa muñeca al ensayo como un azar, y de allí fue emergiendo la historia de su mamá Teresa.

Teresa era una mujer excepcionalmente guapa. Destacaba con su hermoso rostro a donde iba. Era simpática y risueña, buena conversadora.

Cuando Irina hizo la obra, no fue consciente de su contenido cruel. Con la distancia, ella ve los vicios, los malos hábitos (como ella misma comenta).

La Tere:

robaba

mentía

era sucia

era una madre que abandonaba

era una mujer que cuando niña, que sufrió abusos sexuales

Era una mujer hermosa

Esta obra, emerge de una excavación profunda. Una arqueología de sí (en palabras de Matteo Bonfitto).

Este personaje curioso, estaba bañado de belleza y encanto, robaba donde iba, robaba lo que sea.

Una foto

una joya

cualquier pequeña cosa que llamaba su atención.

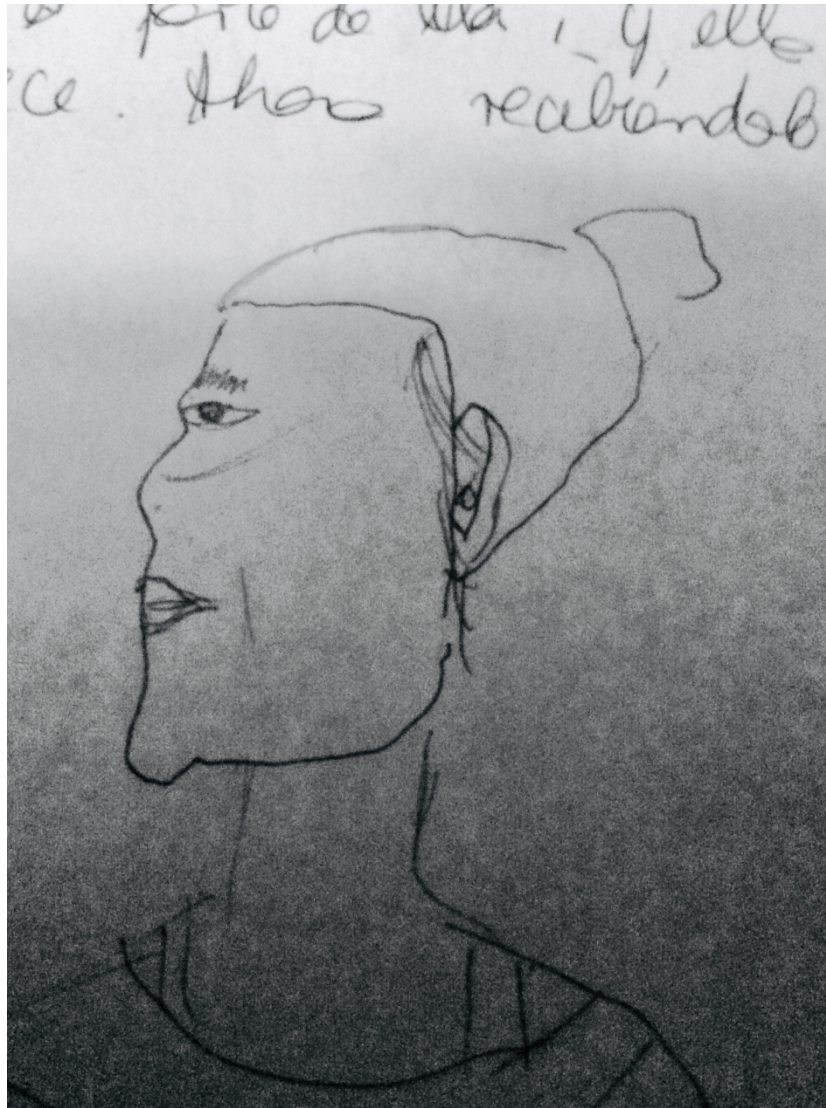
Guardaba los objetos robados en sus senos.

Cuando la Tere murió, todo lo robado empezó a emerger de los cajones.

Pequeños tesoros escondidos.

Robaba, pero era generosa, siempre dando y dando.

Irina mira su parecido con la Tere, una mujer que podía hacer cosas asombrosas. Ahora trata de mirarla sin juicio, la recibe como era.



Esteban habla:

Es evidente que había una carga fuerte. Se siente algo pesado que habita la escena. En lo desconocido y misterioso, hay también una oscuridad.

Pregunta a Irina:

¿Cómo describiría la estructura?

Irina responde:

La oscuridad se presenta adelante, en el proscenio. La idea era mostrar diversas facetas en diversos espacios de escenario. Atrás era la parte maternal.

Opina Carolina(yo):

Atrás está una oscuridad insondable.

Una boca abierta.

Un túnel.

Un espacio negro.

Hoyo que traga.

Habla Irina:

Al final, Histeria blanca es el resumen de lo que la Tere era. Alguien que se muestra y se oculta. Un proceso muy inconsciente.

Esteban vio la obra cuando estaba en la Escuela de exploradores de la danza. Se acuerda de la “boca abierta”.

Irina: el nombre de Histeria blanca hace referencia a la inocencia, a una crueldad inocente.

Hablo yo: El color blanco es luminoso, es neutro, sin juicio, en la luz, el blanco contiene todos los colores.

Habla Josie: es valiente por parte de Irina exponer este tema. Aceptar y amar. Es así.

Irina: La unión con lo otro a través de la creación.

Esteban: ¿cómo ve la obra yendo a otro cuerpo?

Irina: tragar la cosa, y ¿qué será lo que sale? Un obsequio que se regala y se transforma.

Esteban: historias compartidas.

Me gusta ver a Esteban transvestido, usando el vestido verde de terciopelo de Irina. El honra la obra. La toma con delicadeza y amor. Veo que entra en una energía femenina para encarnar la obra. La encarna con respeto y con una suerte de inocencia.

Incluye a Irina todo el tiempo en la obra. La comparte con ella. Es generoso.

Como dramaturgista de esta obra que se repone, yo trabajaría en el ritmo. A veces, la obra se produce en un solo ritmo. También pusiera algunos silencios.

Me encantaría que Esteban sea un poco irreverente, y vaya también por caminos inesperados.

La verdad es que me cuesta opinar sobre esta encarnación. Preferiría verla sin juicio. Que sea como tiene que ser, como el Esteban la conciba, para mí está bien.

27 minutos



Vestido diseñado por Josie, 2004

Conversación 2 octubre 2022

Carolina: Me acuerdo muy claramente cuando Josie bailó su solo. Recuerdo dónde estaba sentada en la Sala Mariana de Jesús. Yo estaba en el centro de las butacas, quizá un poco a la izquierda. Me acuerdo que se movía dentro de la seda,

como una criatura. Era magnífico. Y también, eso de transitar por ese puente del que hablaba la Irina...

Josie: Sólo quiero señalar algo, algo que es importante para mí. Ese caminar hacia adelante que hice...

Carolina: ¿Era en diagonal?

Josie: No, era en línea recta hacia adelante. Sólo me movía a partir de las caderas para desplazarme por el espacio, y aquí es donde la tela del vestido se movía y emitía sonidos (susurrando: chucu chucu chucu chucu). Sólo me movía desde las caderas, el centro de mi cuerpo.

Carolina: Pero caminabas sin la tela de atrás hacia delante. Te sentabas en la tela sólo después.

Josie: Sí, exactamente, empezaba con el vestido. Me movía con las caderas enérgicamente, como diciendo no. El texto que murmuraba era una carta que le había escrito. Recuerdo claramente las palabras: "Tú te crees la vaca sagrada".

Carolina: ¿Todavía conservas esa carta?

Josie: Ahora que nos vamos de vacaciones, la voy a buscar. Murmuraba el texto de la carta todo el tiempo...

Irina: Cuando los animales se pelean, lo hacen con las caderas.

Carolina: Me pregunto qué pasa contigo durante esos 27 minutos.

Esteban: Hemos hablado de esa temporalidad de cruzar el puente. ¿Qué crees que hace la danza durante esos 27 minutos?

Josie: Era una especie de discurso que tenía. Puede que ya lo haya botado a la basura.

Carolina: Tu voz está presente en el baile, pero también llevas una voz colectiva. No solamente tu voz, sino la de todas nosotras. Porque todas "bailábamos como niñas", todas no teníamos suficiente en deors, todas no podíamos hacer el sous

sous, o como se llame. Todas no éramos bailarinas clásicas. Éramos creativas y no éramos obedientes al moño y toda esa mierda.

DRAMATURGIA DE 27 MINUTOS / Carolina

Somos peso de hueso y agua. Venidas del éter. Sangre líquida. Cantos de sirena.

Caballito pardo, crines negras, potro congelado. Arrojado. Ecus, caballus lenesis. Hundido, perdido.

Atravesar 1700 millas de mar, 270 km de tierra, 27 metros de lodo. En 27 días, 27 horas, 27 minutos, 27 segundos.

Patas finísimas alas coloridas. Miles de huevos minúsculos de color gris o amarillo, emergiendo y muriendo.

Somos peso de hueso y agua. Corazones que laten. Complejos organismos que se mueven. Que siguen moviéndose incansablemente.

Organismo congelado, sangre líquida, hundiendo su negra cola. Piel parda, ojos grandes, animal salvaje.

Avanzar, avanzar siempre derecho hacia allá hacia el fin del mundo. Atravesar 27000 millas de mar, 2700 km de tierra, 270 metros de lodo.

Ser ahí nadando en un mar de huevos, con brillo y oquedad. Potro de sangre líquida.

El mar brilla. Hoyo húmedo hoyo que canta.

Entre nuestros huesos, espacio, vacío, nada.

¿Cómo un espacio puede ser juzgado?, ¿Como nosotras, que somos movimiento, podríamos movernos mal?. ¿Cómo la marea podría moverse con errores?

Él tenía una o dos semanas cuando murió. Se hundió en el lodo con su piel parda. Arrojado.

Cayendo en aguas de brillo y oquedad.

Mar profundo y azul.

El mar tiene texturas sedosas.

¿Qué es moverse bien? ¿Qué movimiento puede ser imperfecto?

Caballito Pardo. Arquitectura de huesos porosos.

El mar puede verse como una rugosa tela que brilla y titila. La seda es como el mar.

A veces los huevos mueren, a veces se convierten en larvas.

A veces las cosas valiosas se queman. Una mano grande arrojando la historia al fuego. Una mano grande que tiembla.

Avanzar, avanzar, avanzar siempre derechas hacia allá. Hacia el fin del mundo imperfectas. Recorriendo.

Patas finísimas transitando por el piso. Ojos negros, pelos oscuros o rojos o pardos, arrojadas, venidas del éter.

Somos peso de hueso y agua. Organismos de sangre líquida. Organismos congelados.

Atravesando 27000 millas de mar, 2700 km de tierra.

A veces las cosas valiosas se queman. Se quema la historia del movimiento, una mano grande que tiembla arrojando las cosas al fuego.

Patas finísimas. Organismo preñado, alas grandes. Huevos diminutos.

27 minutos.

27 horas.

27 días.

270 meses.

2700 años

27000, siglos. Una eternidad.